



# **Scaling Up Access to Quality Early Education in Ethiopia: Guidance from International Experience**

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# The Authors

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## Acknowledgements

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The findings of this research project are intended to support the Government of Ethiopia to implement its ESDP V plans to rapidly expand equitable access to quality pre-primary education. The financial support of the Children's Investment Fund Foundation (CIFF) is gratefully acknowledged.

The research project was initiated by the Ministry of Education's School Improvement Programme Directorate, following an ECCE workshop led by Young Lives in early 2015. The workshop was arranged by the Government of Ethiopia's Education Strategy Centre (ESC), to draw on international experience during the development of ESDP V.

Through its longitudinal studies of child development, Young Lives has been engaged with research on early childhood care and education in Ethiopia since 2002, notably the Bernard van Leer Foundation report: *Delivering Quality Early Learning in Low Resource Settings: Progress and Challenges in Ethiopia*, by Kate Orkin, Workneh Yadete and Martin Woodhead (2012).

## About Young Lives

Young Lives is an international study of childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in 4 countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru and Vietnam) over 15 years. [www.younglives.org.uk](http://www.younglives.org.uk)

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# Contents

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Introduction: Ethiopia's commitment to Early Childhood Care and Education	2
1. What is the international experience on effectiveness of ECCE in improving children's school outcomes and later life-chances?	4
2. What are the key features of effective ECCE systems?	6
3. How do these features inform Ethiopia's plans for rapid expansion of ECCE (with a focus on O-Class)?	13
References	17

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# Introduction: Ethiopia's commitment to Early Childhood Care and Education

The Education and Training Policy of the Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia has included provision of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for two decades, via a pre-primary stage focussed on the 'all-round development of the child in preparation for formal schooling' (Government of Ethiopia, 1994). Initially, only very modest levels of pre-primary education were available in urban centres and some rural areas, delivered primarily by the private sector.

Early childhood received a policy boost in 2010 through publication of a 'National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE)' built around four pillars. The first two pillars – parental education and a comprehensive programme of early child health and stimulation – are focussed on children from the pre-natal period up to age 3 and fall under the Ministry of Health. The third and fourth pillars have been more targeted for children aged 4 to 6, comprising non-formal school readiness (notably Child-to-Child) initiatives and the establishment of pre-schools of various kinds, including community-based pre-schools, private pre-schools and pre-schools attached to primary schools (Orkin et al. 2012).

During the period from 2010-15, the Government of Ethiopia, through the Ministry of Education and Regional Education Bureaus, has supported large-scale implementation of pre-primary education, in all areas of the country, via a combination of government, community, non-governmental (NGO), church and private sector initiatives. From a level of just over 340,000 in the 2009/10 academic year, enrolment reached over 3,000,000 in 2014/15. Students are enrolled across Child-to-Child schemes, multi-year kindergarten programmes, Accelerated School Readiness courses and a one-year O-Class 'reception' year. Various studies are ongoing, to understand the effectiveness of these different approaches (see for example, Mundy et al. 2014).

In 2015, the Ministry of Education set ambitious targets for the next five years (2015/16-2019/20), which are elaborated in its fifth Education Sector Development Programme (ESDP V, Ministry of Education 2015). ESDP V now leads national planning and implementation in the education sector and highlights pre-primary education as a priority, with the goal: "to provide all children with access to pre-primary education for school preparedness". Table 1 summarises the achievements at the end of ESDP IV (2010/11-2014/15), as baseline for reviewing the targets of the current ESDP V.

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**Table 1. Ethiopia's stated targets and strategies for pre-primary education in ESDP V**

Headline indicator	Baseline (Achieved under ESDP IV and reached by 2014/15)	Target (Set in ESDP V and to be reached by 2019/20)
Pre-primary Gross Enrolment Ratio (ages 4-6)	35%	80%
% students that receive at least one year of pre-primary education	NA	100%
GPI in pre-primary	0.95	1.00
Pre-primary teachers holding the ECCE diploma	0%	15%
% of pre-primary schools with qualified leader (diploma)	NA	100%
% institutions that have been externally inspected once	0%	100%
% of pre-primary schools met and well above the standards	NA	60%

This policy paper was originally prepared for the Ministry of Education in Ethiopia as part of Young Lives ongoing engagement with the development of ECCE policies and services. The focus is on ESDP V's ambitious goals for expanding learning opportunities during the pre-primary years, especially the challenges of ensuring equity in both access and quality, during rapid scale-up towards the target of 80% of 4- to 6-year-olds.

We follow the convention of referring to ECCE to denote the broad field of initiatives for young children, with the term 'pre-primary education' used more specifically to refer to school readiness initiatives (delivered via pre-school, kindergarten, school readiness, reception class or zero grade). Zero grade in Ethiopia is known as O-Class – a one-year programme for children before they enter Grade 1 – which on current trends appears to offer the greatest opportunity for the Government of Ethiopia to fulfil its access, equity and quality objectives.

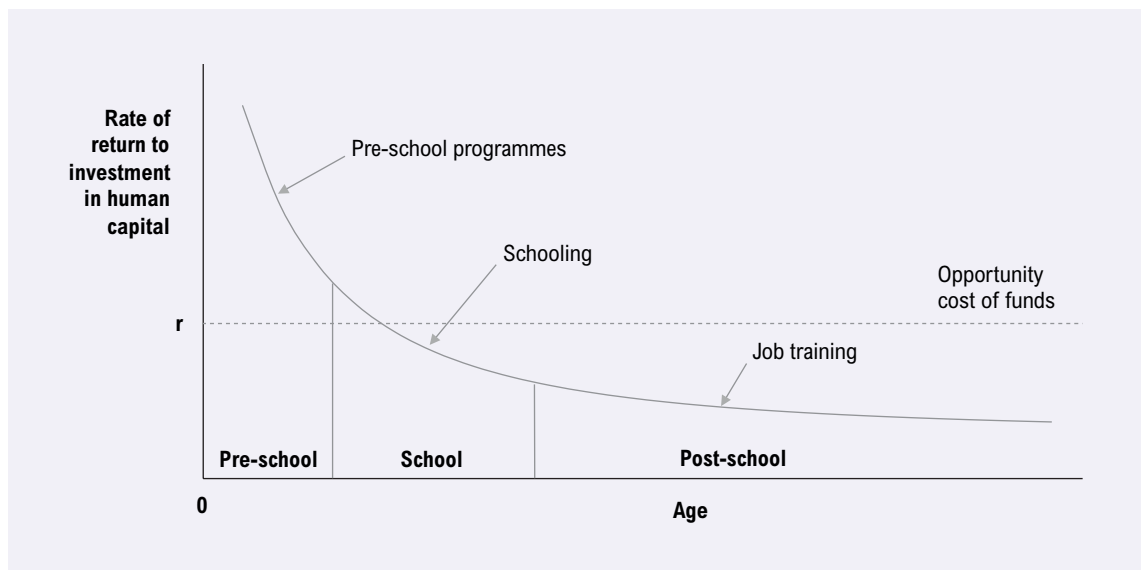
While this paper is focussed mainly on early learning in the pre-primary years, we recognise that the targets within ESDP V can most effectively be achieved if they are coordinated within a multi-sectoral vision for children's health and development from the period of birth through to school, for example as set out the four pillared National Policy Framework 2010. The importance of locating specific early learning initiatives within a comprehensive policy vision is reflected by increasing advocacy for holistic, multi-sectoral 'early childhood development' (ECD) (Woodhead et al. 2014). Ensuring all children have access to early childhood development is also at the core of Target 4.2 of the recently agreed Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

In this policy paper, Section 1 considers the evidence on effectiveness of ECCE in improving school outcomes and life chances; Section 2 establishes some key features of effective ECCE systems; and Section 3 Suggests how these features can inform Ethiopian plans for rapid expansion of ECCE (with a focus on O-Class).

# 1. What is the international experience on effectiveness of ECCE in improving children's school outcomes and later life-chances?

The positive effects of ECCE programmes on school readiness, academic progress and psychosocial well-being have been documented in hundreds of research studies since the 1960s and in dozens of research syntheses (Reynolds and Temple 2008). The dynamic feature of human capital accumulation (new skills building on already acquired skills) has implications for how investments in human skills can most efficiently be distributed over the life cycle. Early childhood is the most effective and cost-efficient time to ensure that all children develop their full potential, by preventing negative impacts of deprivations during the most formative life-phase as well by positively strengthening young children's capacities. The returns on investment in ECCE are substantial (Engle et al. 2011). Figure 1 summarises the major finding of an entire literature: all else equal, the rate of return to a dollar of investment made while a person is young is higher than the rate of return to the same dollar invested at a later age.

**Figure 1. Rates of return to human capital investment, with equal investment across all ages**



Source: Adapted from Cunha et al. (2006)

High-quality ECCE programmes will usually improve children's cognitive functioning, readiness for school and school performance. Improvements are seen in academic achievement, in reducing grade repetition and drop-out, and with growing evidence of life-transforming outcomes emerging in studies with longitudinal evidence (Anderson et al. 2003; Rao et al. 2013). This has already been observed in Ethiopia with children who had enrolled in kindergarten programmes, at age 8, scoring 32% higher in cognitive tests than those who had not and with a higher probability of grade completion (Woldehanna and Gebremedhin 2012).

Interventions that have an educational or early-learning component have seen the largest cognitive effects (Gertler et al. 2014; Nores and Barnett 2010). Other key benefits from high-

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quality pre-primary programmes – and which predict later school performance – include: greater confidence and ability to concentrate, better regulation of emotion and behaviour, and improved cooperation with peers and adults (Child Trends 2014). Holistic programmes that support *all* aspects of children’s development have the best outcomes.

Effects are larger for children from disadvantaged backgrounds and for higher-quality programmes, whether formal or informal. Investments in ECCE have the potential to reduce inequalities perpetuated by poverty, poor nutrition and restricted learning opportunities. The largest and most consistent body of research evidence comes from centre-based pre-primary programmes, but evidence also points to the potential of informal community-based programmes, including those with parent education strategies (Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead 2009; Engle 2011).

A word of caution is appropriate: many of the effectiveness studies that report substantial and positive effects on child development are based on relatively small-scale, well-resourced and high-quality programmes. Quality programmes are achievable at scale but, to date, results from evaluations of scaled-up programmes are more variable (for examples of initiatives to scale up ECCE programmes across several world regions, see Bernard van Leer Foundation 2011; Woodhead et al. 2014).

Expanding coverage while maintaining both quality and access for the most disadvantaged children requires careful planning, targeted resourcing and on-going monitoring and capacity development (Engle et al. 2011). Evidence from numerous countries points to the conclusion that an unsystematic approach to scale-up risks delivering minimal benefit to those most in need, with the consequence that equity gaps may be amplified rather than reduced.

The UNICEF Multi-indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) show consistent inequalities in access across 36 countries (UNICEF 2012). Access is necessary for learning but does not in itself ensure positive outcomes. In South Africa, for example, there has been virtually no measurable impact of Grade R (equivalent to O-Class) for children from the poorest three wealth quintiles (i.e. 60% of children), who attended schools of lower quality, while there are some positive impacts for children from the wealthier quintiles. The South African experience suggests that, with insufficient attention to the quality of teaching and learning during the country’s massive expansion of Grade R, the gap between rich and poor children widened and further extended the advantage of children attending more affluent schools (Department of Basic Education and Department of Performance, Monitoring and Evaluation of South Africa 2014).

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## 2. What are the key features of effective ECCE systems?

The characteristics of effective ECCE, as expressed in the international literature, are many, but there is also consensus around the following six features of quality systems: equitable and inclusive access; curriculum; teaching and learning materials; teachers and school leaders; parental and community support and engagement; standards, monitoring and learning; and system financing, management and leadership (see, for example, the framework proposed in European Commission 2014).

**Figure 2. Six features of effective ECCE systems**



### ***Equitable and inclusive access***

The risks that inequitable ECCE systems may amplify inequality has already been emphasised. As a universal service, harnessing existing school systems to deliver ECCE has the potential to reduce these inequalities, especially through targeted resourcing and programming. Using established schools for the delivery of early childhood interventions, is well supported by the international literature for both high-resource countries (Early Head Start in the USA, Sure Start in the UK, and others) and for low- and middle-income countries, notably Grade R in South Africa (Richter et al. 2014).

Planning expansion and implementation in partnership with communities can promote stability in children's learning environments, and can strengthen the continuity of services to children and avoid disjointedness, providing smooth transitions into pre-primary and through to early grades (Myers, 1984; Reynolds and Temple 2008). As leaders of community engagement, involvement of implementers (e.g. *woreda* education officers and other school leaders) – can strengthen the planning process at the regional level.

An expansion plan can include provision for targeting the most disadvantaged students and areas. For example, in South Africa, it is recommended to reach out to the poorest 65% of children first as they are the most vulnerable as well as the group who will benefit most from ECCE services (Richter et al. 2014). Population-based planning and provisioning can be used to improve targeting and the allocation of scarce resources, including administrative time and capacity. Potential resources for scaling up ECCE services can be set against a background of numbers of children and levels of poverty at the district (*woreda*) level, to enable government to prioritise very poor and under-served areas for immediate attention (Richter et al. 2014).

Early rounds of Young Lives data indicate that, prior to recent expansion, a main barrier to accessing ECCE in Ethiopia has been lack of infrastructure. Surveyed in 2006, many Young Lives caregivers did not send their children to pre-primary education because there was no service close by (Orkin et al. 2012). ECCE infrastructure is an important indicator of quality to communities (Britto et al. 2013) and while building new infrastructure needs to be planned



for the medium- to longer-term, the delivery of essential ECCE services can begin before special-purpose buildings are constructed. Existing community spaces can be used to deliver learning for children and their families in the short- to medium-term (Richter et al. 2014).

### ***Curriculum, teaching and learning materials***

Centre-based programmes, including pre-schools, for children from age 3 to school entry age require pedagogies and curricula that take into account the specificity of children's developmental capacities, ways of learning, and the social, language and cultural contexts within which they live (Woodhead 2006; UNESCO 2007). One specific risk for ECCE is that it is delivered as a downward extension of formal primary classroom organisation, curriculum and pedagogies to ever younger children, without the necessary adjustments for children's developmental capacities and ways of learning. While locating a pre-primary year in the primary schooling system has administrative and infrastructural advantages, this location can add pressure for a more formal primary-like approach (Garcia et al. 2008). These risks can be mitigated through, for example, preparation of age and developmentally appropriate learning and teaching methods combined with age-specific professional training and supervision (see below). At the same time the synergies between health, well-being and learning can be exploited to maximise benefits for children (Berry et al. 2013).

An effective pre-primary programme is also built around a comprehensive plan for each stage of education. Planning for continuity and progression is key in easing the transition from pre-primary to primary school (Woodhead and Moss 2007). An integrated curriculum for pre-primary and primary school, with learning cycles organised around the development cycles of the child has been used successfully in France, Guyana, Jamaica, Pakistan and Sweden (UNESCO 2007). Some of these models make an intentional connection between – or overlap of – pedagogical strategies, teaching and learning styles and materials between the pre-primary and primary levels (Britto and van Ravens 2009). Integrated curricula that link pre-primary with early grades can: (a) support continuity, (b) enhance capacity for organisation of services, (c) promote preferred instructional practices and (d) encourage family support behaviour and school-family partnerships (Reynolds and Temple 2008). An integrated curriculum should, however, remain accessible to students starting from Grade 1, who have not been able to attend an ECCE programme.

A standard national curriculum and pedagogical strategy can be adapted to the cultural, language and ethnic diversity required in each region or area. Programmes that use mother-tongue instruction improve children's preparedness for learning at the primary level, when compared to programmes that use a second language (UNESCO 2007). In primary classroom observations across Africa, researchers have found that the use of unfamiliar languages forced teachers to use ineffective and teacher-centred teaching methods, which undermine students' learning. Evidence from Bolivia, Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique and Niger shows that parents are more likely to communicate with teachers and participate in their children's learning when local languages are used (UNESCO 2007).

Guided learning is as important as children's free play, although both are necessary for optimal development (Siraj-Blatchford et al. 2003). An interactive child development curriculum in which both children and teachers have a hand in designing children's learning activities, appears optimal. This takes account of all aspects of children's development: physical, cognitive, language, social, emotional, cultural, motivational and artistic (Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead 2009). While monitoring individual children's needs and progress is a feature

of quality pedagogy, formal assessment can be detrimental at this stage, especially if it influences progression to Grade 1, as it will often lead to pressure for a less developmental and more academic curriculum model (Garcia et al. 2008).

Curriculum content can also enhance equity and social inclusion and promote children's positive identity (Brooker and Woodhead 2008). Even where equal access exists, early childhood programmes often promote gender-specific expectations, a process that also occurs in homes and communities (UNESCO 2007). Well-designed early childhood programmes can be informed by social and cultural roles and relationships and at the same time can challenge gender stereotypes. Reducing such disparities in roles emphasised in curricula can contribute to closing the gender gap in pre-primary – as targeted by a gender parity index increase from 0.95 to 1.00 in Ethiopia's ESDP V – and in education in general (UNESCO 2007).

A large-scale longitudinal study of children in the United Kingdom found that the most important influence on children's success in learning to read in primary school was the extent of their direct experience with printed materials during their pre-school years, provided these printed materials were age-appropriate, for example well-illustrated story books shared with parents as well as teachers. Exposure to a variety of teaching and learning materials, to compensate for a lack of home-based resources, has also been shown as a basis for greater equity (UNESCO 2007).

## ***Teachers and school leaders***

### **Number of teachers required**

Implementing a plan for building and funding sufficient human resource capacity with specialist ECCE skills is essential – before large-scale expansion of pre-primary classrooms. Otherwise, already strained primary school systems, especially teachers, will be further burdened, risking delivery of low-quality ECCE as well as negative impact on the quality of primary education (Orkin et al. 2012; Biersteker 2008; Britto et al. 2013). Example strategies will include, as a minimum, the numbers of teachers required and provision for attrition; qualification types and providers; remuneration and ongoing training needs (Vargas-Barron 2009).

The number of teachers to be trained depends on the goal for teacher-student ratio as well as the balance of skills between leaders in ECCE, pre-primary teachers and para-professionals or teacher aides. A study in the USA found that adult-child interactions were more closely associated with enhanced well-being than structural features such as class size, staff-child ratios or staff training (UNESCO 2007). This finding is supported by research on ratios and group size effects, in which evidence suggests that one of the ways in which ratios influence quality is through adult-child interactions (Munton et al. 2002). A low adult-to-student ratio can be achieved without additional 'teachers'. It has been shown to be beneficial to add teacher aides in the classroom to reduce ratios so that children can receive individualised attention and more individual learning opportunities (Reynolds and Temple 2008). Volunteer networks of family and community members such as health extension workers are also rich resources (Vargas-Barron 2009).

Language issues are more acute in ECCE than at any other level of education because pre-primary is often children's first experience of a setting where languages other than their 'home language' are being used. Language diversity issues vary according to local patterns of language and dialect use, as well as school policies on language of teaching and learning. In all circumstances, due consideration of the need for teacher trainees who speak local languages is an important criterion for recruitment of pre-primary staff (Biersteker 2008). These processes need not, however, be so restrictive that insufficient numbers apply (Myers,

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1984). ECCE in many countries has a long tradition of family and community members volunteering to support language and literacy development. Human capacity can also include older children, for instance, who can read to their younger siblings and support socialisation activities such as in Child-to-Child programmes that have already been pioneered in Ethiopia (UNESCO 2007; Mundy et al. 2014).

### **Qualification types, financing and providers**

A qualification framework for ECCE teachers is essential to link qualifications at different levels – whether a short-term certificate or a longer term diploma – and is a useful first step in rapid expansion of ECCE provision (Biersteker 2008). It is difficult to increase capacity rapidly through traditional pre-service teacher-training routes. One progressive model would be for new ‘teachers’ to obtain initial qualification with a multi-month pre-school training certificate so that they can begin work in the short term and follow steps in the framework to upgrade their skills to fully qualified ECCE teacher status over time (Orkin et al. 2012; Biersteker 2010). Assistant teachers could be required to attend school to at least the Grade 8 level and to hold education/health volunteer or education/health assistant certificates (Orkin et al. 2012).

Teacher attitudes, skills and behaviours play a key role in the effectiveness of curriculum delivery. The skills required by pre-primary classroom curricula, pedagogies etc. should guide the content of teacher-training, including extensive practical experience. Positive relationships and interactions with pupils, parents and other teachers appear crucial to programme quality – and are often much more important than material inputs (UNESCO 2007). To develop these relations, training approaches that help teachers become more reflective about their teaching practices and the environments in which they work are effective (UNESCO 2007).

Financing for teacher training is best planned as part of the expansion strategy (Britto et al. 2013). In the short term, for rapid expansion purposes, money for training might be found from other sources outside the education administration (Garcia et al. 2008). Alternatively, NGOs and private providers can be accredited to deliver ECCE teacher training. All training need not happen through colleges of teacher education if speed is critical, but the risk of over-supply in urban areas and under-supply elsewhere can be balanced by targeted resource allocation to training centres (Biersteker 2008).

### **Remuneration, status and ongoing training**

There are major resource implications for the number of ECCE staff that are required to reach stated enrolment targets in Ethiopia. Teacher status and remuneration will affect rates of attrition and the quality of candidates that apply to teach ECCE. If wages offered to ECCE teachers are lower than for primary teachers, status will be lower compared to their peers in the primary grades, and there will likely be higher attrition and lower confidence that candidates capable of learning skills will join the training programme (Biersteker 2010).

A career structure that proposes development pathways for all teachers, irrespective of their route of entry to the profession, can help to transfer status (Garcia et al. 2008). By incorporating the career tracks of staff who traverse between ECCE and early grades of primary schooling, such a structure can improve coherence and standardisation in employment status and versatility of teachers (Richter et al. 2014). For locally recruited teachers (recruited for example by the school community), wage sustainability and integration into the school environment and teaching profession more generally need to be considered – and a link to a formal career structure can assist this.

Ongoing support includes receiving curriculum-based supervision and continuing professional development (Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead 2009). In-service training can be an important route to delivering continuous improvements in service quality. Evidence suggests that specialised training for at least 20 hours per year is enough to produce improvements in the way teachers look after children in their class (Munton et al. 2002). Such in-service training is particularly important for locally recruited teachers in the short- and medium- term, before they obtain formal qualification.

### **School leaders**

ECCE delivery in a school site and management by the same school-management team, puts extra financial and operational burdens on schools and their leaders. Training for school leaders, to ensure that they have the capacity to manage, supervise and support pre-primary teachers, is a critical support to teacher training and skills development (Biersteker 2010). Given the additional support that school leaders can offer to ECCE teachers, the education and training of school leaders can have a greater influence on ECCE quality than can individual teacher skills or student-teacher ratios (Munton et al. 2002).

### ***Parental and community support and engagement***

To encourage demand for – and to promote and protect – ECCE, considerable communication effort is needed to create a sense of participation, ownership, investment and responsibility by parents, families, communities and other stakeholders (Richter 2013). Regional advocacy and campaign efforts will mobilise demand (Biersteker 2010) and political channels, such as in Ethiopia through regional presidents, *woreda* and *kebele* officials, can also be used to encourage uptake of ECCE and gather further support from private, NGO and community groups.

As part of their delivery, effective ECCE programmes often include an intensive family support component that facilitates parental involvement and commitment to the child's education and promotes parents' personal growth (Reynolds and Temple 2008). These may include parent education programmes which involve livelihood and practical skills. They may provide parents with information on how to give children the care and support they require to realise their potential or simply bring parents together to acquire information and to share experiences (Woodhead and Moss 2007; Sylva et al. 2003).

Incorporating parents, families and communities as partners in the development of ECCE programmes can improve the integration of relevant child-rearing practices, cultural and local contexts (Marfo and Biersteker 2011). Similarly, teachers' regular engagement with parents and other caregivers to educate them about their children's development and how they can extend learning experiences into their homes, has been shown to be effective (Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead 2009). In some national contexts, parents and community leaders have played an even stronger role in actual delivery of ECCE services, for example 'play groups' and 'play circles' in the UK.

### ***Standards, monitoring and learning***

An effective ECCE system will include monitoring to strengthen quality – linked to standards – along with learning and innovation to inform changes to delivery (Lombardi 2011).

Comprehensive standards will cover the physical environment; the knowledge and experience

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of staff; the nature and organisation of the educational process; organisation, management and administration; the work environment; relationships with family and community; and attention to health, hygiene, safety and protection (Myers 2006). An essential, costed, package of ECCE provision can be devised based on these standards (Biersteker 2010; Berry et al. 2013).

A strong monitoring system will be able to assess whether a child is receiving all essential services, how services are delivered, how the system is functioning, and what funding is received, allocated and spent (Richter et al. 2014). Internal and external procedures are required for programme monitoring, evaluation, accountability, reporting and programme revision (Vargas-Barron 2009). Questions of who will follow the standards and who will supervise or inspect and be held to account are central to monitoring and supervision activities, as are questions about the action steps that will be taken to strengthen the ECCE systems, lines of responsibility and funding, etc. (Okengo 2011).

ECCE monitoring practices vary by extent and type between countries, largely dependent on organisation of more general political and governance systems. In a large decentralised system, a monitoring process may be led by discussion and dialogue involving parents, teachers, educational authorities, researchers, funders and other stakeholders, at national and local levels (Myers 2006). Then, at the local level, self-evaluation by individual pre-primary institutions will serve as a basis for consultation between 'internal' and 'external' evaluators who may have different views of quality.

A final challenge is about learning through evidence, research and innovation. The results of monitoring can support ECCE providers to improve their programming and planning (Myers 2006). These results inform policy reviews and, if made available to the public down to the school level, can be used to inform local adjustments and innovations. There is, however, a general imbalance in research investment between the well-articulated fundamental science of ECCE and patchier, contextualised studies of service delivery (Siraj-Blatchford and Woodhead 2009). A rapid expansion process requires learning to take place in regions and at federal levels of government, based on which adjustments can be made to better meet the needs of children and their families (Myers, 1984).

### ***System financing, management and leadership***

For many years, governments have prioritised the achievement of universal primary education, with ECCE policy development relatively neglected. This was the case for Ethiopia until the release of the 2010 National Policy Framework for ECCE (Orkin et al. 2012). In many countries, less than 10% of the education budget has been allocated to pre-primary education (Engle et al. 2011), although this is changing rapidly. Unless governments allocate more resources to quality pre-primary programmes for the poorest segment of the population, economic disparities will continue to exist and to widen. In some cases of effective implementation (e.g. Cuba, the Philippines) a legal policy structure has been used to facilitate rapid implementation of ECCE services (Engle et al. 2011). Ratification of the new Global Goals for Sustainable Development provides a new boost to policy and resourcing for ECCE, notably Goal 4.2:

*“By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.”*

In Ethiopia, ESDP V provides the framework for progress towards this goal, provided governance systems and resources are put in place to achieve scale-up. The supply of resources against stated standards, for all pre-primary services, depends on a sustainable

funding mechanism (Engle et al. 2011). A sound investment plan for going to scale and achieving sustainability is a common characteristic of effective programmes (Vargas-Barron 2009). This can identify where money will come from (including government, private, NGO and community inputs), a funding methodology that supports the poorest groups/areas, and careful targeting to ensure the inclusion of poor or marginalised children and children with special needs, and to ensure that boys and girls have equal access (Garcia et al. 2008; Biersteker 2010). From such a financing plan, it is then clear how regions will finance and allocate resources to ECCE and is possible to compare this with primary education in per-pupil terms (Garcia et al. 2008).

In many countries the challenges for ECCE leaders include ensuring sufficient regional and national high-level expertise, for example in curriculum development and research. As different regions and districts and rural and urban areas do not all start from the same base of resources and capabilities to deliver ECCE, a 'one size fits all' approach is not recommended. Instead, a mapping of the technical expertise and management capacities that exist at the different levels – who the staff are, what their skills are, and what knowledge they possess – is a useful planning support (Biersteker 2010). Based on this, skills development exercises, pilot tests and demonstration sites can be established under varying conditions, to explore options for delivery (Richter 2013; Tinajero 2011). Increasing numbers of international Masters programmes are now available to help build leadership skills and strengthen ECCE skills networks, e.g. via the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU).<sup>1</sup>

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1 An internationally recognised programme based at the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria (Canada) with programmes for Sub-Saharan Africa and for the Middle East and North Africa (<http://www.ecdву.org>).

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### 3. How do these features inform Ethiopia's plans for rapid expansion of ECCE (with a focus on O-Class)?

This final section applies the lessons from Sections 1 and 2 to the specific plans for Ethiopia. For each of the six features of effective ECCE systems in Figure 2, five key policy lessons are given for rapidly scaling up equitable access to quality pre-primary education. These are set against the relevant strategies stated in Ethiopia's ESDP V. While the details of this section are specific to Ethiopia, many of the general principles apply more broadly.

#### Equitable and inclusive access

##### Relevant strategies from ESDP V

- Establishing a country pre-primary expansion programme with targeting for priority to disadvantaged areas/groups
- Developing a mechanism to promote inclusive pre-primary education and extend access to children with special educational needs
- Conducting needs assessment to target support to disadvantaged children, including those with special educational needs
- Constructing an O-Class in each primary school (supported by community development and resources)
- Preparing a national strategy for non-formal community based Child Preparedness and Child-to-Child programmes
- Providing basic WASH facilities in pre-primary settings (through the multi-sectoral OneWASH programme)
- Preparing a national strategy and guideline for two-month Accelerated School Readiness programme
- Establishing child health and nutrition programmes (feeding/deworming) with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Women's and Children's Affairs

##### Five key policy lessons from the international experience

- Schools as the administrative hub for integrated early childhood education, nutrition and health services
- A population-based planning approach, to improve allocation of scarce resources (with resources allocated based on population characteristics in each area, including relevant population numbers and poverty levels)
- Partnership with communities, school leaders and local education officials in expansion planning (this might include Parent Student and Teacher Associations in *woreda*-level planning, for example)
- Targeting of the most disadvantaged areas/students first( e.g. developing regions, rural and remote communities)
- Planning new infrastructure for the medium or long term but mapping and using existing community spaces in the short term.

### Curriculum, teaching and learning materials

#### Relevant strategies from ESDP V

- Revising general education curriculum across all subjects, from pre-primary level upwards
- Equipping all O-Classes with a minimum package of teaching and learning materials, accessible to children with special educational needs

#### Five key policy lessons from the international experience

- An effective ECCE curriculum will be play-based and will cover learners' physical, cognitive, language, social, emotional, cultural, motivational and artistic needs
- A one-year stand-alone programme (such as O-Class) will have a curriculum with child development for 6-year-olds at its core
- Teaching and learning in ECCE must be distinct from that in Grade 1, be age-appropriate and enable the child's transition to Grade 1
- A common curriculum that promotes equity and challenges gender-based traditions in the early years
- Mother-tongue instruction, including direct exposure to printed materials as a compensation for lack of home-based resources.

### Teachers and school leaders

#### Relevant strategies from ESDP V

- Establishing pre-primary school leaders' education and training programme
- Strengthening all colleges of teacher education to train pre-primary teachers for certificate and diploma courses
- Training Child-to-Child and Accelerated School Readiness facilitators
- Motivating teachers/facilitators to teach in remote and ethnic minority areas through providing incentives
- Providing current Alternative Basic Education facilitators with one month of summer training to upgrade their qualification for ECCE
- Providing primary teachers with a two-week orientation on ECCE facilitation skills and knowledge
- Providing orientation and at least 30 days in-service training annually to pre-primary teachers/facilitators

#### Five key policy lessons from the international experience

- A teacher-needs projection and financing strategy, to cover as a minimum: number of teachers required, provision for attrition, qualification types, and providers
- A qualification framework and career structure for ECCE teachers, linking qualifications and allowing trainees to upgrade their skills over time
- A short-course, in-service teacher training curriculum for O-Class based on the skills required in the classroom; with methods that help teachers become more reflective about their practices
- Teacher-student and adult-student ratios that allow frequent adult-child interactions, incorporating teacher aides, volunteers and health extension workers in the classroom
- Curriculum-based supervision and continuing professional development for all ECCE teachers and school leaders.



## Parental and community support and engagement

### Relevant strategies from ESDP V

- Conducting annual policy dissemination, advocacy and awareness raising events for ECCE
- Establishing and strengthening an ECCE council at all levels
- Disseminating community/cluster support best-practice guidance to pre-primary schools
- Expanding parental education through exercising indigenous knowledge

### Five key policy lessons from the international experience

- An awareness-raising and demand mobilisation approach through administrative and political channels, such as ECCE councils, regional presidents, *woreda* and *kebele* officials
- A communication strategy to create awareness and a sense of participation, ownership, investment and responsibility by parents, families, communities
- Partnership with Parent, Student and Teacher Associations and with communities in developing ECCE curricula, to improve the integration of local practices and cultural beliefs
- Using the links between ECCE and family support components (e.g. adult education) to improve engagement in children's education and growth
- A continuous professional development module that improves teacher skills in supporting parents to extend classroom learning experiences into their homes.

## Standards, monitoring and learning

### Relevant strategies from ESDP V

- Establishing the standards for play and learning equipment and the resources required for each modality
- Developing a complete set of licensing instruments for trainers, school teachers and facilitators at pre-primary and college of teacher education levels
- Preparing licensing standards and process guidelines to permit a non-government provider to provide pre-primary education
- Developing inspection standards for pre-primary education.

### Five key policy lessons from the international experience

- Standards for pre-primary covering: physical environment, human resources, partnerships, management, leadership and administration
- An essential package of pre-primary services, with costs and linked to standards to inform planning and financing processes
- A monitoring system to cover: baselines of current provision, what services are being provided, how services are delivered, how the system is functioning, and what funding is allocated and spent
- A monitoring network of stakeholders including parents, teachers and researchers, to offer an on-going process of dialogue in defining quality
- A strategy for learning from innovation and good practice across and within regions, to understand and disseminate information to ECCE implementers.

**System financing, management and leadership****Relevant strategies from ESDP V**

- Conducting pilots for innovative strategies, including Accelerated Child Readiness, with findings to inform contextualised expansion strategies
- Developing strategies for private sector motivation to support provision of up to 50% of kindergarten enrolment

**Five key policy lessons from the international experience**

- An investment plan for going to scale and achieving sustainability, including sources of funding and resource targeting to communities and children with the greatest needs
  - Supply resources to ECCE, based on the population-based planning under 'Equitable and inclusive access' and defined minimum standards (e.g. an 'essential package')
  - Investigate options for including ECCE services in a legal policy structure, such as an education law
  - A mapping of technical expertise and capacities that exist at the different levels – who the staff are, what their skills are, and what knowledge they possess
  - Support for pilot tests or demonstration under varying conditions, to explore options for improving management and delivery.
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# Scaling Up Access to Quality Early Education in Ethiopia: Guidance from International Experience

**Jack Rossiter**

The Education and Training Policy of the Federal Democratic Republic Government of Ethiopia has included provision of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) for two decades. Under this policy, a pre-primary stage focuses on the 'all-round development of the child in preparation for formal schooling'. Until recently, however, only very modest levels of pre-primary education were available, predominantly in urban centres, delivered primarily by the private sector.

Early childhood received a policy boost in 2010 through publication of a National Policy Framework for Early Childhood Care and Education. Since 2010, the Government of Ethiopia has supported large-scale implementation of pre-primary education, in all areas of the country via a combination of government, community, non-governmental, church and private sector initiatives. From a level of just over 340,000 children in the 2009/10 academic year, enrolment reached over 3 million in 2014/15. Based on current plans, this number should reach almost 6.5 million 4- to 6-year-olds by 2020.

This policy paper was prepared for the Ministry of Education as part of Young Lives ongoing engagement with the development of ECCE policies and services. The focus is on the ambitious goals for expanding learning opportunities during the pre-primary years, especially the challenges of ensuring equity in both access and quality, during rapid scale-up.

The paper focusses on the features of effective ECCE systems relevant to early learning in the pre-primary years and how these align with government plans for the years 2015-20. It acknowledges that the education targets can most effectively be achieved if they are coordinated within a multi-sectoral vision for children's health and development from birth through to school age, as set out the four pillared National Policy Framework (2010). The importance of locating specific early learning initiatives within a comprehensive policy vision is reflected by increasing advocacy for holistic, multi-sectoral 'early childhood development'. Ensuring all children have access to early childhood development is also at the core of Target 4.2 of the recently agreed Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

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