Transforming Early Childhood: Innovations for Quality and Inclusivity

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Presentation Overview

• Part I: Changing Context for Children
• Part II: Thinking Differently About Children
• Part III: Acting Differently for Children
• Part IV: Creating Your System
Part I

Changing Context for Children
New Context

- Globalization
- Technology
- Societal Changes
- Environment
- Gender Roles
New Context

- **Globalization**
  - Ease of communication, inter-connected economies

- **Technology**
  - Instant communication, hand held technology, online learning

- **Societal changes**
  - Greater mobility within and across countries, greater inter-ethnic interactions

- **Gender roles**
  - Women and girls taking on diverse leadership roles

- **Environment**
  - Global concerns for earth
New Knowledge

- Neuroscience
- Evaluation
- Econometric
- Systems
- Implementation
Neuroscience

- The early years are THE formative period of development
  - Young children’s brains grow to 80% of adult size by age 3 and to 90% by age 5
  - Young children grow faster and learn more in their early years than in any other period of life

Evaluation Science

- High-quality early childhood care and intervention can prevent negative effects from taking hold and have powerful benefits
  - Strongest effects of high-quality care are found for children from families with the fewest resources and who are under the greatest stress

Econometric Science

- Investments in high-quality programs produce economic results
  - These savings are due to a reduction in social costs for incarceration, welfare dependence, teen pregnancy, referral to special education, and reduced grade retentions
Implementation Science

- Implementation science strives to integrate research into policy and practice.

Systems Science

- Contends that if you separate the parts from the whole, you are reducing the ability to achieve goals.

- Applies to early childhood because there are so many moving parts that must be considered together.
New Challenges

- Quality
- Durability
- Equity
- Sustainability
- Inclusivity
Quality

- Long-term results only accrue with high quality services
  - Each additional year of quality education increases a child’s adult earnings by about 10%
  - Returns are highest in low- and lower-middle-income countries

- But limited quality exists, so most countries are not yet reaping the benefits of ECD
  - Have poor ratios, poorly trained personnel, inadequate funding and confused governance

Equity/Inclusivity

- Unless the world tackles inequity today, in 2030:
  - Low-income countries will not be on track to achieve universal primary school completion
  - 60 million children of primary school age will be out of school
  - Low-income countries will have primary completion rates of about 76%

Equity/Inclusivity

- Inequities exist by wealth

Percentage of children 3-4 years old who attend some form of early childhood education program, by household wealth quintile

Equity/Inclusivity

- Inequities exist by geographic region

Gross enrollment in pre-primary education by region, 1999-2014

Sustainability

- Planet is increasingly vulnerable (e.g., air, water); humans are increasingly vulnerable (e.g., disease, trafficking)

- Need to be mindful in all we do with children, we are obligated to prepare them to be citizens of a sustainable world

Durability

- Services for young children, like young children themselves, are vulnerable and often shift when political parties do

- Countries without sustained funding and governance, are characterized by:
  - Fewer positive gains for children
  - More difficulty in establishing equitably distributed and inclusive programs
  - Lower levels of quality
All Children as Competent Learners

All Children as Rights Bearers

All Children in a Holistic Context
Part II

Thinking Differently About Children
Thinking Differently

- All Children as Competent Learners
- All Children as Rights Bearers
- All Children in a Holistic Context
All Children as Rights Bearers

Children have entitlements:
- Safety
- Protection
- Education
- Health and Nutrition
- Equality
- Environment
All Children in a Holistic Context
All Children as Competent Learners

All Children as Rights Bearers

All Children in Holistic Context

ACT DIFFERENTLY
Part III

Acting Differently for Children
WHAT DOES ACTING DIFFERENTLY MEAN FOR THE UNITED NATIONS?
Sustainable Development 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

  - Indicator 4.2.1: Percentage of children, under 5 years of age, who are developmentally on track in health, learning, and psychosocial well-being
  - Indicator 4.2.2: Participation rate in organized learning (1 year before official primary entry age) for all countries
WHAT DOES
ACTING
DIFFERENTLY
MEAN FOR US?
Acting Differently

- All Children as Competent Learners
  - Optimize Learning Environment

- All Children as Rights Bearers
  - Make Services Fully Inclusive

- All Children in a Holistic Context
  - Create an Integrated System
Acting Systemically Using Systems and Implementation Sciences

- **All Children as Competent Learners**
  - Optimize Learning Environment

- **All Children as Rights Bearers**
  - Make Services Fully Inclusive

- **All Children in a Holistic Context**
  - Create an Integrated System

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**Learning Sub-System**

**Services Sub-System**

**Infrastructure Sub-System**
Infrastructure Sub-System

Services Sub-System

- Standards
- Assessments
- Supportive Pedagogy
- Social/Environmental Aspects of Learning
- Continuity across the Grades
- Curriculum

Infrastructural aspects and services interconnect to form a holistic learning system.
Implications for Acting Differently

- All Children as Competent Learners
  - Optimize Learning Environment
  - Learning Sub-System
- All Children as Rights Bearers
- Make Services Fully Inclusive
- All Children in a Holistic Context
- Create an Integrated System
Learning Sub-System

- Standards
- Assessments
- Supportive Pedagogy
- Social/Environmental Aspects of Learning
- Continuity across the Grades
- Curriculum
What is an Early Learning Sub-system?

1. Clear standards
   - Specify what children should know/be able to do
   - Integrated, high-quality learning, both at the individual program level and increasingly within communities

2. Clear curriculum and strategies to achieve those standards
   - Specify what services should be provided
   - Sometimes manifest as curriculum (what children learn) and pedagogy (how adults teach or deliver services)

3. Clear assessments
   - Based on the goals and used to improve programs
   - May measure how children are progressing, how the program is doing
What is an Early Learning Sub-system?

4. **Children’s environments**
   - Need to make the program setting as high quality (e.g., adequate space and water; opportunities for growth)
   - Clear curriculum and strategies to achieve those standards

5. **Continuity across the grades**
   - Need to focus on transitions in development
   - Need to be sure that activities are aligned and are age and culturally appropriate

6. **Supportive and culturally responsive pedagogy**
## Examples of Early Learning and Development Standards

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<td>Language</td>
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<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Vietnam</th>
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<td>Motor and Physical Well-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being, and Motor</td>
<td>Being</td>
<td>Emotional and Social</td>
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Examples

- **Korea**
  - **Supportive pedagogy:** emphasis on well-being and play activities
  - **Curriculum:** champions creativity and character education
  - **Continuity across the grades:** emphasis on vertical and horizontal coherence

- **New Zealand**
  - **Assessments:** focus on developmental outcomes instead of actual child outcomes
  - **Supportive pedagogy:** Balanced approach to well-being and academic learning
  - **Curriculum:** all children develop differently, addresses expectations of society

- **Vietnam**
  - **Social/environmental aspects of learning:** whole group and small group, active-listening and active-doing, adult-led and child-initiated activities
  - **Continuity across grades:** linked initiatives for under 3s and older age group

Implications for Acting Differently

All Children as Competent Learners

Optimize Learning Environment

All Children as Rights Bearers

Make Services Fully Inclusive

Services Sub-System

All Children in a Holistic Context

Create an Integrated System
Linking Learning and Programs/Services Sub-Systems

- Standards
- Assessments
- Curriculum
- Supportive Pedagogy
- Continuity across the Grades
- Social/Environmental Aspects of Learning
Programs/Services Sub-System

- Parenting Education
- Health
- Home Visiting
- Child Care
- Transition
- Preschool

**PROGRAMS/SERVICES**
Examples: **Australia, Hong Kong, Malaysia, and New Zealand**

- Increasing public expenditure

Expenditure on pre-primary as % of total government expenditure

*UIS. (2015). Expenditure on education as % of total government expenditure (all sectors). UNESCO Institute of Statistics.*
Service Obligations to Young Children

Governments not only expanding amount of money, but expanding range of services:

- Early childhood mental health expansion
- Universal health care
- Nutrition
- Social protection and environment
- Universal pre-kindergarten
- Home visiting
- Expansions of services to infants and toddlers

BUT!!! A Program Focus only is Limited

- **Is inefficient and often wastes precious resources**
  - Breeds inconsistencies, turnover, and a lack of quality
  - Very challenging for public and families to put programs pieces together

- **Is inequitable because often programs don’t serve children of all ages and all regions**
  - Many initiatives are designed as model programs that are not scalable to entire population
  - Program approach is characterized by sporadic, episodic efforts

- **Doesn’t build capacity in system**
  - Programs may compete for staff who leave for better pay
Changing Our Thinking

FROM:
Thinking about services and programs

TO:
Thinking about systems
All Children in a Holistic Context

All Children as Competent Learners
- Optimize Learning Environment

All Children as Rights Bearers
- Make Services Fully Inclusive

Create an Integrated System
- Infrastructure Sub-System

All Children in a Holistic Context
In ECE, a SYSTEM is: Programs and Infrastructure

Gears: Need to work in all areas to move the infrastructure

- Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment
- Program Regulation and Inspection
- Governance
- Quality Pedagogy, Teaching, and Learning
- Professional Development
- Financing Mechanisms
- Linkages to Schools and Community Health Settings
- Family and Community Engagement
SYSTEM = PROGRAMS/DIRECT SERVICES + INFRASTRUCTURE

8 - 1 = 0
1. Quality Pedagogy, Teaching, and Learning

- Rich, varied learning opportunities that engage children
- Characterized by activity, inquiry, reflection, and curiosity
- Produce productive outcomes for children

2. Standards, Curriculum, and Assessment

- Early learning and development standards specify what children should know and do and are culturally responsive
- Curriculum framework helps teachers plan, and provides ideas for children
- Ongoing assessment to improve instruction
3. Regulations and Inspection for Programs
   - Done regularly by professionals
   - Information from inspections needs to be used for quality improvement

4. Professional Development
   - Pre-service
   - In-service
   - Consistent requirements for all teachers
5. Financing Mechanisms

- Too much focus on quantity, not quality
- Need consistency in funding
- Need to blend public and private funds inventively

6. Governance

- Horizontal debate: which ministry (e.g., health, education)
- Vertical debate: which level (e.g., local, regional)
- Governance brings clarity on who does what, for whom, when, and with what authority and accountability
7. Family and Community Engagement

- Major commitment to family engagement in programs, decisions, governance
- Helps keep programs responsive to parental needs
- Could build an advocacy base for social change

8. Transitions/Linkages

- From pre-primary to primary
- Among health, education, social services
Infrastructure
Sub-System
Infrastructure Sub-System

Programs/Services Sub-System

- Standards
- Assessments
- Curriculum
- Supportive Pedagogy
- Continuity across the Grades
- Social/Environmental Aspects of Learning
Using Systems to Address Critical Issues

- Quality
- Equity/Inclusivity
- Sustainability/Durability
Examples

- **Australia**
  - **Program regulations and inspection**: ACECQA (Australian Children’s Education & Care Quality Authority) and NQS (National Quality Standard) promote quality improvement
  - **Family and community engagement**: Families as First Teachers (FAFT) builds on positive engagement of Indigenous families and communities to support transition

- **Cambodia**
  - **Professional development**: 14 day teacher training program to orient new teachers to child-friendly teaching methodologies
  - **Quality pedagogy, teaching, and learning**: modified curriculum to focus on skills to succeed in school

- **Singapore**
  - **Standards, curriculum, and assessment**: move towards holistic development, highlights children as curious and active learners
  - **Program regulations and inspection**: Preschool Accreditation Framework (SPARK) encourages self-improvement; guarantees that preschools comply with minimum standards

Part IV

Creating Your System
Three Strategies

I. Acknowledgements

II. Create Goals and Theory of Action

III. Think and Move Strategically
Step 1: Acknowledgements

Three acknowledgements:

1. Hard to work on all systems at once
2. Most countries do not have a systemic vision
3. Most countries have no sequenced strategy
Step 2: Create Goals/Theory of Action

Systemic Goals

QUALITY

EQUITY/INCLUSIVITY

SUSTAINABILITY/DURABILITY
Step 2: Create Goals/Theory of Action

Systemic Goals

- QUALITY
- EQUITY/INCLUSIVITY
- SUSTAINABILITY/DURABILITY
Step 3: Think and Move Strategically

- **Think big:**
  - Envision the ideal

- **Think far:**
  - Short/long-term

- **Think different:**
  - System = programs + infrastructure
Think different.
Think Different

■ **Steve Jobs to John Sculley:**
  ■ “Do you want to spend the rest of your life selling water, or do you want a chance to change the world?”

■ **They did revolutionize six industries:**
  ■ Personal computers, animated movies, music, phones, tablet computing, and digital publishing
“The people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world are the ones who do.”

- Apple’s “Think Different” Commercial 1997
- Foreword to Walter Isaacson’s book, *Steve Jobs*