There's more to ECD than teaching the '3-Rs' at ever earlier ages

Nico van Oudenhoven and Rona Jualla van Oudenhoven, International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI)[8], Netherlands

This paper could be summarized in one sentence: early childhood development efforts should move away from treating young boys and girls exclusively as 'early learners' but view them more as 'active participants and contributors of culture'. More to the point, Early Child Development (ECD)[9] should be foremost a 'cultural enrichment' affair. It took us a long time to come to this realisation despite the fact that the signals have been hitting us everywhere we visited with tremendous force and frequency. Whenever we entered the domains of children, so to speak, and interacted with them in their homes, pre-schools,[10] playgroups, orphanages or other places where children could be found, we were taken aback by the role that culture plays and ought to play in the learning process. The 'cultural dimension' – we will use these words for the time being for lack of a better term- was always there, either by elaborate festivities or by its stark and painfully felt absence.

Thus, in the kindergartens of Yakutia, the indigenous Sakha people, teachers and parents, together with their 'native' Russian citizens, hold special days where everyone is attired in the traditional Sakha dresses; Sakha food is cooked, and Sakha music is played, with a dominant position for the national

8 International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI), Netherlands, www.icdi.nl.

9 We use the term ECD -Early Childhood Development- here to denote the wide range of processes, events, services, policies, interventions and practices that impact on the growth and development of children in the 0-8 age group. It subsumes other acronyms such as ECCE -Early Childhood Care and Education, ECED -Early Childhood Education, or ECCD - Early Childhood Care and Development.

10 In this texts the labels 'preschool' and 'kindergarten' will be used indiscriminately and denote any formal ECD service for groups of boys and girls under the age of six or seven.

instrument, the mouth harp. In doing this, their rich traditions are not only be remembered but also, more notably, built and expanded upon so as to keep them relevant for now and the times to come. At the same time, the mothers of the West Bank and Gaza lamented that their children didn't see 'beauty' any more, that there were no colours in their lives, no green fields to play on, nor music or dances to enjoy. In Thailand, when asked what they really valued, parents in the Burmese refugee camps expressed appreciation for the education their young children were receiving, but indicated that what they missed most were the customary celebrations of special events such as weddings or birthdays or losing touch with the ceremonial rituals and songs of funerals[11]. In the multicultural Caribbean nation of Trinidad and Tobago traditional cultures form an integral part of the official school curricula at pre-school, primary, secondary and even at tertiary levels.

When gold was discovered in the Klondike in North-West Canada in 1896, the First Nation Han were quickly bought off their land and moved to Moosehide, a site downriver from sprawling Dawson City, which had sprung up out of nothing, but then teeming with all the trappings of European 'high life'. The Han's leader, Chief Isaac, foreseeing the demise of their culture, actually sent their songs and dances to the Han in neighbouring Alaska for safekeeping, teaching their cousins the Klondike words and rhythms. Moosehide and Dawson City have since vanished, but the Alaskan Han have retained the dances and songs, and nowadays the 'Return to Moosehide' has become a regular celebration (Ferguson, 2005, p.264)

Box 1.

During a break from writing these lines, we strolled over the Saturday market in Leiden, an old town in the Netherlands. Earlier that morning, sheets with music scores were dealt out with the invitation to a 'play in'. Anyone who could play an instrument and were so inclined to do so on that morning would be welcome. Rehearsals were at 10.30, and 12.30. The concert started at 15.00 hrs on the same day. An audience of some 60-100 people watched and listened to the spontaneously-formed orchestra of a similar number of musicians. Among them were children as young as five years old, but also men and women who were well

11 Personal communication with authors, East Jerusalem, November 2010, Mae Sot, June 2010.

over sixty. Everybody seemed to enjoy this friendly, delightful, engaging and, as we saw it, meaningful event.

Why are we so keen on sharing this little activity with the reader? It was just a simple occurrence in and of itself and one that could be done almost anywhere; but it was also more than that as it shows that so much takes place outside the school, in informal and non-formal situations that it is worthwhile to the wellbeing, growth and education of the child: multi-generational interaction, modelling, approval, challenge, exploration and much more. We were impressed that these children have the skills to participate in this orchestra; skills that may serve them and give them satisfaction and meaning during a lifetime. And almost as an afterthought: money or profit did not feature here at all. But then, where would they have learnt to play the flute, the guitar, the violin? Were they so fortunate as to have parents who taught them or got them music teachers? Would it not have been ideal if they had developed these talents in school; or rather if all five-year-old and younger boys and girls had this opportunity, including those whose family backgrounds are not conducive to music, creativity and 'culture,' or financially able to facilitate it?

There are, of course, many more voices that promote this idea that 'culture' and not 'reading, writing and arithmetic', be the core elements in ECD. One that should be heard wider and louder is that of Okwamy and her colleagues (2011). By using participatory and strength-based methods of data collection and appreciative inquiry in villages in Kenya and Uganda, including in-depth 'respective listening' to mothers, grandmothers and great-grandmothers, they show how 'culture' provides a strong and beneficial setting for ECD policy and practice, which is not only relevant in those countries, but also for Africa and far beyond. They press the need for developing culturally and particularly Africa-centred approaches to development and make a strong case for the need to root the dominant narrative of child development in the diversity of local narratives. They also urge the international donor community to work within a more culturally relevant framework and motivate the state, the ultimate duty bearer for child well-being, to promote and support culturally relevant child policy and programming (Okwamy *et al* 2011).

Cultural or even 'culturisation' activities increasingly appear to be healthy for everybody, especially for those with little incomes and without the means to travel widely or attend major festivals or concerts. The Burbank Senior Artists Colony in Los Angeles is, in this respect, exemplary. Elderly people, often without any artistic experience or background of high levels of 'cultured'

education are invited to engage in theatre, film making, visual arts, music and all with great success.

> *The classes are demanding — "no one is gluing macaroni to paper plates"— and the teachers are pros, either laid-off schoolteachers or artists. In addition to pure pleasure, socialisation, and confidence building, after four weeks, the improvement in cognitive function was beyond belief. The theater trainees scored nearly a 60 percent increase in problem-solving ability, and these gains were sustained.*
>
> *(Rosenberg, New York Times online, 16 August 2012)*

Now, if senior citizens benefit so much, would it be too risky to claim that very junior citizens would not also benefit or even more so? However, regardless of the common 'arts and crafts' activities that most kindergartens have as part of their regular curriculum, the main thrust of current ECD thinking is to turn ever younger children into 'early learners' so that they can do well in the primary school and a few years later in secondary schools and so on, this with the ultimate and defensible objective of making them employable and employed citizens. Another reason vigorously promoted is that children's early school attendance facilitates women's participation in the workforce, which is correct, but is not always directly related to children's interests.

An illustration of this movement to transform even the smallest children into students is evinced by the Canadian *Early Years Study 3: Making Decisions, Taking Action*, which recommends school attendance of two-year olds (McCain *et al*, 2011). Also USA state governors are recommended to "develop aligned birth-to-grade 3 assessments that help monitor children's progress toward academic… goals…" (US National Governor's Association, 2012, p.1). This all is proposed with the explicit goal of seeing them graduate from high school, move into post-secondary education and attain higher earnings. These advocates of 'early learning' are not alone and are often stalwartly supported by the children's parents, even, it is argued, to the point of permanently damaging their children's eyesight, due to long hours of poring over texts: concern over the increased rate of myopia in children in China has led to students at Bayi Xiwang elementary and primary school in Guangzhou, China, to be given 45 minutes of outdoor instruction

each day in a clinical trial aimed at offsetting myopia and counteracting obesity, although educators and parents in other schools have resisted this initiative (Pierson, 2012). Asked about the benefits of full-day kindergarten in Pickering, Ontario, Tosha Goldberg, mother of the five-year old Isaiah Jones, answered that "her son's reading and writing skills had improved dramatically and that he now reads above age level" (Dillon, 2012, p. 1). Abu Gosh (undated/ 2003) laments the fact that Palestinian parents on the West Bank feel that their three-year old children should be in school to learn, and not to play.

The push for better test-scores affects children in other ways as well, if the situation in the USA is anything to go by, then we see again a widening gap between the rhetoric of politicians and the reality on the ground. In spite of an increasing obese child population, physical education and other fitness/ movement activities are being cut, even below the minimum requirements, and this, it is suggested, is mainly to attain better tests scores (Baker, 2012).

Of course, there are also moves away from the 'all eyes on learning' as educators, policy makers and perhaps parents are becoming concerned about the ever-growing number of obese and unhealthy children. 'Healthy living' is now becoming part of the school curriculum in many places. It is more and more accepted that healthy eating and activities such as yoga classes alleviate anxiety, result in children eating better, being physically more active, feeling more self-confident, experiencing less bullying and developing better personal skills. Hard-working high-achieving children do not see their grades drop when they 'hang around with friends' or sleep more instead of studying long hours (Teotonio, 2012, and WHO, 2011). These are steps in the right direction, and, yes, concern about one's health and wellbeing should be considered as a major cultural good.

There is indeed an ever-increasing amount of research data that backs up the reasons for promoting ECD. Almost any review on the benefits of ECD lists a multiple of them. The World Bank (2011), the largest financer of ECD services in low-income countries, mentions the following outcomes for children who participate in these programmes:

- Higher intelligence scores
- Higher and timelier school enrolment
- Less grade repetition and lower dropout rates
- Higher school completion rates

- Improved nutrition and health status
- Improved social and emotional behaviour
- Improved parent-child relationship
- Increased earning potential and economic self-sufficiency as an adult
- Increased female labour force participation

The World Bank also cites numerous sources which show that 'developing' countries stand particularly to show remarkable improvements in the following domains as a result of the children's partaking in ECD:

- Nutrition and health.
- Cognitive development and school achievement.
- School enrolment and wastage –repetition and dropping out.

They also state that affordable ECD programmes help to reduce social inequality, and that it increases the participation of women in the labour force (World Bank, undated).

Similar outcomes continue to be regularly mentioned in research reports. ECD seems indeed the silver, if not golden, bullet in monetary terms also, as the reported rates of return on investment are phenomenal and vary from 4 US dollars (Barnett and Masse, 2007) to 17 US dollars (Schweinhart *et al*, 2005) on each single US dollar invested. In tandem with the World Bank, China`s national government also looks at ECD as a path to sustainable economic growth (Beige Zhao, 2012) and to improving future economic competiveness (Kin Bing Wu *et al*, 2012). An entry in the *Voices and Views* blog hosted by the World Bank (Wright, 2012) is indeed not at all coy about presenting its pro-pecuniary stance. They value the benefits as follows: children who enjoyed formal ECD are – (and please note their jubilant comments between the parentheses):

- More ready for primary school than those who did not *(not surprising)*

- More likely to graduate from secondary school (*also not surprising*)
- More likely to be employed (*good news*)
- Better paid in the long run (*great news*)

It is indeed good to see that ECD will result in children having higher incomes when grown up, but is it too naïve to wonder whether life is only about money? Again, what happened to the 'whole child'? But then, the Bank stands not alone, of course: for example the debate on Germany's Conservatives' proposal for a subsidy to women to keep their toddlers at home is framed in economic terms, rather than how this affects the wellbeing of children (Eddy, 2012).

Not investing in ECD is also costly. For example, this is the case with the rather dismal situation in Mississippi, USA, which has the highest rate of childhood poverty in the country and test scores that belong to the nation's worst. From 1999 to 2008, the state spent 383 million US dollars on children who had to repeat kindergarten or first grade. Many are so far behind that they never catch up (Willen, 2012). And those who repeat one or more grades are much more likely than their classmates to drop out of school (Anderson, Whipple and Jimerson, 2002). Here the argument put forward is that children need to be prepared for kindergarten, which is remarkable, as kindergartens themselves were traditionally supposed to be a preparation for formal schooling. One may wonder, though, as to whether it is a solely a matter of a need for 'early learning' in this case, as the majority of children in Mississippi who do not go to pre-school or who fail in kindergarten are poor and Black. There is no exact data to be had on this point, but it seems obvious that rich and White children do well in kindergarten and beyond even without having been to preschool; thus the discussion should be framed much wider than only in terms of preschool attendance. Family background, environmental, social-economic and cultural factors seem to be of much more importance in determining school success (Rouse and Barrow, 2006) whether justly or unjustly, but this is a challenge that is much more difficult to address and one that needs urgent attention.

Nonetheless, it is not surprising that, given this set of extraordinarily positive outcomes, all over the world, hardly without an exception, governments and NGOs are pushing for having more and younger children in school. Currently, this mainly happens by extending downwards the entry levels of children enrolled in basic schools. Most European basic schools now have five- and four-

year old children under their roofs; while a few decades ago the age of entrance was six or seven years. Less resource-rich countries are also following suit. In Turkey, for example, where children traditionally enrolled in basic schools at the age of seven, five- and six-year olds are now being 'let in' (Özgan, 2010), while in Zimbabwe, to mention another rather arbitrarily-chosen country, all basic schools are now required to take in children age five (Rwatirera *et al*, 2011).

The school attendance rate is increasing across the board. UNESCO's *Strong Foundations* provides data on enrolment in pre-primary education over the five-year period 1999-2004; the growth is dramatic, wherever one looks, both for girls and boys, even in 'difficult places', such as those visited by hostilities, natural disasters or radical movements, or where the absolute number of children is actually shrinking. There is no reason to believe that this trend is slowing down (UNESCO, 2007). It is likely that the targets set by the European Union in 1995 and reconfirmed in 2008 –'childcare' places for 35 percent for children from birth to 3 years and 90 percent for 3 to 6 year olds- will be common practice in a growing number of countries and not only those belonging to the Union (European Economic and Social Committee, 2010),

Table 1.

Number of Children Enrolled in Pre-Primary Education (UNESCO, 2007)		
Area	**Numbers in 000**	
Sub-Saharan Africa	5,129	7,359
Arab States	2,356	2,625
Latin American and the Caribbean	16,392	19,119
'Developed' countries	25,386	25,482
'Developing' countries	80,070	91,089
World	111,772	123, 685

More children, wherever in the world, are being sent to 'school' at ever earlier ages. Most of the four-and five-year olds are registered in schools that have 'extended downwards'; younger ones are still cared for and taken care of in special provisions such as crèches and day care centres, but also this approach is under pressure as in many places these services are being modified and subsequently absorbed by the formal school system. A notable exception is the

prevailing Russian kindergarten. Still based on the old Soviet Union's model, children up to seven years are comprehensively taken care of in specially designed buildings with a wide range of facilities and services, and very much different from the regular Russian primary schools, both in outlook and functioning (Shmis, 2012). But they form a rare, but, in our opinion, a beautiful spectacle when set on the ECD stage worldwide.

Although the horrendous and almost incomprehensible fact remains that many children die at an early age of easily preventable diseases, the fact is that their numbers are decreasing and that the global child mortality rate has fallen dramatically in the past 20 years; an estimated 6.9 million children died before the age of 5 in 2011, compared with 12 million deaths in 1990, or around a 40 percent reduction in the rate (Lake, 2012, UNICEF, 2012). The time is ripe for a shift from exclusively looking at the survival of children to qualitative aspects, including those of how to embed and engage children with culture, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child: see Box 2.

Article 29 (1) of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child seems a far cry away from the current view on early childhood education, it reads:

"1. States Parties agree that the Education of the child shall be directed to:

(a) The development of the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential;

(b) The development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, and for the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations;

(c) The development of respect for the child's parents, his or her own cultural identity, language and values, for the national values of the country in which the child is living, the country from which he or she may originate, and for civilizations different from his or her own;

(d) The preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin;

(e) The development of respect for the natural environment."

Box 2. UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, Article 29(1).

Given all the good outcomes that have been documented for the provision of ECD, and with the appreciation and understanding of the benefits of ECD growing worldwide, how could we possible complain? Why don't we choose, instead, to assist, in every way we can, increasing the coverage and bringing to scale the existing services and programmes to including larger number of children, especially those with special needs, from discriminated ethnic backgrounds, with minority status, and difficult-to-reach boys and girls, rather than promoting a different approach? The abstracts for the annual conferences of the European Early Childhood Education Research Association also show how mature the state-of-the-art of ECD is and how almost any issue is being extensively researched and talked about (EECERA, 2012). Why not rejoice that, in addition to the rapidly expanding coverage, quality issues are now also given more attention? Indeed why not?

Frankly speaking, however, an uneasy feeling gnaws on our innards whenever we hear policy makers and big-scale implementers speak about ECD. Their rhetoric is always correct and cannot be faulted; they constantly talk about the 'whole child', that 'education' is more than 'learning' and that they need to play, explore and 'have fun', and, above all, that ECD should look at the 'whole' child. And although it is widely accepted that, in the words of Maria Prochukhateva, an experienced headmistress of a special education or 'inclusive' kindergarten: "Children know how to learn",[12] most schools go full out to instruct their pupils how to learn. Indeed, in practice, the aim of schools seems to be to get children to 'work' at almost all times: children are in school to study and especially to acquire literacy and numeracy skills. It seems that in every country the most important goal of basic education (pre-primary to lower-secondary) is assuring that the next generation be able to read and write. There is, of course, no arguing that literacy is of the utmost importance, as knowing how to read and write is pivotal in enabling countries to escape from extreme levels of poverty. "With few exceptions, literacy at or above 80 percent is the necessary - if far from sufficient - condition for a country to escape extreme poverty… Furthermore, better health cannot be separated from basic education. Few countries have achieved respectable population health outcomes with female literacy below 80 percent" (Richards, 2012, p. 1).

Why do so many keep on pushing a 'learning agenda' in ECD, while life demands and offers so much more? We so often get the feeling that only lip

12 Personal communication during 1 June, 2012, visit to the 'Resource Center for Inclusive Education', DS 288, Moscow.

service is paid to the social needs of young boys and girls, as well as to their spiritual lives, their fantasies, and, even less so, to their worlds outside the school, how they live at home with their parents, siblings, pets, and with the many big and little things that they value and make them who they are (see photo 3).

This is Ricardo, a ten-year old Dutch boy, who became a member of the exclusive 'One Metre Club' after catching a pike of 103 cm. He goes out fishing a lot in his own little boat that he bought with monies he saved up. His amateur-fisher uncle, not yet a member of the 'Club', and his adult fisher friends are charmed by Ricardo, but also take him seriously. He is an above-average student, but doesn't excel. If he were to spend the hours he devotes to fishing to his school work he would most likely become an A+ student. But would this be better for his well-being and healthy development?
(Photo: Anita van der Laan)

The same goes for the street, the neighbourhood, the community in which they grow up. The overemphasis on preschool education seems also rather out of place given that most of a child's development occurs outside the school: "…70 % of our knowledge and skills are developed through informal [we would like to add 'and nonformal'] education" (European Economic and Social Committee, 2010, p. 5). In the ultimate analysis, however, it is the school and schooling that really matters to those who pull the strings.

The 'learning environments' of early childhood in Asia, traditionally took into account the informal and non-formal aspects of the environment (IDRC, 1988). Abdul Bari Jahani, the 'poet of Kandahar', Afghanistan, when interviewed about poetry when he was young, tells us: "there definitely were opportunities those days for young poets... there were literary conferences in schools, where students recited poetry and read essays that their uncles or they themselves had written, or copied from some magazine or paper… They would gather in homes or in restaurants". (Mashal, 2012). Likewise in neighbouring Pakistan, also in kindergartens, non-formal and formal, poetry and reading poems is common practice (Children's Global Network- Pakistan, 2012). But these 'learning environments' seem to be fading out rapidly, to the point of no return, in Asia also.

Luria (1990) approaches the issue from a different angle. According to her, small children form and are members, as it were, of a tribe with their own codes, mores, symbols, language and behaviours. Turning pre-schools and kindergartens into institutions of learning erodes this tribe, bowdlerises their stories and songs and allows it to be invaded by strangers. Perhaps it is also for this reason that 'literacy' is being re-defined in much wider terms, such as the "capacity to participate constructively in a pluralistic democracy facing complex domestic and global problems" (Murnane *et al*, 2012). In their view, having an extensive vocabulary is more than knowing a lot of words, it means having experience with and access to a wider world and to such things as nature, current events, relationships, shops, other customs and values, …or, in shorthand, to a widest possible culture. But we are not sure as to whether promoters of 'early learning' are inspired by this broader definition.

We are not inclined to come up with a definition of culture; we just assume that everybody knows what it is, and we are not concerned by the many variations or even contradictory notions. Most definitions draw on the one given by the anthropologist Edward B. Tylor in his book, Primitive Culture, published in 1871. According to him, culture is "that complex whole which

includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society." Varenne (2001) provides a list of definitions of culture, approached from a range of social sciences; we feel close to his quote from Levi-Strauss: "culture substitutes itself to life, in another way culture uses and transforms life to realise a synthesis of a higher order" (Levi Strauss, 1949, p.4). For us, the concept of 'culture' consists of dynamic constellations of interlinked views, perceptions and emotions. We, therefore, will use the term in a rather cavalier way, but will, when needed, try to be clear in our intentions. At this stage, we will use it to indicate that culture is also something that requires an effort, challenges children, fosters their curiosity and eagerness to explore, increases their faculties, talents and skills and makes them 'better' persons in the sense that it helps them to find, search for and value beauty and meaning in life as well as appreciate the connectedness of things organic and inorganic. ECD should therefore be much more than providing schooling to young children, or rather it should be far more concerned about understanding and responding to the multiple 'cultural' roles young boys and girls have. They act, among others, as

- Enjoyers
- Recipients
- Renewers
- Transformers
- Creators
- Channels
- Corrupters,
- Critics and also
- Victims of culture.

Middle-class people who live in high-income societies and who are concerned about the well-being and healthy development of young children living in high-income societies may find much of what follows less pertinent or even altogether irrelevant. The reason is that this text is intentionally biased in

favour of young boys and girls whose families lack the common privileges, freedoms, opportunities and prospects that the middle classes enjoy. "'There is an unfair access to the arts for our children, which brings consequences of major importance to our society" (Fiske, 1999).

We intend to try to find words for our disquiet and see whether we can find ways to make a positive contribution to the debate on ECD practices and policies, but at the same time we know that we will only partially be successful, if at all, and that this text will result in a piece of work similar to what sculptors used to call *non finito*, a combination of some detailed work and vague contours or just raw, unhewn material.

The assignment set before us is fivefold. Convincing arguments should be formulated that 'cultured' ECD has an advantage over 'learning-based/ scholastic-achievement-oriented approaches as to:

- First, how does it affect the current, *hic et nunc*[13], wellbeing of children; this regardless of their future, inside or outside the school or employment market? Thus questions should be tackled such as do the 'cultured' children feel better, are they healthier and do they enjoy life more?

- Second, what is its impact on the longer-term development of children; do they become more resilient, experience fewer obstacles when enrolling in formal basic education, perform better in school, enjoy a better physical and mental health, have a more positive outlook at life, participate more in social activities, and when adults, will they fare better, socially and economically?

- Third, to what extent do they succeed better in addressing such 'hot topics' as violence, discrimination and social exclusion of children of disadvantaged backgrounds, with impairments or handicaps and bridging the gender gap?

- Fourth, does it contribute more to reducing poverty, or help young boys and girls, both as children and later as adults, to cope with poverty?

- Fifth, does it contribute more to reducing inequality or help young boys and girls, both as children and later as adults, to cope with inequality?

13 Latin, meaning 'here and now'

This is a tall order and perhaps it would have been wiser and more feasible to take in hand the first three issues; as it is, even in this cluster, addressing even only one poses a daunting task. But then, a discussion of this nature within the context of ECD cannot be avoided. And we also would like to reflect on the more than vaguely-felt inkling that cultured ECD can play a positive role in dealing with deprivation, destitution, discrimination and inequity.

To be continued…

Note: This paper is based on part of a forthcoming publication from International Child Development Initiatives (ICDI), a Dutch non-profit organisation with a world wide brief, and a focus on developing countries. ICDI (http://www.icdi.nl/) promotes the well-being of children growing up in difficult circumstances.

References

Abu Gosh, Farid (undated/2003), *Walking the Tightrope*. Jerusalem: Modern Arab Press.

Anderson, G. E., A. D. Whipple, & S. R. Jimerson (2002) "Grade retention: Achievement and mental health outcomes." Position paper, National Association of School Psychologists. Accessed January 2013 at http://www.cdl.org/resource-library/articles/grade_retention.php

Baker, Al (2012), 'Despite obesity concerns, gym classes are cut', *The New York Times*, 10 July.

Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007). 'Early childhood program design and economic returns: Comparative benefit-cost analysis of the Abecedarian Program and policy implications', *Economics of Education Review*, 26(1), 113–125.

Beige Zhao, (2012), 'Foreword.' In Kin Bing Wu, Mary Eming Young and Jianhua Cai , eds., *Early Child Development in China, Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Improving Future Competitiveness*, Washington, D.C.:The World Bank

Children's Global Network –Pakistan (2012), '*Field notes from Vehari, Muzzaffargarh and Multan', Februatry*. Children's Global Network- Pakistan, Islamabad.

Dillon, Moya, (2012), 'Full-day Kindergarten rollout continuing across Durham', *Clatrington This Week*, 10 May.

EECERA (European Early Childhood Education Research Association), (2012), *Pre-Birth to Three: identities, learning, diversities*. Abstracts, Conference 28-31 August, Oporto. Accessed January 2013 at http://www.eecera.org/documents/pdf/conferences/abstract-books/oporto-2012.pdf

Eddy, Melissa, 2012, 'German child care stirs political battle', *New York Times*, 7 June.

European Economic and Social Committee (2010), 'Opinion of the European Economic and Social Committee on 'Early childhood care and education", 459th Plenary Session Held on 20 and 21 January 2010, *Official Journal of the Europeatn Union*, 14.12.

Ferguson, Will, (2005), *Canadiatn History for Dummies*, second edition, Mississauga: John Wiley.

Fiske, Edward B., (1999), *Champions of Change: the Impact of the Arts on Learning*, Washington D.C.: President's Committee on the Arts and the Humanities.

IDRC, UNICEF, UNESCO (1988), 'The Learning Environment of Early Childhood in Asia', UNESCO, Bangkok.

International Step by Step Association (2009), *Competent Teachers of the 21st Century: ISSA's Definition of Quality Pedagogy*. Budapest: International Step by Step Association.

Kin Bing Wu, Mary Eming Young and Jianhua Cai (2012), *Early Child Development in China, Breaking the Cycle of Poverty and Improving Future Competitiveness*, Washington, D.C.: The World Bank

Lake, Anthony (2012), 'A tipping point for child survival, health, and nutrition', *The Lancet*, 380, 9850, Pages 1286 - 1287, 13 October.

Luria, Alison (1990). *Don't tell the Grown-ups; Subversive Children's Literature*. London: Bloomsbury.

Mashal, Mujib (2012), 'Abdul Bari Jahani, the voice of southern Afghanistan, a historic region now engulfed in violence, speaks to Al Jazeera'. *Al Jazeera*, 6 March 2012.

McCain, M.N., Mustard, J.F., & McCuaig, K. (2011), *Early Years Study 3: Making Decisions, Taking Action*. Toronto: Margaret & Wallace McCain Family Foundation.

Murnane, Richard, Sawhill, I. and Snow, C. (2012), 'Literacy Challenges for the Twenty-First Century: Introducing the Issue', *The Future of Children*, 22, 21, pp. 3-15.

Okwany, Auma, Elizabeth Ngutuku, Arthur Muhangi and Kofi Marfo (2011) *The Role of Local Knowledge and Culture in Child Care in Africa: A Sociological Study of Several Ethnic Groups in Kenya and Uganda*. New York: Edwin Mellen Press.

Özgan, Habib (2010), 'Comparison of early childhood education (preschool education) in Turkey and OECD countries', *Educational Research and Review*, 5 (9), pp. 499-507.

Pierson, David (2012), 'Can playtime save the eyes of China's kids?' *Toronto Star*, 5 August. Accessed at http://www.thestar.com/news/world/2012/08/05/can_playtime_save_the_eyes_of_chinas_kids_fighting_a_rise_of_myopia.html

Richards, John (2012), *What CIDA Should Do: The Case for Focusing Aid on Better Schools*. Toronto: C.D. Howe Institute, Toronto.

Rosenberg, Tina (2012), 'For Healthy Aging, a Late Act in the Footlights', *The New York Times*, 16 August 2012.

Rouse C.E. and Barrow, L. (2006) U.S. Elementary and Secondary Schools: Equalizing Opportunity or Replicating the Status Quo? *The Future of Children*, 16, 2, pp. 99-123.

Rwatirera, G. M., Mugweni M. R.and Dhlomo, T.(2011), 'Integrating early childhood development (ECD) into mainstream primary school education in Zimbabwe: Implications to water, sanitation and hygiene delivery'. *Journal of African Studies and Development*, 3, (7), pp. 135-143.

Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). *Lifetime effects: The HighScope Perry Preschool study through age 40*. Educational Research Foundation, 14. Monographs of the High/Scope Foundation.

Ypsilanti: High/Scope Press.

Shmis, Tigran (2012), 'Modern Schools for Modern Times'. World Bank Voices Blog, 31 July 2012. Accessed at http://blogs.worldbank.org/voices/modern-schools-for-modern-times

Teotonio, I. (2012), 'New Academy is teaching the 'whole child'', *Toronto Star*,4 September, 2012.

UNESCO (2007), *Strong Foundations, EFA Monitoring Report*. Paris: UNESCO.

UNICEF (2012), *Committing to Child Survival: A Promise Renewed*. New York: UNICEF.

US National Governor's Association, (2012), *Governor's Role in Aligning Early Education and K-12 Programs: Challenges, Opportunities and Benefits for Children*. Washington D.C.: US National Governor's Association. Accessed January 2013 at http://www.nga.org/files/live/sites/NGA/files/pdf/1210AligningEarlyEducationPaper.pdf

Varenne, H. (2001) *The culture of culture*. Accessed April 2012 at http://varenne.tc.columbia.edu/hv/clt/and/culture_def.html

WHO (World Health Organisation), (2011), *Health Promotion Schools, An HPC Reference List*. Geneva: World Health Organisation.

Willen, Liz (2012), 'Without high-quality preschool, Mississippi's kids risk being left behind', *The Hechinger Report*, 27 July 2012.

World Bank (undated). Benefits of Early Childhood Programs. http://go.worldbank.org/2AHNORUYE0. Accessed: 9 March, 2012.

Wright, Christina (2012), 'Early Childhood Development: An essential building block', The World Bank, Washington. Blog entry: http://menablog.worldbank.org/early-childhood-development-essential-building-block