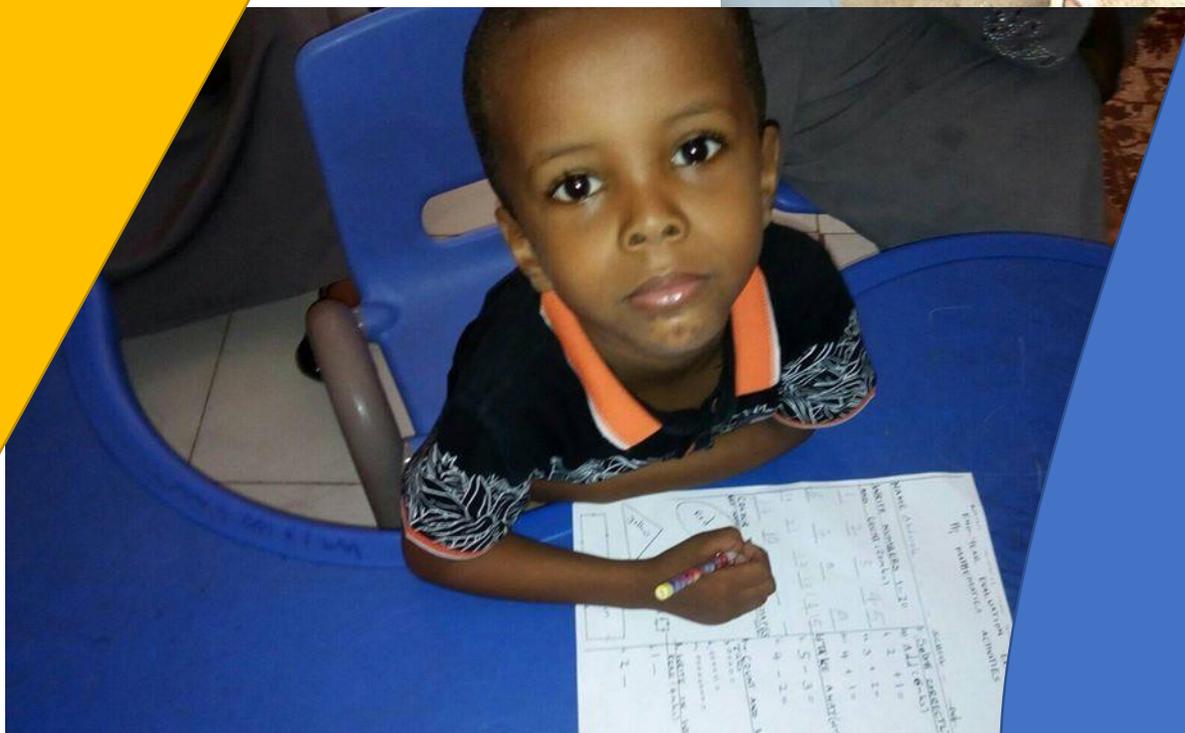


**CHALLENGES FACING THE  
IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY  
CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN  
PUNTLAND, SOMALIA**



*Challenges Facing the Implementation  
of Early Childhood Education in Puntland,  
Somalia  
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# CHALLENGES FACING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN PUNTLAND, SOMALIA

Abdirahman Sheikhdon Ali,

## Abstract

*One of the most significant prioritized areas in education is early childhood education that is an issue of intense policy in sub-Saharan Africa. A main motivation of writing this article is that early childhood education in Somalia remains out of view of ministries of education in both Federal and State levels. Childhood education helps children learning literacy and numeracy that contributes to performance of children in primary school as well as reducing abnormal behavior. In this paper, we describe the challenges faced by early childhood education in Puntland. Lack of subsector policy, curriculum framework, syllabus, unity of teaching subjects, limited space, equipment and qualified teachers were among main findings of this paper. The paper recommended for regulating, and mapping, as well as budget allocating, and giving more attention in order to actively contribute to education of young children in Somalia.*

## INTRODUCTION

Recently, the interest in Early Childhood Education(ECE) in many countries has led to put in place policies to prioritize ECE. UNESCO revealed that 23 out of 47 countries in sub-Sahara Africa have adopted national Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies and another 13 countries have policies

under development, but not yet approved (1). As policy regulates and creates standards of quality learning and safety, it is therefore, necessary for putting in place a policy and its implementation plan. Naudeau et al. stated that the rationale for creating a national ECD policy or framework is three-fold (2). First, a national policy presents a country's vision for its

young children, making visible the goals, objectives, and strategies that are needed to make this vision a reality. Second, a national ECD policy clarifies the responsibilities of different actors or agencies. Given the multi-sectoral nature of the field, there is often confusion or tension regarding which ministry or agency is responsible for which services and interventions. Third, an ECD policy, especially if it is developed in a participatory manner, provides an opportunity to define the respective roles of the public and private sectors in important areas including funding and service provision. In addition to that Neuman stated that a national ECD policy can help maximize scarce financial, human, and material resources in order to reduce duplication of effort. (3).

The education system in Puntland started with a two-year duration of early childhood education (4) followed by eight years of primary school and

four years of secondary school. ECE system in Somali Federal ministry of education is similar to that used by Puntland (5). Puntland Education policy paper states that early childhood education promotes the holistic cognitive, emotional, social and psycho-motor growth and development of the young child. ECE aims to foster the holistic development of children in an environment in which children feel secure, are stimulated and have opportunities to play, explore and develop. It is offered to children in the 3-5 age brackets for two levels of education (5).

ECE also prepares children for formal schooling and made ease the transition from home to primary school. In this age, it is the period that a child goes through the most rapid stage of growth and development where children's brains develop faster than any other point in their lives. Osanyinv said that (0-8 years) are the most impressionable years as they lay the

foundation for the development of the human personality (7). It is therefore, necessary to lay down the foundations for their social skills, self-esteem, perception of the world and moral attitude and development of cognitive skills in this stage.

Despite the statements in education policy in Puntland, the ECE faced more challenges that delayed access and quality education in Puntland or Somalia. Education Sector Analysis(ESA) has reported that modes of delivery, rates of enrolment, quality and content of provision in ECE remain largely outside the view of the MoE&HE and relevant sectors (6). In Puntland, Education Sector Strategy Plan(ESSP) pointed out that the sector lacks adequate resources, and human resource capacity to deliver the desired growth and results. Most of the ECE teachers are largely untrained, and poorly remunerated. (7). Similarly, Somali Federal Ministry of Education, ESSP noted that there is no

clear policy framework or quality standards in place for formal Early Childhood Care Education(ECCE), there are no qualification or training systems in place for ECE teachers, there is no standardized formal ECE curriculum framework, and no government certified ECE learning materials for small children (7). Moreover, ESSP pointed out that there is also lack of a clear understanding of its importance amongst a majority of community members due to inadequate information on its scope, modes of delivery, rates of enrolment, quality, and curriculum design (9). In Somalia, traditionally children receive early childhood education from Quranic Schools, Integrated Quranic schools and privately-owned Kindergartens (7).

In response to above mentioned challenges that hampered for providing education in young children with holistic development, the ministry of education set a five-year

sector strategy plan. Increasing access, equity, ECE centers, promoting quality education, developing policy, curriculum, accreditation and certification system as well as conducting mapping study were among interventions that are expected to be reached within Puntland ministry of education's ESSP timeframe. However, these planned interventions did not perform for the first three years of ESSP timeframe (2017-2019). One of main indicators of above interventions was EMIS data that did not capture any data related to ECE. So, it is quite evidence that these challenges still remain on ECE subsector in Puntland.

However, the currently prevailing condition of early childhood education in Puntland, has been causing wide spread complain as noted above. Information gap is also what needs to be addressed in order to make proper interventions. In this paper, we aim to describe the challenges facing the

implementation of early childhood education in Puntland such as lack of curriculum, policy and less qualified teachers and making recommendations for enhancing early childhood education subsector.

## **METHODS**

This paper employed descriptive research design that allows the researcher to easily describe a phenomenon on challenges faced by early childhood education. with qualitative and quantitative nature were collected to reach research objectives. The population of the study comprised all ECE centers in Puntland state of Somalia. In collecting the primary data, a questionnaire **about** was used to collect data on ECE centers and then it was distributed to 16 ECE centers in Garowe, Bosaso and Gardo through purposive sample techniques, because they were those which are popular ECE centers. Three research assistants have administrated questionnaire at targeted ECE. SPSS

was used for quantitative data analysis and descriptive statistics was used to analyze collected data in order to draw conclusion.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study focuses on understanding of challenges facing of early Childhood education in Puntland. A total of 16 ECE centered were assessed. Data analysis is in line with study objectives to determine the status of existing ECE centers in Puntland in terms of curriculum, taught-subjects, teaching hours, tuition fee, ownership, teacher qualification, equipment and facilities.

### **ECE Center Ownership, Infrastructure and Service**

The study sought to know ownership, service and infrastructure of ECE centers in Puntland. Of the total sample of 16 ECE centers, about 62.5% were private and 37.5% were public. It was observed that public ECE centers are attached to primary school to prepare them to grade one students. Similarly,

EMIS has reported that ECE centers in Puntland are dominated by private institutions (11).

It was observed that vast majority of ECE centers in Puntland operate in rental building that are inadequate to facilitate necessary service which is expected from ECE centers. This is due to the fact that the centers lack enough space and hence operate in small size classroom. 11 out of 16 ECE centers (nearly 69%) lack playground that is vital for children's learning in early age. 62.5% of ECE centers lack play equipment that is vital both playing and learning. 11 centers were asked their class size ( $M=29.7$ ,  $SD=14.5$ ). Classroom size was too short. Even though center managers stated that they have playing equipment. However, the quality and quantity of the equipment being used does not help young children to realize their potential. Play is an important aspect of early childhood development as it contributes to cognitive, physical,

social and emotional well-being of children. Recently research has proven that play has multiple effects on early development. Bowdon argued that play lets children engage in extended interactions that build oral language, imagination, critical thinking, and social skills. And, recent evidence suggests that, at least for some skills, playful learning is more effective for producing student learning than direct instruction (11). As noted of the above evidence, lack of playing space and play-based learning have negative effect on learning and development of children in ECE centers.

As regards to ECE centers' sanitation, 14 out of the total observed ECE centers were reported that they have functional toilets, 56.25% have functional separate toilets for boys and girls, whereas 18.75% have twin latrine and 12.5% have friendly space. Two centers (12.5%) did not respond a question about school latrine. UNESCO defined sanitation as a practice that allows protection of

health with the help of hygienic measures (12). Only 37.5% have hand washing facilities. Burgers revealed that the main component of sanitation and hygiene is the provision of safe water and sanitation facilities in schools (13). In this view, sanitation is vital both learning and health. For that reason, it was slightly assessed the provision of sanitation in ECE centers in Puntland. However, as regards the cleanness of toilets in observed ECE centers are in sound conditions due to that all visited ECE centers are located in the main cities which have taped water system. However, data on pupils' ratio with toilets was not captured which is importance for sanitation and hygiene analysis.

In terms of meals and transportation, it was found that 50% have provided transport facilities, 37.5% of ECE centers offers breakfast for pupils and only 6.25%(one center) provides lunch. This result indicates that ECE center's meals is deficiency, although

school meals were found that it improves the nutrition and academic performance for children, particularly children from low-income households. Figlio and Winicki pointed out that school districts that increased the caloric content of school lunches on test days demonstrated increased passing rates (14). However, the provision of ECE meals is low due to high cost of lunch and shortage of time that children spend in ECE centers.

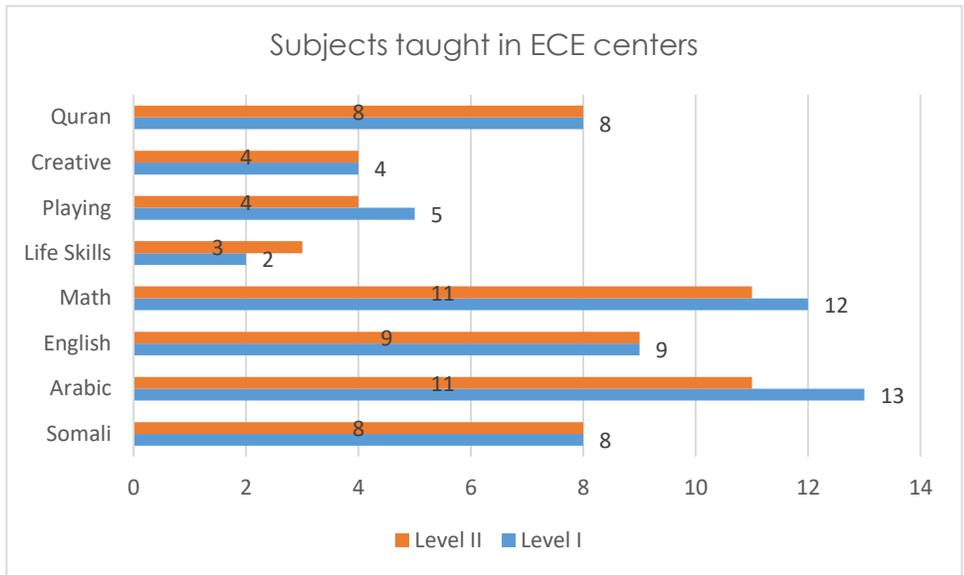
### **Curriculum and Subjects taught in ECE Centers**

Curriculum and subjects taught are important aspect for understanding how children learn and centers are doing well. In this view, the study assessed the curriculum or syllabus that ECE centers in Puntland are adopting for the facilitation of early childhood education. It was found that majority of ECE (68.75%), that the teachers decide what to be taught to the children, while 12.5% have adopted Kenyan pre-school syllabus and

similar percentage also uses mixed syllabus that was adapted from two or more countries, and 6.25% has used Egyptian pre-school syllabus. Teaching hours per week ( $M=20.23$ ,  $SD=9$ ). This is in line with what has been reported by ESSP (2017-2021) as lack of curriculum in ECE centers in Puntland. It was observed that the early childhood education centers lack education inclusiveness as special need children did not enroll in these centers.

In this issue, ECE centers in Puntland have considerable critical issues that limit the provision of quality education and complete development of children. This is because of absence of curriculum that emphasizes language, emotional, literacy and numeracy development.

notable differences between subject



It is a framework that promote life skills competence in young child and would results to positive behavior. It is very difficult to measure quality education provided by ECE centers as measuring of the quality of the education focuses on the teaching of curriculum content which is not in place at the present. In order to address this gap, the ministry of education has recently developed ECE syllabus, though they are not yet make it official document.

taught in ECE centers. Somali, English, Arabic, Math, Life skills, Creative Arts, Playing, and Qur'an are subjects being taught in ECE centers in Puntland. Chart below shows subjects taught in ECE centers:

In above chart, it is quite obvious that 50% of ECE centers teach Somalia language in all levels. This result shows that half of ECE centers do not teach Somali language which is mother tongue that facilitates learning and motivation of children. Study shows that children able to understand

As regards to subjects taught in ECE centers in Puntland, it was found

concepts and subject matter taught in mother tongue. Dutcher made conclusion on that Individuals develop cognitive skills and master content material most easily when they are taught in a familiar language (15).

From results in the above chart, it indicates that ECE centers teach Arabic, English and Somali (Mother tongue) in 81.25%, 56.25% and 50%, respectively. Introducing three languages in early childhood education contrasts with language policy of the ministry of education as English is introduced in grade three at primary school. In numeracy, 75% and 68.75% of ECE centers have taught in level I and level II respectively. However, in the light of the above chart, it is quite clear that some ECE centers do teach neither literacy (mother tongue) nor numeracy. Another issue is that only 50% of ECEs have taught Quran in both levels which is vital for children to learn Quran in early ages. Similarly, creative arts and playing have been

taught by 25% and 31.25% of ECE centers respectively. This shows limited activities on creative and play that are essential for learning in young children. However, it was noted there is big difference in the subjects taught and which level it was introduced. This is in line with what has been found by ESA (2016) that is about that ECE's activities are beyond view of ministry of education.

### **Qualification of Teachers and School Fee**

It is significant to assess the qualification of teachers and school fee in ECE centers in Puntland. It was noted that 50% of ECEs have lacked qualified teachers, whereas nearly 19%(3) of them have only one teacher for each center and other centers have either three to four teachers. Nearly 62% of teachers are female which is good sign of increase in female teachers in schools. School fees per month vary from 12 to 65 US dollars,

although some centers did not report any fee structure. Only 31.25% of ECEs have reported a school fee of above 18 US dollars and one of them has reported a school fee of 65 US dollars. There is big variance in school fee among ECE centers. The reason of high cost is that the school provides both breakfast and lunch and salary of teacher are being paid from school fee. ESA (2016) noted that teachers in ECE have poor remuneration.

### **Conclusion and Recommendations**

Early childhood education was prioritized as it helps children to succeed in literacy and numeracy and as well contribute to the brain development and reducing abnormal behavior, particularly when children are in the age bracket of 3-8 age years. In these years, a child goes through rapid growth and development.

In Somalia, young children are taught reading and writing the Arabic script in Quranic school that would contribute

into the literacy of mother tongue as they have corresponding Early childhood education in Somalia has faced continuous challenges such as lack of curriculum, policy, qualified teachers and others which made it inactive and hence led to few children to transit from ECE to primary school. The ECE subsector was left behind other subsectors due to lack of curriculum, certification, standards, supervision, inadequate trained teachers, resources and poor remuneration. It is unresolved issues as it was positioned with little consideration by the government and education partners.

The results from primary data underline that early childhood education in Puntland are dominated by private institutions that remain out of view of government policy, guidelines and supervisions. Curriculum absence forced ECE centers to adopt foreign curriculum or child is taught content that is selected

by teachers as well as lack of harmonized subjects taught in early childhood education. It offers little service and play activities due to inadequate space and budget. Lack of trained teachers and lack of unified school fee structure were found. The paper has limitation in terms of scope and areas of assessment as well as limited previous studies on Somalia in this field.

The evidence from this paper suggests the following recommendations:

- Developing subsector policy, curriculum framework, syllabus, standards, supervision guidelines, and certification system about early childhood education that enable subsectors staffs to fulfill their responsibilities in effective way that contribute access and quality education to young children in Puntland.
- Regular supervision, setting norms of center space,

equipment should be clearly outlined. Government involvement, budgetary support and partners' intervention are also suggested.

- Early Childhood education should be used mother tongue as medium of instruction in order to promote literacy in early age.
- Ministry of education and teacher education institutes should be developed teacher training program for early childhood education.
- Conducting awareness on importance of early childhood education to develop the right attitude to early childhood education that values by parents and community in large.
- Further research needs to be done for regulating and mapping ECE subsector as well as filling information gaps in this subsector.

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