Impacting early childhood policy in East Asia and the Pacific through contextually-appropriate assessment of early child development

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Outline

• Summary of Impact
• Underpinning Research
• Engagement
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• Research Team
Summary of the Impact

International level

• A Best of UNICEF Research award for “policy impact, innovative design, thoughtful use of available data, methodological rigour and potential replicability in both the country of origin and other country contexts”

• Lauded as one of the major events influencing early childhood development policy and practice in the 2017 Lancet series on Early Childhood Development

• An important input for a monitoring indicator of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) Target 4.2
EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN EAST ASIA AND PACIFIC

Culturally sensitive testing

Monitoring early childhood development is clearly vital and yet there are at present no globally accepted tests that can be applied in all of the world’s regions. In part this is due to concerns that assessment tools conceived in developed Western countries may not be appropriate in some cultural contexts. Yet the need for such testing is acute in countries where a large proportion of children often suffer poor developmental outcomes and where government investment in early childhood development is limited.

To this end, the East Asia and Pacific Early Child Development Scales (EAP-ECDS) have been conceived and trialed over the period since 2010—the first such assessment tool to have been originated, developed and validated specifically with children from the East Asia and the Pacific region in mind. Following an initial piloting in three countries, Cambodia, China, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, Timor-Leste and Vanuatu participated in the

EAST ASIA AND THE PACIFIC

Validation, Finalization and Adoption of the East Asia-Pacific Early Child Development Scales (EAP-ECDS)

Nirmala Rao, Jin Sun, Marie Ng, Yvonne Becher, Diana Lee, Patrick Ip and John Bacon-Shone
Summary of the Impact

Country level

• First developmental assessment tool created on the basis of the culture and values of a world region

• Population-based *direct* assessment tool of *holistic* development of young children

• Equity-focussed national early childhood policy development

• Development of research capacity in eight low- and medium income countries (LMIC) in the East Asia-Pacific region
East Asia-Pacific Early Child Development Scales (EAP-ECDS)

Theory of Change

UNICEF-led development & monitoring of SDG indicator 4.2.2

EAP-ECDS
Psychometrically robust & culturally sensitive assessment tool

HKU Research Outputs
(Reports, evidence briefs & policy recommendations, journal publications)

Country team engagement and training
(government, researchers, NGO)

Development of research capacity in LMICS

Cross-country knowledge exchange
(e.g. regional workshops)

Policy makers’ knowledge & awareness enhanced

Further research, baseline assessment at the country level

Improved developmental outcome of young children in LMICs

UNICEF expertise and technical support

UNICEF, ARNEC, OSF
(funding, global/regional network, country-level presence)

Inputs

Process

Outputs

REF Impacts

Goal
Underpinning Research

Main objective of the EAP-ECDS project

To develop a psychometrically robust and contextually appropriate measure of early child development (ECD) to equip stakeholders across East Asia and the Pacific with a common measurement tool to assess the holistic developmental progress of children ranging in age from 3 to 5 years.
Underpinning Research

EAP-ECDS Project Implementation

In Phase VI (2018-2019), an impact case study will be carried out.
Engagement

Participating countries

[Map showing countries such as China, Myanmar, Lao PDR, Vietnam, Philippines, etc., with markers indicating ELDS used for database, Validation countries, Pilot countries, and Myanmar - Short Form only.]
Engagement

Partners and Process

- Technical support for EAP-ECDS development & finalisation
- Training country teams
- Providing training, quality assurance & advice in data collection
- Data analysis and writing reports and evidence briefs

Country teams:
- Organisation of country consultation meetings and training workshops
- Translation and adaptation and of EAP-ECDS
- Data collection and back translation
- Country-level follow up

- Funding
- Engaging governments and key stakeholders
- Country-level follow up and support for policy and programme development
- Global leader of SDG4.2.2 monitoring

- Organisation of regional workshops, training of trainers
- Dissemination through Asia-Pacific Regional ECD Conference, website, publications
- Custodian of EAP-ECDS to facilitate further administration

Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange
Impacts Achieved

Beneficiaries

1. Participating countries
   - Governments/policy makers: EAP-ECDS provide evidence and recommendations for policy development and programming
   - Researchers in LMICs: research capacity developed through HKU’s technical support and training

2. ARNEC — as the custodian of EAP-ECDS, the regional network is now equipped with a cutting-edge regional assessment tool to respond to country capacity development needs and further strengthen its partnerships

3. UNICEF — as a global leader of SDG Indicator 4.2.2 Monitoring, it has been informed by HKU research outputs and PI’s technical inputs to the indicator development process; Multiple Indicator Cluster Surveys (MICS) complemented with direct assessment based on EAP-ECDS
Impacts Achieved

Country Level

1. Contributions to National Early Childhood Policy Development

- Generation of country-specific findings and recommendations for 8 countries: Cambodia, China, Fiji, Mongolia, Myanmar, Papua New Guinea (PNG), Timor-Leste and Vanuatu

- Development of more equity-focussed national early childhood policy
  - Myanmar ECCD Policy, 2014
  - Fiji: Policy in Early Childhood Education, 2013
  - Mongolia: National Core Curriculum for Pre-school Education, 2015

- PNG commissioned the HKU team to develop a baseline survey of preschool facilities and minimum operating standards and to help draft their national early childhood care and education policy

- Cambodia: HKU was asked to conduct an in-depth study on the differences among population groups; to give a second training as part of the training programme for ECE curriculum revision

- Vanuatu is using the findings for curriculum review and teacher training
2. Development of research capacity in LMICs

• HKU team trained a local research team of each country and closely advised the data collection process

⇒ Transfer of research skills (e.g. sampling, survey methods, data collection and analysis) and quality assurance through HKU training and technical support of country research teams

⇒ Successful piloting and administration in all participating countries demonstrate the positive outcome of this approach
Impacts Achieved

Country Level

2. Development of research capacity in LMICs (cont’d)

• EAP-ECDS have been used in Cambodia, China and Papua New Guinea (PNG) for baseline assessment and programme evaluation

• HKU team conducted in July 2017 a regional training of trainers organised by ARNEC, with participants from Cambodia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Republic of Korea, Singapore, Timor Leste and Viet Nam
  ⇒ Cambodia, Malaysia, Timor Leste and Viet Nam showed interest to adapt and implement the EAP-ECDS

  ⇒ Cambodia and Viet Nam had been trained to administer the EAP-ECDS Short Form in December 2017
Impacts Achieved

Global Level

Timeline of events influencing ECD policies and practice
Impacts Achieved

Global Level

Contribution to the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.2

• EAP-ECDS widely cited and recognized; a Best of UNICEF Research Award

• PI invited to high-level international technical meetings that discussed the monitoring of the SDG Target 4.2.

• Team is developing a tool to measure SDG 4.2 which is largely influenced by the EAP-ECDS
Impacts Achieved

Global Level

Contribution to the monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 4.2

• Expected contribution to SDG Indicator 4.2.1 development and monitoring (the percentage of children under age 5 years who are developmentally on track in health, learning and psychosocial well-being)

⇒ to complement the Early Childhood Development Index (or ECDI), developed by UNICEF, which is collected through MICS parent survey and still requires development and testing.

⇒ EAP-ECDS are one of a handful of tools being considered to inform and complement the improved ECDI through direct child assessment
Research Team

The HKU Network for Early Childhood Development and Education Research [http://hkece.edu.hku.hk/](http://hkece.edu.hku.hk/) in the Faculty of Education conducts research on early childhood development and education, which provides evidence for early childhood policy-making.

We have:

• developed psychometrically robust and culturally-sensitive measures of both Early Child Development (ECD) and the quality of early childhood education (ECE);

• evaluated early childhood programmes

• analysed early educational policy in the Asia-Pacific region

• conducted empirical studies looking at the interplay of culture, policy and pedagogy in the early years

• examined early language and literacy development in Hong Kong’s multilingual context
Research Team

- Nirmala Rao (Principal Investigator)
- Yvonne Becher, Faculty Fellow and Clinical Child Psychologist from the Child Development Centre
- Phases I and II Co-I’s: Pat Engle (dec.) and Jin Sun (PDF at HKU and now Assistant Professor at EUHK)
- Phase III Co-I: Marie Ng (former Assistant Professor at HKU and now Associate Professor at University of Washington).
- Other researchers involved since Phase III: Diana Lee and Carrie Lau (Faculty of Education), Patrick Ip (LKS Faculty of Medicine) John Bacon-Shone (Faculty of Social Sciences), Eva Chen, Ben Richards, Mami Umayahara
Thank You!