



Early Childhood Development Strategy in Jordan

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NATIONAL COUNCIL FOR FAMILY AFFAIRS

**EARLY CHILDHOOD
DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY
IN JORDAN**

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Early Childhood Development:

Concept and Scope

Early childhood constitutes an important stage in the human being's life in general and the child's life in particular. At this stage, a major part of the personal characteristics and elements of development are formed. Therefore, it is important to lay out a comprehensive strategy for early childhood development (ECD) in order to establish a framework for action and a reference for the efforts to be implemented in this field, and for the different institutions and organisations concerned with the different aspects of early childhood development.

The ECD strategy stems from the characteristics, needs, and requirements that distinguish age groups in early childhood, and from the characteristics and culture of the society, which are based on Islamic law (Shari'a). For this purpose, available studies, data, and figures were used. Studies related to women, population, and human resources were also taken into consideration, in addition to the National Plan of Action for Children, and the social and economic development plans.

This strategy tackles various issues and elements related to early childhood development (ECD). The strategy has adopted a definition of early childhood that includes the period extending from pregnancy up to below nine years of age. This period can be divided into five sub-stages, depending on the characteristics that distinguish every single stage. These are:

1. Pregnancy period.
2. From birth to below one year.
3. From one year to below four years.
4. From four years to below six years: preschool education stage.
5. From six years to below nine years: lower basic education stage.

The strategy explores and analyses 14 major themes. These themes cover in their contents the various issues and dimensions of early childhood, and include:

1. Planning and management.
2. Legislation.
3. Health care during pregnancy.
4. Caring for children in nurseries.
5. Preschool education.
6. Basic education in the first three primary years.
7. Family upbringing and the local community.
8. Children with special needs.
9. Curricula and programmes.
10. Health care services.
11. Child culture.
12. The role of the media in early childhood development.
13. Human resources.
14. Social defence.

In tackling each theme, the strategy gives a summary of the present situation of the relevant issues in Jordan. It also outlines the objectives to be achieved through this strategy and the policies designed to achieve these objectives, and to ensure growth, development and progress.

The general aims of the ECD strategy can be summarized as follows:

1. Seeking to achieve balanced, comprehensive development for children of the target age groups, to meet their needs, and to provide them with protection and the appropriate environment for their growth and development.
2. Identifying the basic needs of the early childhood sector in the different educational, social, psychological, physical, and health-related fields, in order to contribute to mobilizing the efforts of the different institutions concerned.
3. Drawing up a general framework for the directions and policies related to early childhood development, which will enable the concerned institutions and organisations to take necessary measures, draw up programmes, and implement projects appropriate to serving the early childhood sector.

4. Organizing, coordinating, developing, and institutionalising the efforts of the institutions and organisations working in the field of early childhood development.
5. Increasing family and community awareness about children's issues and the importance of early childhood development, its characteristics, and demands, as well as their role in providing the necessary support to achieve this aim.

Planning and Management

The institutions that are concerned with early childhood affairs vary according to the required services, such as educational, health, information, social, environmental, and other services.

The Ministry of Education (MOE) tackles the educational issues in kindergartens (KG's) (age group 4-6 years), and early basic education (age group 6-9 years), while the Ministry of Social Development supervises nurseries (age group 0-4 years), and the services offered to children with special needs, such as the handicapped, orphans, vagabonds, delinquents, and those from broken families. Moreover, the private sector (voluntary and for-profit) plays a major role in establishing and running early childhood institutions, especially those related to nurseries and KG's. The Ministry of Health, the Royal Medical Services, and the private health sector provide various health services for all stages of early childhood. There are other ministries and authorities that are concerned with early childhood affairs, such as the Ministry of Culture, the media sector, the civil society institutions, and others.

Nevertheless, the work in the field of early childhood lacks, in general, the potential to develop the necessary institutional capabilities, and to institutionalise coordination and integration among the authorities concerned with early childhood.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of planning and management aims at:

1. Developing the role of the community and the State in the different areas related to childcare and early childhood development in order to ensure proper upbringing in a framework of freedom, human dignity, spiritual values, and an intact health and social environment.
2. Developing the institutional capacities of governmental and non-governmental institutions, including the voluntary domestic sector, in the areas of planning, evaluation, and supervision for the early childhood stage, as well as keeping up with the latest scientific developments in this field in conformity with the cultural environment of the community.
3. Ensuring coordination and complementarity among public and private institutions concerned with early childhood affairs.

4. Developing human resources in the fields of planning, supervision, and management of the early childhood stage.
5. Developing, directing, and guiding funding policies for ECD.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the most important policies for achieving the desired objectives of an ECD strategy in the field of planning and management:

1. To establish a national commission (or national council) of representatives of governmental and non-governmental organisations to plan and coordinate early childhood development at a national level, in addition to following up on the implementation, evaluation and development of legislation. It would also follow up on the implementation of the ECD strategy, its projects and plans, and develop the activities of local and regional networking, taking into consideration the need to support and develop the roles of organisations working in the field of early childhood.
2. To establish a secretariat to work as an executive arm to the above-mentioned national commission.
3. To include a chapter about childhood development in general, and early childhood in particular, in the national economic and social development plans.
4. To develop databases about childhood in general, and early childhood in particular, to facilitate the operations of planning, developing human resources, designing programmes, etc.
5. To encourage research and studies on early childhood issues conducted by universities, research centres, and concerned agencies, including periodic surveys to evaluate the situation of early childhood.
6. To highlight the importance of planning, supervision, and development of the early childhood stage in the functions of governmental and non-governmental organisations, and translating this into specific administrative and financial responsibilities for the concerned administrative units.
7. To develop the quantitative and qualitative aspects of field supervision by the authorities responsible for nurseries, KG's, and early basic education.
8. To provide in-service training to the people involved in planning, supervision, and management of early childhood.
9. To develop the programmes of higher education institutions concerning early childhood by concentrating on the relevant planning and supervision dimensions.

10. To expand educational and health services for children of limited income families and special needs children through the different civil and voluntary sectors.
11. To develop balanced geographic coverage of educational, health, and other services in the field of early childhood.
12. To develop local funding possibilities and systems from the public and private sectors to support social work programmes and projects undertaken by the voluntary, non-profit sector.
13. To take the necessary measures to avoid summoning children aged between 7-12 years to juvenile courts.
14. To support and encourage efforts in the Arab world, which aim at drawing up policies and strategies, general plans, and programmes in the field of childhood in general, and early childhood in particular.
15. To provide incentives for the private sector in general, and the voluntary domestic sector in particular, to establish and manage early childhood institutions.
16. To encourage experimentation and models that deal with early childhood issues, and stem from the local environment and culture, and that will serve as a reference for the authorities and institutions concerned with early childhood affairs.
17. To adapt scientific developments in genetics in accordance with the local and national cultural framework.
18. To develop and circulate national criteria and standards related to the growth and development of children in early childhood, and carrying out regular surveys to evaluate the growth and development of children according to these criteria.
19. To develop the aspects and mechanisms of cooperation and coordination with regional and international organizations working in the field of childhood.

Legislation

Jordan gives special attention to children and the protection of their rights. Jordan ratified both the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1991 and the ILO Convention 183 that prevents the worst forms of children labour. It also held the National Conference on Childhood in 1992, which presented a National Plan of Action for Children for the years 1993-2000.

There are a number of laws and Bye-Laws in Jordan related to childhood issues. Some of these laws include: The Ministry of Social Affairs Law No.14 of 1956; the Jordanian Juveniles Law No. 24 of 1968 and its amendment in 1983; Childcare Bye-Law No. 34 of 1972; Financial Aid for Juveniles Bye-Law No. 49 of 1959; and the Higher Council for Juvenile and Childcare Bye-Law No. 90 of 1973.

As a result of such laws and Bye-Laws, a lot of accomplishments in the various fields have been achieved. The most important achievement was the preparation of the draft Jordanian Law for Child Rights in 1998. This Act defined a juvenile as a person who hasn't attained the age of 18 years. It also emphasized the principle of preventing child abuse, and made it obligatory to imprison or fine anyone who prevented a child from fulfilling his or her right to basic education; the law also made medical check-ups before marriage compulsory.

Despite the fact that the draft Law for the Child's Rights is considered to be a major achievement in this field, it has not added anything new with regard to criminal accountability and violence against children, and with regard to the protection of the disabled, and the protection of children from road accidents. Moreover, it hasn't come up with precise texts to protect children of the early childhood age groups, which highlights the need to amend existing laws to provide children with better protection. Certain amendments must be made to provide better protection for children against violence, negligence, sexual abuse, and to prevent children below the age of 12 years from being held criminally responsible. In addition to these deficiencies, there is an absence of legislation aimed at reducing the environmental dangers on children's health and regulating the use of insecticides, lead, and car exhaust fumes.

Furthermore, there is a lack of legislation related to health, nutrition, and the environment. There is also a need to amend the Health Insurance Law to include medical treatment for all children below six years of age.

The Labour Law has been amended to grant pregnant women and lactating mothers longer maternity leave, and allow one hour daily for lactation for the first year. The law also provides provisions to protect working children and limit child labour.

In the field of education, the Education Law regulated the educational needs and requirements of primary education, but it did not deal sufficiently with preschool education. On the other hand,

the Social Development Law did not provide an adequate legislative umbrella for nurseries. Thus, there is a need to develop this law in this field.

As for legislation related to children of special needs, the Law for the Care of the Disabled No.12 of 1993 provided the basic, legislative umbrella to care for the disabled, and although the issuing of this law was a great achievement, it has become in need of development to enhance services and facilities available to the disabled.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of legislation aims at:

1. Expanding the legal framework for protecting child rights by amending existing legislation accordingly, and adding new legislation in areas not already covered, in harmony with the relevant international agreements.
2. Making society aware of children's legal rights, especially such rights that are related to early childhood.
3. Developing legal procedures for security and judicial authorities, and establishing new mechanisms such as the 'family court' and the system of 'mediation'.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the policies required to achieve the designed strategies to develop early childhood in the field of legislation:

1. To carry out a comprehensive review of all types of legislation related to children in order to identify gaps and weaknesses leading to the creation of new legislative tools and the amendment of existing legislation.
2. To develop the Jordanian draft Law for the Child Rights, in order to avoid gaps prior to its presentation to the Parliament for approval.
3. To activate the CRC and establish an appropriate mechanism to ensure its application by all the concerned authorities and institutions. Also to suggest suitable alternatives for the two articles in the CRC, that Jordan had reservations on.
4. To develop the Juveniles Law to provide better protection for delinquent children, to accelerate the relevant legal procedures, and set up specialized courts for juveniles. It should also prevent children below the age of 12 years from being held criminally

responsible, and children involved in cases of beggary and vagabondage from being classified as delinquents.

5. To develop the Law for the Care of the Disabled to provide better care for the disabled in general, and for disabled children in particular, in light of the social and educational developments that have been achieved since this law was issued.
6. To create a mechanism for continuous review of legislation related to childhood and its development in accordance with new social developments.
7. To modify the Labour and Social Affairs laws and the regulations related to issuing KG licenses, to give more importance to KG's, their environment, and their safety and security needs.
8. To develop legislation related to KG's, to guarantee a better environment for a child's education and care.
9. To update the Penal Code, and increase the penalty for child abuse, and consider it a citizen's duty to report such cases. It should also modify the text that allows parents to hit their children as a disciplinary method.
10. To introduce medical insurance legislation to provide medical care for all children below the age of six years.
11. To develop the Traffic Law, taking children's interests into consideration, and reducing the impact of traffic accidents on the child and the family.
12. To develop the Education Law in relation to preschool education (KG's) and its requirements, and in relation to compulsory basic education.
13. To create new legislation to protect and care for children, such as laws aimed at reducing the impact of environmental pollution on children's health and regulating part-time jobs for women.
14. To amend the Jordanian Nationality Law by adding a new text that allows Jordanian mothers married to non-Jordanians to grant their children the Jordanian nationality.
15. To amend the Penal Code by adding a text that allows any person who has not attained full legal age, if attacked by parents, relatives, or guardians or was forced to beg or commit a crime, to sue the concerned party. Moreover, to amend the law to give special consideration to the testimony of a person who has not attained full legal age, when such a person is the victim of a crime, taking into consideration the need for adequate restrictions that will limit misusing such amendment in a manner that will reflect negatively on family cohesion. Furthermore, to draw up legal mechanisms for central investigation with children, whether they are the perpetrators or victims of a crime.
16. To strengthen media awareness campaigns concerning children's rights, as found in the various legislative tools, and concerning the needs to develop such tools.
17. To enhance the participation of civil society and pressure groups to develop, update, and observe the application of legislation, and to offer legal advice and services to whoever needs them.

Health Care during Pregnancy

Pregnancy is characterized by its utmost importance for the mother and child. During pregnancy, the organs and systems of the whole body are formed. The growth that takes place in the first six months in the brain cells of the embryo is the fastest in a humans' life.

Nevertheless, there are difficulties facing pregnant women in Jordan. The percentage of pregnant women who suffer from anaemia stands at around 30%; the level of fertility in Jordanian women is about 3.4; and maternal mortality rate is 40 per 10,000. The percentage of deliveries under medical supervision stands at 97%, while infant mortality rate is 14.7 per every 1,000 live births.

In Jordan, there are more than 300 maternal and child health care centres that provide services to women and children. These services are offered by the Ministry of Health, the Royal Medical Services, UNRWA, the voluntary and private sector, and the universities. The quality of services varies according to the centres that offer them. A unified system for such services is lacking. Some MOH centres and the Royal Medical Services offer a comprehensive postnatal service programme that is supervised by a gynaecologist, while in other centres a general practitioner supervises such a programme.

The rate of using these services is so low that it affects their effectiveness. Studies show the clear need to develop awareness raising material for people to highlight the importance of antenatal care. There is also the need to train staff in these centres on efficient handling of cases and safe ways of delivery by developing the necessary materials, training programmes, and handbooks. In addition, the referral system between health centres and hospitals is not active enough to guarantee safe follow-up of cases. There is also the need to upgrade the services and social visits to newly delivered mothers, especially in needy areas.

There is a clear lack of studies, research, experiments, services, and experiences of social and psychological dimensions that affect the mother and the unborn child during pregnancy. The educational mass media programmes usually concentrate solely on the health and physical aspects of pregnancy.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of health care during pregnancy aims at:

1. Developing the quality of the medical, physical, social, and psychological services offered to pregnant women through the specialized centres and clinics.

2. Increasing the efficiency of the staff in these centres.
3. Raising the percentage of mothers visiting maternal and child health care centres and clinics according to the World Health Programme to 70% during the next five years.
4. Reducing the incidence of diseases during pregnancy, and reducing the maternal mortality rate.
5. Reducing the incidence of diseases and disabilities in newborns, and reducing the infant mortality rate.
6. Increasing the level of societal and family awareness of the importance of pregnancy and of the methods of taking care of the mother and her baby physically, socially, and psychologically during this period.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the most important policies required to achieve the desired objectives for developing an ECD strategy in the field of health care during pregnancy:

1. To develop a system that specifies the technical criteria and standards that ensure the availability of the same high quality services to all pregnant women.
2. To raise the efficiency of people working in the field of services offered to pregnant women, by providing them with the relevant training programmes, especially those that enhance their abilities in dealing with the family and the society.
3. To prepare curricula and guidance material to train health care workers.
4. To prepare health services programmes (protocols) to deal adequately with pregnant women, according to their health situation, especially in critical pregnancy cases.
5. To lay down qualitative standards for the operation of the pregnant women care centres, and to establish systems for the follow-up and evaluation of the services thus offered to monitor the extent of adherence to the health protocols concerned with treatment and follow-up.
6. To activate and develop a referral system for pregnant women between health care services and hospitals.
7. To develop the operation of health care services such as to concentrate on the family as a unit, and to create detailed medical records that include the medical situation of the mother and children.

8. To improve the quality of services according to the international definition of good services by providing centres in needy areas with the necessary medical equipment and qualified staff.
9. To develop advocacy campaigns and awareness raising programmes directed to families about the importance of regular check-ups during pregnancy, and to emphasize the importance of good nutrition and protection against contagious diseases during this period.
10. To create a home outreach system for crowded and needy areas.
11. To provide the necessary care and awareness services to women who are pregnant for the first time.
12. To develop an ethical code and legislative standards to deal with IVF children and other unnatural (artificial) means of pregnancy. Also, to develop such standards for the medical and health institutions working in this field.
13. To develop studies, research, experiments, services and experiences related to the impact of the mother's psychological health on the growth of the foetus.
14. To develop an early disability detection and intervention system to diagnose disabilities in newborns and to develop related referral procedures.
15. To develop supervision and follow-up mechanisms for the health care services given to mothers during pregnancy.

Caring for Children in Nurseries

Nurseries were established as the result of demand for nursery services from working mothers. Therefore, nurseries are considered temporary substitute families that take care of the social upbringing of children attending them.

Nurseries in Jordan accept children below the age of four. Standards and specifications related to nurseries lack appropriate details, comprehensiveness, and quality.

The first nurseries were established in Jordan in the 1970s. They came under the responsibilities of the Ministry of Social Affairs (now the Ministry of Social Development), which was responsible for licensing, supervising and following up on these nurseries. In the year 2000, the number of nurseries exceeded 700, distributed among the different sectors: the public sector (53%), the domestic voluntary sector (38%), and the private for-profit sector (9%). The Ministry of Social Development undertakes its responsibilities for nurseries according to regulations, but there is no specific law or bye-law that provides for this matter.

Despite the rapid growth in the number of nurseries, they cater for only 1.57% of the concerned age group, which is a low percentage. Of these nurseries, 59% are located in the central region, 28% in the North, and 13% in the South. The highest percentage of children attending nursery is in the capital Amman (49%).

The average number of children in each nursery stands at 16.6. This average ranges between the maximum of 22.6 child in Aqaba and a 9.1 minimum in Mafraq. The educational level of caregivers varies a lot: the percentage of caregivers holding a university or college degree reaches (44.7%), those having only a high school certificate is (32.3%) and those of lower qualification is (23%). As for the ratio between children and caregivers, it is five children to every caregiver.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of caring for children in nurseries aims at:

1. Increasing the number of day nurseries in response to the needs of mothers, especially working mothers, for day care services.
2. Developing and improving the quality of care services in nurseries, and promoting the role of the family in such services.
3. Granting equal access to children from different backgrounds and geographic areas to benefit from nurseries' services and facilities.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the policies and general procedures required to achieve the desired strategies in the field of childcare in nurseries:

1. To sustain the existing policies, whereby the non-government sector (for-profit and non-profit) continue to establish and manage nurseries, in addition to the government sector.
2. To support and encourage the voluntary sector to establish and manage nurseries that provide services free of charge or for a nominal fee for disadvantaged children, such as children from low-income families, and disabled children.
3. To activate the labour law with regard to establishing nurseries within the work sites of working mothers according to the standards defined by the law.
4. To raise the academic level of nursery staff and improve their qualifications to care for children in the concerned age group.
5. To adopt the appropriate criteria for those wishing to pursue a career as caregivers in nurseries, in addition to the academic qualification, to ensure appropriate capabilities in people dealing with children of the concerned age group.
6. To develop and improve the content of the curricula and the programmes at universities and community colleges to concentrate on the characteristics of the early childhood stage, emphasizing the applied dimensions of these curricula and programmes.
7. To develop the qualitative and quantitative aspect of in-service training programmes.
8. To develop and improve the standards and criteria for licensing nurseries, including the technical, organisational, and administrative requirements, in addition to utilities and special facilities.
9. To activate the Ministry of Social Development's supervision services to ensure that sufficient numbers of qualified social and educational supervisors are available in nurseries.
10. To undertake advocacy and awareness-raising measures regarding the functions and responsibilities of nurseries, and the importance of the family's interaction and participation.
11. To take into consideration the connection and complementarity of objectives, programmes, activities, and educational programmes between nurseries and KG's.
12. To develop and circulate safety standards for children's transportation to and from nurseries, in addition to safety standards in the nurseries themselves.

13. To develop counselling programmes, as well as curricula, programmes and guides for caregivers in nurseries.
14. To develop coordination mechanisms between the Ministry of Social Development and other concerned ministries and authorities, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education, Municipalities and others.
15. To encourage studies and research related to the technical, social, and economical dimensions of nurseries.
16. To carry out field studies regarding the situation of informal “home nurseries”, and pave the way to institutionalise their services and improve and support the quality of the services offered in these nurseries, through guidance and supervision.
17. To develop supervision and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that nurseries’ management abide by health and educational requirements.
18. To develop the capabilities of nursery staff with regard to early detection and intervention regarding children with special needs, including the gifted, the disabled, and slow learners.

Preschool Education

Preschool education in KG's in Jordan is characterized by a number of characteristics. The following are the most important:

- Preschool education in KG's is a formal educational cycle, but it is not compulsory for the age group 4-6 years according to the current education law.
- The percentage of enrolment in KG's stands at almost 28% of the age group 4-6 years.
- Of the total number enrolled in KG's, 55% are boys and 45% are girls.
- The great majority of KG's are managed by the private, domestic, and voluntary sectors. There are only a few government KG's.
- The Education Law states that the caregiver in KG's should hold a university degree in an appropriate field. Nevertheless, a great number of caregivers do not have a university degree.
- There is a need to develop university programmes to prepare staff for working in KG's.
- The Ministry of Education is mandated for supervising KG's and preschool education in general.
- There is a need to develop the supervisory function for KG's, and provide them with sufficient number of qualified educational supervisors.
- There is weakness in the contents and application mechanisms concerned with licensing criteria for KG's.
- There is weakness in the curricula, educational materials and guides available to both caregivers (teachers) and children in KG's.
- There is a need to educate families and make them aware of the role and functions of KG's, and how parents should interact with them.
- The geographical distribution of KG's is characterized by the concentration of the relevant services in certain areas and the obvious lack of such services in others.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of preschool education aims at:

1. Increasing the number of children of the age group 4-6 years, joining KG's, to 35% by the year 2005.
2. Developing and improving the quality of educational services in KG's.
3. Providing equal opportunities for all groups and sectors of the society in the different geographical areas in benefiting from the services and facilities of preschool education.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the policies required to achieve the desired objectives in preschool education:

1. To establish and manage more KG's, by the Ministry of Education, and to be made available at low cost for various groups in the society.
2. To work towards making the second year of preschool education (age group 5-6 years) as part of the free compulsory basic education stage.
3. To continue to encourage the private sector (for-profit and non-profit) to establish and manage KG's.
4. To support and encourage the domestic voluntary sector to establish KG's that offer services free of charge or for a nominal fee for disadvantaged children, such as children from low-income families, slow learners, and the disabled.
5. To raise the academic level of KG staff to ensure that they are qualified at university level in the relevant fields of specialization.
6. To adopt appropriate criteria in recruiting caregivers to ensure that such staff are qualified and able to deal with children in the age group concerned.
7. To develop the in-service training programmes for KG staff, quantitatively and qualitatively.
8. To develop standards and criteria of KG licensing, that include technical, organisational, and administrative requirements in addition to utilities and facilities.
9. To develop programmes, curricula, educational materials and guides for both caregivers and children in KG's.
10. To activate the Ministry of Education educational supervision services to ensure that sufficient numbers of qualified educational supervisors are available in KG's.

11. To educate people and make them aware of the role and function of KG's, and the importance of family interaction and cooperation, therewith.
12. To take into consideration the integration and continuity of objectives, programmes, activities, and educational environment between KG's and the lower basic education cycle.
13. To develop safety standards for children's transportation to and from KG's, in addition to safety standards in the KG's themselves.
14. To develop supervision and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that KG management abides by health and education requirements.
15. To develop the capabilities of KG staff with regard to early detection and intervention for children with special needs, including the gifted, the disabled, and slow learners.
16. To activate the role of the family in the educational process in KG's.
17. To provide the appropriate educational environment so that children will develop self-confidence and the ability to express themselves, in addition to taking initiative, cooperating and participating in different activities.

Basic Education

The percentage of enrolment in primary education stands at about 97%; and of those enrolled in basic education, 97.3 are boys and 97% are girls. However, this high percentage is not accompanied by a high level of academic achievement. It was found that the performance of fourth graders in the basic subjects is low. According to a national study carried out in 1994, the national average of achievement in mathematics was 30%, science 42%, Arabic language 54%, and in life skills 61%. But there has been a noticeable improvement in the level of academic achievement as shown in a 1999 study.

The Education Law states that the class teacher of the first three primary grades should have a university degree and appropriate academic and pedagogic skills. The Ministry of Education has also made a great effort to harmonize between requirements with regard to teacher qualification on the one hand, and the development of curricula and educational materials for basic education on the other.

Despite all these efforts, there is still a need to raise the level of teachers' efficiency and capability in general, and in the field of teaching methodologies and class management in particular. There is also a clear need to develop the curricula, educational materials, and the school environment in general, and class environment in particular, to help increase children's interaction and participation in various activities.

Objectives

The ECD strategy for improving the quality of early primary education aims at:

1. Providing a positive school environment that prevents dropouts and increases enrolment in primary education from 97% to 99% by the year 2005.
2. Improving the quality of education in accordance with the characteristics of child development at this stage, and evaluating the different components of education, to make sure that children are gaining the appropriate knowledge, skills, attitudes and values.
3. Minimizing the differences in opportunities among various groups of children, including those with special needs, and eliminating obstacles that prevent them from active participation.
4. Improving the efficiency of teachers of the first three primary grades, especially in applying the latest teaching technology and methodologies.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the policies required to achieve the desired objectives in early primary education:

1. To improve the teachers' efficiency through in-service training programmes, emphasizing the skills of dealing with a comprehensive class environment and cooperative learning.
2. To develop teachers' pre-service training programmes that prepare teachers, who are qualified academically and pedagogically in response to modern educational approaches.
3. To equip school teachers of lower basic education grades with the means and skills necessary for the early detection of disabilities and appropriate intervention.
4. To improve class and school environments by avoiding crowded classes, re-arranging their contents, and providing them with proper educational means and aids.
5. To develop school building codes to accommodate students with special needs.
6. To prepare special curricula for this learning stage, based on the unity and coherence and complementarity of knowledge and experience, according to the needs of children in this age group.
7. To institutionalise the standards of students' achievements and apply them regularly to make sure that students are acquiring the required knowledge and skills, and to set national indicators to monitor the achievement in basic education.
8. To enhance research and applied studies efforts that aim at improving the quality of learning and teaching.
9. To improve the means of evaluation in schools to include personal characteristics, life skills, and basic competencies.
10. To improve the role of educational supervision to meet the needs of integrated and comprehensive teaching, as well as the developmental needs of children of this age group.
11. To activate the role of the family in the process of teaching and learning.
12. To activate the role of the school in utilizing school health services, and to increase health awareness among students and their parents.
13. To improve the democratic atmosphere in the school environment, to develop self-confidence in children and their ability to express themselves properly through effective dialogue, and to enhance schools' relationships with parents.
14. To develop the discipline codes and regulations according to the educational and psychological criteria of children's development at this level, leading to self-discipline.

15. To develop educational, psychological, and social counselling services in the school in order to help children deal with difficulties they face inside and outside school.
16. To take the necessary measures to activate the concept of compulsory education, through cooperation between schools and local authorities.

Family Upbringing and the Local Community

The main responsibility of taking care of children in the first six years of their life lies upon the family. Statistics show that the percentage of children aged 0-4 years who attend nurseries does not exceed 2%, and the percentage of children aged 4-6 years who attend KG's does not exceed 28%.

According to existing circumstances, growth in the number of KG's is not expected; therefore, the role that KG's play in children's development and growth will be restricted to the small group enrolled. Despite the growing efforts made by the Ministry of Education in this field, the majority of children are not expected to be enrolled in KG's in the near future; therefore, KG services will remain under the "demand and supply" forces as far as the private and voluntary sectors are concerned; while in rural areas such services will mainly be offered by the government sector.

Some studies have shown that many parents and caregivers awareness in some aspects of a child's growth and his/her mental and emotional development is weak. This calls for the need for projects aimed at improving the family environment and increasing awareness in this field by enlisting the help of different governmental and non-governmental sectors.

There is also a need to develop the role of the educational system in schools, universities, and educational centres to prepare the future generations to undertake their role in the upbringing of children, and to become future parents. This is in addition to the fact that the role of the media has only sporadic input when it comes to matters related to children's growth and development. Therefore, there is a need to re-evaluate the dimensions related to children's upbringing and education in school curricula, educational practices, and the media.

Objectives

The ECD strategy related to family upbringing and the local community aims at:

1. Developing family performance in the field of early childhood development, thus improving the skills needed to provide children at home with a safe and encouraging environment, which plays an important role in child development.
2. Developing the role of the local community, as well as civic society organizations, in providing early childhood programmes and services that are directed towards families.
3. Achieving coordination and complementarity among social, medical, educational, cultural, and environmental services provided to children and their families, within a gender perspective.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the main policies to achieve the approved ECD objectives related to family upbringing and the local community:

1. To carry out research and studies to identify dominant social trends that influence children's upbringing in Jordan, in order to develop programmes directed to Jordanian families.
2. To highlight and develop projects directed towards families, through all non-governmental organisations and ministries that provide services to the early childhood sector, such as the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Development, Youth, and Information. Such projects should concentrate on upgrading the abilities of parents and caregivers in the field of early childhood.
3. To evaluate the current efforts, services and programmes directed to early childhood and family upbringing, with the objective of developing and activating such services and programmes in both the private and public sectors.
4. To activate the projects that aim at improving the family environment, such as better parenting projects, which empower families to provide better care for their children. This can be achieved through public, private, and civic sector participation.
5. To improve coordination efforts concerned with the family environment in ECD programmes, supervised by governmental and non-governmental organisations.
6. To improve the efficiency and performance of staff in local social organisations, which deal with early childhood care programmes in order to improve the role of families in raising their children. This can be achieved by using different educational methods and supportive complementary programmes that help them meet their children's needs.
7. To develop and increase the number of educational programmes directed to families through the social and mass media.
8. To evaluate the network of concepts related to family and social upbringing and to update such concepts in an both general and higher education curricula.
9. To develop awareness programmes that are directed to the family, concerning early detection of , and dealing with disabilities.
10. To support and activate organisations working in such areas of the country that are remote from centres of childhood services.

Special Needs Children

The world has witnessed growing interest in improving educational opportunities that should be provided to students with special needs -- whether talented, have learning difficulties, are slow learners, or suffer from different disabilities -- and providing them with primary and secondary educational services, through modern educational techniques based on the principle that every human being, regardless of his/her ability, can acquire learning and develop his/her abilities if the learning process is well designed according to specific curative educational programmes that meet the individual student's specific abilities and respond to his needs. Education philosophy has already developed from concentrating on the educational system whereby learners adapt themselves to its requirements, to concentrating on the learners themselves and on adapting the learning process to fulfil their educational needs. Many countries have already enacted legislation that motivates educational institutions to provide the required services to students with special needs.

The characteristics of the current situation of educational services provided to children with special needs in Jordan can be summarized as follows:

1. The Ministry of Social Development plays a prominent role in caring for special needs children, by directing and supervising a number of institutions and schools that care for the deaf, the blind, and the mentally disabled.
2. The Ministry of Education's interest in students with special needs started in the early 80s. This interest increased after the first Educational Development Conference in 1987, which emphasized in its recommendations that education is the right of every individual. This calls for diversifying the teaching methods in educational institutions in order to care for and serve different groups of talented, regular, and slow learners according to their abilities and needs. In this regard, the Ministry of Education established special administrative units to supervise the education of students with special needs. Private schools, UNRWA, and non-governmental organisations also participated in this effort.
3. The percentage of students with various learning difficulties amounts to 12-18% of the total number of students enrolled in schools.
4. The Law for the Care of the Disabled No.12 of 1993, and the Education Law No.3 of 1994 both emphasized the right of all categories of students to equal opportunities in education in a way that meets their special needs and abilities.
5. The Ministry of Education started to apply the 'resource room programme' in the mid 1990s to provide supportive and enrichment services to students with special needs. The 200 resource rooms available benefited 2,400 students in the scholastic year 1999-2000.
6. Teachers who work in resource rooms are adequately qualified and trained according to the High Diploma Programme in Learning Difficulties in cooperation with Princess Tharwat

College. Nevertheless, there is a lack of the appropriate specialized professional and educational supervision in this area

7. There is a weakness in services provided to students with different disabilities in regular schools, in addition to the fact that resource rooms are unfairly geographically distributed.
8. There is a need to improve the capabilities of regular schools to be able to deal with talented students and to provide them with educational and counselling services that meet their needs and abilities.
9. There is a need to develop comprehensive diagnostic programmes directed towards the different categories of children with special needs.
10. There is an urgent need to train regular school teachers to use the skills of individualized teaching and different curricular activities that are varied in types and levels to meet children's needs and abilities, including students with special needs.
11. There is a clear deficit in the services offered by the educational system during the stages that follow the end of resource room education and the beginning of the regular classroom teaching, as there is no mechanism that ensures normal and smooth transfer to regular classroom education.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of special needs education aims at:

1. Improving the efficiency of teachers and staff who deal with different types of students with special needs, and training them to diagnose and deal with such cases.
2. Applying the principle of inclusive education that provides the educational facilities and services to different groups of students with different abilities, including those with special needs. This is achieved by maximizing the use of the available resources in regular schools and developing partnership among various related sectors for this purpose, (health, education, social services, universities, non-governmental organisations, families, etc).
3. Developing the educational programmes and services offered in resource rooms and subjecting these services to evaluation, and educational and professional supervision.
4. Enhancing the mental and creative abilities of students in general, including talented students, by increasing the appropriate learning opportunities, which help them develop their talents within specialized programmes.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the main policies and general procedures to achieve the desired objectives in the field of special needs education:

1. To put the cause of special needs education on the national agenda of education reform, and make the public aware of the right of all children to equal access to educational services made available by society.
2. To modify legislative tools and regulations to respond in a better way to the diversity of learners in order to achieve the principle of equal opportunities.
3. To ensure that the Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Ministry of Social Development, shall accept special needs students suffering from minor or moderate disabilities, who have the disposition to learn, into all educational stages, without enforcing conformity between the children's age and the classes they join.
4. To provide care-givers, teachers and staff involved in programmes for special needs children in schools, KG's and nurseries with in-service training programmes.
5. To develop a comprehensive supervision system specialized in education related to students with special needs, in schools, KG's and nurseries.
6. To improve services, mechanisms, tools, and indicators needed for the evaluation of early detection, and comprehensive diagnosis for students in general, and students with special needs in particular.
7. To adopt the principle of flexibility in curricular requirements in order to give teachers and care-givers the chance to modify content according to children's needs and abilities.
8. To make sure that the benefit from any service or programme designed for students with special needs complements the regular educational programme, and is not a substitution to it. The Ministry of Education should encourage all schools, KG's and nurseries to provide such services to students who need them, including educational packages for such students.
9. To increase the number of 'resource rooms' and other services in regular schools and make them available to all special needs students.
10. To encourage and develop the needed efforts and capabilities to establish early diagnosis of learning disabilities and dealing with them in schools and KG's in order to provide the appropriate services at the appropriate time.
11. To develop the capabilities of regular schools, KG's and nurseries to deal with gifted students and provide them with educational services that meet their abilities and potentials.
12. To develop criteria and indicators specific to evaluating the performance of students with special needs.

13. To develop programmes, mechanisms and experiences needed to guarantee a smooth and easy transition from a special needs programme to a regular classroom environment.
14. To provide special facilities and services to facilitate the enrolment of disabled children in schools, KG's, and nurseries, by applying special building codes for disabled children. Also, to provide facilities to enable the disabled to move freely between home and school, and provide learning aids for the deaf and the blind.
15. To support and encourage the private sector in general, and the voluntary sector in particular, to provide services and facilities to special needs children.
16. To develop monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that agencies dealing with special needs children abide by educational and social requirements.
17. To avail awareness and educational programmes to families for the early detection and diagnosis of special needs children.

Curricula and Programmes

The characteristics of the current ECD curricula and programmes in Jordan can be summarized as follows:

- Most of the efforts in preparing curricula are concentrated on teaching more than on the learning aspects and the needs and characteristics of the learners themselves.
- Current curricula concentrate on ability aspects, but it is noticeable that the majority focus on limited kinds of abilities.
- Despite the recent interests in the application aspects, yet curricula in general are far from connecting learning with work.
- Curricula are weak concerning social aspects related to the learner's life, especially the aspects connected with group learning and work, and developing the spirit of self-education, personal creativity, entrepreneurship and problem solving.
- Emotional growth, which is one of the main aspects of children's growth, is almost absent in the curricula of this age group.
- The role of parents is not clear in most current curricula, neither is the role they play in their child's development through positive interaction with educational institutions, except in some private institutions.
- There is an interest in most curricula in the cultural and social dimensions, but the means of delivery depend on spoon-feeding, and teacher domination. In most cases, children are negative receivers.
- There is a weakness in considering and understanding the pattern of a child's growth and development. Understanding the pattern enables the teacher to recognize a child's needs, to plan more efficiently, and create a suitable learning environment.
- The present curricula need to emphasize better the child's individuality and to be directed towards the whole educational cycle in dealing with each developmental stage. The curricula and the teacher should aim at interacting with the child as a whole entity with his/her learning characteristics, abilities, and physical, mental, emotional, and social needs, while taking into consideration the existing individual differences.
- In practice, curricula are divided into teaching lessons of independent topics and aspects, and are presented in group learning patterns at equal intervals times, with little attention to individual differences.

- There is a complete absence of curricula related to the education of children from birth to the age of three years.
- There is a complete absence of guidance material for parents, of children of the relevant age group.
- The current approach to curricula depends on the principle of one book for all children, with learning taking place in one place (usually the classroom), with strict time frame for learning, and with one teacher's guide book.

Objectives

The ECD strategy related to curricula and programmes aims at:

1. Developing curricula that serve different age groups in early childhood and are appropriate for the child's development, concerning their content, integration, processes, strategies, and various teaching environments, in a way that ensures continuity and smooth transition from one level to the next.
2. Developing learning curricula instead of teaching curricula, which are based on maximizing the abilities of the child, focusing on the learner, guiding his integrated development and education, and allowing the child to interact, with the learning experiences, and participate in directing them.
3. Encouraging and improving the role of parents and their contribution in enriching the curricula and developing the child's experiences, since they are an essential reference and a responsible partner in the education process.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the main policies and general procedures to achieve the desired ECD objectives related to curricula and programmes:

1. To cover comprehensively all aspects of a child's development in early childhood curricula : physical, emotional, social, and mental.
2. To focus the learning process on developing exploration, investigation and experimentation skills, and interaction between children and adults, materials, and the learning environment.
3. To encourage teachers and caregivers to design teaching aspects and activities according to the children's needs and interests, taking into consideration the national and community intellectual, cultural, and social dimensions.

4. To concentrate on the use of tangible and real materials that are appropriate and of value to the child in all learning activities.
5. To direct learning curricula to cater for a large range of children's abilities and interests, which exceed the limits of the children age, to stimulate them and expand their choices.
6. To avoid gender, racial, geographical, and social stereotyping in learning curricula for children of this age group.
7. To minimize children's use of pre-designed exercise books, handouts and worksheets, as well as models made by adults to be copied by children, especially for those below five, and concentrate on applying life skills and playing experiences, as well as verbal development, and working to implement small projects.
8. To provide children with individual learning opportunities, as well as free choice of activities, materials, equipment, space, time, and human resources.
9. To design new curricula patterns and apply them on children of different backgrounds. These curricula are to be based on integration and interaction among different curricula patterns, such as projects, modules, and operation curricula, and are also to depend on the child's own environment and resources.
10. To make sure that there is a balance among different types of active and calm activities, rest, mealtimes, and also between group and individual activities.
11. To provide needed spaces and facilities for out-of-class and out-of-school activities.
12. To pay attention to the educational aspects related to national and civic education, sports, arts, music, health, and life skills, in addition to other aspects, in EC curricula and programmes.
13. To consider parents a responsible educational partner and a source of enriching the curricula and developing the child's experiences.
14. To ensure that curricula take into consideration the characteristics and qualities of the different geographical regions in their natural, economic, and social variations.
15. To provide teachers, caregivers, and families with guide books and resource material that are based on scientific methods of teaching and development of children in this age group.
16. To develop the capabilities of concerned individuals and organisations, and to prepare professionals in the field of curriculum development, experimenting, following up, and developing criteria for evaluation to ensure appropriate utilization.
17. To encourage the development and production of educational games that are linked to the social and cultural environment of the child, emphasizing the importance of learning through games, play, and singing in EC curricula and programmes.

Health Care Services

Jordan has achieved remarkable progress in the field of health care services and the improvement of child health in early childhood stages. This came as a result of the tremendous efforts of the different sectors whether through primary or secondary health care services. This is clearly shown in the remarkable drop in the infant mortality rate, which stood at 28 per 1,000 live births in 1998. This average is considered one of the lowest in the region. Moreover, the percentage of childhood diseases, malnutrition, diarrhea, and other contagious diseases is lower compared to other countries in the region. In addition, Jordan has achieved high levels of immunization coverage through the National Immunization Programme. The fertility survey, which was carried out at the end of 1999, indicates that 38.3 children in every thousand die before they reach the age of five years, and that 78% of these die before their first birthday.

Despite this great improvement in the physical health care indicators, children's health in early childhood needs improvement with regard to:

1. Early diagnosis and treatment of disabilities and psychosocial problems.
2. The quality of health care services provided to children in general.
3. School health care services, which should include psychological, social, and cognitive aspects.
4. The marked difference in health care indicators (anaemia, iodine deficiency, vitamin A deficiency, death of infants and newborns) according to the geographic area and gender.
5. Curative and preventive dental care services.
6. Raising awareness of the public in general, and in particular of those who provide care to early childhood and the family concerning child health (physical, psychological, and social) in the following fields:
 - I. Child nutrition (breast-feeding, complementary feeding, etc.)
 - II. Child development.
 - III. Protection from abuse and violence.
 - IV. Safe environment at home, in playgrounds and in service institutions.
 - V. Early practicing of proper health habits.
 - VI. Interaction between parents and caregivers, on the one hand, and the child, on the other.

- VII. Providing females with proper nutrition during adolescence and pregnancy.
- VIII. Spacing out pregnancies.
- 7. Studies and research related to various aspects of a child's health, especially social, psychological and cognitive health.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of health care services aims at:

1. Improving the capabilities of health care and service providers in identifying cases of early disabilities, and in the diagnosis and rehabilitation of disabilities as well or social, psychological and cognitive problems.
2. Improving the quality of health care services provided to children and expanding their coverage to include dental care and to decrease differences due to geographic regions and gender.
3. Improving the quality of school health care services and expanding their coverage to include psychological, social, and cognitive aspects.
4. Raising the level of public awareness in general, and the family in particular, about the importance of children's physical, psychological, social, cognitive, and nutritional health.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the main policies to achieve the desired ECD objectives in the field of health care services:

1. To expand the training of those who provide health care services to children in the field of early diagnosis, treatment and rehabilitation of early disabilities, as well as cases of children suffering from psychosocial, social and cognitive problems.
2. To increase the number of referral centres specialized in dealing with early disabilities, and coordinating with existing social rehabilitation centres.
3. To improve the quality of health care services and expand such services provided to children, to include dental care as well as social and psychological aspects.

4. To develop and circulate protocols and fixed scientific standards for childhood health care services, including dental care as well as social and psychological aspects.
5. To provide health care services with qualified staff specialized in dealing with psychosocial, social and cognitive aspects.
6. To activate preventive and curative school health care services, as well as those related to the improvement of child health in both the home and school environments.
7. To train school health care workers in the early detection and documentation of disabilities and to refer these cases to specialized centres.
8. To provide school health care services with qualified staff to deal with children suffering from psychological and social problems, and to refer these cases to specialized centres.
9. To develop legislation, services, and mechanisms needed to treat children suffering from health problems, including dental, social, psychological, and cognitive health.
10. To expand child health care services in the regions where they are most needed.
11. To provide a balanced meal to needy children in the various regions.
12. To provide incentives to health care workers in remote areas.
13. To coordinate with the communication and information sector to set policies and programmes to create awareness of the importance of health care for children.
14. To coordinate with the different levels of educational institutions to develop their educational programmes in order to raise the level of public awareness related to the importance of children's physical, social, psychological, and cognitive health.
15. To develop special indicators and measuring diagnostic tools that reflect the physical, social, psychological and cognitive health situation of children.
16. To develop the current health care cards to include psychological and social indicators, while ensuring the secrecy of such indicators.
17. To expand studies, research, and specialized surveys concerning child health, especially the ones related to the child's psychological, social, and cognitive health.
18. To develop and avail health services and medical tests for those planning to marry and for the wife before pregnancy, in order to avoid any potential problems for children.
19. To develop monitoring and follow-up mechanisms to ensure that agencies providing health services to children abide by all the necessary technical and administrative requirements.

Child Culture

There are two main dimensions for child culture in early childhood. The first one is the educational sources and contents which target those who provide children with care, such as mothers, fathers, grandmothers, caregivers and teachers, which consequently affect the child's knowledge, values, emotions, and physical situation. The second is the educational sources and contents that target directly the child itself, such as free play in all its forms, which enhances the child's willingness to learn, think and explore in different environments, in addition to printed materials (especially those available to children above five years of age), as well as museums, theatres, television programmes, etc.

The child's educational environment in early childhood is formed by the daily practices of childcare. It is also formed by promoting the senses and feelings, as well as the visual, physical, cognitive, and sensory perception in the child's environment at home, the surrounding environment, and care institutions such as nurseries, KGs and schools. On the other hand, dialogue, in its different forms, among children themselves and between children and adults is considered one of the main methods in improving a child's cultural capabilities.

The marked improvement in the educational and health services offered to children in Jordan has not been accompanied by similar improvement in cultural services. Planning, development, funding and coordination between governmental and non-governmental organisations in the field of child culture, remained outside the frame of priorities of formal and private organizations of society. In addition to that, there is a noticeable lack of studies and research that focus on the analysis of the status of child culture. Most of the little available in the way of children's literature, is directed towards children outgrowing early childhood, and what is available for the stage of early childhood is very little. One can say, in general, that the educational cultural project is weak and lacks effectiveness in most of Jordan's educational institutions, which include nurseries, KGs, and schools. This calls for hard work to develop the proper physical and human infrastructure for this purpose.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of child culture aims at:

1. Developing the national cultural identity of the child, using various participation methods in the different social institutions by investing in the cultural heritage and modern history.
2. Improving the quality of services and facilities that fulfil children's cultural needs.
3. Promoting and reinforcing the child's self-esteem, and activating ways of the child's self-expression, in addition enriching his/her cultural knowledge through

appropriate educational resources and content, a culturally rich environment, free play, etc.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the main policies and general procedures for achieving the desired objectives of an early childhood development strategy in the field of child culture:

1. To improve the educational capabilities of childcare workers in the fields of child culture and make them aware of the needs of children in these fields. Moreover, to improve their cultural interests, which in turn reflect positively on the needs and capabilities of children. This is achieved through various educational and training programmes.
2. To develop childhood-related educational programmes in higher learning institutions, emphasizing dimensions related to child culture.
3. To support post graduate studies concerning issues, services, facilities, and human resources related to child culture.
4. To encourage studies and research concerned with the different elements and components related to the inputs, processes, and outputs of child culture.
5. To support the publication of educational and cultural materials with content and specifications that are in harmony with the needs of early childhood, which also reinforce the national and personal identity of the child.
6. To give proper attention to develop the habit of reading at home and in the school.
7. To support projects related to drama, singing, and radio and television that are directed to children in the early childhood stage, taking into consideration the effects of TV in particular on children.
8. To establish more museums for children, which support children's abilities in the fields of exploration, and experimentation and thinking.
9. To support the initiatives, efforts, and creativity of artists and educators in the field of early childhood culture.
10. To ensure the appropriate geographic coverage of services and facilities that fulfil early childhood cultural needs, in urban and rural areas.
11. To provide schools with adequate space for outdoor playgrounds, that comply with safety standards.

12. To utilize the potential of public parks for purposes that serve children and contribute to their development.
13. To raise awareness about street traffic, especially through KG and school activities.
14. To develop and activate the role of the Ministry of Culture in meeting the cultural needs of children and supporting national efforts in this field.
15. To give special importance to national and civic education in order to strengthen positive values and ideals.
16. To support and encourage efforts on the level of the Arab World in the field of children's literary work.

The Role of the Media in Early Childhood Development

Despite the interest shown by the Jordanian mass media to childhood in general, early childhood is not given enough attention.

Programmes directed to this group of children are very limited in number, not based on any educational or technical criteria, and are presented by people who are not qualified in the field of early childhood development. These efforts, which are directed towards children in general with no special consideration to the early childhood stage, consist of special programmes on radio and television, children's magazines, special pages in daily newspapers, and some plays. In addition to these, there are some programmes directed to the mother and the family that deal with childhood issues.

Examples of children's programmes on television are cartoons translated into Arabic, educational programmes, plays, and songs. Programmes directed to mothers are the 'Morning Magazine', 'Growth Stages', 'Secrets of Childhood', and the health programme 'Doctor on the Air'.

The number of the annual broadcasting hours in 1999 on Jordan television (JTV) Channel One was 6750 hours; of those, 528 hours were children's programmes, with 132 hours directed to children below seven years. On Channel Two, the broadcasting hours were 3640, including 520 hours of children's programmes, with 80 hours directed to children below seven years. As for Radio Jordan, its weekly broadcasting hours total 140 hours, of which only two hours are dedicated to children's programmes. "Children's World" " An Hour on Air", and "Children around the Microphone" are some of these programmes.

In addition to that, the media contain, every now and then children programmes that are difficult to tally, especially when there is a lack of research with regard to the role of the media in the field of childhood in general, and early childhood in particular. This calls for the need to develop a comprehensive information strategy that meets the needs and requirements of young children.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of the role of the media aims at:

1. Developing media efforts and programmes directed to children in general and early childhood in particular, quantitatively and qualitatively based on the proper educational, social, cultural, and artistic criteria.
2. Developing human resources working in the media field in the area of childhood in general and early childhood in particular.
3. Promoting the child's cultural identity and developing his/her character by presenting meaningful programmes through the different media
4. Increasing community awareness in relation to a child's growth and development, as well as the importance of early childhood and its characteristics and needs.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the policies and general procedures for achieving the desired objectives of the early childhood strategy in the field of the media:

1. To develop media programmes and policies that aim at making the public in general and the family in particular aware of early childhood issues. Such issues include:
 - I- Child nutrition (breastfeeding, complementary feeding, etc.)
 - II- Stages of child development.
 - III- Protecting children from abuse and violence.
 - IV- Early practices of proper health habits.
 - V- Interaction between caregivers including family members and children
 - VI- Nutrition of females in adolescence and mothers in pregnancy.
 - VII- Equal opportunities according to gender.
 - VIII- Dealing with social problems in different preventive and curative means.
 - IX- Spreading positive thinking in the community regarding the disabled.

- X- Spacing out pregnancies, and family planning.
 - XI- Family counselling services and parents' awareness.
 - XII- The ECD Strategy, its aims, contents, and the role of different institutions in implementing it.
2. To develop the capabilities of workers in early childhood media programmes, and raising their awareness of the needs of young children through different training programmes.
 3. To develop educational programmes related to the mass media in higher education institutions, and focus on topics related to early childhood.
 4. To support post- graduate studies in mass media in the field of early childhood development.
 5. To encourage research and studies that deal with different issues related to mass media in the field of early childhood, including the evaluation of programmes directed to young children.
 6. To establish a database of technicians and professionals specialized in childhood issues, such as writers, poets, directors, actors, musicians, as well as their works.
 7. To support initiatives and efforts of the mass media workers in the field of early childhood, and to encourage professionalism in these aspects.
 8. To adopt and circulate national indicators concerning the specifications of programmes presented by the mass media to meet the developmental characteristics of children at this stage.
 9. To improve children's chances of benefiting from presented programmes by activating family and care providers' role in general, and the role of the mother and the caregiver in particular.
 10. To increase funding to the mass media to support the development of children's programmes.
 11. To develop contents and mechanisms of coordination between the mass media and different governmental authorities, such as the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Social Development, and the Ministry of Education, as well as non-governmental organisations.
 12. To reinforce the role of non-governmental organisations in supporting the mass media in the field of early childhood development.
 13. To improve the role of religious fora in educating and raising awareness of the public of early childhood issues, especially those related to child rights, the role of the family in childcare and education, and the different social defence issues.

14. To support and encourage efforts in the Arab World in the field of media production directed towards children.

Human Resources

The continuous increase in the number of children and the wide spectrum of services and facilities offered for their care according to age group, gender, socio-economic background, and family and health conditions call for an increase in the number and quality of those who deal with childhood in general and early childhood in particular. This in turn requires appropriate care to be given to services and processes of qualification, preparation and training of workers in these fields.

Caregivers' qualifications in nurseries and kindergartens range from a high-school certificate to a university degree, while teachers' qualifications in the first three primary grades vary from a college diploma to a university degree. As for the family members and home nurseries and caregivers, the qualifications vary from illiteracy to a university degree, with continuous improvement from one year to the next.

In general, current formal training programmes available for caregivers and workers involved in children services and institutions are poor in quality and lack the professionalism and variation needed to cover the social, cultural, educational, and planning needs. There is a clear need to concentrate on the application of modern childcare methods that are strongly connected to a child's development, upbringing and education, and that will reflect positively on young children's needs and characteristics.

Moreover, in-service training programmes that deal with the interaction and communication skills needed for dealing with children according to their growth and developmental needs, are weak, qualitatively and quantitatively. In addition such training programmes are rarely subject to follow-up and evaluation. There is a clear need to institutionalise in-service training programmes and to accredit institutions with the proper infrastructure needed for this purpose. What makes things even worse in the field of training and developing human resources is the absence of research and studies about training programmes, their application, evaluation and appropriateness for children's developmental needs, taking into consideration the prevailing socio-economic factors.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of human resources aims at:

1. Developing pre-service preparation programmes in educational institutions, and in-service training programmes for those working in the field of early childhood, to cover the human resources needs in educational, cultural, social, care giving, health and media field.

2. Developing policies and funding sources for human resource development needed for early childhood especially in the areas of qualification and training.
3. Enhancing the status of professions related to child care, morally and financially.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the main policies and general procedures to achieve the required objectives of the early childhood development strategy in the field of human resources:

1. To develop, update, and diversify the different university degrees and post-graduate programmes to include the different needs of early childhood in the social, cultural, educational, and planning fields.
2. To raise the level of in-service training programmes for childcare providers in nurseries, KGs, and lower basic education grades.
3. To institutionalise in-service training programmes for childcare providers by evaluating such programmes and accrediting training institutions that possess the appropriate abilities and infrastructure.
4. To encourage the establishment of professional unions and organisations for workers in the field of early childhood, to enhance the status of the relevant professions and professionals, and improve the concerned standards and criteria to guarantee efficient and effective practices.
5. To develop training programmes directed to mothers and to groups indirectly related to childcare, such as social and educational supervisors, as well as members of the police force and others.
6. To improve and circulate the professional standards and specifications of different childcare careers in the educational, cultural, health, and social fields.
7. To develop the abilities of teachers of the lower basic education grades to deal with the integrated comprehensive curriculum of these grades, and to take care of the various developmental needs of the children.
8. To develop the curricula and programmes of all educational levels so that these contribute through their contents and processes to the moral foundation for the role of mothers, fathers, and other family members in their capacity as primary childcare providers.
9. To provide support and incentives to early childhood development educational and care institutions in order to develop their human resources, especially those providing free or subsidized services to children with special needs.

10. To enhance the status of professions concerned with providing child care services in nurseries, KG's and other child care institutions, by improving the working conditions of workers in these professions, similar to these of teachers, in addition to raising awareness of the value of their role through the mass media.

Social Defence

Statistics show that children aged 16 years and below form 40% of the population, and those under the age of 9 years form 25%. The Ministry of Social Development is responsible for social security issues, such as beggary, vagabondage, violence, child labour, orphans, and children of unknown parentage. Despite strong family ties, cooperation, sympathy, and strong family ties, the Jordanian society has quite a number of social problems that include children and their social security. These problems can be summarized as follows:

- There are 23 childcare institutions that have residential care (boarding facilities) for children who are deprived of family care. They deal with 1,300 children every year, most of whom are below the age of nine years, and are victims of family disintegration.
- Divorce was the most important cause of family disintegration. The average number of victims of divorce among children during the nineties reached 6,072. The number of divorced couples in the nineties was 7,000 – three thousand of whom left their children (an average of four children) to social childcare institutions.
- Street children, most of them male vendors, who were dealt with by social welfare institutions in 1999 reached 636; 10% of whom were under the age of nine years.
- Of all the children treated in social care institutions, 20% were victims of sexual abuse.
- The known number of victims of family violence was 590 children in 1999; physical violence accounted for 51% of the cases, 36% were cases of neglect, and 4.6% were victims of sexual abuse. The percentage of children under the age of six years who were victims of family violence was about 14%. The percentage was also 14% for children aged 6-12 years.
- The number of juveniles appearing before juvenile courts totals more than 5,000 cases per year. As for the cases referred to juvenile institutions, they usually amount to 350 cases per year, the main cause being robbery, as well as vagabondage or delinquency. Most of these delinquents are males (92.5%) over the age of 15.
- According to the Ministry of Social Development's adoption programme, the number of children of unknown parentage in the care of foster families is 500.

Objectives

The ECD strategy in the field of social defence aims at:

1. Developing the social services and facilities offered to children joining social, educational, and health care institutions, taking into consideration their developmental characteristics.
2. Firmly establishing positive social upbringing patterns and humanistic approaches, especially when dealing with social problems within the family or in care institutions, and developing appropriate guidance and preventive activities.
3. Developing rehabilitation services and programmes directed to children joining care institutions to help them adjust and integrate with their families and societies.

Policies and General Procedures

The following are the main policies and general procedures to achieve the required objectives of the ECD strategy in the field of social defence:

1. To develop internal regulations and practices in child care and development institutions, especially the regulations dealing with the staff and children's rights and duties.
2. To upgrade the capabilities of staff working in care institutions, childhood development and family protection by providing the appropriate training programmes, and providing such institutions with qualified staff.
3. To develop supervisory and counselling services for staff working in care institutions, childhood development, and family protection, qualitatively and quantitatively.
4. To conduct evaluative studies of childcare institutions and programmes to improve their performance and promote good practices.
5. To promote coordination mechanisms between the Ministry of Social Development and other ministries and concerned authorities dealing with children who face problems and live in difficult social situations.
6. To develop research and studies that deal with issues of social defence for children.
7. To develop supervision and follow-up mechanisms to ensure the adherence of the authorities dealing with children to local legislation, and Arab and international agreements related to childhood.
8. To encourage the civic and voluntary sector to offer institutional services to care for children facing social problems.

9. To develop the necessary legislation to deal with cases of social defence for children, such as vagabondage, beggary, violence, child labour, orphans and children of unknown parentage.
10. To develop awareness and educational campaigns directed to families related to social problems, and issues of social defence for children.