

Assessing Cultural, Linguistic, and Indigenous Competencies: The Case of Early Childhood Care and Development Teachers in the Philippines

Hazel T. Biana¹⁾ Roberto Javier, Jr. Melvin Jabar
De La Salle University-Manila

Abstract

As a country with highly diverse local languages, cultures and indigenous groups, the Philippines' Early Childhood Care and Development Council (ECCD) developed a manual for teachers that prescribes specific cultural, linguistic and indigenous competency standards. To determine the ECCD teachers' levels in these competencies, this study utilizes self-assessment and supervisors' assessment surveys. With the involvement of 274 teachers (locally known either as Child Development Workers or Teachers) in 12 areas all over the country, we reveal that their levels range from beginner to performer, with no skilled ratings. We conclude that although teachers are aware of the children's cultural differences and respect their languages, and they somewhat provide a culturally-supportive environment, there seems to be a need for more training on designing an inclusive curriculum as evidenced by low ratings in planning and implementation. To improve the levels of competencies in the future, we recommend interventions such as the development of policies and frameworks on integration of indigenous cultures in early childhood education, training and revisiting of qualification standards in hiring, and the integration of professional learning communities with the Philippine commissions handling arts, language, and indigenous cultures.

Keywords: Early childhood care and development, child development centers, Philippine education, competencies, indigenous culture

Corresponding author, ¹⁾ Hazel.biana@dlsu.edu.ph

Introduction

The Philippine Early Years Act of 2013 recognizes that children aged 0-8 years old are at the first crucial stage of educational development; thus, there is a need to strengthen the early childhood care and development (ECCD) system in the country (*GOVPH*, 2013). Acknowledging the role of child development teachers (CDTs) and child development workers (CDWs) in child development centers (CDCs), the ECCD Council developed a manual on competency standards with seven particular domains: (1) Child growth, development and learning, (2) Health, nutrition, safety, and well-being, (3) Curriculum, (4) Learning environment and experiences, (5) Assessment and reporting, (6) Family involvement and community linkages, and (7) Personal and professional development (ECCD Council, 2017). In order to become caring, capable, and responsible citizens in the future, ECCD provides children with the needed social, emotional, cognitive, and physical skills (UNESCO, 2017). As a testament to the goal of ensuring that learners promote cultural diversity and affirm the role of culture in sustainable development, the ECCD manual then specifies seventy-five competencies wherein nine focus on cultural, linguistic, and indigenous standards (UNESCO, 2017).

It is unfortunate though that very few teachers have ample cultural, linguistic, and indigenous experiences in early childhood education. They may have misunderstandings, wrong beliefs, unfair judgements and attitudes when it comes to minorities and other groups (Keengwe 2010, 197). As a consequence, cultural conflicts have arisen in early childhood education all over the world (See Lee & Tseng, 2008; and Rourou et al., 2006). The reconceptualization of ECCD systems is vital at this point, and governments have made the capacity-building of cultural, linguistic and indigenous competencies a priority. Such capacity-building efforts may only be done though if the competency levels of teachers have been assessed. Their proficiencies and knowledge may be the basis for more appropriate interventions and government policies in the future.

Given the diversity of children and their various cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds, teachers must have a critical understanding of how to work with such differences (Keengwe, 2010). Their competencies must continuously be geared towards intersectional awareness and sensitivities in the various domains. To address the gap in

determining proficiencies in these domains, this study sought to assess the cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competency levels of teachers in the Philippines. With specific competencies that focus on cultural, linguistic, and indigenous standards, are Philippine teachers competent to provide the needed services for the cultural, linguistic, and indigenous development of children? While it is a difficult but necessary task, knowledge generation must be made inclusive, participatory, and emancipatory (Schafer et al. 2004, 78). Unfortunately, the full implementation of ECCD quality standards is arduous due to the lack of institutional support for assessment (SEAMO INNOTECH, 2014). Since ECCD education in the Philippines lacks systematic monitoring and supervision, teachers are not regularly subjected to performance evaluation, monitoring and mentoring, and professional development interventions. Whether Philippine teachers are equipped with such cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competencies remains to be a question.

One of the elements of successful ECCD education depends on efforts geared towards the appropriation of cultural, linguistic, and indigenous perspectives (Fernandez, 2019). Specifically, teachers are expected to plan learning experiences and environments and use local resources and activities that are socio-culturally appropriate (ECCD Council 2017). They should recognize diversity, demonstrate non-discriminatory treatment, and articulate and use languages that children understand (English, Filipino and mother tongue) (ECCD Council 2017). In short, the bigger challenge really is developing a pedagogy that is culturally responsive with teachers open to the diverse cultures of children (Guo, 2014). With 181 living languages (Tan, 2013), a 12 million indigenous population, and 110 indigenous groups (Biana, et. al. 2016), such competencies are very much relevant to Philippine ECCD teachers. So as not to fall into the trap of undervaluing and endangering cultural beliefs and practices, it is imperative to ascertain the degree of professional understanding embedded in national cultural settings (Tobin 2011).

Through this quantitative assessment survey, we measured nine (9) competencies that are specified in the manual “Competency Standards for Child Development Workers/Child Development Teachers” (ECCD Council, 2017). We determined the teachers’ levels of cultural, linguistic and indigenous competencies in CDCs all over the Philippines with the use of self-assessment and supervisors’ assessment tools. Based on the results of these assessments, we provided strategies and recommendations to strengthen the system for

continuous personal and professional development of teachers toward the progressive achievement of cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competency standards. How various countries implement culturally-relevant pedagogies is an area of further research (Sisson et al., 2020), and this study aims to contribute to such as well.

Literature Review

Local Philippine studies have been done on the professionalization, training and supervision of CDTs/CDWs (see Floresca, Nunez, and Cristobal, 2017; Umali and Velasco, 2015; Asian Development Bank, 2012b). These studies reveal the teachers' educational backgrounds, their government-recognized eligibilities, and ECCD-related trainings and requirements. Due to financial constraints of local government units, hiring competent CDTs/CDWs, and training for capacity-building has been limited. This includes sparse training on cultural, linguistic and indigenous competencies as well. As such, teachers look forward to further ECCD training. They believe enhanced and refresher training and technical interventions are essential for the improvement and quality assurance of CDCs.

Teachers also mentioned some other interventions such as the Expanded Tertiary Education Equivalency and Accreditation Program (ETEEAP) or the Stepladder Training and Education for Professionalization (STEP), and the enforcement and completion of the ECCD checklist. The ECCD checklist is a tool used to monitor development of children in CDCs through seven developmental domains, namely, gross motor, fine motor, self-help, receptive language, expressive language, cognitive, and socio-emotional. The ECCD checklist should help teachers in identifying children with developmental needs or challenges (Umali and Velasco, 2015). Interestingly, those in the service for 10 years had a relatively high level of mastery in administering the tool compared to their younger counterparts (Umali and Velasco, 2015). In the ECCD checklist, we see that the cultural, linguistic and indigenous development of children have been embedded in the receptive and expressive language, and socio-emotional domains.

It is important to note that ECCD teachers in the Philippines are not explicitly required to adopt an indigenous or multicultural framework unlike the Department of Education

teachers. The Department of Education uses the Indigenous Peoples Curriculum Education Framework as a guide to develop “culturally appropriate and responsive curricula, lesson plans, instructional materials, and teaching methods” (Dolatre & Ortiz-Luis, n.d.). Some innovative programs documented include classes in *bancas*, education and peace advocacies, and active dialogues with community partners (Dolatre & Ortiz-Luis, n.d.). While there have been studies that tackle cultural and indigenous basic and adult education (See Cornelio & Castro, 2016; Fiagoy, 2000), no extensive study has been conducted to assess teachers’ competencies in these areas.

In Southeast Asia, the same incorporation of cultural, linguistic and indigenous competencies in ECCD still needs to be achieved. Based on the literature, only a few countries in the region have institutionally included cultural, linguistic, and indigenous learning and teaching in the curriculum. In Cambodia, the child education program includes cultural activities, language learning, and environmental education. In Malaysia, locally published early childhood education books are designed to meet the needs of local cultures (SEAMEO Innotech, 2014). The exception would be Indonesia though, wherein 95% of the population are natives. Indonesia’s indigenous Early Childhood Education model is unique in the Southeast Asian region given its integration in laws and regulations, and as local content in the curriculum (Hasan & Suwarni, 2012). A study (Hasan & Suwarni, 2012) made recommendations on how to improve the Indonesian ECCD model further. It mentioned the government’s need for a multisectoral approach. There was no mention of existing competency levels of Indonesian teachers, and how cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competencies may be applied in the classroom setting though.

Method

The Early Childhood Care and Development Framework

Southeast Asian countries came up with a framework to provide a holistic early childhood development intervention. To ensure that children can access quality services, teachers must possess the necessary competencies to be able to achieve or meet the

objectives of ECCD. To ensure that all CDTs, CDWs, and other service providers have developed and demonstrated the necessary knowledge, skills, and attitudes to meet children's developmental needs and deliver high quality early childhood programs for all children 0-4 years old, the ECCD Council came up with the Competency Standards for CDTs/CDWs. The Standards and Competencies are anchored on the basic theories and principles of child growth and development in terms of milestones, learning, and assessment. Part of this holistic approach to ECCD intervention is the honing of cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competencies of teachers. As such, teachers need to familiarize themselves with these standards and competencies so that training and other technical assistance may be translated into better and more effective delivery of ECCD.

Research Framework and Objectives

This assessment mainly focuses on the human resources component of ECCD implementation in the Philippines. Primarily, it seeks to gauge the level of cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competencies of teachers using the standards identified by the ECCD Council of the Philippines.

In order to assess these cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competencies of teachers, teachers were asked to assess their own competencies along with the evaluation of their supervisors. To gather such data, selected competency standards of the ECCD Council were converted into tasks in the Self-Assessment Tool on Teaching Competencies for CDTs and CDWs. The self-assessment tool provides teachers with the opportunity to evaluate and chart their progress, and to plan and implement strategies to continuously improve their practice from *Level 1* (beginner) to *Level 2* (Performer) to *Level 3* (Skilled). Level 1 connotes readiness with assistance in performing his or her tasks as CDWs; Level 2 shows that the CDW practices or performs the tasks well; and Level 3 is the highest level, in which the CDW demonstrates confidence in knowledge, skills and attitude, and can assist others.

Procedure and Selection of Participants

This paper is based on a quantitative study conducted in the Philippines in a span of six

months (June to December 2019) to examine the level of competencies of select CDWs/CDTs. The nationwide assessment was done with representative cities and provinces selected through purposive sampling. The selection was intentionally based on income class, with focus on relatively poorer local government units (LGUs). Meanwhile, inclusion of (the more affluent) cities from the National Capital Region was done for comparison. Some areas may or may not have indigenous communities present in them. Three areas, in particular, have the presence of indigenous groups such as the Ifugao, Subanen, Manobo, Higaonon, Illanen and Manobo. A self-administered questionnaire was provided to both the CDWs/CDTs themselves and their immediate supervisors. Using the same competency assessment tool, the self-assessment was designed to allow CDWs/CDTs to personally evaluate their competencies while the supervisor's assessment served as a validation of the competencies of the CDWs/CDTs.

Table 1. *Research Areas*

Regional Cluster	Area	No. of sample CDTs/ CDWs	Presence of Indigenous Communities
National Capital Region	Quezon City, Metro Manila	32	None
	Malabon City, Metro Manila	20	
Luzon CAR	Municipality of Banaue	20	Ifugao
	Municipality of Mayoyao	17	
Luzon Region 5	Masbate City	22	None
	Municipality of San Fernando	19	
Visayas Region 8	Municipality of Bobon	19	None
	Municipality of San Jose	23	
Mindanao Region 9	Municipality of Godod	20	Subanen
	Municipality of Mutia	15	
Mindanao Region 10	Municipality of Sumilao	20	Manobo Higaonon Illanen Manobo
	Municipality of Kadingilan	20	

A total of 247 teachers were involved in this quantitative assessment. While all CDC teachers were able to participate in their respective LGUs, some respondents were selected through purposive sampling in others. The Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer (MSWDOs) or the Social Services Development Officer selected the participants from their respective areas. Both “performing” and “non-performing” teachers (based on supervisors’ personal assessments) were included in the study. The number of participants per LGU varied from area to area. Quezon City, the biggest LGU in the sample, provided the most number with 32 respondents.

Tools and Measures

The primary tool of this study is the ECCD Council’s *Competency Standards for Child Development Workers/Child Development Teachers* (2017). The said tool contains 75 items and covers seven domains. The domains are Child Growth, Development and Learning (11 items), Health, Nutrition, Safety, and Well-being (11 items), Curriculum (12 items), Learning Environment and Experiences (10 items), Assessment and Reporting (13 items), Family Involvement and Community Linkages (9 items), and Personal and Professional Development (9 items). The authors of this paper did not perform statistical analysis to establish the properties of the tool given that this has already been used officially by the ECCD Council.

The Child, Growth, Development and Learning domain measures the knowledge of the CDWs/CDTs regarding the sequential, progressive, interrelated, and interdependent nature of child development. The second domain, which is Healthy, Safety, Nutrition, and Well-being, ascertains the level of knowledge of CDWs/CDTs regarding sound nutrition, safety practices, and emergency preparedness. The third domain, which is Curriculum, gauges their knowledge on appropriate curriculum for children with different learning and developmental needs. The fourth domain, which is Learning Environment and Experiences, focuses on the ability of the CDWs/CDTs to foster a conducive, safe, and stimulating learning environment. The fifth domain, Assessment and Reporting, evaluates the capacity of CDWs/CDTs to effectively assess an individual child’s capacity and progress of performance and development including early detection of developmental delays or special

needs of children. The sixth domain, Family and Community Linkages, examines CDWs/CDTs ability to link families and communities in the learning experience of children at the CDC. Lastly, the Personal Growth and Professional Development domain looks into the different continuing capacity building and training that CDWs/CDTs undergo and their ability to demonstrate professional and ethical practices.

The first phase of the study was the conduct of a self-assessment competency appraisal accomplished by the CDWs/CDTs themselves. During the second phase, the same assessment tool was given to their respective supervisors (focal persons or other officers) to rate the CDWs/CDTs in the sample. The conduct of the assessment did not follow a standardized process across LGUs. As a limitation, actual visits to CDCs were left to the discretion of the assigned evaluators. Responses of the participants were taken at face value and the evaluators' processes did not undergo validation.

After signing informed consent forms, participants were asked to fill up either the self-assessment or supervisor forms. While the self-assessment is a self-administered survey, the researchers facilitated the survey process by reading each statement aloud and asking the CDWs/CDTs to indicate their response in their self-assessment tool. This allowed the respondents to clarify questions, especially the translations of the questions. After accomplishing the survey, the researchers collected and checked the completeness of the responses. The same survey was also given to either the Municipal Social Welfare and Development Officer (MSWDO) or the ECCD focal for the supervisor's assessment. They were asked to evaluate the CDWs/CDTs involved in the assessment. As a methodological limitation, the supervisor's assessment process was left to the discretion of the evaluators.

In the self-assessment forms, CDTs/CDWs provided their profiles and rated themselves on a scale of 1-3, with 1 corresponding to the beginner level, 2 the performer level, and 3 the skilled level. For this study's purposes, the following cultural, linguistic and indigenous competencies were retrieved from the responses:

- a. Plans learning environment and learning experiences based on developmentally appropriate practices: 1) age-appropriate; 2) individual-appropriate; 3) socio-cultural appropriate (e.g. uses appropriate language, materials, routine activities, etc.).
- b. Plans and implements learning experiences (activities and practices) that recognize diversity (culture, language, and social factors).

- c. Demonstrates non-discriminatory treatment to children from diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds.
- d. Uses multi-sensorial learning materials that capture the children's interest and are suited to their age and socio-cultural backgrounds.
- e. Uses materials or activities that affirm and respect cultural, gender, and religious differences.
- f. Employs local materials and resources for play-based activities.
- g. Utilizes creative materials such as songs, dances, stories, and other material cultures as learning contents.
- h. Articulates ideas using English, Filipino, and Mother Tongue.
- i. Uses words in English, Filipino, and Mother Tongue that children understand

For data analysis, the authors computed for the mean scores (descriptive statistics) of each of the 9 cultural competencies mentioned above. A mean score closer to 3.0 is an indication of a high level of competence while a mean score of below 1 is considered to be low. To establish the significant difference of means between self-assessment and supervisors' assessment scores, a t-test for independent samples was performed.

Results

Profile and Level of Cultural Competence of CDTs/ CDWs

The 247 teachers that participated in the study had diverse profiles. Their ages ranged from 19 to 72 years old, whereas 65% of the respondents belonged to the 40 to 60 year old range. An overwhelming majority (96%) of the respondents were female. With regards to their residences, 7 in 10 teachers indicated that they lived less than five kilometers away from their respective CDCs. In terms of educational background, 48% were college graduates. The rest of the respondents completed their high school education or had some college education at the least. Only 22% have permanent posts (or with plantilla positions) and are from highly urbanized areas of Quezon City and Malabon. Quite a number of teachers from Bobon are with permanent posts as well. Seven in 10 teachers have been in service for more than half a decade.

Of the 247 respondents, 46% (n=114) mentioned that they have been accredited in the past. This means that the other half (54%) of the teachers have not been accredited, despite the fact that many of them have been in the service for half a decade or more. A little more than half of the 114 teachers (52%) were accredited before 2015. Nine out of the 91 respondents were granted level 5 accreditation. Many of them obtained Level 1 (n=20), Level 3 (n=28), and Level 4 (n=25) accreditations. Four in 10 CDTs/CDWs were never visited for monitoring purposes in the last three years. Three in 10 have received teaching awards since they started working in the field. When it comes to capacity-building activities, 8% of the CDWs/CDTs have not attended a training at all in the past three years. Furthermore, only half attended two training activities in the past three years. Most of the trainings were provided by the municipal local government units, and local and international NGOs.

Of the 72 items of the competency assessment, 9 items pertain to use of mother tongue, use of material cultures in learning and teaching, use of local materials for play-based activities, use of learning materials sensitive to religious, cultural, and gender differences, and learning materials that promote cultural diversity. As gleaned from the results, self-assessment and supervisor assessment of the CDWs/CDTs are consistent in demonstrating the “performer” (average) level of cultural competence. Interestingly, the supervisors’ mean ratings were relatively higher than the self-assessment ratings of the CDWs/CDTs themselves. In this study, cultural competence is based on the ability and capacity of CDWs/CDTs to perform the 9 identified tasks relating to use of mother tongue, use of culturally appropriate learning materials, and recognition of cultural diversity manifested through classroom practices and teaching pedagogies. To statistically examine the difference of means between the self-assessment and the supervisors’ assessment, the authors performed t-test for two independent samples. Results showed that the t-value is -.0771 and the p-value is .469284. This shows that the difference of means between the two types of competency assessment is not significant at $p < .05$. This suggests that although the ratings of the supervisor are higher, a significant difference cannot be noted relative to the self-assessment mean ratings. Hence, overall, the level of cultural competence as assessed by both the CDWs/CDTs themselves and their supervisors is deemed to be consistently average (performer).

Table 2. *Self-Assessment and Supervisors' Assessment Scores of CDWs/CDTs*

Item	CDWs/CDTs' Self-Assessment Scores		Supervisors' Assessment Scores	
	Average	Interpretation	Average	Interpretation
Plans learning environment and learning experiences based on developmentally appropriate practices: 1) age-appropriate; 2) individual-appropriate; 3) socio-cultural appropriate (e.g. uses appropriate language, materials, routine activities, etc.).	1.991869919	Beginner	2.024291498	Performer
Plans and Implements learning experiences (activities and practices) that recognize diversity (culture, language, and social factors)	1.930612245	Beginner	2.028340081	Performer
Demonstrates non-discriminatory treatment to children from diverse cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds.	2.069105691	Performer	2.137651822	Performer
Uses multi-sensorial learning materials that capture the children's interest and are suited to their age and socio-cultural backgrounds.	1.931174089	Beginner	2.052631579	Performer
Uses materials or activities that affirm and respect cultural, gender, and religious differences.	1.991902834	Beginner	2.093117409	Performer
Employs local materials and resources for play-based activities.	1.930894309	Beginner	2.060728745	Performer
Utilizes creative materials such as songs, dances, stories, and other material cultures as learning contents.	2.069105691	Performer	2.133603239	Performer
Articulates ideas using English, Filipino, and Mother Tongue.	2.076923077	Performer	2.113360324	Performer
Uses words in English, Filipino, and Mother Tongue that children understand.	2.117886179	Performer	2.125506073	Performer
Overall Mean	2.012164	Performer	2.085470085	Performer

Legend: 1.00-1.99 (Beginner), 2.0-2.99 (Performer), 3.0-Skilled

Considering the limitation of purposive sampling, results are only generally suggestive of the competencies of teachers all over the country. This report only identifies the competencies of the specific CDWs/CDTs involved in the study.

Discussion

The self-assessment survey reveals that teachers rate themselves as performers in four competencies, namely the demonstration of non-discriminatory treatment, use of material cultures, articulation of ideas in and use of specific languages of Filipino, English and Mother Tongue. In particular, their linguistic competencies are rated as highest. Teachers assess themselves as beginners in the remaining five other competencies. Specifically, the planning and implementation of learning experiences that are appropriate and that recognize diversity in terms of culture, language and other factors. The same goes for the use of materials that are locally-sourced, appropriate, and affirming of children's differences. In general, however, the overall mean reveals that teachers assess themselves as performers in terms of cultural, linguistic and indigenous competencies. None of them has rated themselves as skilled in any of the competencies. Surprisingly, the supervisors rated their teachers as performers in *all* competencies, with the use of material cultures as the highest-rated. This shows a slight disconnect between the ratings of the teachers and supervisors. As mentioned earlier though, a significant difference cannot be noted relative to the self-assessment mean ratings. Both teachers and supervisors acknowledge the need for more skills in the said fronts though.

What is significant, however, is that the self-assessment survey reveals that ECCD teachers in the Philippines believe themselves to be inclusive and aware of the linguistic differences of children, and they are knowledgeable with the usage of languages. This is essential as the mother tongue is vital to the development of children's positive cultural identity, thereby allowing for pride and confidence in their cultural identities (McLvor, 2005). Furthermore, the crucial time for learning languages is said to be during early childhood (McLvor, 2005). As such, teachers must continuously work on improving their levels towards mastery of linguistic competencies. It is important to note that the

Philippines implements the Mother Tongue-Based Multilingual Education (MTB-MLE), a provision in the basic education curriculum which requires the use of the child's first language in instruction from Kindergarten to third grade.

The low ratings on planning and implementation of culturally-appropriate activities and usage of local or indigenous resources in their sessions imply the need for training in these aspects. In other countries, training programs provide measures which encourage the acknowledgment of socio-cultural contexts and Indigenous cultures (Kitson & Bowes, 2010). In order to attain skilled competency levels, teachers need more technical assistance—including training, coaching, mentoring, and monitoring—and supervision to be able to achieve cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competencies mandated by the ECCD standards and the UNESCO. Technical assistance and professional bridging programs, while they need to be comprehensive, should target teachers with limited educational backgrounds, who are in the rural areas, and specifically handling centers with children from indigenous and diverse communities.

The limited number of qualified teachers remains one of the challenges in the implementation of ECCD education in the Philippines. A little less than half of teachers are college graduates and only four of 100 possess government-recognized eligibility (Asian Development Bank, 2012). At the same time, many teachers in the country lack the professional educational background due to the LGUs' financial constraints (Asian Development Bank, 2012). Accreditation can ensure that teachers possess the necessary competencies as profiles show that those with higher accreditation levels have higher supervisor's assessment scores.

When it comes to culturally-appropriate practices in CDCs, teachers must develop self-awareness of their own unique cultures and backgrounds and work towards building knowledge of the Philippines and its indigenous cultures (Hyun, 1996). This leads to more culturally-responsive and relevant pedagogies that could potentially address inequalities in education (Sisson et al., 2020). An inclusive and relevant culture-based education has been promoted by the Department of Education (DepEd) through the Indigenous Peoples Education (IPEd) Program in the K to 12 basic education curriculum. Some efforts for this program include capacity building of teachers, curriculum contextualization, and dialogue and consultation with IP communities (BusinessMirror, 2017). Perhaps, this is something

that can be considered to improve CDT/CDW competencies as well.

In other countries such as England, inclusion and cultural diversity are explicitly mandated in their Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) framework (Ang, 2010). The said framework is conceived to be fully inclusive while recognizing children's differences in "ethnicity, culture, religion or belief, home language, family background, SEN, disability, gender or ability" (Ang, 2010). It also refers to children's cultural and linguistic differences, and the critical role of teachers in "providing opportunities to develop and value these differences" (Ang, 2010). The same support can be seen in Indonesia, as multicultural and indigenous ECCD interventions are integrated in specific laws and policies (Hasan & Suwarni, 2012). Improving the cultural, linguistic and indigenous skills of teachers and the quality of ECCD implementation requires adequate support. Policy interventions may also be necessary to address gaps. As such, Philippine ECCD could benefit from having the same clear mandates in future policies in early years education.

"Everyone in children's services must be aware of constructs grounded in knowledge, respectful relationships and understanding" of children's diversity. (Kitson & Bowes, 2010). It allows for an understanding of children's values, local culture, and factors that lead to discrimination. Given the "performer" ratings of teachers, we can conclude that there is awareness and respect of the language and culture of children with varying backgrounds and teachers also somewhat provide a culturally-supportive environment. Unfortunately, they lack the know-how to design an inclusive curriculum as evidenced by gaps in planning and implementation. There is also an obvious need to improve their mastery to reach the skilled level of competencies.

In view of these current realities surrounding ECCD in the Philippines, it is imperative that the national government, through its agencies, provide an enabling environment and appropriate frameworks and policies that may foster further development of teachers' cultural, linguistic, and indigenous competencies. Recommendations may be addressed through (1) training, mentoring, coaching, monitoring, accreditation, and supervision; and (2) hiring of teachers that meet the qualification standards. There should be utilization of teachers as champions and resource persons for training, mentoring, and coaching as supervisors are also preoccupied with other social service interventions. Monthly meetings may also be a venue for sharing of best practices, and other information and challenges.

With regards to consultation, the ECCD Council should also consider hiring representatives from IP communities who can give a clearer picture of certain cultural backgrounds. Furthermore, we wonder whether the ECCD Council used a deliberate cultural, linguistic, and indigenous framework in including such competencies. Perhaps an explicit statement of cultural and linguistic responsiveness and indigenous awareness may be included in the ECCD manual. Guidelines may also be developed for the forming of professional learning communities among teachers for information sharing, peer monitoring and coaching, and peer evaluation with the support of organizations such as UNESCO, the National Commission on Indigenous Peoples (NCIP), and the National Commission for the Culture and Arts (NCCA).

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank the UNICEF Philippine Country Office, the ECCD Council of the Philippines, and the CDTs/CDWs who have willingly participated in this study for the betterment of the quality of ECCD in the Philippines.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors. The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views and opinions of the Social Development Research Center, De La Salle University-Manila, UNICEF, and the ECCD Council of the Philippines.

Funding

This work was supported by UNICEF Philippines.

References

- Ang, L. (2010). Critical perspectives on cultural diversity in early childhood: Building an inclusive curriculum and provision. *Early Years*, 30(1), 41–52.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140903562387>
- Asian Development Bank. (2012), Philippines: Capacity Development for Social Protection: Rapid Appraisal Assessment Report on ECCD and the Pantawid Pamilyang

- Pilipino Program (No. 43407). <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/173665/43407-013-tacr-03.pdf>
- Asian Development Bank. (2012b), *Capacity Development for Social Protection*. An ADB-funded project for the Department of Social Welfare and Development. <https://www.adb.org/sites/default/files/project-document/173665/43407-013-tacr-03.pdf>
- Biana, H. T., Jabar, M. J., Yabut, H., & Regadio, C. (2016). *Teaching Philippine Indigenous Cultures: Modules for Higher Education Institutions*. DLSU Social Development Research Center.
- BusinessMirror (2017, February 5). *DepEd sustains support for culture based education for IP learners*. BusinessMirror. <https://businessmirror.com.ph/2017/02/05/deped-sustains-support-for-culture-based-education-for-ip-learners/>
- Cornelio, J. S., & Castro, D. F. T. (2016). The State of Indigenous Education in the Philippines Today. In Xing J., Ng P. (eds) *Indigenous Culture: Education and Globalization* (pp. 159–179). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-662-48159-2_9
- Dolatre, I. R. S., & Ortiz-Luis, M. J. P. (n.d.). *Relevant Learning for Indigenous Filipinos*. Childhood Explorer. Retrieved December 23, 2020, from <https://www.childhoodexplorer.org/relevant-learning-for-indigenous-filipinos>
- ECCD Council. 2017. “Competency Standards for Child Development Teachers (CDTs) and Child Development Workers (CDWs): A Manual”. Pasig: ECCD.
- Fernandez, K. P. C. (2019). Lived Experiences Of Teachers And School Heads On Teaching Indigenous Early Childhood Education: A Phenomenological Study. *APCoRE Journal of Proceedings*, 1, 27–31. https://183efcb0-03a7-4c6e-b2ac-6d3fda632a5c.usrfiles.com/ugd/183efc_9dda8b42b8a34ab089d563e001d3b167.pdf#page=30
- Fiagoy, G. L. (2000). *Adult education and indigenous peoples in the Philippines—UNESCO Digital Library*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000198908>
- Floresca, M., Nuñez, A.L., & C. Cristobal (2017, December). Implementation of ECCD and Professionalizing Child Development Workers: What Works? Fundacion Education y Cooperacion (EDUCO).
- GOVPH. (2013, March 26). *Republic Act No. 10410*. <https://www.officialgazette.gov.ph/2013/03/26/republic-act-no-10410/>

- Guo, K. (2014). Mono-Cultural Approach in Multicultural Education: Mapping the Contours of Multicultural Early Childhood Education in New Zealand. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 8(1), 19–35.
- Hasan, A. B. P., & Suwarni, E. (2012). Policies and Practices for Promoting Multicultural Awareness of Indigenous Early Childhood Education in Indonesia. *International Journal of Child Care and Education Policy*, 6(1), 63–94.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/2288-6729-6-1-63>
- Hyun, E. (1996). New Directions in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation: Developmentally and Culturally Appropriate Practice (DCAP). *Journal of Early Childhood Teacher Education*, 17(3), 7–19.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/10901029608548589>
- Keengwe, J. (2010). Fostering Cross Cultural Competence in Preservice Teachers Through Multicultural Education Experiences. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, 38(3), 197–204. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10643-010-0401-5>
- Kitson, R., & Bowes, J. (2010). Incorporating Indigenous Ways of Knowing in Early Education for Indigenous Children. *Australasian Journal of Early Childhood*, 35(4), 81–89. <https://doi.org/10.1177/183693911003500410>
- Lee, I.-F., & Tseng, C.-L. (2008). Cultural conflicts of the child-centered approach to early childhood education in Taiwan. *Early Years*, 28(2), 183–196.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/09575140802163600>
- McLvor, O. (2005). The contribution of Indigenous heritage language immersion programs to healthy early childhood development. In J. Whitehead (ed.), *Research Connections Canada: Supporting Children and Families*, Canadian Child Care Federation, Vol. 12. https://epub.sub.uni-hamburg.de/epub/volltexte/2009/3179/pdf/rc_eng12.pdf#page=5
- Rourou, A., Singer, E., Bekkema, N., & Haan, D. D. (2006). Cultural perspectives on peer conflicts in multicultural Dutch child care centres. *European Early Childhood Education Research Journal*, 14(2), 35–53.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/13502930285209901>
- Schafer, J., Ezirim, M., Gamurorwa, A., Ntsonyane, P., Phiri, M., Sagnia, J., Salakana, L., & Bairu, W. W. (2004). Exploring and Promoting the Value of Indigenous Knowledge in Early Childhood Development in Africa. *International Journal of Educational*

- Policy, Research, and Practice: Reconceptualizing Childhood Studies*, 5(3), 61–80.
- Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization Regional Center for Educational Innovation and Technology (SEAMEO INNOTECH). Competency Framework for Southeast Asian School Heads (2014 Edition). <https://www.seameo-innotech.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/Competency-Framework-for-Southeast-Asian-School-Heads-2014.pdf>
- Sisson, J. H., Whittington, V., & Shin, A.-M. (2020). “Teaching Culture Through Culture”: A Case Study of Culturally Responsive Pedagogies in an Australian Early Childhood/Primary Context. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education*, 34(1), 108–126. <https://doi.org/10.1080/02568543.2019.1692110>
- Tan, M. L. (2013, August 29). 181 languages. __ *Philippine Daily Inquirer*. <https://opinion.inquirer.net/59901/181-languages>
- Tobin, J. (2011). Implicit Cultural Beliefs and Practices in Approaches to Early Childhood Education and Care. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Research in Early Childhood Education*, 5(1), 3–22.
- Umali, A. E., Velasco, P.T. (2015). Assessment on the Utilization of the ECCD Checklist by Day Care Workers and Status of Implementation among Day Care Children in the 11 Municipalities of Eastern Samar. A Plan International and UNICEF-Funded Project.
- UNESCO. (2017). *Education for Sustainable Development Goals: Learning objectives—UNESCO Digital Library*. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247444>