DOI: https://dx.doi.org/10.4314/gjedr.v24i2.9

GLOBAL JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH VOL 24, 2025: 195-204
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# FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMS: ADMINISTRATIVE INSIGHTS

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(Received, 20 March 2025; Revision Accepted 2, April 2025)

## ABSTRACT

Financial sustainability is a critical challenge in early childhood education (ECE) administration, impacting programme accessibility, quality, and long-term viability. This review examines key financial management strategies, funding models, and budget planning techniques essential for ensuring the stability of ECE programmes. Effective budget planning, including needs assessment, cost-benefit analysis, and contingency planning, are crucial for optimizing financial resources. Various funding models, such as government grants, tuition-based systems, public-private partnerships, and alternative revenue streams, present unique advantages and limitations. Transparent financial reporting, cost-efficiency measures, and revenue diversification are identified as core strategies for maintaining financial resilience. Additionally, financial literacy among ECE administrators plays a pivotal role in sustainable fiscal decision-making, supporting the development of long-term financial plans that align with institutional goals. The paper highlights the need for innovative financing models, such as social impact investing and policy-driven funding interventions, to enhance the financial sustainability of ECE programmes. Future research should explore scalable financial frameworks that balance affordability with programme quality, ensuring that high-quality early education remains accessible to all children.

**KEYWORDS:** Early childhood education, financial sustainability, budget planning, financial management, education policy

## INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Education (ECE) is widely recognized as a critical foundation for lifelong learning, social development, and economic productivity. Research has consistently shown that high-quality ECE programmes contribute to improved cognitive and socio-emotional development, higher academic achievement, and better long-term economic outcomes (Heckman, 2011; Nores & Barnett, 2010).

Investing in early education yields significant societal benefits, including reduced crime rates, lower public spending on remedial education, and increased workforce productivity (Reynolds et al., 2018). However, despite its well-documented advantages, financial sustainability remains one of the most pressing challenges faced by ECE administrators, as many programmes struggle with inconsistent funding, rising operational costs, and affordability constraints for families (Phillips et al., 2016).

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Financial sustainability in ECE refers to the ability of early learning programmes to maintain stable and adequate funding while ensuring quality education, accessibility, and affordability for all children (Backes et al 2018). Unlike primary and secondary education, which often receive more stable public funding, ECE programmes operate under diverse and sometimes precarious financial models. Administrators must navigate a complex landscape of funding sources, including government grants, tuition fees, philanthropic contributions, and public-private partnerships, to ensure programme viability (Meloy et al., 2019). The lack of predictable and equitable funding structures can lead to workforce instability, resource shortages, and disparities in programme quality, particularly in underprivileged communities (Garcia et al., 2020a). Without strategic financial planning, programmes may face difficulties in hiring qualified teachers, maintaining learning materials, and expanding access to more children. Additionally, funding models play a crucial role in determining the financial stability of ECE institutions. While government funding and subsidies provide support to public programmes, private nursery schools often rely on tuition fees, which may pose challenges for low-income families (Phillips et al., 2016). Hybrid funding models, including public-private partnerships and philanthropic donations, have emerged as potential solutions to bridge financial gaps, but their sustainability depends on long-term commitments from stakeholders (Nores & Barnett, 2010). Achieving financial sustainability is not solely a matter of internal efficiency; it also requires strong policy support, increased public investment, and innovative financing mechanisms tailored to the needs of early education programmes (Meloy et al., 2019).

This review aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of financial sustainability in ECE from an administrative perspective. It explores key aspects of budget planning, funding models, and financial management strategies, highlighting both challenges and opportunities for ECE administrators. By synthesizing existing research and best practices, this paper seeks to offer actionable insights for improving the financial resilience of early childhood education programmes. Given the growing recognition of early education as a critical investment for societal progress, policymakers and administrators must prioritize strategic financial planning to ensure equitable access to high-quality ECE for all children (Garcia et al., 2020b).

**Budget Planning in Early Childhood Education**

Effective budget planning is a fundamental aspect of Early Childhood Education (ECE) administration, ensuring that programmes maintain financial stability while delivering high-quality services. Budgeting in ECE involves allocating resources efficiently to meet operational costs, sustain staffing, and provide necessary educational materials (Phillips et al., 2016). A well-structured budget enables administrators to align financial priorities with educational goals, ensuring that children receive a nurturing and developmentally appropriate learning environment (McKoy et al., 2011). Without strategic financial planning, ECE programmes may face funding shortfalls that impact programme quality, staff retention, and accessibility for families, particularly those from low-income backgrounds (Backes & others, 2018).

**Key Components of Budget Planning**

ECE administrators must adopt a structured approach to budget planning, incorporating essential financial management techniques to maintain financial sustainability. The following components are critical in developing a robust budget for early learning programmes:

**Needs Assessment: Evaluating Operational Costs**

Conducting a comprehensive needs assessment is the first step in effective budget planning. Administrators must identify and evaluate all operational costs, including staff salaries, facility maintenance, instructional materials, utilities, and administrative expenses (Nores & Barnett, 2010). Personnel costs typically account for the largest portion of a ECE programmes's budget, as high-quality ECE programmes require well-trained and adequately compensated educators (Meloy et al., 2019). Additionally, programmes must consider indirect costs such as professional development, licensing fees, and insurance, which are often overlooked but essential for maintaining programme compliance and quality (Garcia et al., 2020a). A needs assessment also involves forecasting enrollment trends and determining the per-child cost to operate a sustainable programme. Enrollment fluctuations can significantly impact revenue, particularly for tuition-based models, making accurate financial projections a crucial aspect of budget planning (Phillips et al., 2016).

**Cost-Benefit Analysis: Optimizing Spending for Efficiency**

Cost-benefit analysis (CBA) is a critical tool for optimizing expenditures and ensuring that financial resources in early childhood education (ECE) programmes are allocated efficiently. However, its role extends beyond simple financial calculations. In the ECE context, CBA must consider not only the monetary return on investment but also how spending decisions support educational outcomes, operational sustainability, and equity in access to high-quality learning environments. It is therefore essential that administrators adopt a broader perspective—one that integrates both economic efficiency and pedagogical value. As highlighted by Hanushek (2010), assessing the cost-effectiveness of educational inputs is vital for improving system performance. In ECE programmes, this means evaluating whether investments contribute meaningfully to the quality of learning experiences and the long-term viability of the institution. For example, investing in energy-efficient infrastructure, such as LED lighting or programmable thermostats, may involve higher initial costs but can lead to substantial long-term savings on utility bills (Haas et al., 2021). These savings, in turn, can be redirected to critical areas such as staff development, classroom materials, or expanded access for disadvantaged children—demonstrating how CBA supports broader institutional goals.

Furthermore, cost-sharing strategies can enhance financial resilience by reducing waste and improving resource utilization. Bulk purchasing of instructional materials, shared transportation services, and centralized administrative functions among neighboring early learning centers have proven effective in controlling operational costs (Meloy et al., 2019). Such models not only improve financial efficiency but also foster collaboration within the ECE sector—something particularly valuable in under-resourced communities. It is important to emphasize that CBA should also capture the social returns of investment, including improved child outcomes, reduced turnover among educators, and enhanced parental satisfaction. A narrowly defined economic lens may overlook these crucial dimensions, thereby underestimating the true value of certain expenditures. By incorporating both quantitative and qualitative indicators into cost-benefit frameworks, ECE administrators can make informed decisions that support long-term quality improvement and institutional sustainability.

In sum, cost-benefit analysis must be understood as a strategic planning tool rather than a mere financial checklist. When applied thoughtfully, it empowers decision-makers to prioritize spending that enhances programme quality, strengthens financial resilience, and promotes equity. Embedding this approach into everyday financial management practices is essential for ensuring that every expenditure contributes meaningfully to the mission of early childhood education.

**Contingency Planning: Setting Aside Emergency Funds**

Financial unpredictability is a persistent challenge in early childhood education (ECE), especially for programmes operating with limited margins or those heavily dependent on unstable funding streams. Unexpected events such as sudden declines in enrollment, urgent facility maintenance, or shifts in public funding policies can quickly undermine operational continuity. In such scenarios, contingency planning is not only a financial precaution but also a strategic mechanism for safeguarding service delivery and sustaining programme quality.

Establishing contingency funds is a fundamental element of this planning process. These reserves provide critical support during periods of financial strain, allowing institutions to continue meeting essential obligations such as staff salaries, repairs, and instructional delivery without major disruption. Research by Phillips et al. (2016) indicates that without these financial buffers, programmes face a higher risk of service interruption, employee layoffs, and in severe cases, permanent closure. These risks are most pronounced in under-resourced communities where early education opportunities are already limited. While Meloy et al. (2019) recommend maintaining emergency reserves equal to three to six months of operating expenses, this guideline should be adapted based on each programme's risk exposure, funding model, and local context. For instance, ECE programmes that rely heavily on tuition or are situated in economically volatile areas may require more substantial reserves to remain operational during financial downturns. Zhang et al. (2024) also stress that the absence of contingency funds contributes to systemic fragility, particularly during large-scale disruptions such as economic crises or public health emergencies.

Effective contingency planning must go beyond the allocation of emergency funds. It requires continuous evaluation of financial vulnerabilities, scenario forecasting, and integration into broader institutional planning. As noted by Mizrak (2024), organizations that embed crisis preparedness into their financial strategy demonstrate greater resilience and adaptability. This includes identifying critical cost areas, simulating revenue loss scenarios, and establishing internal decision-making protocols to guide response during periods of uncertainty. Contingency planning must be institutionalized through regular updates, policy alignment, and leadership engagement. When treated as an active and forward-looking process, it enhances not only the financial stability of ECE programmes but also their capacity to deliver uninterrupted, high-quality services in the face of uncertainty.

**Challenges in Budget Planning for ECE programmes**

Despite the importance of effective budget planning, many ECE programmes face significant financial challenges that threaten their long-term sustainability. Key obstacles include:

1. **Inconsistent Funding Streams:** Many ECE programmes rely on multiple funding sources, including government grants, tuition fees, and private donations. Variability in these revenue streams makes it difficult to create long-term financial plans (Nores & Barnett, 2010).
2. **High Operational Costs:** The cost of maintaining a high-quality early childhood programme—including staff salaries, rent, and instructional materials—can be prohibitive. Small ECE programmes, in particular, struggle to achieve economies of scale (Phillips et al., 2016).
3. **Limited Financial Literacy Among Administrators:** Many ECE administrators come from educational backgrounds rather than financial or business disciplines, leading to challenges in effective budgeting and resource management (Meloy et al., 2019).
4. **Lack of Policy Support:** Inadequate public funding and restrictive financial policies often leave ECE programmes with insufficient resources to meet their operational needs. This issue is particularly prevalent in underprivileged communities where access to quality ECE is already limited (Garcia et al., 2020b).
5. **Impact of External Economic Factors:** Inflation, rising minimum wage laws, and changing government funding priorities can affect ECE programmes budgets, making long-term financial planning difficult (Lewis & West, 2017).

Budget planning is a cornerstone of financial sustainability in early childhood education. By conducting thorough needs assessments, utilizing cost-benefit analysis, and implementing contingency planning, administrators can create resilient financial plans that ensure programme stability and quality. However, persistent challenges such as inconsistent funding, high operational costs, and limited financial literacy among administrators highlight the need for policy reforms and capacity-building initiatives to strengthen financial management in the ECE sector. As early education continues to gain recognition as a vital investment in human capital, adopting strategic budgeting practices will be essential for ensuring that high-quality ECE programmes remain accessible and sustainable.

**Funding Sources for Early Childhood Education**

**Overview of Funding Sources**

Financial sustainability remains a significant concern in the administration of early childhood education (ECE) programmes, with various funding models influencing their viability and accessibility. ECE programmes rely on a mix of funding sources, each with distinct implications for financial stability, programme quality, and inclusivity (Phillips et al., 2016). Given the critical role of early education in child development (Nores & Barnett, 2010), administrators must strategically select and integrate funding sources that ensure long-term programme sustainability while maintaining affordability for families (Backes & others, 2018). This section presents an overview of the primary funding models utilized in ECE, including government funding and grants, tuition-based models, public-private partnerships, philanthropic contributions, and alternative revenue streams. A comparative analysis of these models is presented in Table 1, highlighting their advantages and limitations.

## Funding Sources in Early Childhood Education

### Government Funding and Grants

Public funding represents a significant financial backbone for many ECE programmes, particularly in countries where early education is recognized as a public good (Phillips et al., 2016). Government funding is typically allocated through federal, state, or municipal grants, with programmes such as Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) initiatives providing subsidies for low-income families (Pendola et al., 2022). These funds support teacher salaries, infrastructure, curriculum development, and child nutrition programmes. However, reliance on government funding exposes programmes to budgetary constraints and shifting policy priorities (Nores & Barnett, 2010).

### Tuition-Based Models

Private ECE institutions predominantly rely on tuition fees, making them financially independent from government regulations. This model allows for curriculum flexibility, smaller class sizes, and enhanced resources, but it often limits access for lower-income families, creating disparities in early education quality (Garcia et al., 2020b). Many private institutions attempt to mitigate affordability concerns by offering scholarships or tiered fee structures, yet high tuition costs remain a barrier for many families.

### Public-Private Partnerships

Public-private partnerships (PPPs) involve collaboration between governments, private companies, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide financial and operational support for ECE programmes (Meloy et al., 2019). Corporate sponsorships and NGO collaborations contribute financial resources, infrastructure, and expertise to enhance early education access. However, sustaining long-term private sector engagement poses challenges, as corporate interests may shift, affecting programme funding continuity (Nores & Barnett, 2010).

### Philanthropic and Community Contributions

Donations from charitable organizations, local community foundations, and individual benefactors offer an important supplementary funding source for ECE programmes (Phillips et al., 2016). Fundraising events, grant applications, and crowdfunding initiatives further supplement operational budgets. While these contributions provide additional financial flexibility, they tend to be unpredictable and inconsistent, making long-term financial planning difficult (Frow et al., 2010).

### Alternative Revenue Streams

To diversify income sources, some ECE programmes generate additional revenue through after-school programmes, summer camps, and facility rentals (Garcia et al., 2020b). These services can significantly reduce dependency on traditional funding streams, but they also require additional staffing and operational oversight, increasing administrative complexity (Meloy et al., 2019). The financial stability of ECE programmes depends on leveraging a combination of funding models. While government funding remains a primary pillar for public ECE programmes, tuition-based models, public-private partnerships, and alternative revenue streams offer additional pathways to financial sustainability. The integration of diversified funding sources can mitigate financial risks and enhance programme resilience, ensuring continuous access to high-quality early education for all children (Bendini & Devercelli, 2022). The advantages and limitations of each funding model are summarized in Table 1.

**Table 1: Comparative analysis of funding sources for early childhood education programmes, highlighting their advantages and limitations**

| Funding Sources | Advantages | Limitations |
|---|---|---|
| **Government Funding and Grants** | - Ensures affordability and accessibility (Phillips et al., 2016) | - Susceptible to political and economic changes (Nores & Barnett, 2010) |
| | - Provides long-term financial stability | - Bureaucratic processes can delay fund disbursement |
| | - Supports programme quality standards | - Funding gaps may impact programme operations |
| **Tuition-Based Models** | - Financial independence from government policies | - Limits access for low-income families |
| | - Greater curriculum flexibility | - Enrollment fluctuations affect revenue stability |
| | - Enables investment in high-quality resources (Garcia et al., 2020b) | - May prioritize profitability over educational quality |
| **Public-Private Partnerships** | - Expands funding opportunities beyond government subsidies | - Requires long-term commitment from corporate sponsors |
| | - Encourages innovation and efficiency | - Risk of corporate influence over curriculum and operations |
| | - Strengthens collaboration between public and private sectors (Meloy et al., 2019) | - Funding continuity is uncertain (Nores & Barnett, 2010) |
| **Philanthropic and Community Contributions** | - Provides additional financial flexibility | - Highly unpredictable and inconsistent |
| | - Strengthens local community engagement | - Requires ongoing fundraising efforts |
| | - Supports scholarships for disadvantaged children (Phillips et al., 2016) | - Not a sustainable primary funding source (Backes & others, 2018) |
| **Alternative Revenue Streams** | - Reduces dependence on a single funding model | - Adds administrative complexity and additional staffing needs |
| | - Generates additional income without raising tuition fees | - Demand for supplementary services may vary |
| | - Encourages programme self-sufficiency (Garcia et al., 2020b) | - May divert focus from core educational mission (Meloy et al., 2019) |

**Financial Management Strategies for Sustainable ECE programmes Operations**

Achieving financial sustainability in early childhood education (ECE) requires administrators to implement effective financial management strategies that ensure both stability and growth. Financially sound ECE programmes can maintain high-quality education services, retain qualified staff, and expand accessibility for children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

Several key strategies contribute to financial sustainability, including transparent financial reporting, cost-efficiency measures, revenue diversification, financial literacy for administrators, and long-term financial planning. These approaches ensure that ECE programmes can navigate financial uncertainties while maintaining operational efficiency and high educational standards (Phillips et al., 2016).

**Transparent Financial Reporting**

Transparency in financial management plays a fundamental role in ensuring the long-term sustainability of ECE programmes. Clear and accurate financial reporting helps administrators track revenues and expenditures while fostering trust among stakeholders, including parents, donors, and government agencies (Sciulli & Adhariani, 2023). ECE programmes that receive public funding or philanthropic support are often required to submit detailed financial reports to demonstrate compliance with funding agreements and ensure accountability (Backes & others, 2018). Regular financial audits are an essential component of transparent financial reporting. External audits provide an objective assessment of financial health, ensuring that funds are allocated effectively and in accordance with regulatory standards (Phillips et al., 2016). Additionally, technological advancements have facilitated the use of cloud-based financial management systems that enable real-time tracking of expenditures and revenues. Lack of financial transparency can have serious consequences, including decreased stakeholder confidence and difficulties in securing future funding. ECE programmes that implement robust financial reporting mechanisms are better positioned to sustain long-term financial viability and attract further investment (Meloy et al., 2019).

**Cost-Efficiency Measures**

Cost-efficiency measures are crucial for ECE programmes that operate on limited budgets. Given the high cost of maintaining quality early education programmes, administrators must identify opportunities to optimize expenditures while ensuring that educational standards are not compromised (Phillips et al., 2016). One effective strategy is the adoption of energy-saving initiatives, such as installing LED lighting, utilizing programmemable thermostats, and integrating renewable energy sources like solar panels. These measures reduce utility costs and free up funds for instructional resources and staff salaries (Brunner et al., 2022). In addition to energy savings, procurement strategies play a significant role in cost management. Bulk purchasing of educational materials, food supplies, and cleaning products enables ECE programmes to benefit from volume discounts and lower per-unit costs (Garcia et al., 2020b). Similarly, shared services among multiple ECE programmes, such as joint insurance plans, centralized payroll processing, and group staff training programmes, help reduce administrative costs while maintaining operational efficiency (Meloy et al., 2019).

**Revenue Diversification**

ECE programmes that rely solely on a single funding source, such as government subsidies or tuition fees, face significant financial risk. Diversification of revenue streams is essential to mitigate such risks and create a stable financial foundation for long-term operations (Phillips et al., 2016). One approach to revenue diversification is offering supplementary services such as after-school programmes, summer camps, and extended daycare, which generate additional income while meeting the needs of working families (Nores & Barnett, 2010). Facility rentals provide another avenue for revenue diversification. ECE programmes with available classroom space, auditoriums, or outdoor play areas can lease these facilities to community organizations for educational workshops, training sessions, and private events (Erickson, 2021). By monetizing existing infrastructure, ECE programmes can create an additional revenue stream that does not interfere with core educational activities. Collaboration with private corporations and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) can also support revenue diversification. Public-private partnerships enable ECE programmes to secure corporate sponsorships, employee childcare subsidies, and grants that contribute to programme funding (Meloy et al., 2019). Additionally, pursuing philanthropic contributions through grant applications and community fundraising efforts further strengthens financial sustainability (Drezner & Huehls, 2014). Revenue diversification reduces financial vulnerability by minimizing dependency on a single income source. ECE programmes that integrate multiple funding streams into their financial model are more resilient in the face of economic fluctuations and policy changes (Garcia et al., 2020b).

**Financial Literacy for Administrators**

Effective financial management in ECE requires administrators to have a strong understanding of budgeting, cost management, and financial planning.

However, many ECE programmes leaders come from educational backgrounds and may lack formal training in financial decision-making (Phillips et al., 2016). Limited financial literacy among administrators can lead to inefficient budget allocation, underutilization of resources, and financial instability (Backes & others, 2018).

Administrators who receive financial training are better equipped to develop sustainable budgets, assess cost-benefit ratios, and apply for external funding opportunities (Yoshikawa et al., 2018). Professional development programmes focusing on financial literacy can provide ECE programmes leaders with essential skills in grant writing, investment planning, and risk management (Meloy et al., 2019). Workshops, mentorship initiatives, and online courses tailored to financial decision-making in early education settings can significantly enhance administrative competencies.

Investing in financial literacy improves the overall management of ECE programmes finances, ensuring that administrators make informed decisions that align with institutional goals. Well-trained leaders can navigate financial challenges with greater confidence, fostering an environment of fiscal responsibility and sustainability (Garcia et al., 2020b).

**Long-Term Financial Planning**

Financial sustainability in ECE extends beyond short-term budgeting; it requires strategic long-term financial planning. Multi-year financial forecasting enables ECE programmes to anticipate funding challenges, allocate resources effectively, and develop strategies for programme expansion (Phillips et al., 2016). Strategic financial modeling plays a key role in long-term planning. Administrators who incorporate data-driven projections can assess future revenue trends, enrollment patterns, and policy changes, allowing them to make proactive financial decisions (Yoshikawa et al., 2018). Workforce planning is another critical element, ensuring that staffing structures align with financial capacity while maintaining high-quality teacher-child ratios (Meloy et al., 2019). In addition, capital investment planning ensures that infrastructure development, technology integration, and classroom expansions are financially feasible. Schools that engage in strategic long-term planning can adapt to changing economic conditions while maintaining financial stability and educational excellence (Garcia et al., 2020b).

**CONCLUSION**

Financial sustainability is a critical pillar in the effective administration of early childhood education programmes. It underpins the capacity of institutions to deliver consistent, high-quality educational services, support the developmental needs of children, and ensure access for families across diverse socioeconomic backgrounds. As early childhood education gains greater recognition as a vital stage of human development, the financial structures that support these programmes must be carefully examined and reinforced. This paper has discussed the core elements that contribute to financial sustainability, including strategic budget planning, balanced funding models, and sound financial management. Budget planning enables administrators to assess operational needs, prioritize expenditures, and prepare for unexpected disruptions. Through approaches such as needs assessment, cost analysis, and the establishment of contingency reserves, institutions are better positioned to maintain stable operations. Diversifying funding sources is also essential, as reliance on a single income stream increases vulnerability to policy shifts, enrollment fluctuations, and economic changes. Combining public support, tuition income, philanthropic contributions, and alternative revenue streams allows programmes to build financial resilience while continuing to serve their educational mission. In addition, transparent financial reporting and competent financial oversight strengthen institutional accountability and stakeholder confidence. Programmes that embed financial literacy into administrative roles are more likely to manage resources effectively, plan for the long term, and make data-informed decisions that support growth and stability. Finally, the financial sustainability of early childhood education is not only a practical necessity but also a reflection of institutional responsibility. Without stable and well-managed finances, the ability of programmes to deliver equitable and high-quality education is compromised.

A clear understanding of financial foundations is therefore essential for ensuring the continued relevance, reach, and effectiveness of early childhood education in supporting individual development and societal well-being.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Enhancing the financial sustainability of early childhood education programmes requires a multidimensional approach grounded in strategic planning, capacity development, and supportive policy environments. A central recommendation is the adoption of comprehensive and forward-thinking budget planning practices. Administrators should be encouraged to conduct regular needs assessments, evaluate operational costs with clarity, and integrate contingency measures that protect against financial disruptions. Such planning creates a solid foundation for long-term programme stability. In addition, the diversification of funding sources is essential for reducing institutional vulnerability. Programmes should seek to combine public funding, tuition income, philanthropic contributions, and alternative revenue-generating activities to build a more balanced and resilient financial structure. Diversified funding not only supports financial independence but also enhances the ability of institutions to expand access and respond flexibly to changing economic conditions. Developing financial literacy among early childhood education leaders is also critical. Equipping administrators with the knowledge and skills to manage budgets, interpret financial data, and make strategic financial decisions will improve institutional efficiency and accountability. This can be supported through targeted professional development, mentorship, and access to financial management tools tailored to education settings. Transparency in financial reporting remains an important priority. Clear documentation and communication of financial performance to stakeholders fosters trust, improves internal governance, and enhances the credibility of programmes when seeking external support or partnership. Supportive policy frameworks are equally important. Policymakers should consider interventions that promote equitable funding distribution, incentivize financial best practices, and provide technical assistance to under-resourced institutions. Strengthening the link between policy and practice can enable a more sustainable and inclusive early childhood education system. Together, these recommendations offer a pathway toward improving financial sustainability while preserving the core mission of delivering high-quality, equitable early education to all children.

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