



CONSULTATIVE GROUP ON EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & DEVELOPEMNT
CONFERENCE / MEETING FEEDBACK

CONFERENCE:

ADEA Biennale on Education in Africa:

What Makes Effective Learning in Schools, in Literacy & in Early Childhood Development Programmes?

ORGANISED BY:	LOCATION:	DATES:
ADEA – Association for Development of Education in Africa	Libreville, Gabon	March 27 – 31, 2006

KEY AUDIENCE:
Ministers of Education from across Africa; Ministers from diverse ministries invited by ADEA WG ECD; Development partners; International NGOs & Coalitions

REPORTED BY:					
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KEY HIGHLIGHTS:

1. For the first time ECD was included in the main agenda of the biennale alongside – the themes of Literacy & Effective schools;
2. Diverse plenary session highlighted

LITERACY & NON-FORMAL EDUCATION

- a. In presenting an overview of the African perspective in the 2005/6 EFA GMR on Literacy, – Nick Burnett of the GMR team set the stage for the inclusion of ECCD in this Biennale by highlighting that the 2006 / 7 GMR will focus on ECCE, and will be launched in October.

EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

- a. The important role of head teachers / directors in school success
- b. The impact of investments in training & capacity development of teachers may be significantly negated by the prevailing poor conditions for teachers (housing , remuneration, health care etc)
- c. A plenary presentation by the Deputy Minister of Education of Namibia titled ‘Bilingual Education, active Pedagogies and Pertinent Curricula: Factors of effective Learning’, was both provocative & inspiring, and provides an important reference point for ECD activists on the issue of mother-tongue language development, languages of ECD programmes, & languages of instruction in schools in Africa.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

- a. Through giving the synopsis of the status of young children in Africa the first of the ECD plenary by Agnes Aidoo, addressed the critical importance for Ministers of education to recognize that children’s access, retention and success in school very much rests on (a) how well prepared schools are to receive and support young children in the early primary grades; and (b) the quality of children’s holistic development in their early childhood years. Thereby indicating the need for ministries of education to (a) prioritize the need for investing in high quality early grades programmes; and (b) work in close partnership with other sectors to improve greater equity in children’s access, retention & success in school.
 - b. The second ECD plenary by Alain Mingat focused on identifying the links between ECD & achieving the MDGs, PRSPs, & EFA. Through exploring the human & financial resource required to operationalise ECD programmes, the presenter highlighted that in order to be both cost effective & efficient planners should (a) connect ECD activities to diverse social umbrellas; (b) integrate activities targeting the 0-3 & 2 – 6 year olds into a comprehensive ECD strategy; (c) develop strategies that maximize the synergy between formal structures & community activities
3. There was a high level of interest in the issues that link poor performance & drop-out of children from school to children not being ready for school & schools not being ready to support them
 4. The links between adult & family literacy & non-formal education and ECD were clearly identified as an opportunity to be explored by ministries of education;
 5. Some ministers (education & others) spoke convincingly about diverse ECD strategies they are pursuing – community based as well as institutional models (Minister RSA; Uganda; Eritrea; Congo; Ghana; Senegal; Central African Republic; Burkina Faso;)
 6. ECD parallel sessions were well attended and with good participation
 7. The ADEA WG ECD / CG Brochures & Flyers re ‘Schools Ready for Children / Children Ready for School’ were well received

SUMMARY PRESENTATION: Key ECD Challenges, Lessons Learned & Recommendations

(see full-text PowerPoint presentation on www.adeanet.org)

FOR MINISTRIES OF EDUCATION

1. Prioritise early grades in terms of human, financial & material resources: improve training, skills and status of early grades' teachers
2. Increase awareness of school principals and managements on the need to support smooth transition to and success in Grades 1 & 2.
3. Monitor and report systematically on the survival rates of children in Grades 1 & 2
4. Intensify efforts for improving girls' education as key strategy for improving the quality of care and education of young children
5. Facilitate links between primary schools and ECD programs to ensure mutual understanding and smooth transition
6. Ensure that school managements encourage community participation and parent involvement in children's learning - at home & school
7. Incorporate ECD content and messages in all functional adult, family literacy and non formal education programs

FOR COLLABORATION

1. Promote and participate in inter-sectoral collaboration with other services (Health , Nutrition, Social Welfare/ Protection, Water and Sanitation) to ensure a holistic response to the young child's needs and rights (CRC).
2. Support and participate in the elaboration of a comprehensive policy framework and actions plans for ECD : with prioritizations, evaluation of costs and strategies for financing and resource mobilization.
3. Support and participate in relevant parenting programs for all caregivers (including fathers and young parents) ensuring early stimulation and learning

Lessons Learned	... & Implications for the CG
<p><u>The Conference as a Whole</u></p> <p>The format of having the three themes of the conference (Effective Schools, Literacy & Non-Formal Education, & ECD) running parallel, prevented ECD representatives being involved in other thematic sessions– and therefore the opportunity to ‘make the ECD links’ with these other themes was missed.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We cannot presume that others ‘outside’ the ECD field see the links – others may include govt as well as development partners, INGOs & local NGOs, UN agencies, therefore a focus in the CG’s new strategic plan on expanding the range of organizations, networks and coalitions we connect with is vital for improved ECCD advocacy; • The CG needs to take a leading role in (a) ‘Clarifying the Links’ via knowledge generation, and (b) include as a key objective in the CG’s Communications & Advocacy Strategy to develop ‘signposts’ that show the links between ECD & diverse human development issues – e.g an ECD Links Series / Briefs – ECD & Equity; ECCD & Family Literacy; ECCD & Non-Formal Education; ECCD & Improved Access, Retention & Success in School; ECCD
<p><u>The ECD Sessions</u></p> <p>a. For Ministers of Education there remains an ‘air of uncertainty’ re HOW to move forward on supporting ECD. Given the fact that most have limited resources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the menu of options are not clear to them, in terms of what age group and in what context it is most beneficial to invest to improve young children’s success in school; • they do not have ready access to the costs of different models (e.g WB costing model focuses more on centre based programmes; more concrete info is required re the costs & diverse financing strategies for community programmes, parenting education etc) <p>Without concrete information as planning tools there is a high likelihood that ministries of education will overlook the ECD issue as being too complex.</p> <p>b. What is the position of development partners who focus on education issues in relation to integrated ECD issues and its link with improving access, retention & success in school? It was noted that during the final presentation of ECD recommendations most of the seats in the development partners section of the hall were empty (... perhaps this was circumstantial).</p>	<p>a. Need to do a lot more work to inform more concrete recommendations re ‘HOW’ governments can best support ECD. Stimulate more case studies, research, as well as tracking & analyzing data & getting info out about</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. Impact of African children’s participation in ECD programmes on their access to, retention & long term success in school (e.g aim to influence the inclusion of appropriate questions in national surveys & data collection) ii. Implications of children’s starting school on time & their success in schools - for girls & boys iii. Girls & boys retention – with a focus on factors affecting early drop-out in Gds 1 & 2. Lobby for systematic inclusion of data & analysis on drop-out an repetition by grade as wells as overall drop-out for end primary (Arnold & Bartlett, 2006) iv. Costing of community-ECD programmes. Whilst Alain Mingat indicated that for resource poor countries the institutionalized pre-school /pre-primary model is far too costly, governments have little or no information available to them to their planning for good quality & cost effective ECD programmes v. Grade 1 & 2 Teacher preparation in relation to the issue of transition to school vi. Diverse country experiences & lessons learned re <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Integrated ECD policy framework development & implementation ▶ Linking community ECD programmes with formal school systems & health care services ▶ Integration of ECD into adult education & non-formal education programmes ▶ Family literacy programmes & ECD <p>b. The launching of the EFA GMR on ECCE offers a prime opportunity for the CG & Partners to engage diverse development partners in discussions & debates re the (a) the first EFA Goal – ECCE; and (b) its critical link to improving school access, retention & success; and therefore (c) the need for development partners to invest in diverse, cost-effective ECD programmes so as to ensure more equitable access, retention & success in school. ■</p>