

Standards for Early Childhood Education

The number of Preschools and Daycare Centers have increased from 138 in 2000 to 151 in 2005 representing an overall enrolment of 34% of all the 0-4 year olds on the island .Of the total Early Childhood Education Center (ECEC), 40 were Day Care Centers; 50% of which were government owned and the balance privately owned.

Management of ECE services has established regulations to govern the operations of pre-school centers. A national policy on ECE has been prepared and a handbook on the minimum standards for operating centers developed resulting in a 10% increase in adherence of these regulations. A Quality assessment Survey of the ECE Centers has provided information on areas needing upgrading.

All pre-schools have a revised curriculum and it is being implemented under the supervision of the ECE unit. Training programmes offered have been many and varied and include training in Small Business concepts in collaboration with the Saint Lucia Small Enterprise Development Unit (SEDU) for ECE providers, community Outreach for parents of pre-schoolers, and training to assist pre-school operators to understand the concept of Early Childhood Education.

The Saint Lucia Poverty Reduction Fund provided finance to assist the refurbishment of ECE centers. The Emergent Literacy Roving Caregivers Programme Saint Lucia, is currently in operation. As noted earlier the programme will be replicated to reach more marginalized families.

In relation to ECE, stakeholders called for expansion of access, but within the authority of the MOE. They saw a closer working relationship between Pre-schools and the Primary schools, a practice which makes for a smoother transition to Primary education.

Issues and Recommendation for Early Childhood

Issues	Recommendation	Consultant's comments Suggestions/ Recommendations
<p>Many service providers open day care centers and pre-schools in areas that are not suitable and this must be stopped or monitored by the ECE.</p>	<p>Need for greater involvement by the ECE unit in quality of pre-school services</p> <p>There should be a feasibility study on suitable sites for future Early childhood Centers</p>	<p>Government needs to legislate on this area and ECE must be made the sole monitor of this service</p>
<p>It is now imperative that pre-schools providers are trained and qualified before they are allowed to offer a service, since much damage can be done at this early stage and Primary schools, in particular the Infant teachers have much to undo when the damage is done.</p>	<p>A Policy to guide the setting up of such centers requiring that persons have received a certain standard of training.</p>	<p>The research has shown that those who impact on children at an early age can make lasting impression on them. Therefore, this call for trained provider is essential at this stage of the education system.</p>
<p>Throughout the country, pre-school and day care providers charge whatever fees they so desire. Many parents because of these are forced to access some of the less desirable schools, since they need to go</p>	<p>Regularize and standardize pre-school and day care fees.</p>	<p>This is a very relevant recommendation, as this can impact on those who most need a pre-school education.</p>

benefits that could be reaped, with regards to literacy in the early levels. This programme could benefit the pre-schools.	wherever possible.	positive impacts, which can make a difference in the reading ability of students. This programme should be replicated at all schools and at all levels.
Many times it would appear, that day care centre and privately owned Pre-schools are operating without supervision. There have been consultations and there are standards to be met.	Greater presence of the ECE officers in the field to supervise and maintain standards.	The number of officer may need to be increased, since the entire island would have to be monitored.
To safeguard children, whenever a centre is found to be operating below standard, and this poise a threat to children there is need to warn and eventually shut down the centre.	Where centers are found to be contravening the set standards they should be closed to safeguard children.	Clear policies and implementation of these must be followed. They are required if standards are to be maintained
Many primary schools have not been able to successfully achieve the transition of children from Pre-Schools to the Kindergarten level. In some reported cases, children are traumatized, cannot adapt and this can be very harrowing	There is the need, to re-train the Kindergarten teacher in elements / strategies of dealing with new entrants. Kindergarten level must still be a constructive play. Avoid formal writing and	A needed strategy, since the Kindergarten teachers can impact negatively or positively on the students. Many times, principals do not place there most experienced and trained teachers at this level and this can create problems. Re-

<p>The day care centers and the pre-schools must be seen by all as a critical part of the education of children, for it is at this early formative stage that positive or negative teaching can be taught. Therefore the ECE and all other educators must form close alliances with these institutions in their community</p>	<p>Regular meeting with DEO and Principals to include these service providers. They must be included in district national and regional training programme.</p>	<p>This is necessary, since the DEO can better advise and assist in a smooth transition. They can help service providers to understand the expectations and guidance and update them on the MOE's latest policies etc</p>
<p>There was the talk of SALCC providing a degree programme for ECE providers. What has become of this?</p>	<p>SALCC and MOE to move promptly into making this programme a reality.</p>	<p>This programme is long over due. Bennett 2000, supports that there is "need to raise the education and status of early childhood personnel (27)</p>