



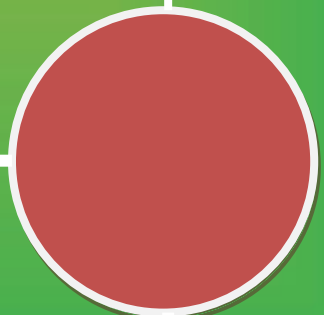
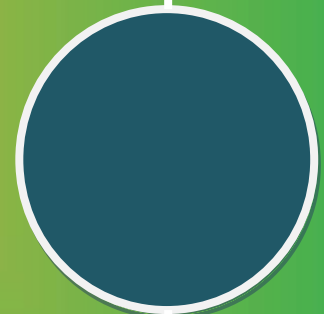
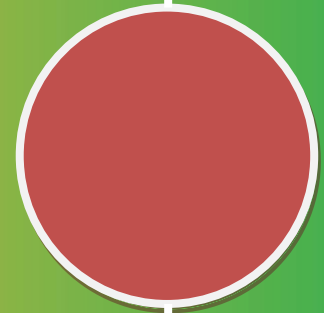
NDA

National
Development
Agency

EFFECTIVE ECD PROGRAMMES

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POLICY BRIEF



1. Introduction.

The ECD programme is structured within an ECD services to provide learning and support appropriate to the children's developmental age and stage. Early childhood development is influenced by characteristics of the child, the family, and the broader social environment. Physical health, cognition, language, and social and emotional development underpin school readiness. Publicly funded, centre-based, comprehensive early childhood development programs are a community resource that promotes the well-being of young children (Anderson *et al.*, 2003). The programs such as Head Start are designed to close the gap in readiness to learn between poor children and their more economically advantaged peers. Systematic reviews of the scientific literature demonstrate effectiveness of these programs in preventing developmental delay, as assessed by reductions in retention in grade and placement in special education (Davids *et al.*, 2015).

Determining information pertaining to ECD centres such as the number of children enrolled or the number of practitioners and assistant practitioners available can play an important role in crafting the nature and scope of policies related to the provision of quality early childhood development services. Factors such as the disability status of children in the centre and the predominant language in which curriculums are taught in a particular province can also have an important bearing on the development of such policy (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy., 2015).

This policy brief will discuss and focus more on the following ECD programme; ECD centre upgrade, Literacy, Numeracy & the life skills programmes, Family Outreach Programmes, Conferences and Knowledge sharing, National Integrated Programme for ECD and Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation.

2. Main Body.

To run an ECD centres which are efficient, effective and sustainable in caring for young children, it is very important that the ECD principals, supervisors and teachers are trained. The effective programmes are selected in relation to the capacity of the ECD practitioners participating in the programmes.

a. Education Equipment Provision

Educational equipment is a vital component in offering a quality early learning environment to young children. By working with educational equipment children acquire essential developmental skills, such as fine and gross motor skills, observational skills, hand-eye coordination, problem-solving skills, as well as the recognition of colours and shapes (Davids *et al.*, 2015). The equipment also assists children in developing their life skills, numeracy and literacy skills, especially their vocabulary. This equipment provides opportunities for play which serves as a means for growth of children's physical, social, cognitive, emotional, social and moral development.

The provided equipments are age-appropriate educational equipment to ECD centres that is fun, durable and safe to use. The equipment packs stimulate early learning with a focus on literacy, numeracy and life skills and contains a range of items including puzzles, balls, bean bags, games, blocks, laces, beads etc. This is always linked to skills training which informs ECD practitioners on the use, maintenance and safe storage of education equipment (Anderson *et al.*, 2003). This equipment supports ECD practitioners in the practical implementation of lessons learnt during ECD trainings.

b. ECD centre upgrade.

In order for ECD centres to become registered as a Partial Care Facility with the Department of Social Development, it is essential that they meet the minimum standards, as determined by provincial government departments. As a means to meet the minimum physical requirements for registration, it is essential that ECD centres

provide a safe and secure environment for young children (National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy., 2015).

They also provide minor and major infrastructure building upgrades. These upgrades ensure that the youngest and most vulnerable citizens receive a quality early learning programme in an environment that is safe, secure and hygienic. The upgrade process includes baseline assessments at ECD centres to establish the extent of the upgrade needed, obtaining quotes from various service providers to provide the best upgrades within the given budget, and conducting the infrastructure upgrades and/or renovations (Patel *et al.*, 2004).

A minor upgrade would consist of renovating an existing ECD centre. This could be anything from replacing a roof to installing a new floor or providing a fresh coat of paint for the ECD centre.

A major upgrade would involve the building of a new ECD centre. The design of new centres always takes into consideration the minimum standards as required by all the relevant government departments and the agencies. However the departments contribute to the design and specifications of the ECD centre as well as manage the construction process. They also ensure that there is easy access for people and children with disabilities.

c. Literacy, Numeracy & the life skills programmes.

There has been an under emphasis on the development of reading, writing, numeracy and life skills at the ECD and Foundation phase. The literacy, numeracy and life skills programmes inspire an understanding of literacy, numeracy and life skills among young learners through interactive activities and resources which present these skills and concepts in a stimulating and exciting way (Patel *et al.*, 2004). These programmes provide ECD practitioners with innovative and interesting ways of teaching literacy, numeracy and life skills to young children, and encourage parents to become more involved in their children's early development activities

d. Family Outreach Programmes.

The majority of South Africa's children cannot access formal ECD provision and as a result are not exposed to quality early learning opportunities. The result is that those children enter formal school not having experienced a structured learning programme and are poorly prepared for formal schooling.

The family outreach workers partner with parents and caregivers in their homes to provide an early education and health programme which encourages parent-child interaction and learning through play. The home visits will also provide support, advice and hands-on, practical guidance on various topics including health, nutrition, child safety, discipline, cognitive development, assistance with accessing social assistance grants, as well as creating educational toys and resources from recyclable materials (Anderson *et al.*, 2003).

e. Conferences and Knowledge sharing.

There is annual ECD conference in which stakeholders share knowledge, resources and information on ECD best practice and provide opportunities for networking and sharing between government, donors, academics and the broader ECD sector (ECD Audit National Report., 2014). Such conferences hosted have attracted delegates from countries throughout Africa and abroad and they facilitate the sharing of knowledge and information within the ECD sector, including government departments, ECD non-profit organisations, ECD practitioners, communities and donors, in order to meet the needs of young children and their families (Anderson *et al.*, 2003). They also respond to numerous requests for information and resources from ECD practitioners and ECD organisations working with young children.

There are few places where ECD stakeholders can obtain quality ECD resources, materials and information required to run effective ECD programmes and ECD facilities. The lack of relevant, accurate and up to date information regarding ECD policy, practices, curriculum, registration, and child development is a challenge to the sector globally. The solution to this challenge is the development of a comprehensive

ECD knowledge and resource base which is globally accessible (Davids *et al.*, 2015).

Early Childhood Development as the lead department for children from birth to school-going age, the Department of Social Development launched an awareness campaign to promote ECD in local communities in collaboration with the ECD sector. (Davids *et al.*, 2015).

Moreover knowledge sharing service contributes to the expansion of quality ECD programmes globally as they assist ECD stakeholders in the work that they do, by providing them with relevant, up to date resources and materials.

f. Coordination, Monitoring and Evaluation.

Effective monitoring, evaluation and research assists the ECD sector in developing and implementing ECD programmes that are effective, serving those most in need and producing models that are cost effective, affordable and replicable. They also research a range of topics on ECD for donors, government departments, development organisations, and academic institutions (Davids *et al.*, 2015).

3. Conclusion.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is a fundamental pillar for laying a good foundation for a child's development which would greatly impact how the child performs later on in life. Early childhood development programs are recommended on the basis of strong evidence of their effectiveness in preventing delay of cognitive development and increasing readiness to learn, as shown by reductions in retention in grade and placement in special education (National Integrated Plan For Early Childhood Development In South Africa., 2005).

The number of children enrolled in an ECD centre is an indication of the capacity of the specific centre as well as the need for the service in a specific community. ECD centres that accommodate more children than its legal limit are in contravention of the law. Therefore, where ECD centres are exceeding these maximum numbers it is likely that more facilities need to be provided in close proximity to ensure increased access to the services provided (Davids *et al.*, 2015).

References

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