

Comparative Analysis of Early Childhood Education in Asia-Pacific Region

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Abstract

This study explored the early childhood education quality assurance policies and mechanisms among the top ten performing countries in Asia-Pacific Region that belong to the top 45 countries across the world offering preschool education and ranked by the Economist Intelligence Unit in terms of quality in which high standard level policy, availability of preschool and affordability of the program. Early childhood practices were identified and used as basis for its comparative analysis in order to have a clear outline of each country. This research used qualitative content analysis. Data and materials needed were gathered through data minding from reliable sources like websites, and data bases. Moreover, these countries were chosen due to accessibility of available data shared in the public domain. Purposive sampling was utilized based on the selection criteria. Data collected was examined and analyzed so similarities and differences as well as issues and concerns were identified to come up with a model/quality framework for the 21st century early childhood education in the Philippines. Results showed that the ten countries offered Kindergarten and preschool classes for young children ages 1-5 years old. Some countries have mandatory preschool education, provide financial assistance, high teacher-pupil ratio, teachers with bachelor degree holder specializing early childhood education. The findings recommend that the Philippines through Department of Education may consider the quality standards of other countries to enhance the implementation of Early Childhood Education.

Keywords: Comparative Analysis, Early Childhood Education, Asia-Pacific Region.

I. INTRODUCTION

“Education is considered as the ultimate vehicles by which children progress. Employed by skills, values, attitudes and knowledge gained through education, children are endowed to endure in their adulthood by their ability to enjoy the quality of life and to work as well as they are enabled to defend themselves from any danger and harm, such as violence and discrimination, by acquainting themselves of their prerogatives” (ASEAN ECCDE, 2017). Education for young learners plays an important role in the life of the child and it is considered as one of the rights that a child of any age deserves. Countries and states all over the world generated programs that promote early childhood education in every aspect of child’s life.

Early childhood education is also regarded as a factor that contributes to the Sustainable

Development Goal that guarantees equitable and inclusive quality education that also stimulates opportunities for a life-long learning for all. The key to achieving SDG goal 4, is quality and inclusive education for everybody confirms the belief that education is one of the most effective and powerful medium for sustainable development. This desired result makes sure that all boys and girls finish free primary and secondary studies when 2030 comes (SDG, 2016).

According to UNESCO Office of Bangkok (2014), policies in education can have a crucial role in modifying the educational outcomes and landscapes of learning. It is in the policy of countries or state that made it excel in the aspect of education. In this policy, goals, curriculum, programs, monitoring and coherent planning are needed in order to be well implemented.

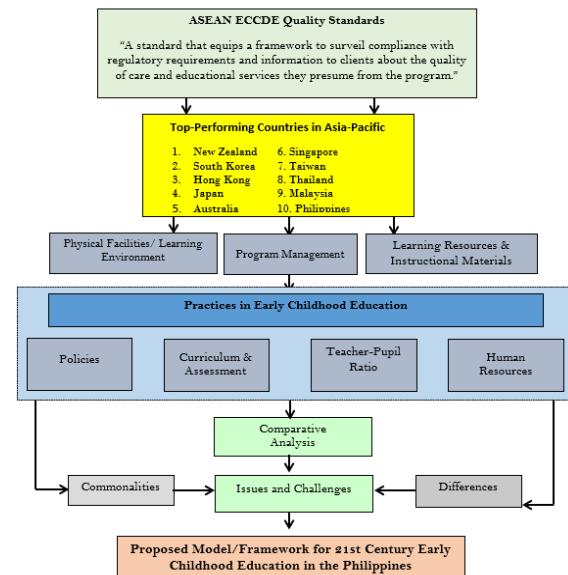
Many researches have been directed to the early childhood care, improvement and education status among nations which is driven by the goal of evaluating the quality of education they provided especially the policies and programs. The study conducted by the "Economist Intelligence Unit" (EIU, 2012) "Starting Well: Benchmarking Early Childhood Education Across the World" revealed the ranking of 45 countries preschool program in terms of quality of services. They devise a tool to rank preschool provisions across 45 countries. The primary objective is to assess the degree to which quality systems are available to all children. The research conducted divulged that Japan (21), South Korea (10), Malaysia (36), Singapore (29), Thailand (38), Taiwan (30), Australia (28), New Zealand (9), Hong Kong (19) and Philippines (43) provided quality preschool services. Of the chosen countries under study, the educational scenarios focused on multi-level area. These countries belong to Asia-Pacific Region and they are chosen to be the subjects of this study. Among the 45 countries being rank, New Zealand, South Korea, Hong Kong, and Japan belong to the top 20 countries. While the countries belong to the bottom 20 are Australia, Singapore, Taiwan, Malaysia, Thailand and Philippines.

While in the Philippines, early childhood education system recognizes mandatory and compulsory Kindergarten education because it is important for the development of the Filipino child "for it is the period when the brain develops at its sharpest". They are being prepared to be life-long learners and absorber of learning as they learn the mother tongue on the next level of their education (Sumalinog, 2019). Philippines ranked 43rd out of 45 countries being probed. This revealed that there is a need to level up the services and programs in our country, to be at par or become much better compared with countries across the world.

The researcher, being an early childhood educator for 29 years observed that some existing childcare lack quality standard system to comply with. What is in the paper is quite different from what is being practice in the

school. There are a lot of changes but lack of awareness or training in the side of the teachers. Classrooms are over-crowded, materials are not enough for all children, and teacher-pupil ratio is high and hires teachers that are not license. It is on these bases that this research is conducted to explore the Early Childhood Education assurance of its quality among the top performing countries in Asia Pacific with the desire of making our country globally competitive. This will delve on the best practice these countries employed in terms of policies, curriculum and assessment, physical facilities/learning environment, the learning resources and instructional materials used, teacher-pupil ratio, on how the program are being managed and the qualifications of the administrators and teachers. The results of this study are envisioned to be integrated in Philippines Early Childhood Education program to make it readily respond to the needs, diversity of the students, communities and schools and circumstances with the use of practices that are culturally sensitive and developmentally appropriate. Furthermore, seeks to warrant that all Filipino children shall have equal opportunity of having quality education.

II. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND



This study is anchored on the Early Childhood Care, Development and Education Quality Standards (ASEAN ECCDE, 2017). Because of the significance of the formative year's

experiences of the developing brain of the children, it is crucial that the services of care, development and education provided to children during the phase have the fundamentals of quality.

The ASEAN ECCDE quality standards works as a guide to ASEAN Member State for assessing whether the services delivered by private and government sectors meets the fundamentals of quality care, education and development. Recognizing the prerogatives of all learners to have right to development of their potential to the optimum. The ASEAN Quality Standards for children is to assess the services proposed for the care, development and education for ASEAN children known as "childcare services". This standard of quality has nine (9) components with sub-components and indicators. (1) Relationship. It is basic to build positive relationships to quality early childhood care. The created relationship among the staff and teachers is considered crucial because loving, warm relationship of the staff with all children that they are taking care of affect the surrounding in the center and the development of the learning of the children accordingly.

Thus, it is important to build positive relationships among these types of relationships to quality early childhood education (ASEAN ECCDE, 2017). (2) Curriculum is known as the voluntary practice that permit children to acquire and generate knowledge, skills, dispositions, concepts, and attitudes. The experiences are acquired through selected materials, with adults and other children and activities that are carefully planned in the contexts of respect for individual differences and cultural diversity. The scheme, substance and application of a curriculum in early childhood are relevant contributors to the childcare services' quality. (3) Learning and Teaching – in a program in early childhood, the strategies and methods that guide the learning of a child, behavior and support for the all-inclusive development of children are required to supply children with a proper start in their foundation. (4) Assessment of Child Progress –

this covers procedures utilized to secure reliable and valid information about the development of individual child. Procedures also compose evaluating the information in the assessment and relaying the details to parents or guardians. (5) Safety, Health and Nutrition – great wellbeing, security and appropriate sustenance are essential components for children's development, advancement and learning. (6) Physical Environment - incorporates area of the childcare focus, space, outfitting, materials utilized and hardware. (7) Staff Qualification – their commitments are noteworthy to the nature of early childhood. (8) Home, School and Community Partnership – setting up association with home and network will contribute essentially to the nature of early childhood programs. Through correspondence and cooperation, the staff can set up a decent working association with families which will bolster children's endeavors to develop and learn and the assets in the network can be a powerful system for improving the children's encounters and prosperity. (9) Leadership and Management – so as to manage a high caliber early education program, manager needs to have a wide assortment of abilities.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

This research assessed/explored the Early Childhood Education quality assurance policies and mechanisms among the top performing countries in Asia Pacific Region during the Academic Year 2018-2019 as basis for crafting a Quality Framework Model for 21st Century Early Childhood Education in the Philippines. Specifically, the study aimed to gather data on the following:

1. What are the practices of the early childhood education in the Asia Pacific Regions on the following indicators:
 - 1.1. Policies,
 - 1.2. Curriculum and Assessment,
 - 1.2.1. Learning Framework;
 - 1.2.2. Learning Assessment; and
 - 1.2.3. Content/Learning Areas
 - 1.3. Teacher-Pupil Ratio,
 - 1.4. Physical Facilities/Learning Environment and Learning Resources

- 1.5 . Human Resources,
- 1.5.1 Qualification Standards for Principals/Supervisors and
- 1.5.2 Teachers and
- 1.6 Program Management?
- 2. Compared and contrasted the early childhood program of these countries based on the aforementioned indicators.
- 3. Issues and concerns on quality assurance of Early Childhood programs and services of the ten countries?
- 4. Based on the findings of the study, what Quality Framework Model for 21st Century Early Childhood Education program in the Philippines can be crafted?

IV. METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research is a qualitative content-analysis designed to investigate and interpret the data of Early Childhood Education programs of the countries under study. Qualitative content-analysis is a method of research for the interpretation of the content of the data which is subjective through classifying systematically the coding process and in the identification of patterns or themes.

The similarities and differences of the aforementioned countries underwent analysis. Issues and concerns on quality affirmation of Early Childhood programs and services of the ten countries was also delved. A Model/Quality Framework for implementation of quality assurance policies and mechanisms for the Early Childhood Education in the Philippine was proposed.

V. SOURCES OF DATA

The researcher selected ten countries that belong to the top 45 countries across the world offering preschool education and ranked by the Economist Intelligence Unit (2013) in terms of quality in which high standard level policy are at a high level, availability of preschool in both rural and urban areas and affordability of the program to all families in the country. Moreover, these countries were chosen due to accessibility of available data shared in the

public domain. Other countries were not chosen because of their limited data and restrictions about other information needed in the study.

Purposive sampling was utilized based on the selection criteria cited above. In this study the following 10 Asia-Pacific countries included were as follows: Australia, Hongkong, Taiwan, Malaysia, Singapore, New Zealand, Malaysia, Japan, South Korea, and Philippines as regards to policy, assessment and curriculum, physical facilities/learning environment, learning resources/instructional materials, human resources and program management.

VI. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Early Childhood Education Practices in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Region

ECE is among the most significant determiners that young learners need to acquire. It serves as the best weapon every child must possess in order to survive and to cope up with the journey of life. In every country, education must have best practice employed in terms of policies, curriculum and assessment, physical facilities, learning resources, teacher pupil ratio, program management and qualifications of principal and teachers. These practices must be implemented and followed to keep track on the main purpose of doing it.

Policies.

Policy on Quality

In achieving the desired outcomes of an early childhood education depends on ensuring good quality. Quality refers to degree of excellence. It is a set of standards of something that is measured against other things of a similar kind. But what directs quality in every school? There are many ways to ensure quality: raising the qualifications of hiring teachers, setting clear curriculum guidelines, lowering the high teacher-ratio and consistent monitoring of the program. All of these areas ensure quality that facilitates better learning outcomes.

As to quality, Table 1 showed that among the selected top performing countries in Asia

Pacific Region, government sets basic standards or quality assurance framework for an effective and efficient early childhood education. Since quality assurance framework plays a vital role

in ensuring quality of ECE service. The countries under study have a structure set up for their ECE settings and have made guidelines that deal with various aspects.

TABLE 1. Policy on Quality of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Regions

Selected Countries	Quality
New Zealand	<p>A compulsory educational programs system is set up (Te Whariki Educational) for the whole ECEC age group.</p> <p>Administration and staff quality and child improvement are normally observed. The office for education review is in charge of outer assessment surveys of a wide range of early childhood administrations, which center around quality areas.</p>
South Korea	<p>Visits related to quality check-up are created by superintendents in the local area who must look on in each center two times a year to check curriculum and quality instruction.</p> <p>Apart from the inspection system that is external, the director in the Kindergarten acts a key role in keeping track on the quality.</p>
Hong Kong	<p>The effect of early childhood education in global scale trends, the Education Bureau visit the kindergarten schools regularly to give advice to school administrators if they follow the Operation Manual for Pre-Primary Institution to maintain the quality. The manual provides school operators necessary information regarding the operations of the school.</p>
Japan	<p>To encourage quality, early childhood educations design and implements curriculum and standards, improve qualifications of teachers and staff, sets out quality regulations and goals, and involve homes and communities.</p>
Australia	<p>Early childhood education institution will nurture their development, deliver the highest possible quality of educational outcomes for all children and safeguard children's well-being.</p>
Singapore	<p>The Child Care Centers Act and Child Care Centre Regulations of 1988 were built up to control, permit and direct child care focuses from ages year and a half to 7 years. Kindergarten is managed under the Education Act and is for children from ages 4-6 years of age.</p>
Taiwan	<p>Early childhood education has advanced essentially in the course of recent years. It has turned out to be progressively perceived as a fundamental piece of the national instruction framework.</p>
Malaysia	<p>Education is intended to deliver resident who are proficient and competent, good models.</p>
Thailand	<p>Thai Constitutions offers significance to family expressing that gov't must give essential services to children and family, particularly in giving consideration and advancement of young children.</p> <p>The 1999 Educ. Act underlines equivalent and quality instruction and advancement for all children.</p>

Philippines DepEd Order sets the fundamental benchmarks for a productive and successful Kindergarten education program usage for both open and non-public schools everywhere throughout the nation and will fill in as the reason for accreditation and acknowledgment and in maintaining quality education.

Participation in Early Childhood Education can positively affect children's initial learning advancement, also on ensuing results, for example, scholarly achievement, work advertise execution and financial versatility. The advantages of ECE on child results, anyway relies upon high caliber. Settings and program that have an quality of high level are decidedly connected with children's social, cognitive and conduct improvement, with burdened children profiting fundamentally from top notch settings (OECD, 2011; Gambaro et al. 2014).

Quality affirmation on the hand is a build and a training whose objective is to improve quality through the use of models and benchmarks against which proof or execution will be measured (Ishmnie, et al., 20019). It is required so as to decide or check whether projects and administrations achieve public expectations. Quality is projected as critical in early childhood education program. Preschool of high quality gives children a solid begin the way that prompts school or a vocation. The Korea Child Care Promotion Institute, takes care in observing the childcare habitats for kids matured 0-5 years, whereas, kindergartens are checked by provincial and neighborhood training workplaces, under the sponsorship of the Ministry of Education. ECE administrations might be required to take measures to address deficiencies, for example, interest in preparing to improve their dimension of value (OECD, 2015).

Moreover, Hong Kong government has gained some momentum on the giving care for the children. One of the legislature's most noteworthy late accomplishments has been its presentation of a quality affirmation system in caring young children through distinguishing proof of Execution Pointers. In Japan, ECE policy is a topic of aroused interest where developing quality in the early education for children is a subject of progressing relevance.

To encourage, OECD determined five policy levers that are effective: curriculum and guidelines; quality goals and regulation; home and community engagement, research and evaluation and workforce (Taguma, et al., 2012).

While in Australia, not all young learners experience a high caliber early education. Such a large number of children in Australia are passing up high caliber early learning chances. In the course of the most recent 10 years, the governments and the more extensive Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) segment have been striving to execute real changes to improve the nature of the early childhood framework (OECD, 2017; Steering Committee for the Review of Government Service Provision, 2017). The continuous evaluation of early learning and care against the seven key quality models, has shown that there is still advancement to be made (Torii, K. et al., 2017).

Since the start of the 21st Century, the government of Singapore "has put considerable assets in planning and implementing arrangements and techniques to raise the nature of preschool education in a few high-influence zones" (Tan, 2007). While extensive endeavors have been made to advance a solid begin for each child since 2000, the recently declared systems and interest in early childhood inquire about sign unequivocally a convincing state intrigue and responsibility in quickening enhancements in childcare Singapore (Tan, 2017). In Taiwan, early childhood education and childcare administrations have been overseen by two separate government divisions for an extremely lengthy time-frame. Preschool education and childcare were individually under the support of instruction and welfare specialists (Chiu, 2011). Kindergarten is a solitary sort of training office in the educational

system, presently directed by the Kindergarten Instruction Act (Wei, 2011).

For as far back as two decades, the administration of Malaysia has put a ton of consideration into expanding quality control in Early Childhood Care and Education. This association mirrors an expanded acknowledgment that quality solid starts to instruction has a long haul psychological and social advantage for children and add to the nation's monetary advancement (ECCE Committee, 2011). In the same way as other creating nations in Asia-Pacific area, Malaysia has received this idea of value as a way to keep on gaining monetary ground which it has been upheld by means of its national instructive arrangements (Kamerman, 2006).

Thailand 1997 Constitution gives importance to family and their children declaring that they must be provided with basic services particularly in consideration and advancement

of young learners (UNESCO, 2017). While in the Philippines, the Kindergarten Education Act and the Enhanced Basic Education Act are significant achievement that gives Department of Education the official command to offer kindergarten instruction to every one of the multi year-old children and give equivalent chances to all children. Putting resources into early learning is a generally acknowledged methodology, upheld by broad proof, for the country and families to cultivate children's advancement, establish the frameworks for future learning and prosperity, and decrease downstream use on wellbeing, welfare and equity (Vandell, et al., 2010). While all kids profit by high caliber early learning, inquire about likewise demonstrates that children encountering larger amounts of detriment advantage the most, and can even make up for lost time to their more advantaged companions.

Table 2. Policy on Availability of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Regions

Selected Countries	Availability
New Zealand	ECEC services offer incorporated projects that incorporate instruction and childcare administrations. There are five primary kinds of ECEC settings, which are extensively part between focus based arrangements, play focuses and locally established training and care.
South Korea	ECEC services incorporate both official and different establishments. Official kindergartens and child care offices have formal acknowledgment from the services and get sponsorships.
Hong Kong	The administration gives nine years of free and obligatory instruction to all children from Primary One to Secondary Three.
Japan	Education and care are available and divided into day care and kindergarten program. Almost a hundred percentage of pre elementary school age children participate in early childhood program.
Australia	Place is available and must fit the necessities as far as area. Preschools are perhaps situated on school premises, situated alongside schools, or exist as remain solitary premises
Singapore	Childcare Centers and Kindergarten go under the support of the MCYS and MOE. Childcare Centers are authorized by the MCYS while Kindergartens are under the supervision of MOE. A three-year organized program for Nursery, Kindergarten 1 and 2 is accommodated children aged 4-6 years.

Malaysia	Early childhood Education is proposed by both private and public sector. It's also provided by religious bodies and the state religious department. Information revealed that most of the children have no difficulties in accessing ECCE
Thailand	National Education Act of 1999, early childhood education gives: tuition based schools, Early Childhood Development foundations, and those under purview of Buddhist or different religious establishments and learning centers sorted out by non-formal training offices; people, families, networks and private associations.
Philippines	Kindergarten Education Act gives equivalent chances to all children to open and compulsory kindergarten education and must be offered to all five year old children.

Table 2 shows the policy on availability of early childhood education in selected countries in Asia Pacific Region. The organization of ECE services changes enormously from nation to nation as far as structure, yet in addition with respect to the period of children's going to various sorts of settings or the force of the child cooperation in various settings.

In New Zealand, the broad access to ECE administrations for children from 3 to 5 years old, giving completely sponsored admission to pre-ECE for as long as 20 hours out of each week. South Korea's ECE services include both official and other institutions. Children care offices take into account children from birth to preschool, and the service is likewise offered children in the lower reviews after school. Official kindergarten childcare facilities have formal recognition from the ministries. In terms of availability, all Hong Kong kindergarten and childcare centers are accredited with the Education Bureau give children services from 3-6 years old. In Japan, care and training for newborn children and young learners is accessible in kindergartens and day care focuses. Kindergarten gives three years of consideration and instruction for youngsters three years old or more established, who proceed to enter primary school in the wake of completing kindergartens. School education in Australia is all around accessible for children of necessary age. State governments are required to guarantee the arrangement of tutoring to all offspring of school age and it is conveyed through both government and non-government

not revenue driven, private for benefit and private non-benefit associations.

While in Singapore, practically all children complete a 1 year preschool education before admission to grade school. Be that as it may, preschool instruction isn't obligatory and is given basically by the private area. The Ministry of Education supervises the offering of Kindergarten. Taiwan's Early Childhood Education has developed essentially in the course of recent years. Understanding Taiwanese ECE advancement requires seeing how Taiwan created as a general public. Instruction and care for young children has turned out to be perceived progressively as a basic piece of national training framework drawing the consideration of government authorities and regular citizen alike.

Open areas included are the Ministry of Education, Service of Rustic and Local Improvement and the Branch of National Trustworthiness and Solidarity. Thailand's Early Childhood Education deals with children aged 0-5 years old. Education for early youth care and improvement with sorted out learning exercises incorporate nursery and day care being offered by both open and private foundations and for over 3 years of age children, child advancement focus , kindergarten and preschool classes.

While in the Philippines, the government responded to the demand of mandatory and compulsory kindergarten education that provides fair chances for all children (at least 5 years old) (Belsky, 2009). The inclusion of

child care centers in every country is deemed important because it can give positive influence on the development of the child (Bennet, 2011).

Table 3. Policy on Affordability of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Regions

Selected Countries	Affordability
New Zealand	It is the country's responsibilities for funding ECEC. Political need is being given to the consideration and young children's education. Early childhood education and care administrations are additionally supported by private sources, for the most part through expenses paid by guardians.
South Korea	Child care charges fluctuate crosswise over nearby authorities who assign the expense levels. There is a checked contrast among public and private child vehicle expenses in the different zones. The legislature is focused on offering need to expense bolster structures and approaches for low salary families. Kindergarten programs in public are bit by bit moving to turn out to be free for all children.
Hong Kong	Quality Kindergarten Free Education Scheme which came into effect. This new scheme was designed to largely replace the Pre-primary education coupon scheme. The primary strategy objective is still to give a quality, reasonable training from the early years, however it additionally hopes to improve openness to various methods of administrations which suit explicit requirements.
Japan	The local and national governments give sponsorships to families children joined up with preschool and day care dependent on financial foundation and pay. The legislature gives a few types of budgetary help for low pay understudies. Necessary training understudies who meet the pay qualification prerequisites can get Education Assistance through the Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare.
Australia	Free endowments are accessible in acknowledgment that most families can't bear the cost of the full expense of ECE. In gov't educational systems, parent are approached to make willful budgetary commitments to the school. The sums are typically set by individual schools.
Singapore	Providing affordable education administrations is a key need for the legislature. For childcare, children get a fundamental appropriation and lower and center salary families may get expansion sponsorships. Lower and center pay kids joined up with kindergartens kept running by the AOP or MOE are likewise qualified for the Kindergarten Fee Assistance Scheme.
Taiwan	The push to make ECE progressively moderate and available to the families was base up in nature. The government has implemented initiative to address the concern; created a voucher program on ECE, provided education free of charge for 5 yr old and supported young children from families in need.
Malaysia	Monetary budget distributed for early childhood instruction is given to 3 services/offices. Budgetary help or Child support is provided to family with kids for food for the everyday costs while school help is given to class going children.

Thailand	In terms of kindergartens/ and preschool classes and Child Development Centers, the major funding source is the government. For Kindergartens and preschool classes in the school system of public. Free of charge for all services.
Philippines	Free Kindergarten education for public schools.

Policy on Affordability

Affordability of early childhood education is another concern in terms policy. Financial assistance and free education in child learning centers is a vital component to supplement the needs of families and their children. Children who go to a quality early childhood education administration profit advantage that last through to their initial time in school and past (Wylie, et al., 2006). Table 3 shows the policy on affordability of the selected Asia-Pacific countries. The cost of New Zealand's early education for young children is at present 32 percent more reasonable than it was before. Early childhood instruction in Hong Kong, South Korea, Singapore and Japan are provided with free access in education. South Korea public kindergarten programs are slowly becoming free of charge for all children. Hong Kong is providing free education scheme for quality kindergarten came.

Australia is also providing fee subsidies in acknowledgment that most families can't manage the cost of the full expense of ECE. The district right now gives charge sponsorships to qualified families as Childcare Assistance and Childcare Rebate. Preschool participation is financed by the state and Regions either by guiding subsidizing to administrations or joining this financing with expense appropriations. In Taiwan, education project with free tuition for all 5 year old children was launched in 2010, the modified project adopts the "quasi compulsory education" as its main concept. Funding for early childhood education in Thailand involve private sectors, government, communities, NGOs, external sources, and parents.

As indicated by Reynolds (2000), long haul impacts incorporate decrease in remediation and task to a custom curriculum, an expansion in the secondary school graduates, high rates of

business and lower examples of wrongdoing. Moreover, children who take an interest in early youth training perform well in school, and they become gainful individuals from the network and society. Preschool youngsters in sponsored focus based consideration have better pre-scholarly results contrasted with children in controlled plans.

Curriculum and Assessment

Curriculum and Assessment are considered important in providing quality to the services given to young children and their family. The scheme, substance and application of curriculum and assessment in early childhood are relevant contributors to the childcare services' quality. In order to assess this component, there is a need to look into its learning framework, learning assessment and the content/learning area each center is providing.

Learning Framework

All children are brought into the world with tremendous potential. Quality early learning encourages them to start to understand that potential and construct a solid establishment for later learning and forever. Guaranteeing the nature of learning, requests a structure that will illuminate the learning zones or substance. As worldwide natives in a quickly changing and progressively associated world, children should be versatile, inventive and strong. They have to figure out how to realize so they can connect with new settings, openings and difficulties with confidence and cleverness. Children need curriculum that emphasizes the development of skills, attitudes, dispositions and knowledge that support lifelong learning.

Table 4 shows the early childhood education learning framework of the top performing countries in Asia-Pacific Region. In New

Zealand practically all children go to an early learning program for a supported timeframe. The administrations accessible are assorted. They have a wide scope of possession and administration structure just as various methods of insight and working models. The educational

modules holds the guarantee that all youngsters will be enabled to learn with and nearby others by drawing in encounters that have significance for them.

TABLE 4. Learning Framework of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Region

Countries	Early Learning Curriculum	Description of Early Learning Standards/Competencies
New Zealand	Te Whariki: Early Childhood Curriculum	Inclusive Curriculum
South Korea	National Kindergarten Curriculum	National Kindergarten Curriculum Standard 2000
Hong Kong	Guide To The Pre-Primary Curriculum	Holistic Curriculum 2007
Japan	National Curriculum Standards for Kindergartens and Guidelines for Nursery Care	Course of Study for Kindergarten and Guidelines for Nursery Care
Australia	The Early Years Learning Framework for Australia	Belonging, Being and Becoming
Singapore	Nurturing Early Learners : Guidelines for Curriculum and Pedagogy	Curriculum 2003
Taiwan	Standards of Kindergarten Curriculum	Temporary Guidelines for Preschool Activities and Curriculum
Malaysia	National Early Childhood Care and Education Curriculum for Children 0-4 years old 2011	National Preschool Curriculum Standard 2010
	National Preschool Curriculum Standard (NPCS) for 4-6 year old children	
Thailand	Curriculum for Pre-Primary Education for 3-5 year old children developed by the Ministry of Education	Early Childhood Behavioral competencies for 0-3 and 3-5 years old
Philippines	Kindergarten Framework	Standards and Competencies for 5 year old Filipino Children

The Educational programs Improvement Gathering in Hogkong has distributed the reexamined the “Guide to the Pre-primary Curriculum” which has been completely

actualized in all pre-essential foundations since 2007. The guide underlines that early childhood education establishes the framework forever long learning and entire individual

advancement. The guiding principle of early youth instruction lies in "child centeredness". In Japan, the first Nursing Guidelines was implemented not exclusively to kindergartens, yet additionally to day nurseries and home instruction, with many suggested exercises, for example, perception, cadenced activities, rest, free play, music, narrating pictures, crafted works, sensational, and so on. The MOE of Singapore first propelled a curriculum system in 2003, which was invigorated in 2012 to advance quality guidelines in the conveyance of kindergarten programs over the area. In Malaysia, the National Preschool Curriculum is the main thorough national educational programs created for the preschools. Taiwan on the other hand, revised and published the Standards for Kindergarten Curriculum.

In Thailand, the Ministry of Education (MOE) and the Department of Curriculum and Instruction Development (DCID), has created and issued a Curriculum Guidelines for Preschool Education (1997) for the infant to 3 and 3 to 5 years age group. The early childhood education learning framework of the these chosen countries place a high emphasis in learning basic concepts, nurturing in them positive attitudes and developing basic skill. These countries believed that by creating such standards it will foster children to achieve a holistic development. Play is integrated in the activities to nurture the holistic development of a child.

TABLE 5. Learning Assessment of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Regions

Countries	Checklist	Anecdotal Record	Running Report	Observation	Portfolio	Interview
New Zealand	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
South Korea		✓	✓	✓		✓
Hong Kong	✓			✓		
Japan	✓	✓		✓		✓
Australia	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Singapore	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓
Taiwan	✓	✓		✓	✓	
Malaysia	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	

Thailand	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Philippines	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
Total	9	7	5	10	7	5

Table 5 shows the different learning assessments used in the chosen countries under study. Assessment in early childhood is certifiably not another training. Early childhood experts utilize a scope of appraisal devices to recognize children's associations, discussions, thoughts and articulations so as to all the more likely see every child's qualities, capacities and interests.

In New Zealand, children in 3-4 years of age in a privately owned preschool and those in 5 years old in private and public preschools are all the more frequently scholastically evaluated constantly utilizing developmental appraisal set by the individual preschools. Developmental appraisal evaluates children inside the setting of their regular learning encounters and comprehension picked up, are utilized as the reason for future instructing and learning (Broadfoot, 2007). Focus on assessment should also include the grammar of the young learners (Sumalinog, 2018a) as well as their listening comprehension skills so they could be at par with the rest of the world (Sumalinog, 2018b).

In South Korea the tool most frequently used is the observation method. Child assessment in this country has been actualized to differing degrees, running from poor to precise, as per settings since this methodology has not been ordered or seen as significant by instructors overviewed in studies (Lee, 2004). Be that as it may, child appraisal has been ending up increasingly orderly since the ongoing usage of kindergarten assessment and childcare certification techniques by government. These pieces of information are recorded and created. Early childhood experts viably watch children, pick the best technique to record what they have observed and apply their expert mastery to decipher this proof of learning and improvement. Singapore's, assessment instruments are utilized to evaluate the ideal learning in ECE communities for youngsters infant to 5 years of age through watching, chatting with kids and guardians, and utilizing contextual investigations, activities and item examination exercises of the child (NAEYC, 2009).

TABLE 6. Content/Learning Areas of Early Childhood Education in per Developmental Domain

Countries	Self, Social & Emotional	Cognitive	Language/Communication	Physical/ Health	Aesthetic/ Creative	Moral/ Religious	Techno-Logical
New Zealand	Socio-emotional	Numeracy Problem-solving Environmental Awareness	Literacy	Physical	Art Music Dance	Values	
South Korea	Social relationship	Numeracy Creative Thinking	Communication Skills	Physical Health Nutrition Safety	Aesthetic Creativity		

Hong Kong	Self and Society	Early Mathematics Science Technology	Language	Physical fitness and Health	Arts		
Japan	Society	Nature Numeracy	Language and Expression	Health	Drawing and Handicraft Musical Rhythm		
Australia	Social and Emotional	Cognitive	Linguistic	Personal Habits	Creative	Spiritual	ICT Literacy
Singapore	Self & Social Awareness	Numeracy Environ mental Awareness	Language And Literacy (English)	Healthy Habits Motor skills	Aesthetic creative expression	Sound moral values	
Taiwan	Socio-emotional	Cognitive	Language	Soft and gross motor		Religious /Moral Values	
Malaysia	Socio-emotional (self-esteem)	-Early Mathematics -Early Science -Sensorial	Language Communication	Physical	Aesthetic Creativity	Moral Spirituality	Basic ICT Literacy
Thailand	Socio-emotional	Cognitive		Physical			
Philippines	Socio-emotional	Cognitive	Language	Physical health & well-being	Creative Aesthetic	Character and Values	
				Motor			

The decision on the curriculum adds to every child's learning and advancement results in connection to their personality, association with network, prosperity, viability, as communicators and certainty, as students.

Teacher-Pupil Ratio

A teacher-pupil ratio is a measure of the quantity of children for whom every child care supplier is dependable. The instructor-student proportion is typically expressed in numerical terms. For instance, if every parental figure thinks about 10 children, the proportion is 1 to

10. All in all, lower staff-to-children proportions are one marker of a higher-quality program in light of the fact that a child care supplier can be progressively sensitive and receptive to children's needs on the off chance that he/she is in charge of a fewer group of children.

TABLE 7. Teacher-Pupil Ratio of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Regions

Countries	Teacher-Pupil Ratio
New Zealand	1:14
South Korea	1:16
Hong Kong	1:15
Japan	1:15
Australia	1:30
Singapore	1:15
Taiwan	1:10
Malaysia	1:25
Thailand	1:16
Philippines	1:25

Table 7 shows the teacher-pupil ratio in the countries under study. It reflects the standard teacher-pupil ratio of class size. The teacher-pupil ratio varies from each country. Taiwan has the lowest ratio, while New Zealand has 14 pupils for every preschool education. While in Hong Kong, Japan and Singapore, there are 15 pupils for every teacher. South Korea and Thailand have the same teacher-pupil ratio. Philippines and Malaysia have the same teacher-pupil ratio of 20 per class. In Australia, it has the highest ratio of 30 pupils in each teacher.

The finding further implies that for early childhood education to maintain the quality they should have small number of pupils in class. Class size refers to the number of children learning in one space at one time. Reducing the population of children in the classroom does not mean to improve the learning. Teachers need to adjust their teaching methods and provide more frequent feedback and one-to-one interaction. When the class size is few, practitioners have better opportunities for one-on-one interaction with each child. According to Kambuga (2013), that teacher has a crucial role in the classroom. She is the major character for applying quality in her pedagogical activities.

Physical Facilities/Learning Environment and Learning Resources

Most nations in Asia-Pacific Region have explicit prerequisites and conditions set for early youth training focuses as far as physical offices, learning condition and assets. These prerequisites and conditions must be met and kept up for enlistment permitting, authorization to work or certification. Some are delivered as rules in accomplishing quality markers in Early Childhood Education.

For example in Malaysia, the Ministry of Education has figured the Specification on Building Space, Equipment, Furniture, and Decorations for all preschools to control MOE in planning, arranging, and providing new centers with furniture and decorations. In Thailand, the structure of the offices is proper for the activity of a school. The open air and indoor spaces, building, apparatus and fittings are reasonable for their motivation, including supporting the entrance of each child. Furthermore, Taiwan, the nature of premises, just as the well-being and security necessities for youngsters focuses, is ordered through Childcare Center

While in Australia, Early Childhood Facilities Guidelines and Design Standards educate the arranging and configuration regarding new early childhood offices and the developing again the existing offices. In New Zealand, the quality preschool condition is recorded in the Core Indicators for Minimum Quality Standards for ECE. In Hong Kong, Kindergartens build a stimulating learning environment that provides learners experience and interests in life, by putting up various learning centers. In the Philippines, through Administrative Order No. 29, s.2004 the Department of Social Welfare and Development defined the standards for outdoor and indoor learning environment for the children in the day care centers.

TABLE 8. Qualification Standards for Principals/Supervisors of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Region

Countries	Post Graduate Degree Holder	College Degree Holder	High School Diploma Holder	Training/ Certificate/ Credits	Registration Licensure	Examination Passer	Character Attributes
New Zealand		✓		✓	✓	✓	
South Korea		✓		✓	✓		✓
Hong Kong		✓		✓		✓	✓
Japan	✓			✓			✓
Australia	✓			✓		✓	
Singapore		✓		✓	✓		✓
Taiwan		✓		✓	✓		
Malaysia	✓			✓	✓		✓
Thailand	✓			✓			✓
Philippines	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

In Japan, the necessity for a head is an ace's or four year certification, and an authentication on ECD mindfulness raising workshop and preparing. In Australia, principals must be a post graduate holder or an advanced education holder. Since 2011, the Australian expert standard for Standards has given an open explanation setting out what school principals are required to know, comprehend and do to prevail in their work. The primary must have solid administration abilities. In Thailand the qualifications for head of school incorporate moral conduct and administrative and leadership abilities. They should have the fitting instruction or preparing.

Qualification Standards for Teachers

For an average child of about 2-4 years of age, the first adult they can begin to trust aside from their parents, is their teacher. The bond that they form with this teacher is very important (Sriram, 2017). At this age, children absorb everything that they encounter, unfiltered. A good teacher knows how to develop the young mind of the child, discipline and guide him/her in the right direction.

TABLE 9. Qualification Standards for Teachers of Early Childhood Education in the Top Performing Countries in Asia Pacific Region

Countries	Post Graduate Degree Holder	College Degree Holder	High School Diploma Holder	Training/ Certificate/ Credits	Registration Licensure	Examination Passer	Character Attributes
New Zealand	✓			✓	✓		
South Korea	✓	✓			✓		✓
Hong Kong	✓			✓		✓	✓
Japan	✓	✓	✓			✓	
Australia	✓			✓	✓		
Singapore	✓			✓			✓
Taiwan	✓			✓	✓		✓
Malaysia	✓	✓	✓				✓
Thailand			✓	✓			✓
Philippines	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓

Table 9 shows the qualification standards for teachers in countries under survey. Teaching staff in New Zealand must finish an undergrad training program or a post graduate testament program following a receipt of a college degree. The teacher provides sufficient support system to enhance the growth and development.

Kindergarten Teacher capability or the equivalent. In Japan, kindergarten educators must be authorized by one of the three gauges affirmed by the government. Educators graduated from secondary school, total two years of preparing in a professional school or junior school are given Class II Endorsements. Educators who completed four years of preparing in college get Class I Authentications. Instructors who attend to graduate school can get a "Specialized Certificate" amid their lord's projects. While in Australia, the fundamental kinds of capabilities as of now perceived by kids' administrations guidelines are; the

Community Services Diploma; the Advanced Diploma of

Commonalities and Differences of the Early Childhood Education Programs in the Top Performing Countries in Asia-Pacific Region

Commonalities and differences of the selected early childhood program of the countries under study are discussed in this segment. The following indicators were used in order to compare and contrast countries its policy, curriculum, assessment, learning facilities, resources, teacher-pupil ratio, and the qualifications of the school heads and teachers are considered.

As to policy, the ten countries have common practice of having Kindergarten and preschool classes being offered for young children ages 1-5 years old. But the findings revealed that countries differ in terms of compulsory education and the age when they start to join preschool education for children. In the

Philippines it is mandated by the government that all 5 year old child must be in Kindergarten. The compulsory age of entering to preschool education vary from each country. New Zealand, Australia, Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand and Taiwan entrants are the 2-4 year old, while the rest of the countries have compulsory age of 4-5 year old to attend preschool classes. Kindergarten education is free and subsidies by the government in all countries under study. However, countries like Singapore, Japan, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand are providing financial assistance children who belong to low income families which means all services are provided free of charge.

As to learning framework, all countries under study are common in providing early learning curriculum framework design and mandated by the government that emphasizes the development of a holistic child. However, they differ in terms of early learning standards and competencies. South Korea, Malaysia, Thailand, Philippines, Australia and New Zealand have early childhood competencies or the national Kindergarten curriculum standard, While the rest of the countries under study have only guidelines for curriculum or course of study.

Issues and concerns on quality assurance of early childhood programs and services

“Despite the growing importance of early childhood education, there are a number of challenges that have continued to pull down its effective implementation” (UNESCO, 2017). The ten Asia-Pacific countries experiences also revealed that a number of challenges in terms of quality in the establishment and implementation of early education for children. These include quality standards, policy and implementation, factors that influence the socio-economic, and high rate of teacher-pupil ratio.

Policy and practice

The policies speak about the quality education that they give to the children, in other words

“policy is beautiful”, but the implementation faces the greatest concern. What is in the paper is quite different from what is being practice in the school. As observed there a lot of changes but lack of awareness or training in the side of the teachers. There are training programs provided for teachers to help them improve their competencies but not all are given the opportunity to participate.

Quality Standards

Some countries in Asia-Pacific region rely on private, business or religious sector to provide early care and preschool education to children. As observed, there are countries do not have a system for quality standards for privately owned schools offering education to young children to comply with, only government implemented childcare. For instance in Malaysia, as much as the government wants to implement quality assurance measures, it could only do so occasionally due to lack of manpower, even as it is aware that many private centers are not able to provide services according to quality standards.

Socio Economic Factor

Socio-economic transformation affects the implementation of early childhood education in all regions, with some being tagged as marginalized. Inequalities in every region play an important role in assisting admission to early education for young learners, where enrolment in both rustic and marginalized areas are less compared to those in municipal areas.

Limitations of Evaluators or Supervisors Understanding

One of the weaknesses in attaining quality assurance is the limitation of understanding of the role of government in setting the standards especially certification and guidelines. Though there are written policy in terms of monitoring and mentoring system, but it needs to be fully understood by the one implementing it. There should be trained evaluators or supervisors who could monitor the system. The lack competent

supervisors or personnel could weaken the system.

Lacking of Involvement among Stakeholders

There is a lack of collaboration among government agencies. The participation and awareness among parents and leaders of the community on the importance of ECE program needs to be given importance. This is essential to provide and endure quality development of the child. This is one of the challenges in Thailand and Japan where preschool education is under the jurisdiction of several ministries or departments, each with its own quality assurance mechanism in place.

VII. CONCLUSION

Twenty-first century early childhood education program means quality assurance. It is the most important thing to consider and has to be addressed in the different aspect of education especially in educating the young learners. The selected ten countries of Asia-Pacific Region has noticeably evidenced that besides its commitment to improve quality and increased access and affordability, a number of significant efforts that quality standard of early childhood education programs and services may be improved. Countries may direct their efforts toward enhancing their national frameworks, standards, procedures and approaches that provide quality assurance in ECE.

VIII. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings and conclusion, the researcher would like to recommend the following:

1. Guidelines and recognition may be made mandatory and be strictly enforced especially in policy framework for smooth operation of schools and quality assurance.
2. Collaboration between government and other agencies who are responsible for giving education and care of young learners may be strengthened.
3. Improve the programs and services of early childhood education by giving the teaching staff professional enhancements or capability trainings.

4. Conduct a systematic monitoring and evaluation scheme of the programs and services implemented.
5. The Philippines through Department of Education may consider the quality standards of other countries in order to enhance the implementation of Early Childhood Education
6. Class size may be revisited for a better classroom environment and for the teacher to have more time with each pupil.
7. Improve accessibility of early childhood education centers in rural places may be considered.

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