

FED-CEPECE Seminar: “Cultivating Early Development: The Role of Educational Policies, Preschool Programmes, and Home Learning Environments”

**Centre for Educational Psychology and Early Childhood Education (CEPECE),
Faculty of Education**

Date & Time: 15 December 2025 (Monday); 14:30-16:00

Venue: E33-2036, Faculty of Education

Language: English

Registration: Online Registration (<https://go.um.edu.mo/hzuf5s93> or )

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Speakers:

Prof. Nirmala RAO is the Serena H C Yang Professor in Early Childhood Development and Education, Chair Professor of Child Development and Education, and Director of the Consortium for Research on Early Childhood Development and Education (CORE) in the Faculty of Education at The University of Hong Kong (HKU). Her work sits at the intersection of early childhood education and developmental psychology, focusing on child development and preschool quality across Asia. Her interdisciplinary research also demonstrates that girls' education is a foundational driver of intergenerational well-being, with measurable effects on child development. Her work appears in leading journals, and she has earned international awards. Since 2022, she has been listed among Stanford University's top 2% of scientists worldwide in the social sciences. She serves on the editorial boards of premier journals. Committed to knowledge exchange, she has served on numerous non-profit and professional boards. She has also regularly provided expertise and consultancy to UNICEF, UNESCO, the World Bank, the OECD, and the WHO. Additionally, she has extensive senior management experience at HKU.

Abstract:

This presentation analyses the interplay between preschool systems, home environments, and early childhood development across global contexts through three complementary research lenses. First, leveraging nationally representative data from low- and middle-income countries, the presentation illustrates how family wealth, maternal education, gender disparities, and urban-rural divides influence access to early childhood education (ECE). Second, longitudinal cohort analyses from China demonstrate how home learning environments perpetuate intergenerational advantages, while targeted ECE policies significantly mitigate socioeconomic gaps in school readiness. Third, evidence from Hong Kong's universal, publicly funded ECE system (ages 3–6) reveals that high-quality ECE and home learning environments jointly reduce developmental inequities, even in high-income settings. Synthesised findings emphasise that equitable access to robust ECE infrastructure and cultivation of stimulating home learning environments are dual levers for disrupting cycles of disadvantage. This cross-contextual evidence offers actionable strategies for designing systems that optimally support early development.