



# HRDC: TASK TEAM 1

## SOCIAL COMPACT APPROACH



BUILDING THE FOUNDATION FOR A  
TRANSFORMED ECONOMY AND  
SOCIETY



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# 1. ECD

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A/PROFESSOR

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ERIC ATMORE

## REFLECTIVE PAPER ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT HUMAN RESOURCES IN SOUTH AFRICA

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Eric has worked in the non-profit sector for 40 years, and has lectured at various universities and consulted to a range of non-profit organisations around South Africa. He has been published extensively, including refereed and peer-reviewed articles, chapters in books and conference proceedings and numerous articles in the media. Eric holds a doctorate in Education Policy Studies with a thesis entitled, "An Interpretive Analysis of the Early Childhood Development Policy Trajectory in Post-apartheid South Africa"

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# INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND



The National Development Plan (NDP) identifies early childhood development (ECD) as a key programme to improve the quality of education and long-term prospects of future generations, including for employment. Globally, ECD is increasingly being seen as a lever for human resource development. There is a strong belief that improving the quality and quantity of ECD in South Africa will enhance human resource development.

- In the National Integrated ECD Policy approved by Cabinet on 9th December 2015, early childhood development is defined as “The period of human development from birth until the year before a child enters formal school”. Education White Paper five goes into more detail referring to ECD as “A comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and caregivers.

Its **purpose** is to protect the child’s rights to develop his or her full **cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential.**



There is vagueness and confusion as to whether children in Grade R classes are included in this. Globally ECD covers the age range, conception to nine years. In South Africa this mostly covers up to age of six years.

Presently, the ECD workforce across South Africa is poorly trained, works in difficult circumstances and with poor conditions of service, is poorly paid and is largely exploited. To correct this the number of workers in the ECD workforce must be significantly increased, their training, skills and capacity must be significantly enhanced and their salaries and service conditions must be substantially improved.



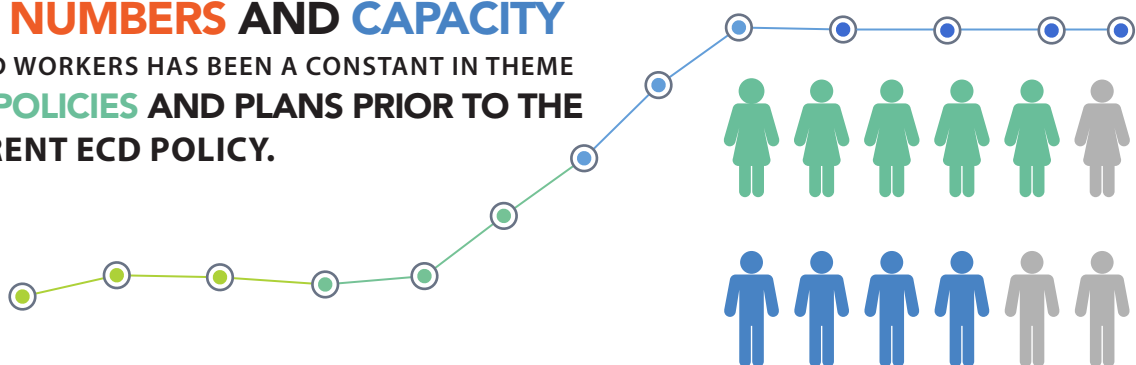
To give effect to the **policy, government** recognised that it had the responsibility "...to ensure a sufficient number of appropriately qualified human resources, including managers and supervisors, to deliver early childhood development services in order to ensure the universal availability of quality early childhood development services" (DSD, 2015: 108).

To enable this, one of the goals set out in the policy is to establish a national ECD human resource strategy that would develop sufficient numbers of skilled individuals to support the implementation of the policy. There is little evidence of progress on this. The achievement of universal access to quality ECD programmes would be dependent on human resource capacity and numbers, among other actions.

## **ECD workers** were listed in the **2013 Draft Social Services Professionals Policy** as the largest group of social development service providers.

No full audit on ECD has been carried out since the year 2000, and many researchers in ECD allude to the absence of accurate data on the ECD workforce, estimates within the ECD sector are that there are some 180,000 ECD workers in South Africa. The ETDP-SETA (2020) suggests that the Departments of Social Development and Basic Education, undertake a situational analysis of the ECD sector to correct this.

### **IMPROVING THE NUMBERS AND CAPACITY** OF ECD WORKERS HAS BEEN A CONSTANT IN THEME **ECD POLICIES AND PLANS PRIOR TO THE CURRENT ECD POLICY.**





In developing ECD practitioners in sufficient numbers and with the required skills and ability, it is intended that this would support the implementation of the National Integrated ECD Policy and its programme activities, to ensure the universal availability of quality ECD programmes across South Africa. Clearly the availability and quality of ECD programmes are dependent on sufficient, skilled human resources.



### Within the ECD policy, it is recognised that

- Professionalism
- Career-pathing
- Adequate conditions of service
- Conducive working environment

are critical elements of an effective national early childhood development human resources strategy (DSD, 2015: 108).

The ECD policy recognises that current working conditions of ECD practitioners is poor, that jobs are not sustainable, there are few opportunities for progression, and that these need to be addressed to ensure the professionalisation and retention of trained ECD practitioners within the ECD ecosystem (DSD, 2015).

The **impact** of ECD programmes on young children is **largely dependent on the quality of the people working in ECD** and the **quality of people working in ECD** is in turn, dependent on the training, qualifications and related skills, and experience of ECD workers.

This has an impact on improved child outcomes (DSD, 2015:108).



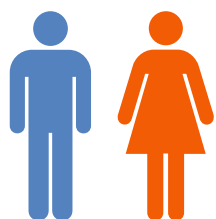
## STATE OF AFFAIRS

ECD is receiving increased attention by government. It features in the National Development Plan and a comprehensive and integrated ECD policy was adopted in December 2015. Scaling up ECD to meet the policy goals will require significant human resources of various types and at various levels.

There is however little information on the size, scope, capacity and geographic distribution of ECD human resources in South Africa (Ilifa Labantwana, 2014: 2) nor is there any recognised data on the number of ECD workers required to implement the ECD policy. If the ECD policy of 2015 is implemented and targets are reached as planned, it will create a substantial numbers of jobs.

### THE ECD POLICY COMMITS

- Government to universal availability and access to a basket of quality ECD services.
- Commits to ensuring **sufficient qualified human resources** to secure universal availability and equitable access to ECD services through the expansion of the size and diversity of the workforce to meet the assessed needs, ensuring the workforce is qualified and has the necessary skills and is adequately funded, for all publicly funded ECD programmes (DSD, 2015: 69).



**2.5 MILLION**  
**CHILDREN ARE IN AN**  
**ECD PROGRAMME**

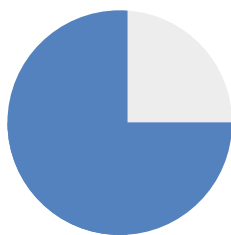
As there has been no full audit of children in ECD in South Africa since 2001, the estimate is that some 2.5 million children are in an ECD programme in South Africa. If this is correct then significant human resources will be needed given that ECD is a person-intensive field due to the ages of children attending and the accompanying child care and safety regulations.

The ECD workforce currently consists of individuals employed in maternal and child health care, nutrition support, parenting support, social assistance, social protection, ECD centres, home-based programmes, playgroup facilitators and as family outreach workers. They work in government, non-profits and in the private sector. The majority work directly with children in communities. Within all three spheres of government (national, provincial and local), departments responsible for ECD are chronically under-staffed to fulfil leadership, management and co-ordination responsibilities. The result is that there is very limited capacity and expertise to fulfil the requirements of the ECD policy (DBE, 2018).

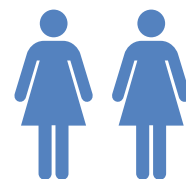
The ETDP-SETA Skills report (ETDP-SETA, 2020) is of the view that there is a lack of qualified ECD personnel, a great need for more ECD teachers, there needs to be a systemic process of developing capacity for ECD practitioners with training needed to upskill teachers as well as a high need to empower women.

## ECD TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

- There are a number of SAQA-aligned qualifications for early childhood development practitioners who work directly with children, and community development qualifications with early childhood development specialisations.
- Training for the early childhood development workforce is predominantly provided by TVET colleges, non-profit ECD training organisations, private for-profit providers and universities (albeit to a very limited extent).



**99%**  
**MAJORITY OF ECD  
WORKERS ARE  
WOMEN**



The overwhelming majority, upwards of 99%, of ECD workers are women. Ilifa Labantwana reports that “**Despite a policy focus on out of centre programmes, training is predominantly for ECD centre practitioners**” conservatively estimating that these constituted 70% of trainees (Ilifa Labantwana, 2014: 4).



**THE TVET AND ECD  
NON-PROFIT TRAINING SECTOR  
IS SMALL IN RELATION  
TO THE NEED WITH LIMITED CAPACITY TO  
SCALE UP TO THE REQUIRED LEVELS**



**The main reason for this is the lack of readily available funding for ECD teacher training.**

Of the 24 TVET colleges providing ECD teacher training (Murray & Biersteker, 2014: 3), the Western Cape has six, four are in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, and three are in the North West. Gauteng and the Northern Cape have two each, and Limpopo, Mpumalanga and the Free State have one each. No reliable numbers are available or could be found on throughput of qualified ECD teachers.



**Training mostly conforms to the ETDP-SETA requirements and is focussed on the Further Education and Training Certificate:**

- ECD (Level 4 on the NQF)
- Higher Certificate: ECD (NQF Level 5)
- National Diploma: ECD also at NQF Level 5

In practice, the NQF Level 4 qualification is seen as an entry level qualification and the NQF Level 5 qualification is more desirable with universities providing initial teacher training, some programmes include a module on Grade R and/or ECD. There are a number of short courses that train managers in leadership and management, governance and financial management.

A 2014 survey established that 96 ECD NPOs provide some form of ECD training, for varying durations and of varying quality. (Ilifa Labantwana, 2014). Not all of this results in a formal qualification. Almost no information is available on training for ECD programmes that cover playgroups, home-visiting and family outreach. These three programme options are most often provided with little or no training of ECD workers running these programmes and these ECD workers learn on the job.

In addition to the above and from experience in the field, there is an imbalance in the geographic distribution of where ECD teacher training happens with most training happening in the Western Cape and the Free State, followed by Gauteng, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal and more especially in the urban areas including informal residential settlements.



## TRAINING MODULES

on identifying developmental difficulties and promoting inclusion for children with identified disabilities in early childhood development programmes (both centre and non-centre-based) are in short supply (DSD, 2015: 111).



### Further points to note are:

- ECD qualifications currently available are not aligned with the ECD policy. In the ECD policy, specific ECD programmes are suggested for which no appropriate qualifications are yet provided. This includes playgroups and home-visiting as two examples.
- Training does not equip practitioners to provide a continuum of early care and education from birth, in homes, communities and partial care facilities (Ilifa Labantwana, 2016: 2).
- Current ECD training is not producing the number or kinds of teachers with the knowledge and skills they need to meet the ECD policy vision and objectives (Ilifa Labantwana, 2016: 2). With the migration of ECD to DBE, there are opportunities to develop curricula for training programmes that will meet this need.
- It is difficult to accurately determine how many individuals, both pre-service and in-service are trained by ECD NPOs and the private sector each year.
- The staffing need for universal access to ECD services of different kinds is estimated to be in the region of 100,000 ECD practitioners (Murray & Biersteker, 2014: 2).



## FUNDING FOR ECD WORKER TRAINING



Current government policy is to allocate public funding for ECD training to public entities resulting in a shift to TVET colleges as ECD training providers. However, their capacity for ECD training is limited and unevenly spread across provinces. The Department of Higher Education and Training funds TVET colleges to train ECD teachers at NQF Levels 4 and 5.



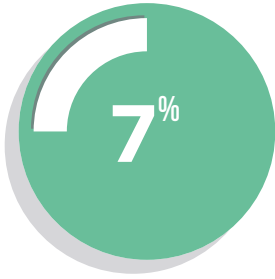
The ETDP-SETA provides funds for ECD training nationally. ECD NPOs are mainly funded by companies through corporate social investment departments, and by philanthropic Trusts and Foundations, both within South Africa and from overseas. In some provinces, local and provincial government also funds ECD training.

## THE ECD WORKFORCE

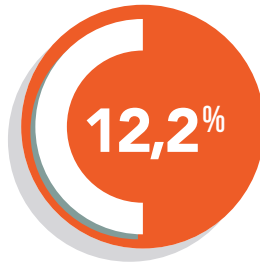
The Department of Basic Education (DBE, 2018: 17) estimated that there were 57,646 individuals working in ECD centres across South Africa. This number is based on the partial ECD survey undertaken in 2014. Of these, 11,369 were principals/supervisors; 27,364 were practitioners; 3,027 were ECD assistants; and 15,886, were support staff. Studies in the ECD sector (Ashley-Cooper, van Niekerk and Atmore, 2019) indicates that this is a significant undercount.

According to the DSD commissioned ECD survey of 2014, over 36% of ECD centre principals/supervisors and over 45% of teachers and assistants have less than a Grade 12 qualification. 43% of principals have a Grade 12 education, 9% have ABET Level 1-4 qualifications, 5% have post-Grade 12 diplomas, and 2% have a degree.

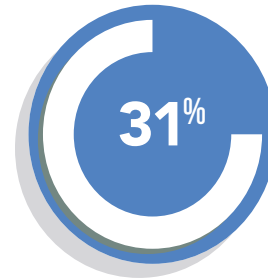




This study also found that 7% of teachers have an ABET Llevel 1-4 qualification.



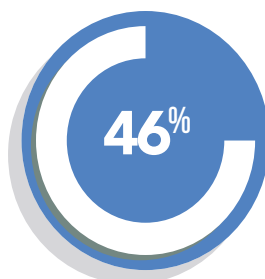
42% have Grade 12, 2% have a post-Grade 12 diploma and 1% have a degree.



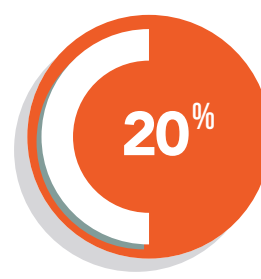
In terms of ECD-specific qualifications, 31% of principals at registered ECD centres have an ECD certificate.



8% have an ECD diploma, 1% have an ECD degree.



while 46% have no formal ECD specialisation.



The Department of Basic Education estimates that a third of Grade R teachers have not completed Grade 12 and only 20% had a degree (DBE, 2018: 23).

There are no available numbers of individuals working in non-centre-based ECD programmes. The number of individuals working in ECD centres is old with no recent up-to-date actual numbers.

The National Integrated ECD policy requires in the short-to-medium term (2017–2024), that the availability and capacity of early childhood development practitioners and related workers be expanded through:

- 1 Expansion of the community health worker programme through a specialised, accredited short course that includes early childhood development, and to be implemented at a provincial and/or municipal level
- 2 Development of a national non-centre-based facilitator programme with standardised and accredited short-course training
- 3 Twinning of strong resource and training organisations with less experienced TVET colleges and NPOs providing early childhood development-related training to improve the quality of training
- 4 Articulation of the early childhood development NQF Level 4 and 5 qualifications to enable good students with occupational qualifications to progress to an early childhood development Level 6 qualification or a Bachelor's degree in Education that includes early childhood development
- 5 Development of complementary avenues for career paths;
- 6 Alignment of NQF Level 4 and Level 5 training with the requirements of the ECD Policy and the development of electives and/or specialisations for those working in centres, in non-centre-based programmes and with parent groups (DSD, 2015: 10).

Four and a half years after Cabinet approval of these ECD policy requirements, there is little evidence of progress.



## ECD FUNCTION SHIFT FROM DSD TO DBE

Government has decided that ECD will be located in the national Department of Basic Education. This will have significant impact on HR development in the ECD sector. The implications of shift unclear at this point. As this process is still in the early stages it is still unclear as the details are being worked out. At this time, it is difficult to anticipate what will emerge.

This is timed to be fully operational by 2030. The DBE is currently developing a plan for the different workstreams involved in the ECD function shift (Grade R, Grade RR, and Birth to 4), in collaboration with the relevant partners in government. A costed plan for the ECD function shift was planned to be finalised by March 2020 but there is no information whether this has yet been done.

### SOCIAL PARTNERS

- South Africa has a range of social partners working in formal education. This has not been replicated in ECD and presently there is little collaboration between potential social partners in ECD. Bringing in companies through corporate social investment, donors through Trusts and Foundations, organised labour through trade unions and the non-profit sector, in support of ECD will enhance the skills and capacity of the ECD and Grade R workforce.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STRATEGIC STEPS

The ultimate goal of an ECD human resources strategy must be "... the establishment of and institutionalization of an HR system that enables successful delivery of the comprehensive ECD programme." (DBE, 2018:3). These recommended strategic steps are in relation to the gaps and blockages set out earlier.

1

Government to develop, fund and implement a comprehensive national ECD human resources plan. Each department with assigned responsibility, in all three spheres of government (**national, provincial and local**) should “develop appropriate cadres of early childhood development practitioners, in sufficient numbers and with sufficient skills to support the implementation of the national early childhood development policy and programme” (DBE, 2018) and allocate sufficient funding for this.



**ECD and Grade R teacher training must be included in DBE medium-term plans and professionalised. This must be prioritised.**

- It also entails developing the leadership, coordination, and management capacity to implement the policy. The human resources development strategy and plan should require every government department concerned with ECD to review and revise its human resources strategy, putting it in line with the ECD policy requirements. Decide on the knowledge, skills and dispositions ECD workers need for each ECD programme type.

2

Expand and scale up ECD training to ensure that all ECD workers are well trained. Universities, TVET colleges and non-profit organisations are well placed to do this across all nine provinces of South Africa, and especially in rural communities.

Linked to this, there is a need for effective ECD leadership and management HR capacity within and across the government and non-government role players. Initial education should be supplemented with ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) to ensure that all ECD practitioners have the knowledge and skills needed for their respective roles. This will create a skilled and competent ECD workforce.

3

ECD training providers to capacitate ECD workers to provide appropriate ECD programmes to children with disabilities and developmental delays and for those with special education needs. Not addressing this will be an indictment on our generation.

- 4 Facilitate and pilot models between TVET colleges and ECD service providers for improving quality of lecturing, project management and workplace support. This could be done through structured mentorship opportunities and partnership with strong and experienced institutions that are able to provide support. TVET colleges do not provide substantial workplace practical experience. These TVET colleges could collaborate with ECD non-profit organisations to provide this.
- 5 Obtain proper ECD workforce data through a large-scale full ECD audit through the DBE. This would provide statistics on number of children that are in ECD centres and programmes and the number and type of staff needed for these ECD centres and programmes to be made universally available.
- 6 Support the governing bodies of community-based, non-profit ECD centres and programmes to enable decent salaries and conditions of service. The sector must be attractive to young people to get a new cohort of ECD human resources. Take steps to significantly improve ECD salaries, conditions of service and career progression so as to make ECD the career of choice for young people.
- 7 In the short to medium term, significant funding allocations to TVET colleges and NPOs to substantially increase training in ECD for all programme types and at all levels. The significant ETDP-SETA funds currently available could be used for this. This ETDP-SETA funding must be disbursed quickly and equitably to training providers, and must ensure an equitable geographic spread.
- 8 In the medium-term, as the HR system for ECD matures, trained and qualified ECD and Grade R teachers must become provincial education department employees and be brought on to the PERSAL system with the appropriate conditions of service that match their qualifications and experience.

- The ECD sector has entered a significant phase with the adoption of the most recent ECD policy in December 2015. However, just over four years later, little has been implemented especially around building the ECD workforce.
- In the absence of good and verifiable data, it is estimated that half of the ECD workforce is untrained or undertrained even at the most basic level. Going forward, a system to up-skill and increase the size of the ECD work force is imperative if we want quality universal ECD provision and if government wants to fulfil its promise to view ECD as a social good and to meet government’s commitment to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, to the Sustainable Development Goals and to the National Development Plan.
- At the current pace and without government leadership and political will, our country will fail in this. As the South African Child Gauge of 2013 states: “A state-led approach to resourcing the system to safeguard young children’s rights to survival, healthy development and early learning,” is urgently required (Viviers, Biersteker & Moruane, 2013: 40). Implementation and quality assurance can be added to this view.

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