



**NDA**

National  
Development  
Agency

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

**SEPTEMBER 2016**

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**ECD PRACTITIONER PRACTICES**

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## **1. Introduction**

According to the (Department of Social Development 2007) the well being of children depends on the environment, community and the functions of their families. Children need to grow up in a nurturing and secure environment that can ensure that they develop physically and emotionally. From an environmental perspective, it means safe water, basic sanitation, and protection from violence, abuse, exploitation and discrimination. These essentials work best together and lay the foundation for life and early childhood Development contributes in playing a role to ensure that this is delivered.

Early Childhood Development needs to attend to the child's health, nutrition, development, psychosocial and other needs. Parents, communities, non-governmental organisations and government departments have a role to play to ensure an integrated service to children. Access to basic social services is the right of all children, parents and other primary caregivers. They should have access to as many resources as possible to provide in the needs of young children (Department of Social Development 2007).

First and foremost the topic to be addressed in this literature review is; ECD practitioners practices in South Africa and globally. Firstly one will identify in a brief summary what is Early Childhood Development, secondly the role and responsibilities of ECDs, thirdly who are the Practitioners (What role do they play and what are they responsible for). Lastly the ECD Practitioner Practices in South Africa and on the global scale will be outlined.

## **2. The purpose/aim of this literature review**

The main objective of this literature review is to establish the underlying factors, key issues and debates surrounding the above mentioned topic, to establish a theory based on ECD practitioners practices in SA and on a global scale, which will inform the NDA Research Unit and for part of a research study.

## **3. Methodology**

The methodology used for gathering information on this literature review was a qualitative approach, this was carried out through document analysis, desktop research, articles, journals, and books review.

## **4. What is an ECD?**

Both the Department of Education and UNICEF defines ECD in a broader context as an umbrella term or a general classification that refers to the processes by which children from birth to six grow and flourish socially, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, and morally, [www.worldvision.co.za/campaigns-projects/early-childhood-development-eed](http://www.worldvision.co.za/campaigns-projects/early-childhood-development-eed) .

“One of the main policy documents influencing early childhood development is the Ministry for Social Development’s *White Paper on Social Welfare, 1997*; this guides the ministry in terms of service provisions in the social development sector. Key points include:” Department of Education (Department of Education and Social Development 2001).

- Provision of educational service for children between the ages of 0 to 6 years
- Putting emphasise and showing the importance of home based education, in other words, bringing early childhood development within the family environment, especially for those children under the age of five years and children whose parents do not afford ECD Centres.
- It calls for an inter-sectoral national ECD strategy, bringing together other government departments, civil society and the private sector.

- It emphasises the positive impact early childhood development interventions targeting all caregivers and parents

“On the other hand UNICEF focuses on four areas of intervention for early childhood development:”

1. quality basic health, nutrition, HIV/AIDS, education and protection services;
2. Good care practices for children within the family and community,  
<https://www.unicef-irc.org/knowledge-pages/Early-Childhood/599>

## **5. The importance of Early Children Development**

“Research in South Africa and internationally indicates that the early years are critical for development. From 0 to six years is a period of rapid physical, mental, emotional, social and moral growth and development. The early years of a child’s life are a time when they acquire concepts, skills and attitudes that lay the foundation for lifelong learning. These include the acquisition of language, perceptual motor skills required for learning to read and write, basic numeracy concepts and skills, problem solving skills, a love of learning and the establishment and maintenance of relationships”, (Fourie 2013).

The early years of a child are seen as the ideal phase for the passing on values that are important for the upbringing and development of a child’s life. These values include respect for human rights, appreciation of diversity, anti-bias, tolerance and justice, and can be applied in undertaking life challenges in the future and also for growth purposes, (Fourie 2013).

(Fourie 2013) “It is important to identify and support “children at risk” early in their lives. If there is early and appropriate treatment and care, this can often reverse the effects of deprivation and support the development of innate potential. Early intervention and provisioning make it possible for children to grow and develop to their full potential, thus reducing the need for remedial services to address stunting,

developmental lag and social problems later in life. Quality provisioning will also increase educational efficiency, as children will acquire the basic concepts”,

## **6. Who are ECD Practitioners**

(Bolstad 2004) An ECD Practitioner is a pre-school teacher that is responsible for instilling knowledge and skills in the lives of children between the ages of 0 to 6, ensuring that a proper foundation is laid or build for them for school readiness. Practitioners offer educational learning, life lessons, and mostly protect children from any harm. ECD Practitioners play an enabling and facilitating role through multiple practices to reach young children and their families both in their immediate and broader environments. Here are some of the their roles and responsibilities;

- Assessing a child's developmental needs, deficiencies, and goals.
- Developing a child's language skills through songs and stories.
- Choosing and facilitating activities that help a child to develop motor skills.
- Promoting interaction between children to ensure healthy social development.
- Promoting healthy psychological development through activities focused on aspects such as confidence building.
- Interacting with parents and other professionals to discuss a child's progress.

## **7. ECD Practitioners Practices**

### *Management of Centres*

All ECDs should have a management team that will oversee the overall performance of their centres, lack of growth/improvement in the lives of the children, issues of governance (registrations, compliance etc), and the centre manager/principal/even practitioners must ensure management is well practiced in the daily operations of their centres, (Ebrahim & Killian 2010).

### *Teaching services*

Part of the roles and responsibilities of Practitioners is to prepare children for lower primary level, for them to be ready for school; practitioners have to instil the knowledge they have, for intellectual growth, (Ebrahim & Killian 2010).

### *Nutrition and Health*

Through provision of school feeding schemes, food supplies to community-based ECD facilities and home-based centers, establishing food gardens in rural communities as well as skills development and training on nutrition, this helps eradicate poverty in disadvantaged ECD centers, (Ebrahim & Killian 2010).

### *Safety and security*

To reduce the risk of children being exposed to danger, centres must ensure safety measures are always taken. Children have the right to be in a secured, safe and clean environment, (Ebrahim & Killian 2010).

## **8. Conclusion**

Despite the progress South Africa has made in terms of investing in ECD, ECD practitioners still require more empowerment to be able to provide quality education. In this regard universities should demonstrate social responsibility by intervening in early childhood development as such interventions have the potential to break the cycle of poverty and inequality. The development needs and challenges of poor and marginalized people should play a crucial role during the engagement between universities and communities. Community engagement should be based on collaborative partnerships between higher education institutions and the communities that they serve.

## Reference List

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[www.worldvision.co.za/campaigns-projects/early-childhood-development-ecd](http://www.worldvision.co.za/campaigns-projects/early-childhood-development-ecd) .

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