



Ministry of Education, National Heritage, Culture & Arts, Youth & Sports

## **POLICY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION**

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## **1.0 POLICY OBJECTIVE**

The purpose of this policy is to provide clear direction to assist schools, all organizations and parties providing Early Childhood Education (herein after referred to as ECE) services in Fiji to access key administrative and policy information to ensure that all services offer quality programmes.

## **2.0 POLICY STATEMENTS**

- 2.1. ECE in Fiji must provide developmentally and culturally appropriate , quality care and education to the 0-8 year olds and programme are to be conducted in English, i Taukei, Hindi, Rotuman, Urdu, or whichever applicable language whenever necessary.
- 2.2. ECE Sessions must include any of the following arrangements:
  - 2.2.1. Half day for 3 – 5 year olds
  - 2.2.2. Full day for 6 – 8 year olds
- 2.3. ECE teachers shall work cooperatively with families, communities, school managements and other organizations to promote the health, safety and well being of the children who are placed under their care.
- 2.4. The Ministry of Education (herein after referred to as MoE) will advise and support communities in the establishment and recognition of any ECE programme.
- 2.5. All ECE Centers must operate only when approval of recognition is granted by the Permanent Secretary of Education (PSE).
- 2.6. The ECE programme must be based on the philosophy and principles that underpin ECE Curriculum Guidelines for the Fiji Islands [Na Noda Mataniciva].
- 2.7. The ECE teacher[s] employed by management committees must be qualified early childhood education teacher[s] having completed a formal qualification the minimum basic of which is a Certificate in ECE.
- 2.8. Remuneration for teachers should commensurate with their qualifications and experiences; Degree, Diploma, Advanced Certificate, Certificate and basic training from the MoE.
- 2.10. Terms of employment and conditions of service must be drawn up, agreed to and signed by the committee and the teacher[s] and endorsed by MoE

## **3.0 BACKGROUND**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The policy was initially approved and implemented in 2007 and has been reviewed successively annually.

ECE aims to promote the total learning and development of the child, namely, social, emotional, physical, spiritual, language and cognitive. Such a holistic approach will ensure the child's optimum learning development. Simultaneously, ECE will equip the child with the necessary knowledge and skills for later schooling and lifelong learning.

Programmes used in ECE centers/kindergartens and followed by ECE teachers vary in principles and beliefs. Such programmes are Montessori, Reggio Emilia, Waldorf and High Scope. These approaches promote the holistic development of children to be able to construct their own knowledge and ideas that will in turn equip them to be confident and productive adults.

### **3.2 Rationale**

It is the first years of life that the fundamental organization and functional capabilities of the brain are established as young children interact with and make sense of their world. Research indicates that of all educational investments, early childhood education achieves the highest rate of social return both in developing and industrialized countries. Early childhood education offers children a 'head start' in their primary schooling and positively influences their later performances in school. Children who have undergone a quality early childhood education programme are more successful in their schooling than those who have not [UNESCO, 1995].

Early childhood education is one way of providing opportunities for the less privileged child, thus helping to minimize the disparities in educational opportunities particularly amongst the rural and low income families. It provides the much needed ease in access to basic education.

## **4.0 DEFINITIONS**

### **4.1 Early Childhood Education (ECE)**

An overarching term for services that promotes health, growth, care, development and learning for children from 0-8 years

### **4.2 Infant School**

A school or part of a school, for young children between the ages of three and eight [Kindergarten – Class 3].

#### 4.2 **Early Childhood Care & Development Education (ECCDE)**

This is an informal programme, catering for children 0 – 3 years. Support is given to parents and families to enhance their child rearing practices, parenting skills and further understanding of child development

#### 4.3 **Playgroup**

This is an informal programme, involving parents, families and qualified care givers for children, 0 – 6 years.

#### 4.4 **Kindergarten**

This is a half day programme offered for children 3 – 5 years under qualified ECE teacher(s)

#### 4.5 **Day/ Child Care Center**

This is a full day programme offered to children 2 – 6 years under qualified ECE teacher(s), health workers and child care givers

#### 4.6 **Montessori Programme**

A system of ECE founded on the ideas and practices of Maria Montessori. The programme is normally for children from 2-6years.

#### 4.7 **Reggio Emilia**

A programme for 3 months – 6 year old children. It is an approach on the philosophy and practices that children are active constructors of their own knowledge.

#### 4.8 **Waldorf**

The emphasis of this programme is on lifelong teaching of the whole child – head, hands and heart.

#### 4.9 **High Scope**

This is a constructivist approach based on Piaget and Vygotsky's ideas.

#### 4.10 **Early Primary**

The first 2 years of primary school – Classes 1 & 2 or 6 & 7 year olds.

## **5.0 RELEVANT LEGISLATIONS AND AUTHORITIES**

### **5.1 Legislations**

- 5.1.1 Education Act, 1978
- 5.1.2 Public Service Act, 1999 Part 2; Section 5 (1) – (14)
- 5.1.3 People’s Charter for Change, Peace and Progress

### **5.2 Authorities & Policies**

- 5.2.1 Establishment of Educational Institution
- 5.2.2 Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of a Pre-School Center
- 5.2.3 Education for All (EFA 2000)
- 5.2.4 Education Commission Report (2000)
- 5.2.5 Public Service Code of Conduct and Values
- 5.2.6 General Orders
- 5.2.7 ECE Curriculum Guidelines
- 5.2.8 National Curriculum Framework
- 5.2.9 Inclusive Education Policy

## **6 PROCEDURES**

### **6.1 Establishment & Recognition**

- 6.1.1 Every ECE center whether it’s a pre-school, kindergarten, or a group of kindergartens shall be managed by a properly constituted controlling authority and registered with the MoE.
- 6.1.2 On the intention to open Establish or Recognise / Register an ECE center or kindergarten, the district Senior Education Officer or the Senior Education Officer ECE should be consulted on the application for Establishment or Registration.
- 6.1.3 All procedures and guidelines for establishment and recognition that are specified in the Policy on Establishment and Recognition /Registration of Schools must be followed.
- 6.1.4 If and when Establishment is approved, application must then be made through the district Senior Education Officer for recognition.
- 6.1.5 When Establishment or Recognition/ Registration have been approved by district SEOs, a support letter from the District Education Office should be attached with it before approval can be made by the Establishment and Registration Board.

## 6.2 **Physical Environment**

- 6.2.1 The premises must be approved by and maintained at all times to the satisfaction of the appropriate Health Authority and the MoE.
- 6.2.2 There must be a minimum floor space of 10sq feet (approx.9290cm<sup>2</sup>) per child and the number of children accommodated in any one room or hall should not exceed 35 at the maximum and not less than 10.
- 6.2.3 Floors must be free of splinters or covered throughout by clean mats or floor covering.
- 6.2.4 Adequate windows and doors are to be provided for good lighting, ventilation and easy access to the outside in case of emergencies.
- 6.2.5 Storage space must be provided for materials and equipment.
- 6.2.6 Proper sanitary facilities must be provided. Toilets should be no more than 10"- 12" high. (30.5cm)
- 6.2.7 Standing taps and or a shower with proper drainage/wash basins should be provided for washing hands. Clean hand towels should also be provided and hung within children's reach.
- 6.2.8 Drinking water must be safe and free from contamination. Clean well and river water must be boiled before use.
- 6.2.9 All drinking and eating utensils must be kept in clean and hygienic conditions.
- 6.2.10 There must be ample supply of furniture and play equipment to cater for the number of children attending the center.
- 6.2.11 The kindergarten furniture and equipment should be of a size suitable for small children.
- 6.2.12 A First Aid Kit must be available with the basic essential items including cotton wool, lint, disinfectants, antiseptic cream, band aid and bandages (small & large)
- 6.2.13 There should be a minimum play space of 100sq feet per child and the layout should allow for easy supervision of all areas and activities.
- 6.2.14 All ECE centers or kindergartens should have an outdoor play area and equipment that should be sufficient, safe, clean and well maintained.
- 6.2.15 The outdoor play area should be well drained, surfaced and amply shaded.

### 6.3 **Management Committee**

- 6.3.1 A committee appointed or elected by the management, parents and/or community/village members should take responsibility for the maintenance, administration and running of the center.
- 6.3.2 The committee should consist of a Manager, Secretary, Treasurer and committee members agreed upon by the AGM and should have a valid term.
- 6.3.3 In the event of a kindergarten physically located on school site, the kindergarten committee should work hand in hand with the primary school committee. However, it is advisable that the primary school committee shall manage both levels but to have a separate kindergarten bank account.
- 6.3.4 The committee be registered with the PSE and have a duly accepted constitution.
- 6.3.5 In the signing of Memorandum of Agreement hereinafter referred to as [MOA], the Teacher should not by any means coerced into signing the MOA but be done under mutual agreement by both parties.
- 6.3.6 The committee should abide and honour all the agreements in the signed MOA.

### 6.4 **Terms of Employment and Condition of Service**

- 6.4.1 The ECE/Kindergarten Teacher's hours of work shall be for half a day and officially begins at eight o'clock (8:00 am).
- 6.4.2 The ECE/Kindergarten Teacher's shall be remunerated on an hourly basis for extra duties performed outside the normal hour as agreed to in the Memorandum of Agreement with the committee.
- 6.4.3 The ECE/Kindergarten programs shall operate on a normal termly basis but may be adjusted by the concerned officer in collaboration with committee.

#### **6.4.1.1 Staff salaries**

##### 6.4.1.2

- 6.4.1.1.1 The committee should conform to its responsibilities which include the provision of a Terms of Employment with their staff that should include payment of staff salaries and remuneration

- 6.4.1.1.2 The payment of staff salaries by the committees should be in agreement with the signed MOA that has been approved by MOE.
- 6.4.1.1.3 The committee shall process the teacher's salary form the salary grant provision subjected to a normal FNPF contribution.
- 6.4.1.1.4 The committee should pay the teacher not less than  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the grant received for Category1 (\$3500.00/annum); Category 2 (\$1800.00/annum) and Category 3 (\$900.00/annum), the Committee should pay the Teacher \$1800.00 and a minimum of \$900.00.
- 6.4.1.1.5 Salary provision for the teacher shall be credited directly in to the bank account.

#### **6.4.1.2 Condition for Staff Attending MoE's sanctioned training**

- 6.4.1.2.1 Teachers who have been selected to attend further training as part of the Ministry's initiative shall continue to be paid their normal salaries sourced from the school grant.
- 6.4.1.2.2 The committee shall seek an adequately qualified person as a replacement and shall be responsible for their remuneration.

#### **6.4.1.3 Transfer**

- 6.4.1.3.1 All the expenses incurred by the teacher who is newly transferred to any ECE school shall be borne by the committee from his/her residence to the new school in consultation with the MOE.

#### **6.4.1.4 Teachers Quarter**

- 6.4.1.4.1 The Committee shall be responsible for the provision of the teacher's quarters where relevant.

### **6.5 Staffing**

- 6.5.1 Teaching staff at the ECE centers/kindergartens must have an approved certificate in teaching at that level from any recognized instituon ( USP/FNU/APTC/MLTC/etc.) and must be registered under the Fiji Teachers Registration Board (FTRB).

- 6.5.2 The person in charge of a kindergarten should be trained for this work; or a person who by reason of other training and experience or other special qualification, is considered by the PSE to be competent enough to carry out the ECE programme.
- 6.5.3 The appointment of teachers in any kindergarten shall lie with the manager and his committee, but every such appointment shall be subject to the prior approval of the PSE.
- 6.5.4 Any person without previous experience of teaching at Early Childhood level may only work directly under adequate supervision.

## 6.6 Programme

- 6.6.1 Qualified ECE teachers must deliver quality programmes that are developmentally and culturally appropriate.

## 6.7 Enrolment

- 6.7.1 No children under the age of three should be admitted to a kindergarten and no children should be allowed to remain at a kindergarten after reaching the age of six, without prior approval of the PSE.
- 6.7.2 The teacher in charge of the ECE center/kindergarten should arrange for an initial interview with the mother/father prior to enrolment to gather information on the life, health and medical history of the child.
- 6.7.3 Fees levied by the committee should be of reasonable amount.

## 6.8 Monitoring & Evaluation

- 6.8.1 Records which must be kept include admission and attendance register, accident reports, programmes book, log book, Teacher's Workbook, copies of children's birth certificate, child's profile, medical record card(if any), time book, petty cash book and inventory book.
- 6.8.2 Each ECE teacher must submit the completed and correctly filled Schools Information Management System 1 & 2 (SIMS) return form on the due date to the responsible District Education Offices.
- 6.8.3 The Head Teacher should monitor & evaluate the work of ECE teacher on school site and also on stand alone site close to or is a feeder school to the primary school with the assistance of the Class 1 teacher.

- 6.8.4 Report of visit by the Head Teacher should be submitted to the ECE Office in Suva and a copy to the responsible District Education Office.

## **7 GUIDELINES**

### **7.1 Establishment and Recognition**

- 7.1.1 No ECE center/ kindergarten may be opened until it has been given a recognition certificate by the PSE

### **7.2 Physical Environment**

- 7.2.1 If a pre-school kindergarten is intending to build its own school classroom or building there may be a local hall available which can be used temporarily until such time when a special building is erected.
- 7.2.2 For storage spaces lockable cupboards and shelves may be used if necessary (especially for more expensive items).
- 7.2.3 There may need to be one toilet seat to 15 children or part thereof; if otherwise due to development or funding constraints then proper organisation on its use should be maintained. In case of ordinary size pans wooden boxes may be used for children to climb on.
- 7.2.4 Wash basins, if available should be set to 2 feet (60.10cm) high. A mirror fixed over the basin is desirable.
- 7.2.5 It is recommended that a suitable room or space be provided, satisfactorily furnished and equipped (bed, blanket, pillow, mat) for use in case of illness. This should be screened off or isolated from the play area.
- 7.2.6 It is encouraged that the area be fenced on all sides with a gate which can be securely fastened. A galvanized wire fence or thick hedge 3' high (90.15cm) is desirable.
- 7.2.7 Outdoor play is important for the development of children's gross motor skills and decision making so children should spend adequate time outdoors and well as indoors.
- 7.2.8 There is a guide on the amount and type of equipment necessary for a center where 35 children attend on a half day basis, and this information could be seen in the document 'Guidelines for Establishment and Operation of Pre-School Centers' pages 9-14

### 7.3 **Management Committee**

7.3.1 The committee may incorporate guidelines for the following:

- A Constitution
- Objectives of the association /committee
- Membership
- Annual subscription. If any
- Election of office bearers
- Meeting and meeting procedures, minutes, etc.
- Annual meeting
- Finance – books of account, banking, etc.
- Financial year – audit
- Procedure for dissolution of committee
- Rules for any amendments to constitution
- Quorum

7.3.2 There is a suggested constitution and rules of a pre-school committee on pages 15 and 16 of the document 'Guidelines for the Establishment and Operation of an ECE Center/ kindergarten' that the committee shall follow.

### 7.4 **Staffing**

7.4.1 It would be best practice that at least two adults are to supervise any number of children up to 35 and one more for each 15, or part thereof, over that number.

7.4.2 If the school roll in an ECE Centre exceeds 15 and goes up to 30, both teachers should receive salary grant from the MoE and if one more for each 15, or part thereof, over that number the teacher should also receive grant.

7.4.3 The staff of ECE centers should receive written confirmation of terms of employment as put out by committee or through mutual agreement, including hours of duty, sick leave, arrangements for termination of employment, methods of salary payment and amount.

7.4.4 The staff hours of duty to include 30 minutes prior to children's arrival in the morning to supervise children and 30 to 60 minutes after children leave in the afternoon to allow adequate preparation and planning periods and ensure all material and equipment is available to children during the entire session.

## 7.5 Programme

7.5.1 Children's pattern of attendance and a choice may be made from the following:

- Morning session - three hours
- Afternoon session - two, two and a half to three hours
- Centers operating on a half day session basis:
  - Group 1 - 5 mornings  
Group 2 - 4 afternoons
  - Group 1 - 3 mornings – Mons. Tues. & Weds.  
Group 2 - 2 mornings – Thursdays & Fridays  
Group 3 - 4 afternoons – Mons., Tues., Wed., Thurs.

Other combinations could be considered according to the need of the center in consultation with the district education officer and SEO ECE. Teachers responsible for a half day programme are involved in planning and working with two groups of children per day. Therefore, it is important for them to have at least one hour in between the morning and afternoon groups to allow sufficient time for lunch, parent contact and adequate preparation for the afternoon group.

7.5.2 If possible, it is also advisable to plan the pattern of attendance to provide one afternoon without children. This will allow the staff adequate time to maintain records which provide a valid basis for study of children and planning for their development. Maintenance and preparation of material must also receive attention at this stage.

7.5.3 There is a Curriculum Guideline titled 'Na Noda Mataniciva' that Kindergarten teachers are encouraged to use but with implementation advise from the Ministry of Education's Curriculum Development Unit.

**8.0 EFFECTIVE DATE.....16/12/11**

**9.0 REVIEW DATE..... 16/12/12**

**10.0 KEY SEARCH WORDS**

Curriculum Guideline, ECCDE, High Scope, Kindergarten, Montessori Programme, Play Group, Regio Emilia, Waldorf

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**SIGNATURE**

**16/12/11**

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