CITIZEN REPORT CARD (CRC) SURVEY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

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ABOUT API

The Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) is a Cambodian non-profit and non-governmental organization which has a mission to serve the long term democratic and social development needs of Cambodia through the empowerment of people to interact with their government to project their rights and provide for their needs.

More information on API can be found at http://www.apiinstitute.org/

ABOUT CACHRD

Cambodia-ASEAN Centre for Human Rights Development (CACHRD) is non-profit and non-governmental organization in response to the needs of training and research in human rights in Cambodia.

Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

API	Advocacy and Policy Institute
BIGS	Bandung Institute of Governance Studies
BSP	Budget Strategic Plan
CACHRD	Cambodia-ASEAN Centre for Human Rights Development
CRC	Citizen Report Card
DOECE	Department of Early Childhood Education
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education For All
ELDS	Early Learning Development Standard
ESP	Education Strategic Plan
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
IBE	International Bureau of Education
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoWA	Ministry of Women Affair
NCDD	The National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development
NGOs	Non-Government Organizations
PI	Perkumpulan INISIATIF
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Science
UNESCO	United Nation Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	The United Nations Children's Fund
USAID	The United States Agency for International Development
R4D	Results for Development Institute

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Currently Early Childhood Education (ECE) is fully supported by the Royal Government of Cambodia, and has been developed and implemented throughout the country. Pre-school education refers to the formal system of education for children aged three to five years (IBE/UNESCO, 2006) and it covers public pre-school education, private pre-school education, and community pre-school education (ECE, 2012).

As a percentage of total government spending, 12.4% of the budget in 2011 went to education, of which only 1% was spent on pre-primary or pre-school education (UNESCO-UIS, 2013). Although enrolment in ECCE programs has increased over the years, the gross enrolment rate in pre-primary school still lags behind compared to neighbouring countries. The gross enrolment rate in pre-primary school in Cambodia was 13% in 2011, considerably lower than the regional average of 62% (UNESCO-UIS, 2013). There are concerns regarding the access, quality and equality of the ECCD program.

The objective of this survey was to study which and to what extent services in pre-school education reach the service users, in this case children in pre-school education. The main research questions were:

1. How do caretakers perceive the availability, accessibility, and quality of services at the pre-school of their child? Services include but are not limited to materials.
2. How do caretakers perceive the transparency and accountability of their child's pre-school?

METHODOLOGY

Since children this age are too young to act as respondents in this study, their caretakers are used as proxy respondents. As a methodology, Citizen Report Card survey was used. This kind of survey provides a quantitative measure of user perceptions of public services.

The sampling procedure involved two stages, strategic selection and randomization. Firstly, the five provinces and seven districts were selected based on strategic assumptions of API target provinces and districts and the availability of ECE programs. The provinces were Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Kampong Speu, and Banteay Meanchey. Secondly, pre-schools were randomly selected from the list of pre-schools in seven districts of the five provinces derived from the NCDD database (2010) and MoEYS Database (2011). School principals and teachers recommended caretakers (parents, grandparents, siblings or uncles/aunts) for the interviews. The total sample consisted of 33 public pre-schools and 359 caretakers of pupils enrolled in pre-school in the academic year 2011-2012. Caretakers are used as proxy respondents and each represent one pre-school child.

Data was gathered with a questionnaire developed for the purpose of this survey. The questionnaire consisted of 25 questions, mostly closed ended with fixed answer categories (e.g., yes/no) and five point Likert scales to allow responding with a rating on a scale of choices (e.g., accessibility, satisfaction).

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It was found that caretakers have a high appreciation for the pre-schools of their children, and they believe that pre-school has a positive effect on their child's development. In our sample, where the pre-school was close to the child's house, regular school attendance is more than satisfactory and if the child misses classes, it is because the child was sick, but it does not seem to be because of school location, transport to school or migration. The monthly family income was not related to appreciation or satisfaction with pre-school. Also, monthly family income was not related to school attendance. It was found that almost 50% of caretakers were willing to contribute to the pre-school of their child while the child is at the school. Understandably, the willingness to pay for pre-school and the monthly family income were related: the higher the income, the higher the readiness to contribute.

There are considerable differences between the availability of services. For instance, in the category of generic school materials, telephone and photocopy/ printing machine were never available, and a rubbish bin and toilet almost always. School meal and medicine kit were available according to less than 15% of caretakers, whereas clean water and sanitation materials were available according to 68% and 65% of caretakers. This means that on average at least 3 out of 10 pre-school children do not have access to clean water and soap, and hence do not have the significant opportunity to prevent diarrhoeal disease.

It was in particular revealing to weigh availability, accessibility and satisfaction against each other. If a certain material or service is not commonly available, but widely used if it is, and at the same time it is highly appreciated by caretakers, this is a signal to at least consider increasing availability of these particular materials/services. Based on this line of reasoning, it is recommended to provide more school meals, outdoor observation, sanitation before leaving the classroom and daily assessment of students. Apart from that, considering the care children this age need, we also recommend that sanitation materials, clean water, and a medicine kit will become commonly available at pre-schools.

An important outcome of this survey is that there is actually not a clear and regular tracking and reporting system in place for child assessment, at least not a system that actually reaches the caretakers. They are unaware of daily assessments of their child, are not invited to meetings at schools, and not regularly asked to sign the monthly monitoring book. Since in particular children in the pre-school age go through important developmental social, emotional, physical, and cognitive stages, it is important to keep track of their progress and report this to their caretakers. It was found that caretakers currently lack, but appreciate regular reports on their child's development. We therefore recommend implementing regular and standardized report systems at all pre-schools, for all children.

Although education should be free for all, it was found that 36% of caretakers were asked to support school financially or materially. Only 24% of caretakers received an invoice for contributions or payments. This survey also shows caretakers' appreciation of pre-schools, and half of them would be willing to contribute. This willingness should be rewarded with complete openness and accountability on schools' behalf. Apart from that, school finances should be organised alongside official guidelines, without caretakers having to make unofficial payments/contributions.

With regard to enrolment it seemed that there were no difficulties with the procedure itself, but information about school enrolment is mostly provided by teachers, whereas village chiefs, commune councils, or other government officials were the least likely source of information about school enrolment. If the goal is to increase enrolment rates for pre-school education, it seems highly recommendable to educate government officials on the existence and enrolment procedures of pre-schools so that they can distribute information to caretakers as well.

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1. GENERAL BACKGROUND

After the collapse of Khmer Rouge Regime in 1979, pre-school education was established by a technical working group of General Education and Pre-school education. In 1986, this working group was changed to Department of General Education and Pre-school Education. In 1999, this department was divided into the Department of General Primary Education and the Department of Primary and Pre-school education. The Department of Early Childhood Education (DoECE) was initiated in 2002. Currently Early Childhood Education (ECE) is fully supported by the Royal Government of Cambodia, and has been developed and implemented throughout the country.

As a percentage of total government spending, 12.4% of the budget in 2011 went to education, of which only 1% was spent on pre-primary or pre-school education (UNESCO-UIS, 2013). Pre-school education refers to the formal system of education for children aged three to five years (IBE/UNESCO, 2006). Officially, pre-school education is organized as a three-step system, with the first level for three-year-olds, the second for four-year-olds and the final level for five-year-olds. Three-level pre-school refers to independent pre-schools with all three levels of classes. High-level pre-school is part of the primary school and refers to the five-year-old pupil class. In practice, most pupils receive only one or two years of early childhood education (IBE/UNESCO, 2006). The recent enrolment in ECCE programs in Cambodia has an observable and remarkable increase, from 120,098 in the academic year 2005/2006 to 171,768 in the academic year 2009/2010 for children aged from three to five years old. In the academic year 2011/2012, children aged 0 to 6 years enrolled in the program increased to 275,844.

Apart from the public pre-schools, ECE also entails community-based pre-schools, which are centre-based pre-schools set up by Commune Councils (democratically elected local governments at the grassroots level). These community-based pre-schools are meant for all children, particularly those in rural and urban areas where opportunities for early childhood stimulation are few (IBE/UNESCO, 2006). In the current survey only public pre-schools were addressed.

1.1.1. Legislation framework

The constitution, laws, policies, and other legitimated reform mechanisms of the Royal Government of Cambodia draw attention to care and education of children. Article 48 of the constitution states that “The State shall ensure protection of the rights of the children as stipulated in the Convention on the Right of the Child, in particular, the rights to live, education, protection during wartime, and from economic or sexual exploitation. The State shall protect children from acts that are harmful to their educational opportunities or that is detrimental to their welfare.”

Regarding specifically Early Childhood Care and Education chapter 4, article 16 states that “The State shall support early childhood care and childhood education from the age of zero to before primary school age, generally provided at childcare centres in communities or at home. Kindergarten education shall commence education prior to primary education for preparation to attend primary school. The Ministries in charge of Education and other relevant ministries and institutions shall determine the meanings of early childhood care and education.”

In order to meet Millennium Goals regarding education a number of official government policy plans were developed and approved, e.g. the Education For All (EFA) National Plan 2003-2015 and the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2009-2013. In the integration of ESP and Education Sector Support Program it was formulated to ensure linkages between education policies and strategies with development programs and actions as well as between planning and budgeting. ESP 2009-2013 has categorized all development activities into five core programs and 28 sub-programs. Expansion of Early Childhood Education is one of the sub-programs in the first program on Development of General Education and Non-formal Education.

1.1.2. Programs

The strategic plan for ECCE in Cambodia defined three main programs namely parental education, home-based education, and pre-school education.

Parental education

Parental Education Program aims to enhance the role of parents as prime educators and how they can best strengthen this role through parental engagement in home early learning. This program was established in 2000 as cooperation between MoEYS and MoWA, funded by UNESCO. In 2004, the program was expanded under financial and technical support of UNICEF. The parental education program curriculum was developed by MoEYS as a program that was easy to understand for illiterate or low educated parents. The target families are those who have children under 6 years old.

Home-based education

The home-based pre-school program plays a very important role in promoting the values of pre-school education for children, parents and community. This program is established in response to the growing needs of parents and communities and in fulfilling the gaps of public policy actions. Currently, 1,633 communes of 172 districts are running home-based pre-schools throughout the country. This program is actively engaged by 49,811 families.

Pre-school education

Pre-school education covers public pre-school education, private pre-school education, and community pre-school education (ECE, 2012).

Public pre-schools are classified into two types, namely pre-schools attached to primary school and independent pre-schools. Public pre-school teachers are government officials who received two years pre-service training from the Pre-school Teacher Training Centre in Phnom Penh. The curriculum for the program is developed in collaboration between ECE department and relevant departments based on Early Learning Development Standard (ELDS) for children aged three to less than six years old. Public pre-schools are operating under government Program-based Budgeting (PB) and currently 4,032 public pre-school staff and teachers (95.33% females) are employed in 2,575 public pre-schools.

Apart from public pre-schools, there are also 231 private pre-schools, all established and registered at MoEYS. The MoEYS is responsible for monitoring the quality of the private pre-schools, but not for funding.

Currently there are also 2,319 community pre-schools, mainly supported by MoI, MoWA and development partners. Community pre-schools are established under the cooperation between MoEYS and Commune Council Committee for Women and Children.

1.2. PROBLEM STATEMENT AND OBJECTIVES

Nevertheless the increase in enrolment in ECCE programs, the gross enrolment rate in pre-primary school[1] still lags behind. The gross enrolment rate in pre-primary school in Cambodia was 13% in 2011, considerably lower than the regional average of 62% (UNESCO-UIS, 2013). There are concerns regarding the access, quality and equality of the ECCD program, however there is a lack of research to be able to determine if the current situation of the ECCD program is a result of underfunding or ineffective program management. Also due to the deficient and poor quality of learning materials of public pre-schools, students are not able to access the good learning environment which absolutely affects their quality of education.

1.2.1. Objectives

The overall objective of this survey was to study which and to what extent services in pre-school education reach the service users, in this case children in pre-school education, in order to increase quality of ECE through an advocacy effort.

1.2.2. Research questions

The following research questions were taken into account:

1. How do caretakers perceive the availability, accessibility, and quality of services at the pre-school of their child? Services include but are not limited to materials.
2. How do caretakers perceive the transparency and accountability of their child's pre-school?

Citizen Report Card Survey

Since children this age are too young to act as respondents in this study, their caretakers are used as proxy respondents[2]. As a methodology, Citizen Report Card survey was used. This kind of survey provides a quantitative measure of user perceptions of public services. The public services investigated in the current CRC were pre-school services and the users were caretakers of pre-school pupils. Usually the CRC methodology goes beyond just collecting data by claiming public accountability through the process (World Bank, 2004). Therefore, in this survey the caretakers of the pupils participated. After all, for pupils between 0-6 year accountability is more difficult to achieve.

1. *The gross enrolment rate is the number of pupils enrolled in a given level of education regardless of age expressed as a percentage of the population in the theoretical age group for that level of education.*
2. *Proxy respondents are individuals who can answer questions for those who are unable to answer on their own behalf. In many surveys, adults are asked to report for children.*

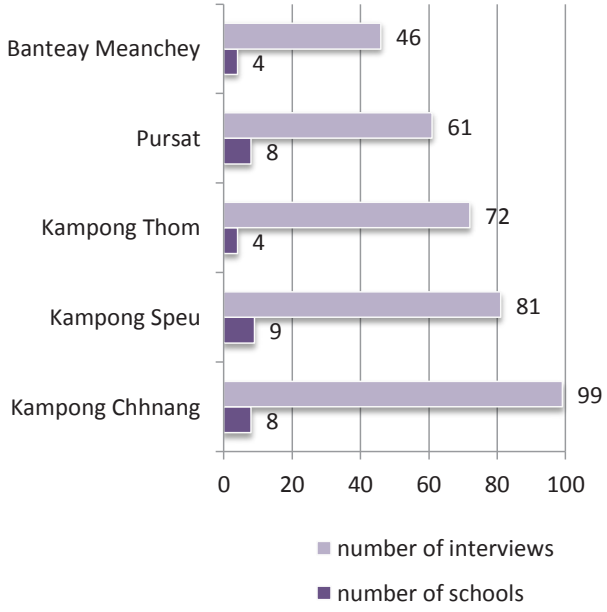
2. METHOD

2.1. SAMPLE

The sampling procedure involved two stages, strategic selection and randomization. Firstly, the five provinces and seven districts were selected based on strategic assumptions of API target provinces and districts and the availability of ECE programs. The provinces were Kampong Thom, Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Kampong Speu, and Banteay Meanchey. Secondly, pre-schools were randomly selected from the list of pre-schools in seven districts of the five provinces derived from the NCDD database (2010) and MoEYS Database (2011). School principals and teachers recommended caretakers (parents, grandparents, siblings or uncles/aunts) for the interviews.

Thus, the total sample consisted of 33 public pre-schools and 359 caretakers. The target respondents were pre-school service users, e.g. pupils enrolled in pre-school in the academic year 2011-2012. Caretakers are used as proxy respondents and represent each one pre-school child. Figure 1 shows how the schools and caretakers were distributed over the provinces. On average 10.88 caretakers were interviewed per school, with a minimum of one and maximum of 29 per school, depending on the number of pupils at the school. At larger schools, more caretakers were interviewed than at smaller schools.

Figure 1. Distribution of schools and interviews in each of the provinces



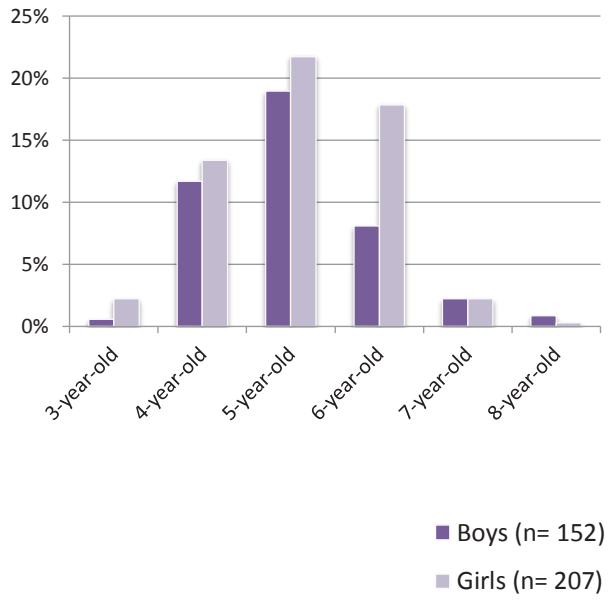
As we can see in Table 1, most (74.4%) the largest group of caretakers consisted of parents and grandparents were the second largest group of caretakers (17%). The majority of caretakers were educated at primary level (40.1%) or secondary level (31.2%). Only a small percentage (8.4%) of caretakers had not received any formal education. The group of not formally educated caretakers consisted of 12 parents (40%) and 18 grandparents (60%).

Table 1. Caretakers: educational level*relation to child

	Parent(s)	Uncle/aunt	Siblings	Grandpa/ma	Other	Total
Primary	112	6	1	23	2	144 (40.1%)
Secondary	90	5	5	12	0	112 (31.2%)
High school	43	7	4	7	0	61 (17.0%)
University	10	1	0	1	0	12 (3.3%)
None	12	0	0	18	0	30 (8.4%)
Total	267 (74.4%)	19 (5.3%)	10 (2.5%)	61 (17.0%)	2 (0.6%)	359

These caretakers represented pupils at the earlier mentioned 33 pre-schools. The represented pupils were 152 boys (42.4%) and 207 girls (57.6%). Age[3] of pre-school pupils was normally distributed as we can see in Figure 2, with a peak of 5-year-olds (40.4%), and 25.1% 4-year-olds and 25.9% 6-year-olds. Since there were more girls than boys in the total sample, it does not come as a surprise that in all age groups, the percentage of girls is higher than of boys. The over-representation of girls in the age group of 6-year-old is however remarkable: 17.8% of the total sample was comprised of 6-year-old girl pupils, whereas this percentage was only 8.1% for boys.

Figure 2. Pre-school pupils: Age distribution of girls and boys



2.2. QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEWS

A questionnaire was developed after receiving input from pre-school teachers and principals on service and physical environment of a good quality pre-school. The questionnaire was designed in English and reviewed and revised several times with the project team. Objective and mind mapping was used to make the first draft of the questionnaire. Key questions were prepared for FGD with teachers to receive their input on the key terms of the questionnaire and to determine services/materials to be interviewed. After this a group discussion was organised with six teachers and principals after which a revised version of the questionnaire was shared with the project team and BIGS/PI for another revision/review. Finally, the questionnaire was translated into Khmer. The Khmer version was then piloted with seven respondents.

The final version of the questionnaire consisted of 25 questions. Most questions were closed ended with fixed answer categories (e.g., yes/no) and five point Likert scales to allow responding with a rating on a scale of choices (e.g., accessibility, satisfaction).

Eleven interviewers, five staff members from an NGO partner based in Kampong Speu and six former provincial API staff members were trained on the use of the questionnaire before they went into the field.

2.3. DATA ENTRY AND ANALYSIS

The raw data was carefully and thoroughly checked and cleaned before it was entered into SPSS. The data was entered in a single data entry procedure by an API employee who was familiar with SPSS.

The data set was thoroughly checked and cleansed before analysis was undertaken. The analyzed data was also generated into excel format in order to create appropriate charts and graphs.

3. *The child's age at the moment of enrollment for the academic year 2011-2012.*

3. KEY FINDINGS

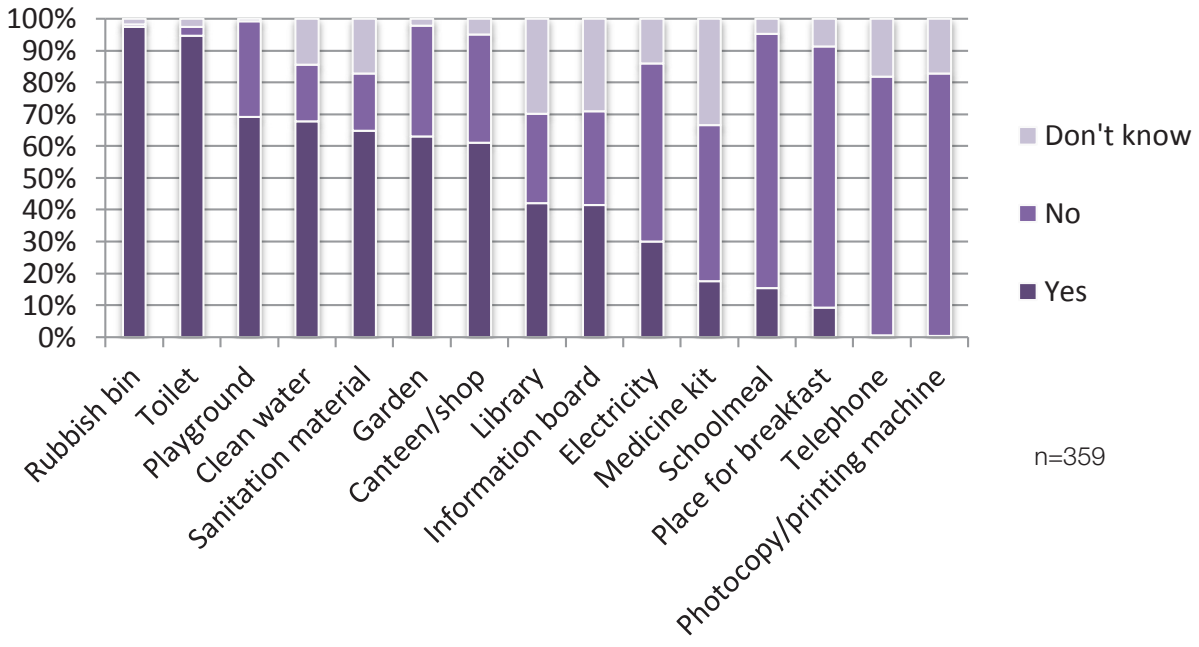
3.1. CARETAKERS' PERCEPTION ON PRE-SCHOOL SERVICES

3.1.1. Availability of materials/services

Caretakers were asked whether or not specific materials[4] were according to them available at their child's pre-school. They could answer yes, no or don't know/not sure. Since we were talking to proxy respondents we deliberately included "don't know" to ensure reliability of their answers. Figure 3 depicts the percentages of general school materials that were available, not available or unknown/unsure. On the left are materials with the highest availability percentages, on the right materials with the lowest availability. The availability of the library and materials on the right of the library was 40% or less, and telephone and photocopy/printing machine were virtually never available[5]. School meals were not provided according to 80% of caretakers, and a medicine kit was not available according to 49% of caretakers.

According to UNICEF, diarrhoea remains the second largest cause of under-five mortality globally. The causes of diarrhoea usually are a lack of safe water, sanitation and basic hygiene. Scientific research shows that hand washing with soap prevents diarrhoeal disease in a more straightforward and cost-effective way than any single vaccine, cutting the risk of diarrhoea from 30 to 50% (Fewtrell, Prüss-Üstün, Bos, Gore & Bartram, 2007). Pre-schools would have a toilet according to 98% of caretakers. However, it is disturbing to find (see Figure 3) that clean water and sanitation materials were available according to 68% and 65% of caretakers. In other words: on average, at least 3 out of 10 pre-school children do not have the opportunity to break the disease cycle by having access to clean water and soap.

Figure 3. Availability of generic school materials

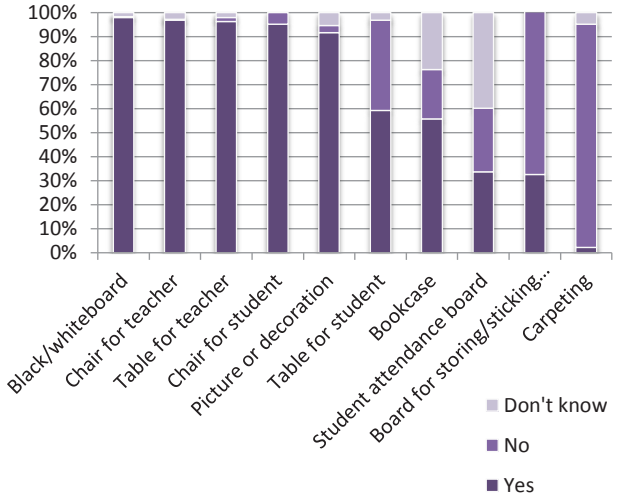


4. *A canteen/shop is a place where children can buy small snacks, drinks and sometimes food. Usually there are no tables and seats. A place for breakfast is a room or space with tables and chairs.*

5. *For the simple reason that these materials were close to never available, phone and photocopy/printing machine are represented in the following figures.*

Caretakers were also asked about availability of classroom materials, see Figure 4. Again, materials with the highest percentages of availability are depicted on the left, materials with the lowest availability on the right side of the figure. According to caretakers, teacher materials like table, chair and blackboard, were available in more than 96% of the cases. Interestingly, 95% of children had a chair, but only 59% had a table. This might be explained by the fact that at pre-schools for a lot of activities like singing or story telling tables are not necessary. Least available were carpeting and the board to store/stick pictures[6] on, with percentages ranging from 2% (carpeting) to 24% (board to store/stick pictures on).

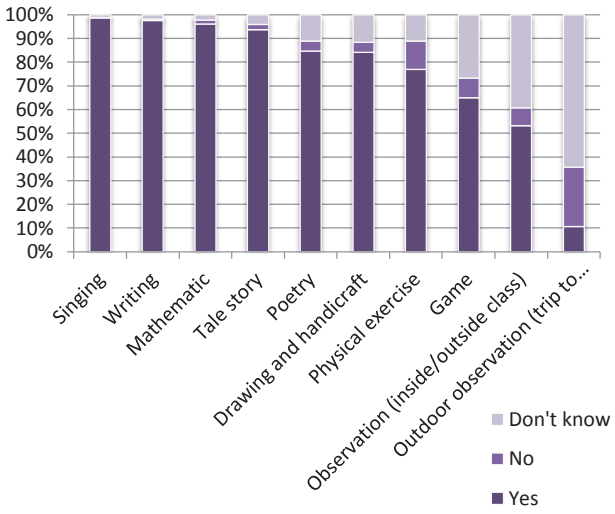
Figure 4. Availability of classroom materials



n=359

In terms of learning activities, we see in Figure 5 that activities like singing, writing, mathematic (number, amount size, colour) and teaching reading tales to students were the most common, e.g. occurred at the children's schools according to more than 90% of caretakers. Not so common were observations inside/outside class (53%) and outdoor observation[7] (11%). Observations outside class occur within schools perimeters, whereas outdoor observation is outside the schools perimeters. The low prevalence of outdoor observation can be explained by the fact that teachers are afraid to be held responsible for accidents outside school perimeters.

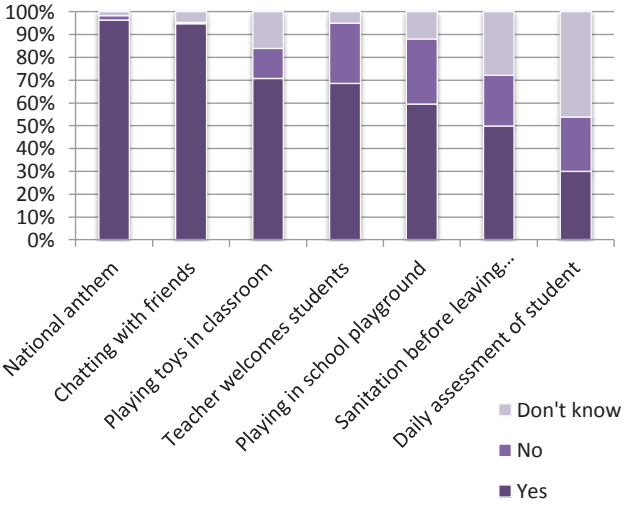
Figure 5. Occurrence of learning activities



n=359

According to caretakers, other activities that their children engaged in while at pre-school were saluting at the national anthem (96%) and chatting with friends (95%). Sanitation before leaving the classroom, e.g. hand washing, occurred 50% and daily assessment of student only 30%. This assessment usually consists of rewarded sign for child performance or behaviour per day, which is put on a list or board in the classroom. Interestingly, 46% of caretakers did not know or were unsure about the daily assessment of their children.

Figure 6. Occurrence of generic school activities



n=359

6. *This is a board, usually made from wood, on which pictures can be displayed either by storing them on a small wooden ridge, or by sticking them to the Velcro tape on the board.*

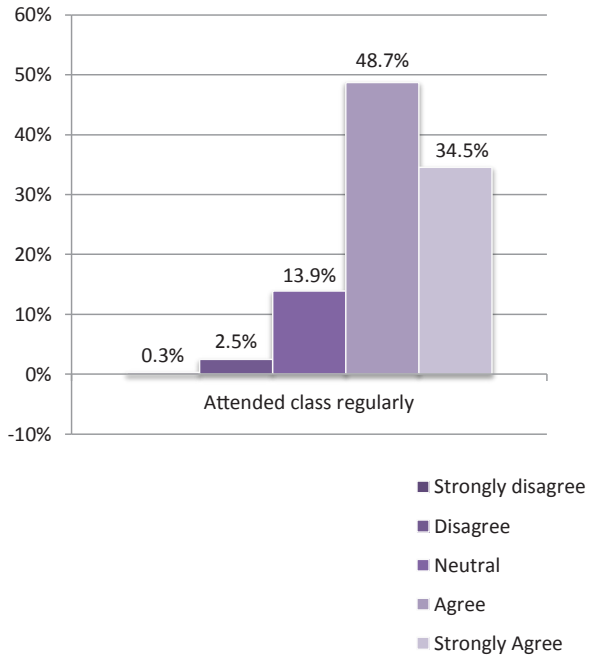
7. *Outdoor observation is one activity in official curriculum of pre-school education which often refers to a small trip to a real place for certain learning's program. An example is trip to visit pagoda.*

3.1.2. Accessibility of materials/ services

To get a picture of how accessible the pre-school is, we asked a number of questions, for instance how far the school location was from where the child lives. According to 84% of caretakers, the school location was not far from house, 12% was neutral, and the remaining 4% agreed that the school location was far from their house.

We also wanted to know if classes were cancelled by school often. On a weekly or monthly basis, literally none of the caretakers agreed that **classes were cancelled** often: 85% strongly disagreed[8] this was the case, 13% disagreed, and the remaining 2% did not know or was not sure. On a yearly basis, 66% of caretakers strongly disagreed that classes were cancelled often, 21% disagreed, 9% remained neutral and 4 percent did not know or was not sure. After this, we asked how much the caretakers agreed that their child went to pre-school regularly (**school attendance,** see Figure 7). As we can see, 83% of caretakers agreed or strongly agreed that their child went to pre-school regularly, and only 3% (strongly) disagreed that this was the case. In short: in our sample, where the school was not far from the child's home, school attendance is regularly, with not much absenteeism of the child, and not many cancellations of class made by school.

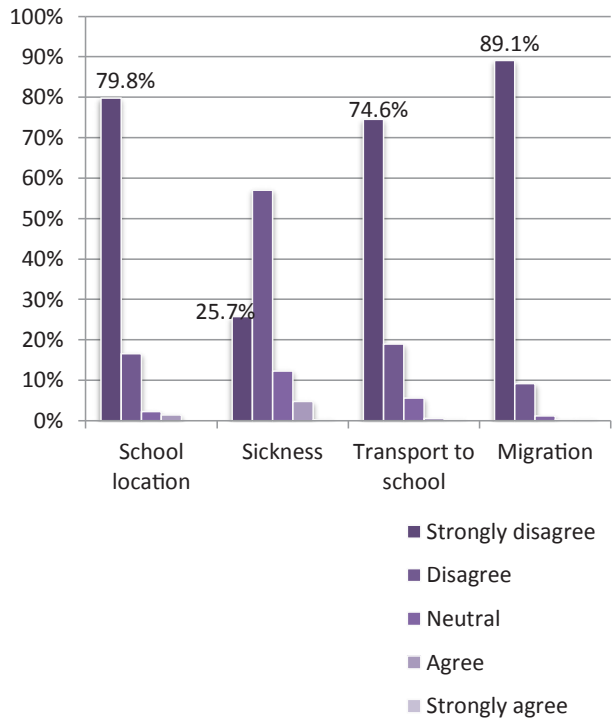
Figure 7. School attendance



Regular attendance of class does not imply that children **never missed class**. We therefore asked caretakers about the reasons for missing classes. Caretakers were presented statements to which they were asked to reply by indicating how much they agreed. An example of such a statement is "My child often missed class due to sickness". It seems that the most likely reason for the child to often miss class was sickness (see Figure 8): 5% of caretakers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. "Transport to school" was captured with a statement saying that the child missed class due to the lack of person who was supposed to take the child to school. Apart from sickness, the other reasons apparently did not cause children to miss class often.

We checked if there was a relation between household monthly income and school attendance, but a correlation analysis revealed that the height of the family monthly income was not significantly related to how often the child missed class.

Figure 8. Reasons to miss class often



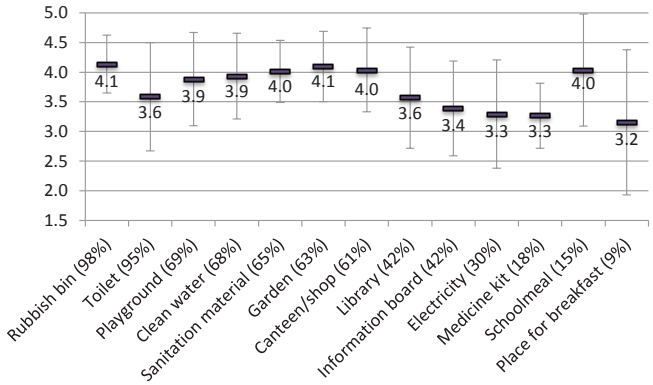
Next, caretakers were asked about the actual use of the materials/services, i.e. accessibility. Note that this question is only answered by caretakers who indicated that the services were available in the first place. They were asked to rate on a scale from 1-5[9] how often their children use materials or engage in activities at their pre-school.

8. *Caretakers could indicate if they strongly disagreed; disagreed; were neutral; agreed or strongly agreed.*
9. *1=never; 2= rarely; 3=sometimes; 4=often; 5=very often. 0=don't know/not sure, not included in the figures*

In figures 9-11 the average score is depicted for each of the services, with for each figure on the left commonly available materials and on the right not so commonly available materials. In the figures also an error bar is depicted, indicating one standard deviation above and one standard deviation below the mean accessibility of the service. The longer the error bars the more variation. Generally, if answers follow a normal distribution around the mean, 68.2% of scores would be around the mean. Of interest are low accessibility scores for commonly available materials, or the other way around, high accessibility scores for not commonly available materials. If materials are used extensively even though these are not commonly available, this could be interpreted as a sign that more materials are needed, or conversely commonly available materials not being used regularly could be an indication that materials are sufficiently available.

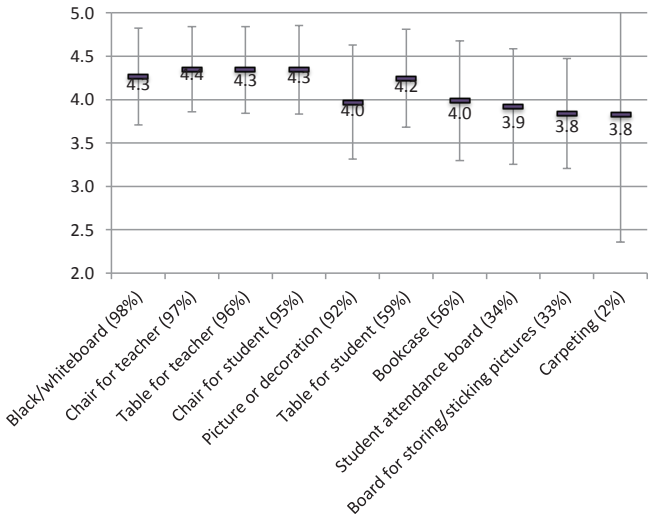
In Figure 9 **(generic school materials)** we see this for school meals: only available according to 15% of caretakers, but if it is available, children use of it often (average score of 4). Interestingly, the toilet was available according to 98% of caretakers, but the average score for use of toilets is 3.6, in between sometimes and often.

Figure 9. Average use of available generic school materials (availability % between brackets)



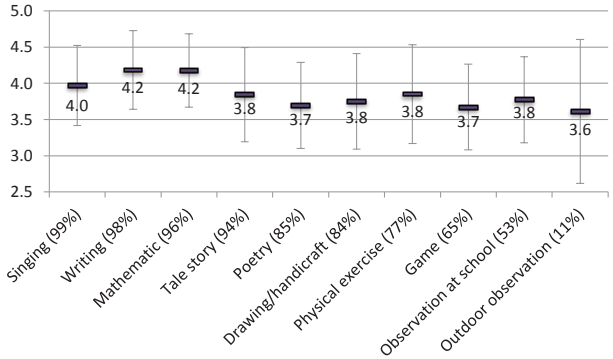
Compared to generic school materials, it seems that **classroom materials** (Figure 10) are more extensively used: most of the materials have an average score close to 4, meaning materials are used often according to caretakers. The not commonly available board for storing/ sticking pictures (9%) and carpeting (2%) had the lowest average scores of accessibility of 3.7 and 3.8, indicating that the average scores for use of these materials are somewhere between "sometimes" and "often". Note that the error bar with one standard deviation above and below the mean is large for carpeting, so apparently caretakers had different views on how often the carpet is used.

Figure 10. Average use of available classroom materials (availability % between brackets)



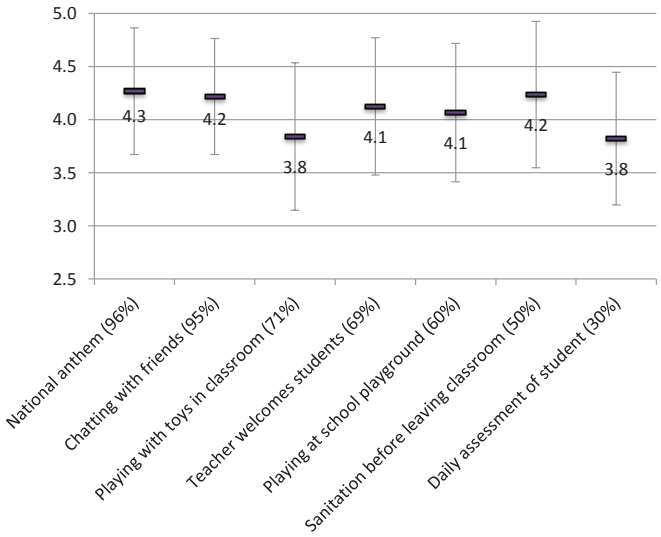
The average scores for engagement in **learning activities** (Figure 11) indicate that children engage often (average scores 4.0 or 4.2) in activities like singing, writing and mathematics. According to caretakers these three activities are also the most commonly available activities at pre-schools. Outdoor observation was not commonly available, and how often children engage in it was on average in between sometimes and often. Note that the error bar for this activity was quite large, which indicates that caretakers had different views on how often their children engage in outdoor observation at their pre-school.

Figure 11. Average engagement in available learning activities (availability % between brackets)



Not only is the salutation for national anthem available at their children's pre-school according to 96% of caretakers, it is also had the highest average accessibility score of 4.3, which indicates that on average it is often practised, see Figure 12. **Other generic school activities** children experience often (average score higher than 4) according to their caretakers, are chatting with friends, the teacher welcoming the students, playing at the school playground and importantly, sanitation before leaving the classroom. This last activity was found not to be widely available (50%) but if it is available, it is apparently often used.

Figure 12. Average engagement in available generic school activities (availability % between brackets)



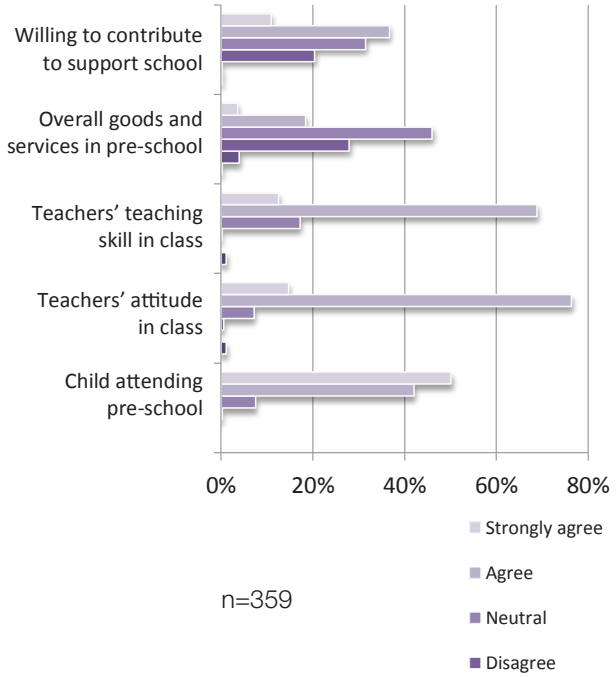
3.1.3. Satisfaction and perception of pre-school service quality

Satisfaction

Caretakers were asked to indicate how much they agreed[10] with a number of general statements regarding their satisfaction with pre-school. Notably, no less than 92.2% of caretakers said they agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am satisfied with my kid attending pre-school", and 91.1% agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I am satisfied with teachers' attitude in class". A slightly lower percentage was found for teachers' teaching skills, but still 81.3% of caretakers agreed or strongly agreed to be satisfied with teachers' teaching skills. Again the relation with household monthly income and satisfaction was not significant. Slightly less than 50% (47.6%) of caretakers said to be willing to contribute financially or materially to school during their child's learning. Not surprisingly, the higher the monthly family income, the more caretakers agreed that they would be willing to contribute to the school.

Even though the overall satisfaction seemed to be high, the percentage of caretakers who indicated not to agree with the statement "I am satisfied with the overall goods and service in pre-school" (31.8% disagree/strongly disagree) was higher than the percentage of caretakers who indicated to agree with this statement (22% agree/strongly agree). To get a clearer view on this, we also asked how satisfied caretakers were with each of the pre-school services.

Figure 13. General appreciation of pre-school



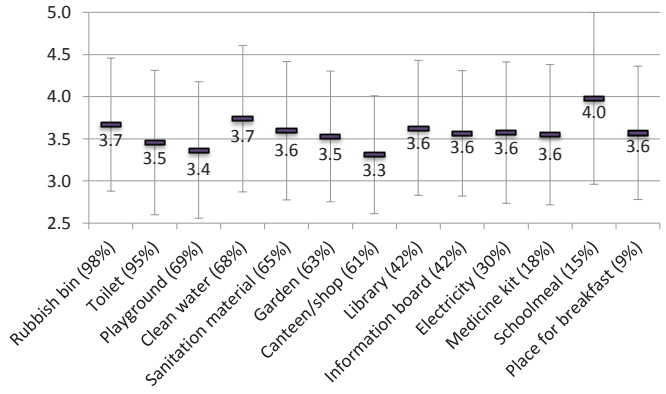
Therefore, for each of the services we also asked caretakers how satisfied, on a scale from 1-5[11], they were with the services. In Figures 14-18 we again show the most commonly available services on the left, and the least available on the right, with the mean scores and one standard deviation below and above in error bars.

In Figure 14 we see that caretakers were the least satisfied with the canteen/shop and the playground, with average scores of 3.3 and 3.4 respectively, indicating that their satisfaction was on average neutral. The highest average score for satisfaction was found for school meals, with an average score 4, indicating they were satisfied. Note that the highest satisfaction score was found for a service that was only available for 15% of the children, which could be interpreted as a call for more availability.

10. 1= strongly disagree; 2= disagree; 3= neutral; 4= agree; 5= strongly agree. 0=don't know/not sure, not included in the calculations these figures.

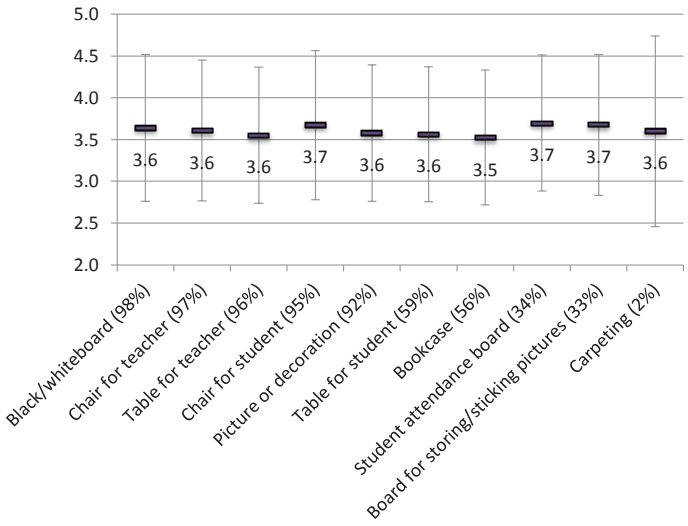
11. 1=very unsatisfied; 2= unsatisfied; 3=neutral; 4=satisfied; 5=very satisfied. 0=don't know/not sure, not included in the calculations for these figures.

Figure 14. Average satisfaction with available generic school services (availability % between brackets)



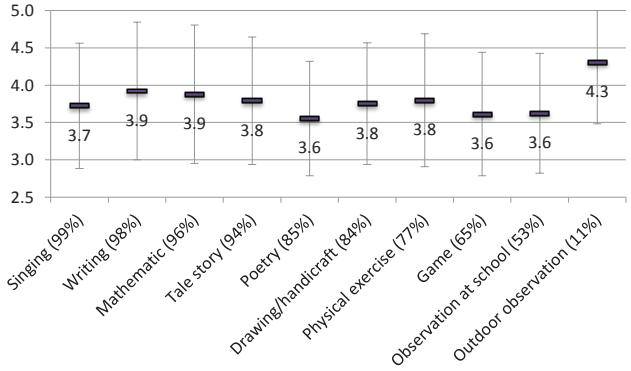
The average satisfaction with classroom materials was surprisingly similar for each of the materials (Figure 15): the lowest score was 3.5, the highest 3.7, indicating caretakers' satisfaction was in between neutral and satisfied for all of the classroom materials. That there was little differentiation between the appreciation of each of the materials might be a consequence of the fact that the materials we are talking about are rather basic than standard classroom materials, of which caretakers might think it is just necessary to have them, without further gratification.

Figure 15. Average satisfaction with available classroom materials (availability % between brackets)



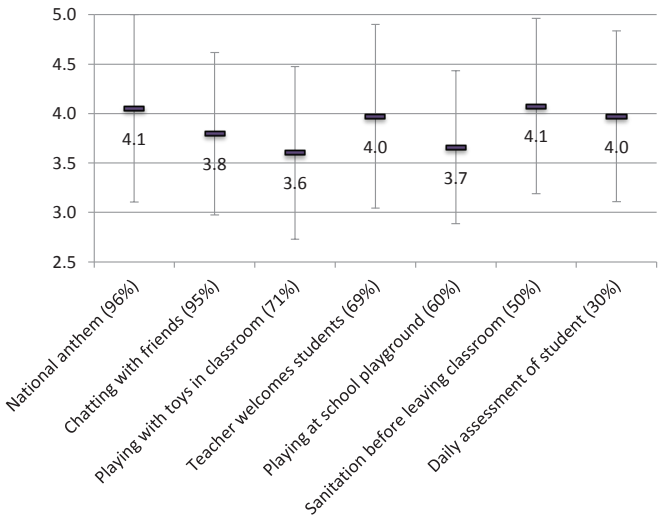
The standard learning activities of writing and mathematics received slightly higher average satisfaction scores than the other activities, see Figure 16. Strikingly, the highest average satisfaction score of 4.3 (slightly above satisfied) was found for the least available activity, namely outdoor observation. Again, this could be seen as a signal that caretakers would be happy to see more of this activity at their child's pre-school.

Figure 16. Average satisfaction with available learning activities (availability % between brackets)



The lowest satisfaction (average scores around 3.7) was found for chatting with peers and playing, both in the classroom and at the playground (see Figure 17). It could be that according to caretakers these activities are not the most important activities their children engage in at pre-school. Higher satisfaction was found for activities like the saluting at national anthem, the teacher welcoming the students upon arrival, and strikingly the two least available activities of sanitation and daily assessment of the children.

Figure 17. Average satisfaction with available generic school activities (availability % between brackets)



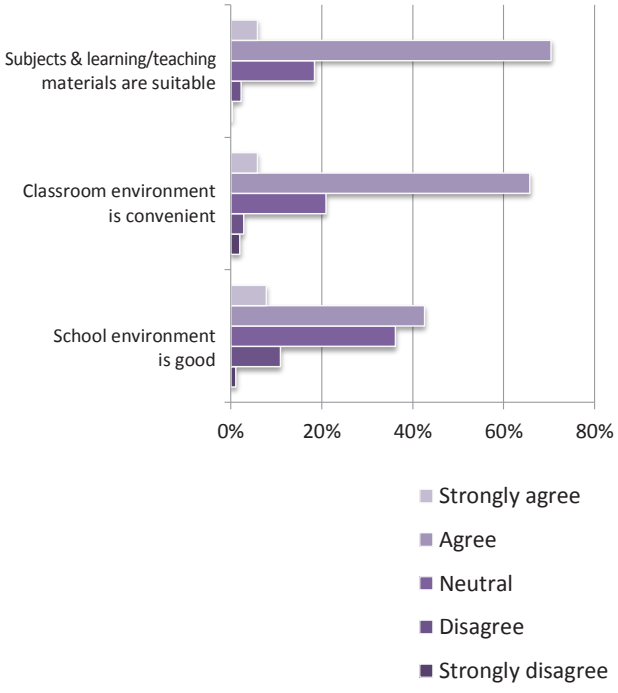
For the satisfaction with each of the services we again checked for height of monthly family income. Interestingly the only significant and high correlation was found between income and satisfaction with outdoor observation (r =.33, p = .05), signifying that caretakers with a higher monthly family income also had higher satisfaction for outdoor observation.

Quality of pre-school services

Caretakers were asked to indicate how much they agreed with a number of statements concerning the quality of pre-school services, e.g. the quality of the school environment, teacher behaviour and child development.

In Figure 18 we see that caretakers' agreement with the statement "The school environment is good" is more dispersed than for the other two indicators of the quality of the generic school environment. A direct result of this dispersion is that the total percentage of caretakers agreeing or strongly agreeing was just 50.4%, whereas for classroom environment this was 71.6% and for subjects & learning/teaching materials 76.3%.

Figure 18. Appreciation of the quality of the generic school environment



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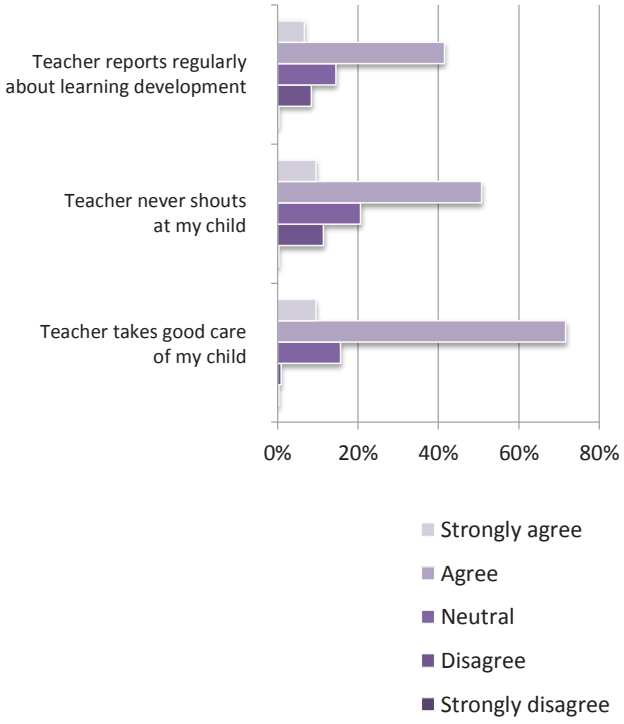
According to caretakers, the quality of teacher behaviour is also fairly good, see Figure 19. What can be seen as an indicator that assesses the overall quality of the teacher, namely "The teacher takes good care of my child" received 81.1% of caretakers' (strong) agreement. Interestingly, the more detailed statement "The teacher never shouts at my child" received 60.2% of caretakers' (strong) agreement. Apparently, even though the teacher might shout at the child, it is still possible to state that in general the teacher takes good care of the child. Lastly, only 48.2% of caretakers (strongly) agreed that teachers report regularly about the improvement of the child's learning. This might be related to the finding that only 30% of caretakers reported that there was a daily assessment of their child: it appears there is actually not a clear and regular tracking or reporting system in place for child assessment.

Figure 19. Appreciation of the quality of teacher behaviour

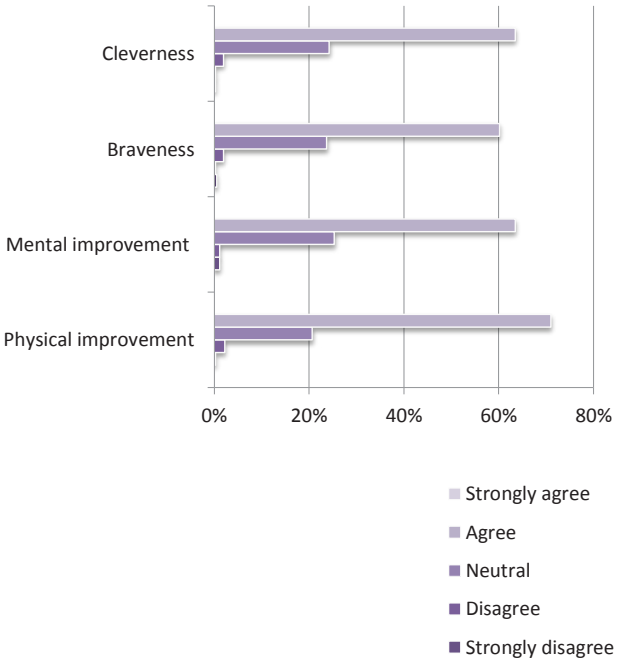


Even without regular reports on learning development, caretakers have their own view on their child's development and how pre-school is related to it, see Figure 20. We asked caretakers to indicate how much they agreed with several statements on their child's behaviour and development since attending pre-school. Their answers are a clear indication that caretakers believe

that pre-school was positively related to their child's behaviour and development. Notably, nobody answered to strongly agree or disagree with the statements. Consequently, what is depicted in Figure 20 are bars for the answer categories disagree, neutral, and agree. 71% of caretakers agreed with the statement that attending pre-school made their child improve physically, and 63.5% agreed that it made their child improve mentally, or made them cleverer. Also 60.2% of caretakers agreed with the statement that pre-school attending pre-school has made their child braver. We would like to emphasize again that the remaining percentage is not attributed to caretakers not agreeing with the statements, but with 20-25% of caretakers that opted for the neutral category.

For each of these quality indicators (school environment, classroom environment, teacher behaviour and effect of pre-school on child) we checked if this was related to height of monthly family income, but this was not the case. This again signifies that caretakers with different family incomes did not have a significantly different view on the quality of the pre-school.

Figure 20. Improvement of child's abilities after attending pre-school



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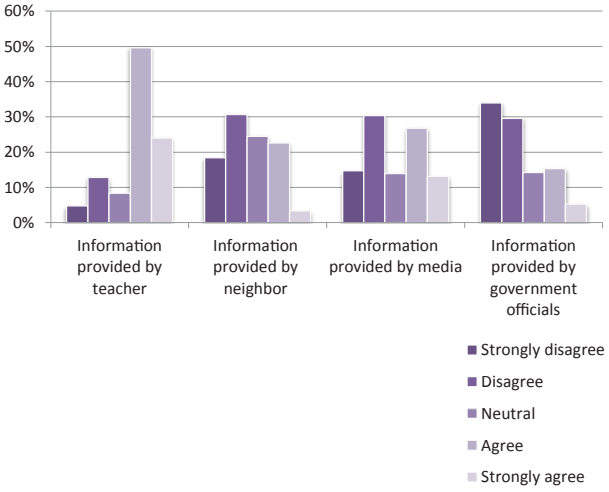
3.2. CARETAKERS' PERCEPTION ON TRANSPARENCY OF PRE-SCHOOL

With regard to transparency, we started asking caretakers questions about the **information** on enrolment, see Figure 21. The statement "I got information of school enrolment from media" triggered diverse responses: 45% of caretakers (strongly) disagreed, and 40% of them (strongly) agreed. It is therefore difficult to draw any conclusions on the effectiveness of media in providing information about enrolment to caretakers. Conversely, teachers is the most important source of information: 73.5% of caretakers agreed or strongly agreed that they had received information about school enrolment from teachers. Least likely they received information about school enrolment from the village chief, commune council or other government officials (agreed and strongly agreed 20.6%).

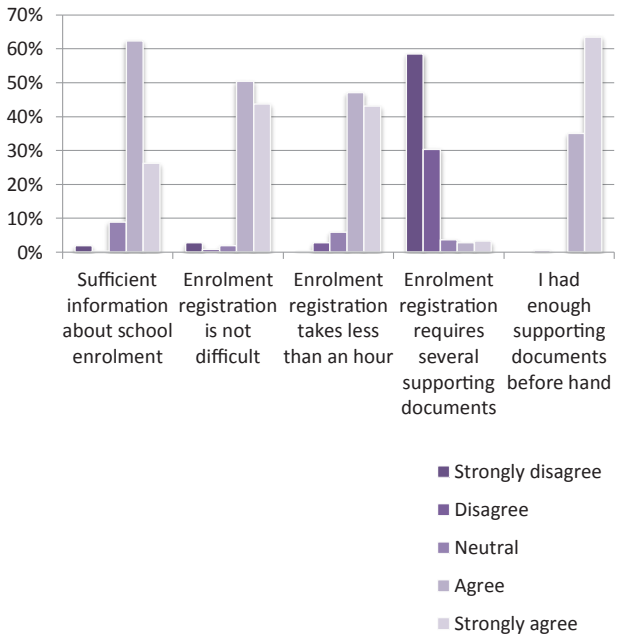
Figure 21. Enrollment information provided by different sources



We also asked caretakers how strongly they agreed with statements about the **enrolment procedure** itself, see Figure 22. Here we see that the only statement caretakers did not agree with, was the statement about supporting documents necessary for the enrolment registration[12]. The only necessary document for registration is a birth certificate of the child. It seems caretakers agreed that they had sufficient information about enrolment, that the enrolment registration was not difficult, took less than an hour and that they had enough supporting documents beforehand.

12. *E.g., birth certificate, family book or any document that shows the name and age of the child.*

Figure 22. Perception of the enrolment procedure



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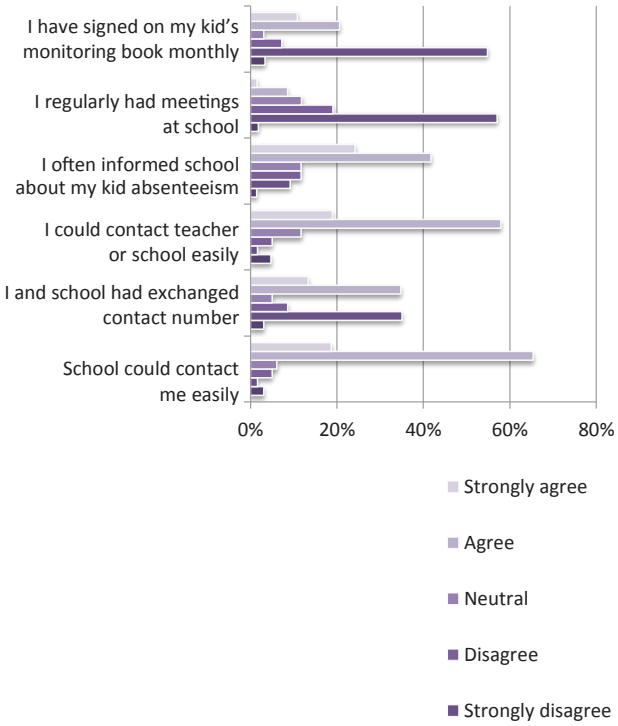
Education in Cambodia is supposed to be free for all children and this includes early childhood education. However, even though there shouldn't be any admission fees or tuition fees, sometimes it is reported that schools ask caretakers for **material or financial support.** We therefore asked caretakers to indicate how much on a scale from 1-5 they agreed with the statement "School asked for financial, in-kind or material contribution for school functioning". Of 359 caretakers, 49% strongly disagreed or disagreed that they were asked for support, and 36% of caretakers replied to (strongly) agree. Concerning transparency, it was found that only 24% of caretakers said to (strongly) agree to have received an invoice for any form of contribution of payment, and 55% said to (strongly) disagree receive an invoice.

Transparency obviously has to do with **communication** between schools on the one side, and caretakers on the other. We therefore asked caretakers how much they agreed on a scale from 1-5 with several statements on communication between them and the school of their child. This is depicted in Figure 23. Caretakers (strongly) agreed that it was easy for them to contact teacher or school (77%), and that it was easy for school to contact them (84%). This contact is apparently not established via phone, considering the finding that less than half (48%) of caretakers acknowledged that they exchanged contact number with school. However, only 10% of caretakers indicated to have meetings at school, and 32% of caretakers (strongly) agreed that they signed the monthly monitoring book of their child. Strictly speaking, this does not mean that the school did not have a monitoring book. However, together with the finding that less than half of caretakers agreed that the teacher reports regularly on the child's development and that only 30% of caretakers indicated that there was a daily assessment of children it seems there is a lack of regular monitoring on child development.

Figure 23. Communication between schools and caretakers



CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this survey it was found that caretakers have a high appreciation for the pre-schools of their children, and they believe that pre-school has a positive effect on their child's development. In a sample where the pre-school is close to where the child lives, regular school attendance is more than satisfactory and if the child misses classes, it is because the child was sick, but it does not seem to be because of school location, transport to school or migration. It appeared that the monthly family income was not related to appreciation or satisfaction with pre-school. Also, monthly family income was not related to school attendance. It was found that almost 50% of caretakers were willing to contribute to the pre-school of their child while the child is at the school. Understandably, the willingness to pay for pre-school and the monthly family income were related: the higher the income, the higher the readiness to contribute.

Nevertheless these positive findings on how caretakers appreciate pre-school, make use of it, or are willing to contribute to it, we also found that there were considerable differences between availability of services. It was in particular revealing to weigh availability, accessibility and satisfaction against each other. If a certain material or service is not commonly available, but widely used if it is, and at the same time it is highly appreciated by caretakers, this is a signal to at least consider increasing availability of these particular materials/services.

- Based on this survey, we conclude that there is actually not a clear and regular tracking and reporting system in place for child assessment. Since in particular children in the appropriate age for pre-school go through important developmental social, emotional, physical, and cognitive stages, it is incredibly important to keep track and report on their progress. Apart from this, in this survey it was also found that caretakers appreciate, but currently lack regular reports on their child's learning development. We therefore recommend implementing regular and standardized report systems at all pre-schools, for all children.

- Caretakers believe that pre-school has a positive effect on their child's braveness, cleverness, and mental and physical development. Also, we found they were satisfied with the teacher quality in terms of teacher behaviour, attitude and teaching skills and with the fact that their child attends pre-school. Their appreciation for the suitability of subjects and learning/teaching materials was pretty good as well, just as the appreciation for the classroom environment. However, their appreciation for the school environment and their satisfaction with the overall goods and services were considerably lower, signifying that there is room for improvement. Improving is both a matter of finances and of setting priorities. This survey provides some clues on pre-school services that should be prioritised, see the next point.

- Based on the high scores for use of and satisfaction with services, we would recommend that services should have higher availability or improvement, e.g.,

  - **School meals** are not often available, but if school does provide school meals, children make use of it often, and the average satisfaction score was fairly high (4= satisfied).

  - **Appropriate place for student to have breakfast** is rarely available in pre-schools, but if there is a place, the level of satisfaction is in between `neutral' and `satisfied'. It is observed that some students and caretakers are likely to have or to be fed by their caretakers at school, although the environment seems inappropriate.

- **Outdoor observation,** such as a trip to the nearby pagoda, was not commonly present as a learning activity, and even if it was available, it was not practised very often. An explanation might be that teachers are afraid to take responsibility for children outside school perimeters. However, of all pre-school services, the caretakers' appreciation of this activity was fairly high (mean = 4.3 on a scale from 1-5) which might be understood as a signal that they think outdoor observation with the teacher is an important learning opportunity for their children.

- **Sanitation** before leaving the classroom and **daily assessment** of students were the least commonly available generic school activities, but if they are available, these are used often and both activities received a fairly high average satisfaction score. We already discussed the importance of a regular and standardized report systems at all pre-schools, for all children. When it comes to sanitation it was found that pre-schools would have a toilet according to 98% of caretakers, but clean water and sanitation materials were far less available: 3 out of 10 pre-school children did not have the opportunity to use clean water and soap. We cannot stress enough how important hygiene and sanitation are. Diarrhoea remains the second largest cause of under-five mortality, and hand washing with soap prevents diarrhoeal disease in a more straightforward and cost-effective way than any single vaccine (Fewtrell, et al., 2007). To be able to break the disease cycle, pre-schools need to have clean water and soap so that all children have access to it. Having the financial means is necessary but not sufficient condition for this issue. Schools, teachers, parents and children need to be aware of the importance of hand washing, which might call for a campaign on raising awareness on the issue as well.

- **Transparency/accountability**

  - With regard to finances we found that 36% of caretakers were asked to make a financial or material contribution to school. Since education, including pre-school education is supposed to be for free, this could be an indication that schools need additional funding to be able to run the school. These contributions or payments are not officially accounted for, considering that only 24% of caretakers reported to have received an invoice for contribution or payment, and 55% denied to have received an invoice. When caretakers were asked if they would be willing to contribute money or materials to their child's pre-school, 48% confirmed and 32% denied. We would recommend organising school finances alongside official guidelines, without mixing it up with unofficial payments/contributions from caretakers. This survey shows caretakers' appreciation of pre-schools, and half of them would be willing to contribute. This willingness should be rewarded with complete openness and accountability on schools' behalf.

  - Even though it was found that caretakers and schools knew how to reach each other, there is clearly a lack of regular and formal meetings, for instance to sign the child monitoring book or to have meetings at school. Only 10% of caretakers indicated to have meetings at school, and 32% agreed that they signed the monthly monitoring book. Again, this is a strong indication to underline the need of an official tracking and reporting system for child assessment.

  - With regard to enrolment it seemed that there were no difficulties with the procedure itself, but information about school enrolment is mostly provided by teachers, and the village chiefs, commune councils, or other government officials were the least likely source of information about school enrolment. To increase enrolment rates, we recommend educating government officials on the existence and enrolment procedures of pre-schools so that they can distribute information to caretakers as well.

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