

SCALING UP EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) (0-4 YEARS) IN SOUTH AFRICA

Human Sciences Research Council

Presented at the ECD Knowledge Building Seminar, Durban November 2008

Since 2001 Government has made significant efforts to expand services for 5 year olds in the Reception Year of formal schooling. In 2005 the Social Sector Cluster of government produced the National Integrated Plan for ECD as its commitment to addressing the needs of children **under 5** with a particular focus on poor and vulnerable children. Government's Massification of ECD Concept Document signals their intention to rapidly expand these key services. Strong political commitment for this expansion has been demonstrated by increased budgetary provision and inclusion in high-profile programmes, such as the Expanded Public Works Programme, and as a current APEX priority, or special focus area, announced by the President in his State of the Nation address in February 2008.

In support of government's ECD and job creation priorities the **Scaling Up ECD Services for Children Under 5 Years Research Project** led by Dr Miriam Altman, Executive Director of CPEG was developed. This had its origins in the 2004 Economic and Social cluster project "*Leveraging services for growth, employment & equity*" which identified a service delivery gap in child development, recognised that ECD can play a role in improving child indicators while at the same time being an extremely large potential employer in a context of extremely high unemployment, especially among women.

A multi-disciplinary research team including Dr Altman, Professor Andy Dawes, Linda Biersteker and Judith Streak, undertook an investigation of the delivery of services for children under age five, with the aims of identifying blockages to scaling up quality ECD (0-4 years) services (0-4 years) in South Africa, and informing innovative interventions to support expansion, which will involve employment opportunities particularly for poor women. This first phase of the project, received funding from the Department of Education through the Social Cluster and was advised by its National Intedepartmental Committee for ECD. The **National Integrated Plan for ECD 0 – 4 years** has been the frame of reference for a series of research papers, each identifying issues to be considered in the scaling up of provision to accepted levels of quality. These have included the following background papers:

1 Early Childhood Development policy and child profile (0-4 year olds) in South Africa; a summary of policies and services.

2 Review of current Early Childhood Development service delivery in South Africa

2.1 Government indicators and monitoring systems review

2.2 Review of education and training

2.3 Review of on the ground delivery models (local case studies)

2.4 Government budget allocations, processes and systems

3 Innovations to inform improved Early Childhood Development outcomes, scaling and job creation

3.1 Specification of child and caregiver outcomes and measures

3.2 Identification of inputs likely to lead to agreed levels of quality of ECD

3.3 Review of existing and proposed job hierarchies

3.4 Review of alternative on the ground delivery and supervisory models

3.5 International case studies

4 Integrated finding of background studies

The papers consider the implications for rolling out the National Integrated Plan of the current ECD situation in South Africa (policy, provisioning, service targeting, monitoring and evaluation, training, governance and budgeting) and international evidence which could inform innovations for the effective expansion of ECD services. They will soon be available on the HSRC website.

For purposes of the Knowledge Building Seminar, the focus is on one of the background papers, which reviews the existing ECD job hierarchies in South Africa, puts forward a proposed hierarchy for discussion and raises a number of issues around professionalisation, salaries and service conditions in the sector.

Towards a Job Hierarchy for ECD Provision and Supervision in South Africa, and the Fit of Low-skill Service Providers

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Introduction

Background and purpose

Any mass expansion of Early Childhood Development (ECD) jobs for service provision of a quality that will impact positively on outcomes for children requires that staffing is given serious consideration. Due to historical neglect, the ECD sector is faced with numerous challenges to quality, including an underskilled workforce with low pay and poor conditions of service. If the sector is to grow and be upgraded, it will need to become more attractive as a career option, with incentives to improve qualifications.

White Paper Five: Early Childhood Development (Department of Education, 2001) attributes the variable quality of ECD services and programmes, among other things, to:

- Absence of a mechanism for the professional registration of ECD practitioners/educators and of the requirement that they be registered with the South African Council of Educators;
- Inequities in the qualifications of ECD practitioners/educators; and
- Absence of an accreditation system for trainers of ECD practitioners/educators (Paragraph 2.2.6).

To address these problems, the Department of Education (DoE) “undertakes to expand, over the medium term, its work on practitioner development and career pathing for Reception Year practitioners and **Pre-Reception Year practitioners** (the target group for this research project). It undertakes to develop best practice models for the management and quality development of Pre-Reception Year programmes” (Paragraph 5.3.4).

Similarly, the National Integrated Plan (NIP) for ECD (Departments of Education, Health and Social Development, 2005) recognises that all ECD practitioners should be supported as professionals with a career path. This plan and other ECD programmes also point to new types of jobs for ECD workers at a variety of levels, for example, family support workers and child development workers. In addition, expansion of the system will create the need for more and different kinds of capacity building, supervisory, monitoring and support job opportunities.

The purpose of this paper is to:

- Identify the job hierarchies and career paths in ECD service provision and supervision needed to deliver access, quality and child outcomes;
- Relate these to the career opportunities for low- and semi-skilled workers and the use of the ECD service sector as a route to job creation and capacity building;

- Consider the location of certain of these jobs, for example, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), local government, district offices, community-based organisations (CBOs) and small private businesses;
- Review the range of pay scales and expectations, from volunteerism to pay according to a public works stipend to aligning the service delivery agent to some extended pay scale (thereby seeing it as a proper job rather than a special ‘make-work’ opportunity);
- Analyse the implications of these for Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) training and job hierarchies and the mass expansion of ECD and how these align with requirements of the NIP; and
- Make recommendations to government with regard to developing the job hierarchy, service conditions and on how job creation initiatives could better address the current mass expansion programme and the NIP for ECD.

In view of the very broad service package proposed for 0-4 year-olds, many of the service providers will be health practitioners, but in keeping with the ECD job creation focus, this paper discusses the jobs which fall under the Department of Social Development (DoSD) and the DoE.

Method of investigation

The methods used for this study included a literature review and interviews with key informants. The literature scanned included information on South Africa’s social sector employment projects, including proposals for job creation, a review of the international ECD job hierarchy literature, information from local case studies (Ndingi, Biersteker & Schaffer, 2008) and South Africa’s ECD policy and programmes. Key informants from the public sector, NGOs and on-the-ground service providers (at national, provincial and local level) were interviewed.

I. Possible career paths for ECD workers in South Africa

What are career paths and why is it important to map these for ECD in South Africa?

Mapping of possible jobs and career paths is important for:

- Providing a structure that can be taken into account in the development of common norms and standards for regulation (licensing);
- Indicating the possible horizontal and vertical progressions between these so that they can as far as possible be taken into account in the development of core qualifications and specialisations; and
- Helping to define the upward mobility or exit opportunities for those who enter low-wage ECD jobs and allow for a broader focus in social sector job creation programmes targeting this sector, and in the South African context may be used to motivate for additional public support for different kinds of jobs.

Job mappings may either follow a career ladder or career lattice approach. A ladder gives the jobs within a single professional setting and a lattice indicates possible horizontal as well as vertical progression opportunities. For this reason a lattice is the recommendation for ECD jobs in South Africa, though there are certain articulation challenges to be addressed (see section III below). A concern is whether the ECD employment structure could reasonably be expected to raise mobility rates substantially, as this will depend both on supply of better jobs and whether there is a qualifications ‘ceiling’ to be broken through to reach them. A well-organised sector to negotiate for institutional commitments to fill openings with people from lower down the ladder can facilitate mobility.

Types of ECD jobs and career paths in South Africa: what are the current opportunities?

Both the Interim Accreditation Committee for Early Childhood Development and the EPWP Social Sector ECD Plan have previously produced career maps for ECD, which is a useful basis for a recommended mapping that takes account of new policy directions in South Africa and changes to the qualifications framework for ECD.

ECD career paths: international comparisons

International evidence indicates that service integration, professionalisation, improving service conditions and linking to career paths are issues for ECD in many countries.

Those countries currently tackling professionalisation and career opportunities seriously tend to be higher income countries than South Africa. The qualification base from which they are working is also higher than South Africa's where minimum standards call for a secondary level certificate in ECD as the basic supervisory qualification for an ECD centre and interim qualification for a Grade R teacher. Career lattices for jobs in a range of ECD settings have been developed by a number of states in the USA. Job roles to provide more integrated ECD opportunities are emerging. In Europe, social pedagogues are expected to include and support parents in a range of ways and work with other professional agencies, and in the UK a lead professional role has been introduced to support effective integrated service delivery. A lead professional is responsible for co-ordinating services for children and young people with additional needs and to act as a single contact point for the child and their family. In both cases evidence is that co-ordinated service delivery has been difficult to achieve for a variety of reasons.

A recommended South African career lattice for ECD takes account of previous mappings in South Africa, international mappings (in particular the career lattices used in the USA) and current jobs outlined in new ECD policies.

II. Linking ECD jobs to professional norms and standards

Two possible routes for linking ECD jobs to norms and standards are in development in South Africa.

Registration with a professional body (professional licensing of individual practitioners)

The function of these bodies is to safeguard standards within the profession. It also raises the status of those working in the sector which may, but does not necessarily, improve salaries and service conditions. Only registered persons may practice in the sector and registration requires specified professional qualifications, continuing professional education and adherence to a code of conduct.

Currently ECD practitioners working in Grade R classes are required to register with the South African Council of Educators (SACE), and a possibility is that this could be extended to other practitioners working directly with children. An alternative route is the Social Services Professions Council. This is more aligned to community and outreach ECD service jobs, but could also apply to practitioners working in centres, as new draft legislation is providing for a category of child and youth care worker.

Issues to be considered before going the professional registration route include the limited number of levels of registration. The lowest is National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Level 4 as an auxiliary social services professional or conditional registration as an educator. At this stage many workers in the ECD sector are below this level and the professional registration process might become an exclusionary rather than an enabling mechanism. Registration fees are also a burden for low-paid practitioners. Finally, consideration needs to be given to the implications for job mobility of having more than one professional registration in the sector.

Regulations by government notice under relevant legislation

These regulations include, for example, the Children's Act (licensing of ECD facilities and programmes which includes staffing determinations), and are the second possible route for linking ECD jobs to norms and standards. The specification of staff qualifications and programme responsibilities by government notice as an aspect of broader requirements for registration of ECD services is an established practice and is a way that norms and standards are enforced. Whilst staffing information required for the quality assurance process is currently limited, it would be very simple to develop this. An advantage is that it is inclusive of all job levels. A combination of the two routes is also a possibility and is the approach being introduced in some states in the USA particularly.

III. The ECD sector as a route for job creation, capacity building and career opportunities for low- and semi-skilled workers

Job opportunities in the sector

The EPWP ECD plan provides for a number of training opportunities at NQF Levels 1, 4 and 5 and is well aligned to addressing training backlogs in the ECD sector and upgrading of existing provision. However, it is rolling out slowly and would not in its present form allow for significant expansion of the sector as a whole, as it is targeted to practitioners in existing employment. To improve quality, some provinces are tracking the same participants through different training levels, which reduces the number of beneficiaries but is realistic in terms of challenges to sustainable (paying) exit opportunities and serves the sector need for improved qualifications. Certain job categories indicated in the Massification of ECD document and the NIP are not included in current EPWP plans but could be made possible by a further EPWP allocation for social sector job creation announced in President Thabo Mbeki's 2008 *State of the Nation* address. These include child development workers and graduates to assist with registration, monitoring and support of centre facilities for young children. Childminding (caring for six or fewer children in the home of the provider) is a potentially significant small business opportunity, particularly if it could be linked with supervisory support, and should be further explored.

Institutional locations for different ECD jobs

A lack of clarity about institutional locations for certain categories of jobs, in particular those falling into the community- and home-based ECD servicing options, needs to be resolved. Currently these services are run by NGOs, although erratic funding streams are a problem. Significant scaling up would require the establishment of larger, more viable intermediary structures and/or expansion of government support or posts at provincial and especially local level.

Determining minimum conditions of service/remuneration levels

The issue of wages and services conditions for ECD practitioners of all kinds needs to be addressed. Local and international evidence is clear that reasonable wages and service conditions for those working with young children are essential to attracting and retaining good quality workers in the sector. In a sector that is largely private and informal there should be immediate and concerted efforts to secure a sectoral determination of a minimum wage via the Department of Labour (DoL). The fact that such a process is under way for workers in the welfare sector suggests that this could be achieved. Concerns that going the route of a sectoral determination might affect mobility into the education sector must be addressed.

A clear distinction should be made between volunteerism, ‘make-work’ opportunities and the need for salaried jobs. Volunteerism on an ad hoc basis in support of core ECD jobs should be encouraged. However, so-called ‘volunteers’ tend to be performing too many core functions, which should be paid and accountable. Staff and capacity-building investments are often lost due to ECD workers not being able to afford to continue in their low-paid jobs. In the context of the EPWP, practitioners who have received stipends while training are often required to return to salaries lower than these once they have qualified. Higher per capita ECD subsidies for qualifying children in subsidised ECD facilities are expected to ameliorate this but subsidisation will not on its own address the needs. The possibility of establishment posts for ECD facilities similar to the option for Grade R classes provided for in the DoE’s Grade R funding norms should be investigated.

IV. Implications for scaling up of ECD services (0-4 years) and creating ECD jobs

On the basis of this review, the following recommendations are made with regard to the ECD supervisory and job hierarchy needed for the mass expansion of ECD services for children aged 0-4 years through both formal and community- and home-based services.

1. There should be a consultation process with sectoral stakeholders to discuss and agree on a South African ECD career lattice. This would involve:
2. Agreeing on the different jobs and determining of experience levels as well as qualifications for the different jobs;
 - Resolving issues of horizontal as well as vertical progression, particularly where there is a cross-over of ‘education’ and ‘social welfare’ job functions;
 - Once career paths are established, stakeholder groups negotiating with relevant government departments about different institutional locations for core jobs, management and supervisory roles; and
 - Putting measures in place to facilitate workers in lower job categories in different institutional settings to progress to higher-level jobs.
3. The implications of professional registration should be considered in terms of:
 - Possibilities of registration with SACE for those working directly with children and with the Council for Social Service Professionals for workers in community and outreach positions and whether this would hinder horizontal mobility in the career lattice;
 - Where lower skill levels will fit if a professional registration route is taken and whether this will unintentionally act as an exclusionary factor;
 - How professional councils would play an enabling role for ECD members in terms of professional development;
 - Whether the current mechanism of ensuring norms and standards by regulation under legislation is not a simpler route to quality assurance which could be developed to have a greater focus on staffing.
4. A sectoral determination for minimum service conditions, especially wage levels for ECD workers, should be explored by stakeholders with the DoL, and as part of this process clarity should be gained to ensure that this does not cut off professional opportunities, for example, through registration with the SACE or the Social Services Professions Council.

5. Job creation schemes should provide for additional job categories. These would include 'registration assistants' and child development workers as outlined in the Massification of ECD Strategy, and childminder, playgroup leaders and parent educators as outlined in the NIP and EPWP. Childminding is a potentially significant area for developing of small businesses, provided that adequate support and supervision are available, and should be considered for skills programmes.

Appendix 1 Recommendations for a South African ECD Career Lattice

	Home	Formal		Outreach		Regulation, Monitoring, Training and Capacity Building		Support Services
NQF Level	In Home care	Registered ECD Programme 0 – 4 year olds	Foundation Phase Class	Centre based community services	Community Outreach services	State Offices	Education and Training Institutions	Various locations
Level 7/8			Teacher R - 3 HOD Special Ed teacher	Director Children's Centre Director of ECD service organisation	Manager of several outreach services	ECD Director/Manager M & E Directors Municipal ECD Manager	Researcher Senior Lecturer Dept Head Materials Developer Curriculum Specialist	
Level 6/7 Degrees and professional qualifications (B Ed; B Soc Work, B Admin etc)	Au pair	Supervisor/mentor Lead Teacher Director of several programmes	Teacher R - 3 HOD	Centre Manager Toy library manager Director Children's Centre Director of ECD service organisation	Project manager (outreach, child minder networks, IECD projects)	ECD Director Welfare Planner (DoSD) ECD Unit Coordinator Curriculum Advisor (DoE) SETA Verifier SETA Moderator Municipality ECD Coordinator QAS Officials	Lecturer Research Assistant	Finance Manager Office manager

Level 5 (diplomas and certificates)	Au pair	Lead Teacher Teacher Supervisor/Principal Mentor for Level 4 ECD Practitioner	Grade R teacher	Outreach Coordinator Toy library manager Toy librarian	Project Manager Programme Developer Community Development worker (ECD)	Registrars	FET College lecturer NCV Lecturer Level 4 trainer Internal Moderator Assessor	Database administrator Bookkeeper Personal assistant Administrator
Level 4	Au pair Childminder Babysitter	ECD Practitioner Mentor for Level 1	Grade R teacher assistant Foundation Phase Assistant	Toy librarian Parent Educator Child and youth care worker Hospital child visitor	Support and Development Worker/ team leader Community Development worker (ECD Spec) Educational home visitors Professional development officers (municipal)	SETA Assessor Social work auxiliary Child development workers Professional development officers (municipal)	Trainer Level 1 and skills programme Fieldworker Evidence Facilitator	Receptionist
Level 3					Development Support worker (Comm Dev Level 3, ECD spec)			
Level 1	Child minder Nanny/domestic Babysitter	ECD Care Worker (EPWP term) Assistant		Playgroup assistant Hospital visitor				

Skills Progs at Levels 1/2/3/4 plus at least Grade 7	Child minder Nanny/ domestic	Volunteer	Volunteer	Toy Library assistant Playgroup assistant	Family Outreach worker (link to services) Assistant Home Visitor Safe House mother			Driver Gardener Caretaker Cook
ABET	Child minder (under 7 children)	Volunteer Parent		Volunteer	Volunteers			

