

# The Incorporation of Early Childhood Development (ECD) in the Mainstream School Curriculum: Challenges and Achievements

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## Abstract:-

### ➤ *Background*

The incorporation of early childhood development (ECD) into the mainstream school curriculum is one way to foster successful implementation of inclusive education. Learners who are in ECD were unintentionally ignored as the ECD were under administration of social service department.

### ➤ *Objectives*

To explore the incorporation of ECD into mainstream school curriculum. Thus enhance the implementation of inclusive education with the intention of providing support to learners with learning barriers. The other objective was to bring about maximum support to schools that needed support to cater the needs of learners with learning barriers.

### ➤ *Method*

To achieve the objective, a qualitative research approach was followed. The population of the study was made up of several crèches in Matlosana local education office. Data was collected using semi-structured interviews. Data was collected through interviews that were collected from crèches managers including owners. Semi-structured interviews were administered for data collection to four crèches. Challenges experience in the incorporation of ECD includes, lack of knowledge in the identification of learners with learning barriers, improper structures, lack of proper sanitations and lack of training in ECD practitioners, the establishment of ECD-based support team.

### ➤ *Results*

The study revealed the learners in ECD were indeed not catered for in terms of inclusive education as there were numerous challenges, inter alia improper infrastructure, lack of sufficient funding, lack of sanitation, most learners were without necessary documentation. The study also showed that since learners were incorporated in mainstream school curriculum there enough food provided by Basic Education department (section 21 provision). The study

divulged that teachers who were teaching learners ECD were hired without proper qualification thus resulted in such teacher deviating from what they were supposed to teach i.e. according to annual teaching Plan (ATP).

### ➤ *Conclusion*

The incorporation of ECD in mainstream school curriculum was made priority in ensuring that quality and basic education is maintained especially to the young learners who are age (birth to five years old). However there are factor hindering the successful incorporation of ECD in mainstream. The discussed factors hindering the amalgamation of ECD into mainstream includes, structural challenge, poor financial support, lack and inadequate support from subject advisory services, insufficient training and development in ECD and lack and poor resources provision.

### ➤ *Contribution*

The incorporation of ECD into mainstream school result in learners been catered for especially those who are identified with learning barriers.

**Keywords:-** Early Childhood Development (ECD), Early Childhood Development Based Support Team (ECDBST), Early Childhood Development Practitioners, Education White Paper 5.

## I. INTRODUCTION

### ➤ *Background and Motivation*

Education in South Africa has undergone major transitions. Prior 1994 democratic election which gave birth to new South Africa, education was organised on the basis of race and disability. In 1994, South Africa signed the Salamanca Statement on Principles and Practice in Special Needs Education as a resolution of the conference held in Spain in June 1994. This Statement on Principle and Practice in Special Needs Education (1994) takes this as a step further by stating that, every child has unique characteristics, interests, abilities and learning needs. Education systems should be designed and educational programmes implemented to take into account the wide

diversity of these characteristics and needs (Dyson, 2001:02).

#### ➤ *Research Problem*

It has been an intention of the Department of Basic education and the bone of contention that all learners from early age must access equal education irrespective of their learning barriers. There has been a disparity between curricular taught in preschools and formal education in primary schools. One other challenge was that there has been several lamentation from the Basic education department that learners in matric level cannot read and write. There was commission on the matter hence the attention was that foundation must be laid where more reading and writing should be emphasised.

This study outlined research problem as learners who are admitted in schools without the following proper documents.

- Admission of learners without necessary documents
- Birth certificates
- Road to health cards

The other challenges that are encountered in the pre-schools are:

- Teachers teaching learners in pre-schools are without qualifications
- Improper infrastructure
- Lack of standardised tool that determine the amount of money parents must pay the school
- Lack recreational facilities
- Lack of toilets and ablutions

## II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

According to the most recent Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), 81% of Grade 4 learners in South Africa are unable to read for meaning, particularly those coming from the rural provinces. The PIRLS findings reveal problems with teaching and learning in pre-Grade R and the Foundation Phase. The South African government has recognised that ECD is key to responding to this reading crisis yet, while the government keeps highlighting the importance of early childhood education, it fails to make the corresponding investment in it. The draft Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA) is also another potential step towards the recognition of the right to early childhood education through the introduction of compulsory pre-Grade 1 education. The Basic Education Law Amendment affirms and proposed changes to the South African Schools Act. Amongst others, the Bill seeks to amend certain definitions; to provide that attendance of Grade R is compulsory, and to provide for system improvements in terms of admission of learners to public schools. It also provides for financial and public accountability frameworks for governing bodies and provincial departments.

The government has also moved the ECD function from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education. This is intended to create an integrated model that will ensure access to quality early learning and development opportunities for all children.

## III. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study adopted Ecological System theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner. In this theory he argues that the child is embedded in multi layers of context that influence his/her development (Bronfenbrenner, 1979). Bronfenbrenner also proposed that each human development is influenced by the factors influenced by operating in different system encapsulated in his theory. It is stated in the theory that each person is also affected by interaction among numerous overlapping namely, the micro-system, meso-system, exo-system,

The adopted theory was found to be relevant to explore the impediments of ECD programmes and the environmental systems with which they interact. The ecosystems theory provides a conceptual lens through which human behaviour and social structures can be viewed and analysed concurrently. It is made up of the ecological theory and systems theories, which are known as person-in-environment approaches, (Baloyi, & Makhubele, (2021).

#### ➤ *Aim*

The aim of the study is to explore the challenges experience in the incorporation of early childhood development into our mainstream school curriculum. Also to explore the weaknesses that may be experienced in the incorporation of early childhood development in mainstream school curriculum.

#### ➤ *Purpose of the Study*

The purpose of the study is to bring awareness regarding the challenges experienced by childhood development practitioners to the national department of education and how to deal with such challenges. Secondly, how will childhood development be incorporated into our mainstream school curriculum as it was adopted by social service department some years ago.

#### ➤ *Population Sampling Selection of Participant*

This study selected teachers who are teaching learners in early childhood centres, the crèche managers, members including non-governmental organisation as well as senior education specialist who are monitoring such crèches or centres. The crèche managers will be interviewed on the challenges they experienced and how they deal with such challenges. The non-governmental organisation are involved in the study as they provide crèches with food and water for sustainability.

➤ *Challenges Experienced*

- *The challenges in this Study were Outlined in Five Themes, Inter Alia:*

***Theme 1: Structural Challenge in Early Childhood Development***

The main concerns raised by the participants was the ECD structural problems. This paper outlines the lack and the delay in the subsidies paid by the department, government subsidy reduction, parent's inability to pay ECD centres fee. It was also divulged that even there are good Samaritans who are providing food to such vulnerable centres there is shortage and at times nothing at all it was aggravated by the rapid increase in food prices. Some parent do not pay ECD fee at all as there is much increase in lack of employment, (Baloi & Makhubele, 2018).

***Theme 2: Financial Constrains***

In many places in South Africa, the provision of financial resources is still a great challenge especially in ECD when young learners are vulnerable and where there is more need. There are facilities that needs monthly payment for sustainability, inter alia sanitation payments and daily drinking water and electricity. Such facilities needs ECD to be well financed to cater the needs of learners in such ECD. Many of the ECD are not recognised as they do not meet infrastructure necessary requirements for registration. It is for the above reason that most ECD hired unqualified teachers to teach in such ECD.

There has being government funding for ECD that has provided through service level agreement in conjunction with NGO's sector. These governmental programmes were as an initiative for poverty alleviation but since ECD are to be incorporated in Basic education system there will be more challenges. An alarming increase in unemployment in our black communities many parents are not able to cater ECD payments. The grand that was provided by the government has also become pivotal challenge as we depended on it for sustainability. Many ECD centres depended on non-governmental organisation for survival.

***Theme3: Inadequate Training and Lack of In-Service Training for Teachers Teaching in Crèches.***

Teachers in ECD are expected to perform and bring competed work therefore it is pivotal that they are taken for in-service training to be able to deal with their day to day challenges. Teachers working at ECD needs to acquire knowledge and skills to deal with young learners who are experiencing challenges in such centres. Education acquired in ECD is the basic knowledge therefore it is imperative to have more skills in working with learners at ECD. It was found that many teachers teaching ECD do not have qualifications it is necessary that such teachers must be taken for some course or certificate that will equip them with skills and knowledge to perform and bring about quality education to learners in ECD.

Since now that ECD are to be incorporated in Basic education system there will be senior education Specialist (SES) who will be empowering, developing and training ECD teachers. It was alluded again the ECD managers needs to be trained on issues around ECD control and management, financial management and in drafting ECD policies. In many centres it was found that teachers who are employed and working teaching in ECD are matriculates who are without any ECD qualification or any form of certification, thus compromises the quality of expected education from such ECD.

***Theme 4: Inadequate Support and Monitor from Senior Education Specialists (SES).***

For ECD to function to the maximum support need to be instilled in ECD managers, teachers and non-teaching officials. In the absence of continual support and development there will be no expected results, Since ECD centres have been under control of social service department there were no monitoring and support from subject advisory unit from Basic education training. It is only now after the incorporation to basic education department there will be substantive training and monitoring of ECD. It is suggested that ECD must also be supported by social. Early childhood development centres comprises of young learners who are most of the vulnerable in terms of lack of financial support, low socio-economic factors and child headed families is therefore significant to have social workers working with such ECD to attend and alleviate such challenges. Psychosocial services are also needed to deal with learners who are abandoned by both parents to provide psychosocial support to such ECD. Social workers need to have a clear database of learners in ECD who come from child headed families, orphans and those who are vulnerable without care and support in order to place them in foster care families that will cater for their wellbeing and ensure that they have full support and care.

***Theme 5: Lack of Resources and Support***

The availability of resource in enhancing successful incorporation of ECD in mainstream school's curriculum plays significant role. As ECD encapsulates young learners it is therefore pivotal for maximum provision of resources to ticklish basic learning. Most ECD centres lack educational resources that stimulate teaching and learning. There is no proper teaching and learning because most practitioners do not have adequate skills enabling them to teach learners appropriately, although in the past most ECD centres were getting support from social development in terms of monetary and toys provided. Social development assisted the ECD centres in ensuring that there is compliance in providing quality learning and teaching holistically.

#### IV. ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE INCORPORATION OF ECD INTO MAINSTREAM SCHOOLS

Early childhood education consist of structured and supervised programmes with social and academic goals and objectives for children of up to the age of early school entry level in the temporary absence of their parents, an important part in a child's development is played by ECD, it lays the foundation for their cognitive, social and academic development and the outcomes based on ECD in mainstream schools involve helping children develop their language and reading skills, furthermore a child's cognitive development is greatly impacted by effective early childhood education, additionally, investing in early childhood education also has a major positive economic influence on society as a whole

#### V. CONCLUSION

The study intends to discuss and discourse the challenges and achievement in the incorporation of ECD in mainstream school's curriculum. The incorporation of ECD in mainstream school curriculum was made priority in ensuring that quality and basic education is maintained especially to the young learners who are age (birth to five years old). However there are factor hindering the successful incorporation of ECD in mainstream. The discussed factors hindering the amalgamation of ECD into mainstream includes, structural challenge, poor financial support, lack and inadequate support from subject advisory services, insufficient training and development in ECD and lack and poor resources provision. It is critical to ensure that all the above stipulated factor needs to be addressed to ensure successful incorporation of ECD in our mainstream school curriculum where young learners will be provided with quality education.

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