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Funding for implementation of ECD policies in South Africa

Human Resources for Implementation of ECD policies in South Africa

POLICY BRIEF

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Stakeholder participation in the implementation of ECD policies

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICIES

Introduction

The centrality of early childhood development to the developmental initiatives to which the Government is a party (such as the Sustainable Development Goals and EFA goals) is founded on an ever-growing body of evidence which confirms that a nation's development depends on the extent to which it can unlock the potential human capital inherent within its very youngest population. This in turn depends on the extent to which Government secures or provides the conditions necessary for the realisation of the right of every infant and child to develop "his or her potential to the maximum extent possible, to become physically healthy, mentally alert, socially competent, emotionally sound and ready to learn – cognitively, socially, emotionally, physically and psychosocially – to their full potential".

The realisation of these rights is dependent on the quality of the biological, social and economic environment in which the foetus, infant and young child develops, especially whilst in utero and in the first two years after birth – a period commonly referred to as the 'first 1 000 days'. If the foundational development of the brain and skills is flawed in these earliest days, later developments that build on earlier circuits and skills will be inherently limited. The first 1 000 days thus offer a unique and invaluable window of opportunity to secure the optimal development of the child, and by extension, the positive developmental trajectory of a country *(National Integrated ECD policy, 2015: 15).*

Situational analysis and problem statement of young children in South Africa

The preceding developments have improved the lives and development of many young children in South Africa. However, various policy and programmatic gaps and a range of deficiencies in implementation and systems mean that a number of early childhood development services are not available to all young children. In addition, the quality of a number of the services that are universally available varies and is inequitable across geography, population group and income quintiles (National Integrated ECD policy, 2015:35).

In 2015 there were 8 207 723 children from birth to 6 years (not turned 7) (i.e. 5 936 350 children birth to 4 years, 1 144 897 five-year-old children and 1 126 475 six-year-old children) living in South

Africa – with the largest number of children birth to 6 years living in KwaZulu-Natal (23%) and Gauteng (20%), and the lowest number in the Northern Cape (2%) and the Free State (5%)89. In terms of gender, for children birth to 4 years, there are 2 867 585 male children and 2 817 867 female children, with Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal having the highest number of both males and females, while the Northern Cape and the Free State have the lowest number of both male and female children.

Monitoring and Evaluation for the 0-4 year olds- the Global trends

Monitoring is assessing whether performance is at the level it should be (OECD (2012). On the other hand Evaluation is a systematic, analytical assessment of performance. Evaluation goes beyond monitoring as it searches for explanations of performance, so that performance can be improved (World Bank Consultant, 2015). On this note, Sayre, Devercelli, Neuman, and. Wodon, (2015) see evaluation as Capacity Development (CD) which helps to build sound governance in countries—improving transparency, and building a performance culture within governments to support better management and policymaking, and to strengthen

accountability relationships—through support for the creation or strengthening of national/sectoral monitoring and evaluation systems. Evaluation therefore, refers to procedures to determine how well the services and the system are performing, and with what effect on intended beneficiaries.

Monitoring and Evaluation serve the following critical aspects in various programmes including that of the early childhood development programmes: (World Bank, 2015). In the same context, Holdsworth (2014) acknowledges that support, monitoring and evaluation systems from the central government are essential for the success of programmes for children with special education needs. However, an additional dimension of support, monitoring and evaluation system is added by Mackey (2006) who notes civil society play a catalytic role through provision of assessments of government performance in certain countries. Independent Evaluation Group (IEG) aims to identify and help develop good-practice approaches on how early childhood development programmes are striving to meet the educational and developmental goals in countries; and to share the growing body of experience on such work (Mackey 2006).

Support, monitoring and evaluation are important for decision making purposes which include: resource allocation such as time, finance budgeting, human resource, teaching and learning materials and infrastructural adjustments if any, in terms of the ECD Centre priorities (World Bank, 2015). With regards to ECD programme implementation, issues such as budgeting are universally accepted as key as they may affect other issues that benefit linkages with development of national or sectoral plans (World Bank, 2015). ECEC policy and provision in the Netherlands has traditionally been a shared responsibility of the national, provincial and local governments. The national government takes on those tasks that can be more efficiently organised at national level, *such as* legislation, rules and regulations, development of policy frameworks, formulation of national standards aimed at attainment of targets. The purpose is to ensure that educational programmes reach the desired targets. In recent studies Holdsworth, (2014) found that in China the federal government through the local administration offers overall support and monitoring systems to schools and on the performance of teachers delivering in ECD classes so that they meet the desired standards. The government provide teaching resources, fund for in-service training workshops and

seminars, including purchase of assistive devices for special needs education learners (Holdsworth, 2014).

In addition, in countries such as Colombia, earlier studies found out that: the government has a quality assurance department that cut across educational sectors and institutions, ensuring that the content that learners learn and the teaching infrastructure are meeting the expected standards. There is no doubt that quality assurance measures that governments have put in place will continue to provide a legal framework that enforces compliance of ECD settings to meet the national and global stands.

There is need for regular monitoring of early childhood programmes by program managers so that they can take corrective action where necessary to improve performance. In some case studies contacted in Latin American countries of Chile and Brazil, monitoring and evaluations were seen as critical in feeding into program management or program improvement plans (World Bank, 2015). Furthermore, monitoring and evaluation are also very important to establish both internal and external accountability and social control (World Bank, 2015).the importance of monitoring and evaluation is indicative of the fact that performance information may be used to establish whether contractual undertakings are being

met. Such contractual undertakings include: in-servicing the existing staff to ensure they perform to meet their contractual obligations (World Bank, 2015). Considering the fact that ECDCs are public entities, evaluation in most cases should lead to external reporting of performance indicators and this can inform clients on how well public funds are being spent, how growth and development of young children is accelerated and the measure taken to improve the existing situation in line with expected standards. This social control element seems particularly strong in Latin America, perhaps reflecting its more recent democratization, where perhaps consultation with citizens and program users and public access to information, have been more long accepted parts of the government system. All of the above relate to the overall goal of decision-making to improve public sector performance.

According to (Richter, Berry, Biersteker, Harrison, Desmond, Martin, Naicker, Saloojee & Slemming 2014), ECD programmes may only work if they are well designed and well-executed through quality management procedures. In ECDCs monitoring is regarded as ongoing collection of data on what goes on in the entre centre (Richter, et al, 2014). In the same way, evaluation involves the assessment of impacts, e.g. what actually is going on in the programmes. Currently, there is no integrated national information system describing and tracking trends in the lives of young children in South Africa, and the adequacy of the national response to their needs (Richter, et al, 2014).

In the South African context, monitoring of the implementation of the ECD should serve three purposes, namely:
Assessment of the access and level of participation of children in ECD services; (Richter, 2012):

- Assessment of the adequacy, efficiency and quality of local service provision e.g. the role of teachers, centre directors, school heads, ancillary staff and parents;
- Supporting planning for adequate resourcing the ECDCs;
- Identifying custodian measures that can be used to track progress over time, drawn from the neighbourhood/ households;
- Working towards the tracking of individual children across Government systems that link birth registration with utilisation of health and social services, and participation in early learning

programmes and entry into Grade R and schooling;

- Whether a child is receiving all Essential Package services;
- Who is providing them, where are they being provided, in what dose and duration, and whether the child is benefitting from the services in terms of health, growth and development;
- How services are delivered, including the numbers and work load of the staff, their performance quality, supervision received, materials available, and so on.
- Data on these elements must be collected at each level of service provision – clinic, centre, community programme, and child minding service. How the system is functioning as expressed in the numbers of early learning centres and community programmes, toy libraries, child minders, services meeting norms and standards, ECD Practitioners and MCHCWs, Essential Package Coordinators, staff qualifications, training capacity and trainees.
- What funding is received, allocated and spent.

From the above it can be noted that literature reviewed on monitoring and evaluation will assist researchers to investigate a variety of issues on whether ECD programmes are meeting the designed standards which promote growth and development of learners as stipulated in the national legislations.

Funding and human resources for implementation of early childhood development policy in South Africa

The South African government has put in place legislation, policies and programmes to ensure that children's rights to early childhood education (ECD) as stated in Jomtien, Dakar Framework of Education for All and the national Constitution is fulfilled (Republic of South Africa, 1996; Republic of South Africa, 2005; Giese, Budlender, Berry, Motlatla & Zide, 2011; Department of Social Development, 2015; UNESCO, 2015). In these policies the country has committed to expanding access to early childhood care and education (pre-primary education) and to improve its quality to all children especially the most vulnerable and marginalised ones (Department of Social Development, 2015; UNICEF, 2011; UNESCO, 2014). The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy provides for a "comprehensive package of quality ECD services with important and essential components, namely,

programmes on health care and nutrition, social protection, parent support and opportunities for learning and playing" (Republic of South Africa, 2015:53). In order for implementation of policies and programmes to be effective there is need of adequate financial and human resources. It is essential to allocate sufficient funds to ensure universal and equity access to quality ECD programmes with priority given to children from poor families and those with disabilities. It is also important to consolidate sufficient number of appropriately skilled human resources who are well motivated and enjoy good working conditions to deliver the programmes (Department of Social Development, 2015).

Stakeholder participation in the implementation of ECD policy

Stakeholders in the ECD sector, as encapsulated in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy 2015, include the following "responsible role players" such "government departments, organisations, agencies and individuals." These role players include, among others, "development partners, non-governmental organisations, private entities and the business sector" as well as municipalities (UNICEF, 2015:65).

According to the policy, the government partners with each of the role players in order to realise its ECD commitments and ensures that each provides services in compliance with the international, regional and constitutional commitments. Hence, policy frameworks are in place to regulate the stakeholders' involvement in ECD. Role players are expected to "commit to, and align their policies, laws, programmes and budgets to achieve the common early childhood development vision, goals and objectives" To achieve this, these essential government partners should network, coordinate, cooperate, collaborate and contract other stakeholders (UNICEF, 2015:65). For example, parents and caregivers are viewed as primary and central in their children's early childhood development for their role in providing a nurturing environment as well as ensuring that children are healthy and safe (Chinhara, 2016; Rembe, Shumba & Goje, 2014; UNICEF, 2015). Research reveals that responsive parenting (that which provides positive affection and warmth) is instrumental for greater gains in young children's learning (Landry, Smith, Swank, Zucker, Crawford & Solari, 2012).

Various government departments are involved in the implementation of the ECD policies. For example, in the current ECD policy the Department of Social

Development (DSD) is responsible for "…ensuring the universal availability and adequate quality of and equitable access to, inclusive learning opportunities for children aged birth to until the year before they enter formal school through the development, delivery, regulation, quality monitoring, improvement and evaluation of early childhood development programmes" (UNICEF, 2015:67). The policy stipulates that DSD collaborates with the Departments of Health, Basic Education, Higher Education and Training, Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Water and Sanitation, Labour, Public Service and Administration, Arts and Culture, Science and Technology, Transport, Correctional Services, Human Settlements, Justice and Constitutional Development, Public Works, Rural Development and Land Reform, Sport and Recreation, Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Finance, Communications, Planning and Monitoring, Women and Telecommunications and Postal Services. Other stakeholders who are part of the synergy include (SAPS), Quality Council for Trades and Occupations, Statistics South Africa, Presidency, local and metropolitan municipalities as well as non-governmental organisations. Each of the stakeholders has key ascribed roles and adheres to the government laws and regulations but it remains the

Government's prerogative to oversee the activities of the stakeholders who may be contracted to provide services. Norms and standards regulating ECD service provision are in place in both the new policy and the preceding policy documents. UNICEF (2015:72) categorically points that the government "… will remain responsible for funding, regulation, capacitation and oversight of contracted partners within the limits of this policy." The current study seeks to find out how the afore-mentioned stakeholders implement their mandate in promoting service delivery in ECD Centres.

Monitoring and support of programmes enhances quality of ECD services and hence it is a critical issue in this study and literature on how it is implemented is reviewed. For instance, the South African National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (Department of Social Development, 2015) suggests that government is responsible for the development, monitoring, quality control and ongoing improvement of ECD services and is expected therefore, in collaboration with relevant line departments, to ensure appropriate quality and qualification norms and standards will be put in place. Although the current policy is at its infancy, more guidance is

needed on how the development and monitoring of ECD services is done and how the line departments implement their mandated roles. However, findings of studies and reviews of other policies are captured to position the present study. For example, Davids, Samuels, September, Moeng, Ritcher, Mabogoane *et al*. (2015:4) report on findings of a diagnostic review on ECD. Their findings capture that although the White Paper 5 on ECD presented a vision to include various players, the different sectors/ stakeholders acted in isolation and that resulted in service deficiencies in areas such as nutritional support for women and children, support for parenting and childcare for very young children. They propose a shift towards a rights-based ECD framework and accompanying funding model that takes into account governments' commitment to provide ECD services for all, especially "those living in poor families, rural areas and informal urban areas and for children with disabilities." According to Davids et al. (2015), as a result of the recommendations of the diagnostic review, DSD has tried to implement its mandate by revising the ECD policy with the support of UNICEF and has carried out a costing exercise on the intended services. It was agreed that DBE's focus should be on the development of a curriculum and the training of practitioners. On the other hand, the Department of Health has put in place strategies to capacitate women with young children and ECD centres. Ward-based health teams now visit households to provide health education on various aspects and parenting skills. The department has also developed a menu guide for ECD centres to ensure provision of nutritious menus. It is also noted that the current ECD policy attempts to redress these anomalies by proposing more collaboration among the various stakeholders and gives more elaborate details on the roles of each stakeholder (UNICEF, 2015). However, what happens on the ground in the implementation of the policy needs investigating so as to help nip the flower in the bud and give remedies early.

In many developed countries, America included, parents and civic organisations are also important members of the monitoring and evaluation process (Rubio-Codina, Araujo, Attanasio, Munoz and Grantham-McGregor, 2016). Good practice in parental participation is noted in countries where both fathers and mothers are allowed to take "maternity leave" after the birth of their child. However, this is constrained by lack of funding as the parent on leave may have to forfeit their salary during this critical time

(EFA Report, 2015). The same report indicate that in less developed countries lack of parental participation is attributed to lack of knowledge and resources to boost their children's early cognitive development. Other good stories come from Malawi. An example is reported in a study on the role of community based childcare centres in Malawi, one of the key roles of parents is to provide food for the children. The other critical stakeholders are Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) who visit centres to provide services such as "immunisation and other preventive and promotive health services" (Munthali, Mvula & Silo, 2014:9). These HSAs are based in the communities and are attached to health facilities. Additionally, NGOs provided support in terms of constructing structures for the community based childcare centres in Malawi. The Malawian case can be compared to health services of note in the ECD sector that are also provided in Pakistan in the form of Pakistan Lady health workers who have provided home visits since 1994 and provide nutrition education and supplementation as well as psychosocial stimulation mothers. They work with mothers in these interventions. For the current study it would be crucial to establish whether similar interventions are in place in the context under review.

The civil society is regarded a major player in the provision of ECD services as it feels the gap where the government lacks capacity (Hickman, 2014; Malete, 2013). A case to be used is UNICEF. At a macro level UNICEF's key role is to provide technical leadership, sector specific technical guidance, support to country offices to influence national programmes to go to scale with proven interventions, to manage and disseminate programme knowledge and experiences. It aims to influence ECD social policies to create an enabling environment and build capacity for programming (UNICEF, nd). Internationally, some of UNICEF'S involvement in ECD is in various projects such as: Impact assessment of ECD kits after the 2010 earthquake in Haiti; Democratic Republic of Congo, ECD in Emergencies and Post-Crisis Transition; Belarus, Early childhood intervention, Special Education and Inclusion; India, Integrated Child Development Services with 40000 centres; Maldives, First Steps to build capacity in the media sector and Jordan, ECD Better Parenting Project which aims to upskill parents and caregivers with knowledge, skills and social services on child rearing. In South Africa, UNICEF's presence in the ECD sector is summarised as follows: "UNICEF SA, who through their advocacy of the importance of early years in child

development supported the DSD with technical assistance and financial support" in the completion of the guidelines (DSD, 2006). UNICEF also supported the amendment of the Children's Act to cater for the CED sector and worked with the government to produce a comprehensive policy that guarantees equitable coverage in ECD provisioning (UNICEF). However, it would be apt to investigate how UNICEF and other stakeholders are operating at a micro level in the ECD centres IN order to establish what their roles are, the successes they enjoy and the challenges they encounter.

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