

## Concept Note and Agenda

### *Contexts, Costs and Practices: Debating Public Policy and Planning for Public Services in India* *(with special reference to Early Childhood Care and Education)*

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies, Bangalore - University of Cambridge

#### Dissemination Workshop

18<sup>th</sup> December 2019

Centre for Budget and Policy Studies (CBPS), in collaboration with the University of Cambridge is organising a one-day policy workshop to discuss planning for provisioning of public services in India. An accurate assessment of costs for provision of any service is essential for effective delivery, whether the service is provided by a private or public entity. However, costing for public services in India is often based on expenditures alone and the allocations are not primarily based on rational criteria. Additionally, such planning practices fail to account for local needs as well as in utilising the local resources available to make the services truly responsive. Drawing specifically on a recently completed study on 'Costs, Contexts and Practices of Early Childhood Care and Education in India', funded by the British Academy, this workshop aims to generate a larger discussion and debate regarding the need for costing of public services taking into account the implicit economic costs to facilitate proper planning for effective delivery of public services. We argue for costing principles, which enable planning for and implementation of responsive models. The study attempted to explore these in the context of public provisioning and planning for children's development, which is narrow, and target-driven, and reflects international policy priorities and developmental thinking, rather than responding to local concerns and needs.

This can be seen even with respect to the holistically-conceptualised Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), which started with an initial focus on improving nutrition and health indicators (such as malnutrition and infant and maternal mortality). At present, the ICDS continues to be viewed as a "feeding centre for the poor", as much of its administrative machinery and budgets remain focused on the delivery and monitoring of supplementary nutrition, immunization and health. With monitoring and supervision mechanisms routinised, no quality evaluation mechanism for components such as preschool education available, and planning largely concerned with achieving various national and international quantitative targets, services offered remain perfunctory rather than integrated or efficacious.

Parallely, India also has a large private market of varied ECCE provisioning. The private market of ECCE services, which largely lack the integrated focus on nutrition, health and preschool education offered by the ICDS, is nevertheless preferred by parents who seek to accrue early educational advantages for their children. Preschools which offer formal literacy, numeracy and English training from the early years are seen as important to prepare children for later schooling, and remain competitive with children from the elite castes and classes. Thus, though most private provisions for ECCE adopt developmentally inappropriate practices, it has continued to grow as a result of a lack of

regulation and legislation of quality ECCE as a right. In this context, there is an increasing stratification seen within the ECCE sector, as those with the economic resources opt for private ECCE provisions of varied qualities and types, while it is the most marginalised of communities, with the least bargaining powers, that rely on the ICDS (which also varies in quality and functioning by state and region).

In this context, while ECCE has come to be accepted as important to improved educational outcomes in later years and economic outcomes for individuals, communities and nations, there is a lack of attention paid within policy to the political economy of ECCE and, and the differences in developmental opportunities this affords to different communities. ECCE policies and practices focus simply on quantitative goals such as enrolment and attendance, but do not fundamentally consider the ways in which communities have to negotiate with educational structures to secure equal opportunities, access or outcomes. Thus, existing models of ECCE, while target-oriented, remain unresponsive to community needs.

Placing these discrepancies in developmental planning in the foreground, and our findings from a six-month ethnographic and costing study on responsive models of ECCE, the workshop aims to bring together policy makers, grass-root organisations and academics, to discuss the policy implications of our study, as well as experiences of participants and practitioners. The aim will be to bring together these varied experiences in planning for more responsive models and services related to the child. Responsive model here broadly refers to services that are more responsive to the needs and contexts of children. The workshop also aims at going beyond the study and engaging with the issue of costing of and planning for public services in general, especially in the context of education. This becomes especially important in a context where we rarely undertake any rigorous exercise for estimating the cost of public services. The discussion will also delve into issues of scale, decentralisation, diversity and accountability in the context of planning for and costing of public services.

The workshop will adopt the following format:

<b>Day 1 (17.12.2019)</b>	<b>Pre-Workshop Dinner and Introductions</b>
7.00 pm – 9.00 pm	Dinner and introductions / registration Venue: Taj Ambassador, Sujan Singh Park, Subrmania Bharti Marg, New Delhi
<b>Day 2 (18.12.2019)</b>	Venue: Maple Room, India Habitat Centre, New Delhi
<b>SESSION 1</b>	
9.15 am	Registration
9:30 am- 9.45 am	Introduction to the workshop
9.45 am – 11.00 am	Key Note & Discussion Keynote Speakers: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Pronab Sen, Programme Director (India), International Growth Centre</li> <li>• Dr. Venita Kaul, Professor Emerita Ambedkar University, Delhi</li> </ul>
11.00am – 11: 30am	Tea
<b>SESSION 2</b>	

11:30 A.M.-1:00 P.M.	<p>Presentation 1: Ethnographic study of two sites in Bihar and Tamil Nadu</p> <p>Response by Discussant</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Geeta Menon, Independent researcher</li> <li>• Ms. K. Lakshmi, Chairperson, SRC ECE DDMS, Andhra Mahila Sabha</li> </ul> <p>Open discussion</p>
1:00 P.M. – 2:00 P.M.	Lunch
<b>SESSION 3</b>	
2:00 P.M. – 3:30 P.M.	<p>Presentation 2: Cost of ECCE services: estimates, costing framework and governance framework</p> <p>Response by Discussant</p> <p>Discussants:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ms. Avani Kapur, Fellow, Centre for Policy Research and Director, Accountability Initiative</li> <li>• Ms. Uma Mahadevan, Principal Secretary (PR), Rural Development &amp; Panchayat Raj Department, Government of Karnataka</li> </ul> <p>Open Discussion</p>
3:30 P.M. – 4:00 P.M.	Tea
<b>SESSION 4</b>	
4:00 P.M. – 5:30 P.M.	<p>Panel Discussion on the Importance of estimating Cost of Public Services, with special reference to Education</p> <p>Panelists:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dr. Vinod Vyasulu, Development Economist and President of CBPS Governing Board</li> <li>• Mr. Sujit Chowdhury, Director, Fiscal Policy Institute, Government of Karnataka</li> <li>• Ms. Mridula Bajaj, Former Executive Director, Mobile Creches</li> <li>• Mr. Asadullah, Programme Director, Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability</li> </ul>
5:30 P.M.- 6:00 P.M	Closing Remarks and Vote of Thanks

Further information and reading related to the project can be found on our [website](#) and blog posts on [responsive models](#), the [contexts](#) of ECCE in India, [Indian scholarship](#) on childhood.