

Strategies and implementation of a Holistic Approach to ECD



Nadica Janeva , MD, public health expert

UNICEF National ECD Coordinator ,ECD-CoR , Macedonia

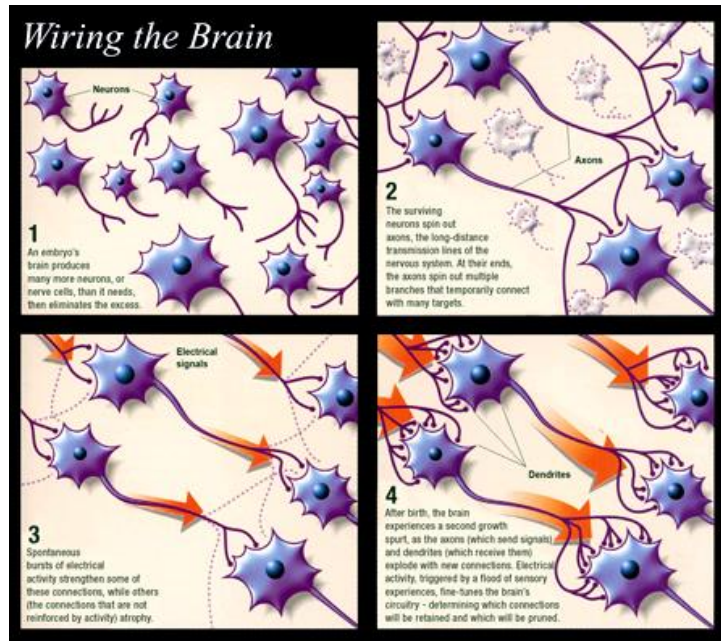
Main subject matters:

- **Early child development in focus**
- **Holistic approach to ECD**
- **Holistic policy responses**
- **Possible strategies and implementation**
- **UNICEF Holistic ECD approach in country context – Macedonia**

Why focus on Early Child Development ?



Today we know more than ever before about how young children develop and about how to best support early learning.



What we know?

- The **first five years of life** are critical to a child's lifelong development.
- **Early experiences** influence brain development - establishing the neural connections that provide the foundation for language, reasoning, problem solving, social skills, behaviour and emotional health.
- **Families and communities** play critical roles in helping children get ready for school- families that are economically secure and have healthy relationships
- **Children's development suffers when** their early learning and care experiences lack appropriate social, language and cognitive stimulation.

Why is the holistic approach an issue?



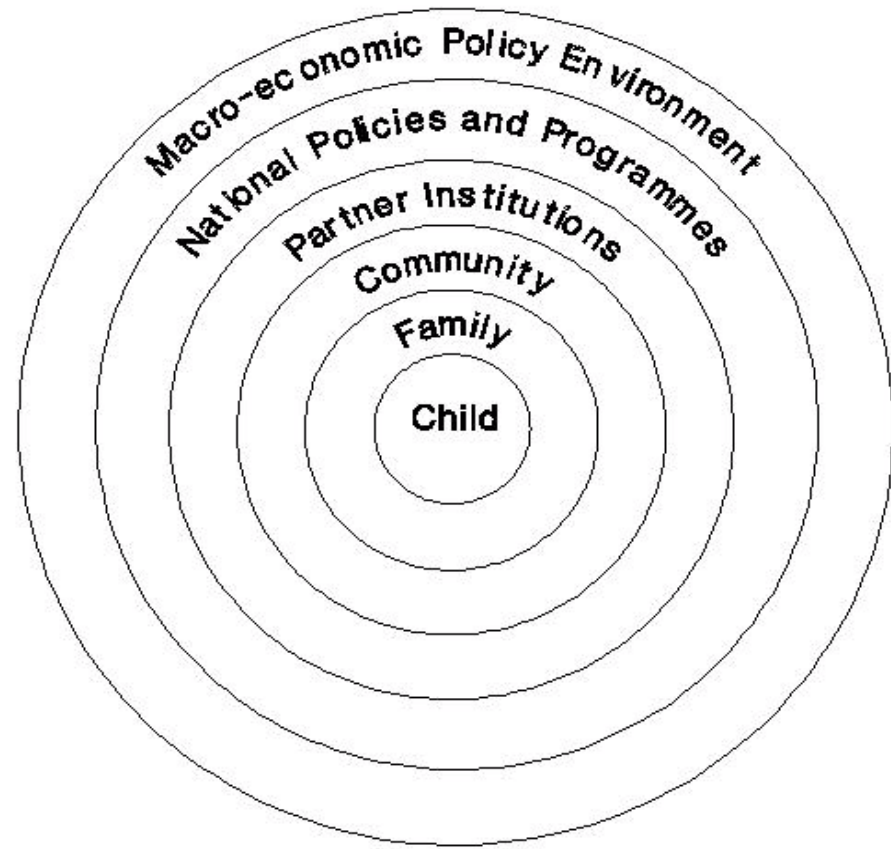
What is Holistic Approach ?

- Addressing the child's multiple rights within the context of the family and community, using a variety of strategies.
- Add value to any activity directed toward young children and their families.
- Single focus programs has demonstrated limitations and ineffectiveness.



Holistic Approach to Child Development

"The holistic ideology values the whole child understanding the young child as an individual within the context of his or her family, community and culture."

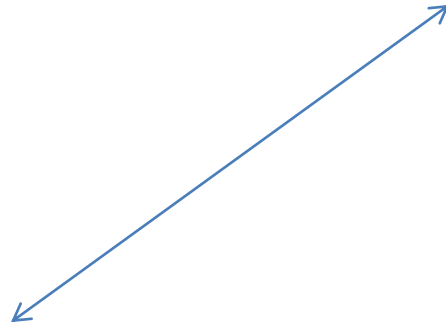
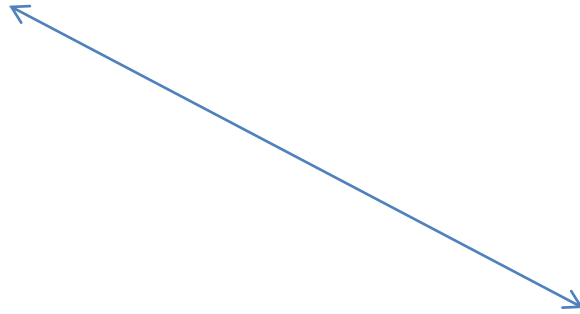


The scope of definition “early childhood education and care” *

- **all types of services** that provide education and care to children under school age, whether coordinated or not, belong to the same field.
- **all arrangements for the care and education** of children from birth to compulsory school age, regardless of setting, funding or operating hours.
 - such as family support,
 - gender equality,
 - health,
 - lifelong learning,
 - employment and
 - social integration policies, addressing the field’s multiple dimensions.
 - the child’s transition from home to ECEC, compulsory school and out-of-school provision.
- **overcome the barriers that have obstructed unified action** in the field of early childhood
- **eradicating the historical split between** “child care” and “early childhood education”.
- **convergent actions** across the board – in policy, programmes and research.
- **suitable for developing and developed countries**

* Starting Strong, Thematic Review, OECD, 2006

Child environment context



And the most challenging question is

Holistic view of the child or
a holistic view of service provision ?

WHY?

Development is holistic; it consists of inter-dependent dimensions.

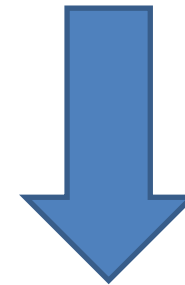
This means that the child's development **cannot be fragmented** into health, nutrition, education, social, emotional and spiritual variables. All are **interconnected** in a child's life and **are developing simultaneously**.

Progress in one area affects progress in others.

Similarly, when something goes wrong in any one of those areas, it has an impact on all the other areas.

Holistic community response to developmental needs

- integration – creating a network of services that work together
- coordination- effective referral system
- diversification- flexible service provision
- Community participation
- Involving parents/caregivers
- Partnership –



QUALITY SERVICE PROVISION

Early learning environment

- a focus on individual development
- an emphasis on child-initiated not adult-directed learning
- learning is co-constructed with adults and peers
- children are active agents not passive recipients
- a view of children as competent learners rather than immature adults
- listening to and respecting children and their choices
- learning is shaped by context and community.

Holistic strategies:

An integrated set of actions for ensuring young children's rights:

- to grow up healthy,
- well-nourished,
- protected from harm,
- with a sense of identity and self-worth and
- opportunities for learning.

Strategies for Developing a Holistic Approach to Early Child Development

Start with building a communication strategy.

Focus, first and foremost, on the whole child.

Start with what is possible and with willing partners.

Make scientific knowledge about ECD accessible to everyone.

Strategies for Developing a Holistic Approach to Early Child Development

Remind programmers that they are also parents.

Remind caregivers that they are also role models.

Look for opportunities to add components to existing interventions.

Look for opportunities to link services.

Remember that family relationships are critical.

Produce communication media and materials locally.

Programming Strategies : **Putting the Pieces Together: the challenge.**

- >Support young children's development through direct services.
- >Educate parents and caregivers.
- >Promote community development.
- >Strengthen demand.

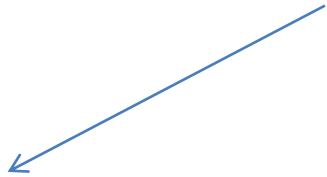


Key aspects in strategy implementation

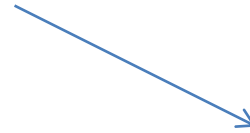
- Universal access including focus on at-risk children –availability and proximity
- scalability,
- parental involvement,
- outcome orientation, and
- sustainable and long-term commitment

Holistic Framework – ELDS

- a set of statements that reflect expectations for children’s knowledge and behavior
- across several developmental domains



young children’s learning
is **multi-dimensional**



ELDS highlight the fact that young children grow physically, socially, emotionally, linguistically, and cognitively **at the same time,**

ELDS

- Support the curriculum development process
- Reference for informing parents and care givers in all ECD setting
- Reference for developing policy options
- Entry point for reforming ECD system
- Reference for quality assurance in service provision
- Reference for inclusive approach in ECD

UNICEF Holistic ECD approach in country context – Macedonia

The context

- National definition of ECD is pre-school education (Law on Child Protection)
- Main responsibility of MLSP (but also MoES, MoH)
- Low pre-school education coverage (14%)
- Existence of community-based ECD centres (Lifestart materials)- sustainability an issue
- Outdated curricula in kindergartens
- Non-existence of in-service training
- Lack of standards

The opportunities

- Focus on economic growth & human capital development
- Increase in spending in public sector
- Ongoing debate on standards (education)
- Child rights
- Decentralization
- IPA

UNICEF Early learning and developing standards for children from 0-6



ELDS as entry point for reforming the ECD system (National ECD policy)

- Inter-sectoral cooperation, national-local cooperation and partnerships (experts, NGOs)
- Increase access (link between kindergartens and community-based centres, health preventive teams)
- Improve quality (basis for revision of curricula, parenting materials, pre and in-service training)
- Raise awareness on importance of ECD

Key initiatives 2010

- ECD financial study as key contribution in ECD policy development was finalized. The study provides a financially feasible plan for expanding ECD coverage.
- A training programme for ELDS implementation - piloted in five kindergartens and 20 community-based centres.
- Instruments for monitoring child outcomes based on ELDS have been developed and tested and have been included in the new regulation for record keeping and documentation in kindergartens.
- Community-based ECD centres have been supported as forms of ECD provision for the most marginalized children (in rural areas and Roma communities).
- Municipalities increasingly choose to invest in these centres (expected that in total 6 will be funded by municipalities in 2011). Standards for their functioning were developed and expected to be included in the next revision of the Law on Child Protection.
- All these key initiative are based on implementing Early Learning and Development Standards as a reference for reforming and improving services in ECD field. .

Successful programmes

1. Incorporate the principles of the CRC/
CEDAW
2. Use the existing strengths
3. Have a broad framework,
4. Are developed with and for families
5. Are developed with and for communities
- 6 Provide equal access for all children
7. Are flexible and reflect diversity
8. Meet the highest quality standards.
9. Are cost-effective and sustainable



Early Childhood Development System

Comprehensive health services that meet children's vision, hearing, nutrition, behavioral, and oral health as well as medical health needs.

Early care and education opportunities in nurturing environments where children can learn what they need to succeed in school and life.

Early Learning

Health, Mental Health and Nutrition

Family Support



Early identification, assessment and appropriate services for children with special health care needs, disabilities, or developmental delays

Special Needs/ Early Intervention

Economic and parenting supports to ensure children have nurturing and stable relationships with caring adults.



the
end