

**STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN EARLY  
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT IN POLOKWANE  
CIRCUIT, LIMPOPO PROVINCE**

**BY**

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MINI DISSERTATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for  
the degree of

**MASTERS IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION**

**in the**

**FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT AND LAW**

**at the**

**TURFLOOP GRADUATE SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP**

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**2013**

## DECLARATION

I, Patience Engela Mpakela Malete, declare that the research paper hereby submitted to the University of Limpopo for the Master's degree in Public Administration has not previously been submitted by me for a degree at this or any other university. I also declare that it is my own design and execution and that all material contained therein has been duly acknowledged.

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## **DEDICATION**

This research is dedicated to my husband, Samuel Maletse, and to my two daughters Bontle and Lehlogonolo for their support as they encouraged me to study, to show myself approved.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

First of all I would like to thank the Almighty for giving me wisdom, patience, perseverance, knowledge and courage to complete my studies. He has done great things for me throughout my studies and for that I am so grateful. Acknowledgements are due to people who assisted me with this study. Sincere appreciation goes to Prof M.P. Sebola, my supervisor, for his patience, selfless support, motivation, encouragement and constructive criticism he gave during the compilation of this work. Furthermore, I would like to extend a word of thanks to my family for their support and courage they showed me during my studies.

## **ABSTRACT**

The present study is about stakeholder participation in Early Childhood Development in Polokwane Circuit, Limpopo Province. The main aim of the study was to investigate poor stakeholder participation in ECD programme. The objectives were to evaluate the extent of stakeholders participation in ECD programmes, to assess the attitude of stakeholders towards ECD programmes, and to determine the impact of lack of resources on ECD projects and to suggest probable solutions to problems facing ECD programmes. Structured interview questionnaires and literature were used to collect data. The study concluded that some stakeholders namely parents and educators fully participate in ECD programmes while officials in the Department of Education are not fully participative.

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## **CHAPTER 1: BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

### **1.1 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND**

The involvement of stakeholders in early childhood development is vital, since it forms the child's foundation for learning. The participation of stakeholders in ECD in Polokwane Circuit is not satisfactory, hence the poor results at the end of Grade 12 level. The stakeholders are not working together and no team spirit attitude prevails. Stakeholders in this case do not regard involvement in ECD as important and it might be due to reasons emanating from two sources namely, parents and educators. Firstly, most parents work far from their homes and as such are unable to attend parents' meetings. Some lack knowledge and information about ECD programmes, thus affecting their interest in participating.

Secondly, as for educators the problems are that some are inexperienced and even underqualified. Some ECD centers are under resourced and even understaffed, and some departmental officials are not competent enough to deal with challenges that are faced by ECD practitioners in schools. Some officials do not visit ECD centers regularly to check on performance of practitioners. Such factors impact negatively on the matric results at a latter stage. Grove and Hauptfleisch (1991:10) suggest that the importance of ECD programmes is to inform the stakeholders of the route to take in as far as child development is concerned, to outline the necessities of stakeholders' participation in the learning of a child through its programmes, and the development of basic skills.

Meier and Marais (2007:143) believe that to enhance stakeholders' participation, guidelines should be followed. Time to work with parents must be included in the teachers' work schedules, teachers should be trained on how to work with parents, keep parents informed about the importance of their involvement and contributions, as well as keeping them informed about curriculum and how they can assist at home.

Stakeholders' participation is therefore vital in the early stages of the child's education because of the impact it has on matric results.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

The problem is poor involvement of stakeholders in the early developmental stages of a child. This lack of involvement leads to poor results at grade 12 level. Despite the availability of ECD unit in Polokwane Circuit, the unit seems not to be functional. The officials are not visiting the schools that have ECD centers regularly as expected, thus hampering progress. In some ECD centers, existing resources are not used effectively because of the incompetency of the practitioners.

## **1.3 AIM OF THE STUDY**

The aim of the study is to investigate stakeholders' participation in ECD programmes. This stage of a child's education is of vital importance, given that it provides the foundation, instilling in the child critical basic skills.

## **1.4 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this study are:

- To evaluate the extent of stakeholders' participation in ECD programmes.
- To assess the attitude of stakeholders towards ECD programmes.
- To determine the impact of lack of resources on ECD projects.
- To suggest probable solutions to the problems facing ECD programmes.

## **1.5 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

- To what extent are stakeholders' participating in ECD programmes?
- What is the attitude of stakeholders towards ECD programmes?
- What impact does lack of resources have on ECD projects?

- What are the possible solutions to the existing problem?

## **1.6 DEFINITION OF CONCEPTS**

This study seeks to describe the following terms in order for the readers to have a clear and meaningful picture about the issues around stakeholder participation in Early Childhood Development.

### **1.6.1 Early Childhood Development**

This refers to a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from birth to nine years of age with the active participation of their parents and care givers (Meier & Marais, 2007:41). Grove and Haupfleish (1981:3) regard Early Childhood Development as a school readiness stage where the child learns easily and effectively without emotional or other disturbances. They believe that it is a condition which is brought about by factors such as experience, intelligence, language development, emotional and social adaption, attitude, interest, health and muscular co-ordination. If the child is not motivated, obviously the above factors will not be attained. ECD programmes have to do with the following activities: visual discrimination and perception, auditory discrimination and perception, visual motor co-ordination, gross motor movements, fine motor movements, eye-hand co-ordination, body image, laterality, dominance and sequencing. They further note that if stakeholders understand these preparatory activities, then they will be able to assist each other in developing the child.

### **1.6.2 Stakeholders**

Stakeholders refer to any group that is affected by organisational discussions and policies (Robbins & De Cenzo, 2001:41). Stakeholders are encouraged to get involved in the learning of their children from an early age.

### **1.6.3 Perception**

This concept is defined as the ability of the brain to give meaning to the information that is sent to the brain by means of the five senses, namely touch, see, hear, smell and taste (Grove & HauptFleisch, 1981:1).

### **1.6.4 Gross motor muscles**

This concept refers to the movement of the larger muscles of the body that need to be developed during the child's development process (Grove & HauptFleisch, 1981:1). This further refers to those muscles found on the arms and legs, and such are preparing children for classroom activities e.g., reading and writing.

### **1.6.5 Fine motor muscles**

This refers to those muscles found on the fingers. Such muscles enable the child to have correct pencil grip and to write letters correctly. The movement of the small muscles of the body that need to be developed during child development process is dealt with in classes (Grove & HauptFleish, 1981:2).

## **1.7 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Mouton (1996:107) describes a research design as "(a) set the researcher has set for him/herself". Mouton further states that the researcher's design could be viewed as the blue print of a research project that precedes the actual research process. The research design, therefore specifies clearly what a researcher wants to find and determines the best way to do it. The present research will employ the qualitative method to gather data. The qualitative method to be used in the study will incorporate considerations of the following: the respondents, the activities that participants are asked to perform and data analysis. The present researcher's method of data collection entails personal Interviews and questionnaires.

### **1.7.1 Population**

The target group of the present study is government officials, parents and educators offering ECD programmes in Polokwane schools. This target group was chosen for a specific purpose namely, to investigate the extent of stakeholder participation in ECD activities in Polokwane schools.

### **1.7.2 Sample size and selection method**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:175) note that a researcher selects particular elements from the target population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest. About 25 schools will be selected to complete categories of questionnaires. The researcher will use purposive sampling because according to De Vos (2005:328) in purposive sampling, a particular case is chosen because it illustrates some feature or process that is of interest for a particular study. It is further indicated that in purposive sampling the researcher searches for information, rich key informants, groups, places or events to study. The samples are chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon that the researcher is investigating (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993:378). The researcher believes that the target group, stakeholders in Early Childhood Development in Polokwane Circuit in Limpopo Province are likely to be knowledgeable about their participation or non-participation.

### **1.7.3 Data collection method**

Interviews, questionnaires and literature will be used to collect data. The literature sources to be used include books, journals and legislative framework governing education e.g., South African Schools Act (SASA) Act 84 of 1996, The Constitution of RSA 1996, Act 108 of 1996.

#### **1.7.4 Data analysis**

Data will be analysed manually. The researcher will interpret data collected from respondents and assign them meaning and interpret them. Data interpretation and analysis are done by finding out how respondents perceive the non-participation of stakeholders in Early Childhood Development, how they define the situation or what it means to them.

### **1.8 OUTLINE OF THE RESEARCH REPORT**

#### **CHAPTER 1 – BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

Chapter one outlines the background of the study. It forms the basis of the present research process. A detailed account of the statement of the problem, as well as the research questions are given in this chapter.

#### **CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter focuses on the views of various authors on Early Childhood Development and the problems that schools encounter due to non- participation of stakeholders.

#### **CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

This chapter outlines the research methodology and design that are employed to examine the research problem in question. The target group, sampling method and sampling size are also indicated in this chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

In this chapter collected data will be analysed and interpreted. The data will be segmented into meaningful thematic units. The original data text and the content will be synthesised to shape a coherent argument.

## **CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

After interpreting the findings, the aims of the research are summarised and compared with the findings. Conclusions are then drawn on how far the objectives of the research were achieved. Recommendations are made in response to the issues raised in the discussion.

### **1.9 CONCLUSION**

It is important for stakeholders to get involved with the education of the children in early stages of their learning as that is core to their development. In the chapter that follows the study will concentrate on how other writers view stakeholder participation in Early Childhood Development (ECD). Important aspects that are discussed include the involvement of stakeholders in ECD, the significant of parents' participation, the role of parents in ECD, the advantages of stakeholders' involvement in ECD, teachers' strategies in involving parents and challenges faced by ECD.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter enables educators to understand ECD programmes in order for them to develop their knowledge and skills through practice. Teachers could be relieved of a number of responsibilities as that is shared with parents. They are therefore sure of people to talk to in case they feel frustrated about the child's behaviour be it academically or socially.

Stakeholder's participation in Early Childhood Development is the active involvement and working together of parents, educators and government officials for the ultimate benefit of the learners. The process thereof involves collaborating on educational matters and maintaining trust between home and school. The involvement of stakeholders is vital in that it impacts on the entire life and also enhances the learning of a child. Such participation of stakeholders is critical, not only in the very beginning of the educational process, but also throughout the child's entire life. It becomes easier for one to investigate the problem with the deeper insight and understanding if one knows what other scholars have researched. Parents question the value of their involvement when children enroll for the first time in ECD centers, forgetting that they are their children's first teacher therefore their involvement is vital.

Given this background, this chapter will define ECD concepts, activities necessary in ECD and also the arrangement of classrooms in order to instill love and develop gross and fine motor muscles for the child's full development. Furthermore, stakeholder's participation is vital in that it ensures safety on the part of the child, and establishes the aspect of trust with educators. Learning is therefore encouraged with confidence; hence teachers and parents should regard themselves as partners in the child's education. ECD programmes build the relationship between home and school and build the foundation for future learning and development.

Parents involvement is also an aspect that is dealt with in this chapter. Parents have obligations by way of guiding, caring and educating their children. They are also obliged to send their children to school regularly. They need to be encouraged to participate in activities like accompanying their children on educational trips, donating toys or other materials to improve teaching and learning and also form part of the School Governing Body (SGB).

## **2.2 THE CONCEPT OF “EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT”**

Padayachie (2012) indicates in his speech that the Department of Public service and Administration views ECD as an important building block towards the achievement of Millennium Development Goals because it cuts across all eight of them. To intensify the campaign of transforming South Africa into a united, just, democratic, non-racial, non-sexist and prosperous society, government took a very important step in 2005 to include ECD in Expanded Public Works Program (EPWP). That initiative placed ECD as one of government apex priorities where government committed to speed up the implementation of ECD program across the country. In the context of ECD, Community Development Workers have amongst other responsibilities to ensure that government reaches children who are outside ECD net by facilitating access to amongst other services immunization, administration of ARVs, application of birth certificates and registration of ECD programs particularly in rural areas.

He further states that the National Planning Commission has highlighted in social vision 2030 that different kinds of interventions are required for different age groups. Capacity needs to be developed to provide relevant developmental activities to the total projected 4 million children in the 0-3 age cohort and nearly 2 million children in the age 4-5 age group by 2030. The department of Public Service and Administration as guided by amongst other legal frame works such as the South African Constitution, Public Service regulations and Medium Term Strategic Framework is charged with the responsibility to foster good governance in ECD.

Innovative public management and the implementation of a coalition governance approach helped transform early childhood development in Manitoba from a private and personal family concern to public policy issue. Early Childhood Development is a public management issue. It is an integral period to positively contribute to the development of a child to his or her fullest potential. Physical health, social competence, emotional maturity, language and thinking aptitudes, and communication skills are significantly influenced during the early years. Adequate opportunities and resources for early childhood development are important components for future success during the school years and into adult life. Aside from exceptional circumstances, parents hold primary responsibility for their child's development. However, new parents are too often unaware or unable to access parenting and early childhood development programs. The early years are particularly challenging, since parents and children tend to have little or no regular interaction with organizations that aim to improve the health and well being of their families. As a consequence, information, programs and other sources that could improve parenting skills are not accessed; this results in lost opportunities to enhance early childhood development (Cottes, 2011).

Early Childhood Education Care (ECEC) policies currently include the whole range of government actions to influence the supply and demand for ECEC and program quality. The government activities include: direct delivery of ECEC services, direct and indirect financial subsidies to private providers of education and care such as grants, contracts, and tax incentives, financial subsidies to parents of ECEC such as grants and tax benefits to permit or facilitate access to services or to permit parents to remain at home and withdraw from the labor force at the time of child birth or adoption for a brief period of time, and the establishment and enforcement of regulations. Labor market policy, public assistance policy, education policy, child welfare policy, and child development research all have a role in the expansion of ECEC policies and programs. The rise in the number of single-mother households has added to the demand for full-day programs, since single mothers are more likely than married mothers to work full time and female headed families have been a rapidly growing family type. Early childhood education and care in the US includes a wide range of part-day, full-school-day, and

full-work-day programs, under educational, social welfare, and commercial auspices, funded and delivered in a variety of ways in both the public and private sectors, designed sometimes with an emphasis on the care component of early childhood development and care (ECEC) and at the other times with stress on education or with equal attention to both. (Kamerman and Gatenio-Gabel, 2007).

In developing and developed countries, many children are exposed to risk factors that can adversely impact outcomes, including poverty, violence, poor sanitation, and malnutrition. In response to this, countries around the world have developed a range of early childhood development (ECD) policies and programs that aim to protect young children from these risks. As the early childhood field continues to develop, governance, involving the allocation of responsibility for decision-making and delivery across government departments, levels of government, and public and private sectors, becomes increasingly important and policy makers must ensure a coherent ECD policy for all levels and actors. There is a need for a holistic, comprehensive ECD monitoring system that covers multiple facets (i.e. education, health, social protection and the social and economical context in which the child is born) of public and private ECD interventions in a country. (Vitiello and Kools, 2010).

Meier and Marais (2007:41) refer to Early Childhood Development 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. The purpose of ECD is therefore to protect the child's rights in developing his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. The reception year (Grade R) for the five-year olds turning six in the year of admission is a priority in the ECD policy. Reception year should therefore be made compulsory for admission into Grade One, and that it should be offered at all primary schools. It is important that government fund the implementation of ECD centres and address matters related to employment issues such as subsidizing ECD salaries and compelling ECD practitioners to register with the South African Council for Educators (SACE). With full government involvement ECD programmes will be available in all schools, and that will be a major education achievement.

Grove and Haupfleisch (1981:3) regard Early Childhood Development as a school readiness stage, where the child learns easily and effectively without emotional or other disturbances. They believe that it is a condition which is brought about by factors such as experience, intelligence, language development, emotional and social adaptation, attitude, interest, health and muscular co-ordination. If the child is not motivated, obviously the above factors will not be attained. ECD programmes have to do with the activities such as visual discrimination and perception, auditory discrimination and perception, visual motor co-ordination, gross motor movement, fine motor movements, eye-hand co-ordination, body image, laterality, dominance and sequencing. If stakeholders understand these preparatory activities, then they will be able to assist each other in developing the child.

Public approaches to funding early care and education have developed at different levels of government and with different focuses. In addition, the administration of preschool and subsidized child care programs in many states occurs within different departments. Although these programs are all focused on the care and education of disadvantaged children, three distinct early care and education systems have developed, each with different administrative rules, eligibility criteria, programmatic requirements, and funding levels. The public role in financing early care and education programs has developed along three parallel but distinct institutional tracks. In 1965, the Head Start program was established as part of the anti poverty initiatives of the Great Society. As a federal initiative, Head Start traditionally operated in a separate sphere from other early childhood programs, serving a particular population of children. Head Start has detailed performance standards that serve as a blueprint for national implementation, teachers and managers were to receive similar professional development, and programs were to undergo standardized monitoring. (Selden, Sowa and Sandford, 2006).

Meier and Marais (2007:26) outline the aims of Early Childhood Development as developing the young child holistically, including physically, intellectually, emotionally, socially, morally and aesthetically, addressing the health and nutritional needs of young children, providing positive role models for parents on how to relate to their children. Other aims include working in co-operation with parents and communities, preparing the young child for success at school and later in life and preventing early identification and intervention regarding barriers to learning and development.

Meier and Marais (2007:204) further point out that proper planning of the playroom is very important for successful teaching in an ECD centre. Young children require enough well-planned space in order to learn through play. When planning a playroom it is important to make sure that there are block plays, woodwork and manipulative play materials. Typical ECD classes must have the areas such as a creative art area, a block play area, fantasy play area, gross motor area, a writing area and a water or sand area. Therefore, when planning for such areas, teachers have to realize that the layout is not permanent. As the children's interests and play behaviour expand, new areas must be added. Childhood Development is therefore defined as the gradual, observable changes in or unfolding of the child-in-totality who is en route to proper adulthood, (De Witte and Booysen 1995:3). Heredity and environment is believed to have influence on the child's development. The areas of development which are of importance to the learning of a child are, physical development, cognitive development, emotional development and personal development.

Ornstein and Levine (2000:358) regard Early Childhood Development as "Head Start" and "Follow Through" programmes that attempt to help disadvantaged five-year olds to achieve readiness for the first time in schooling. The programmes also emphasize parental involvement and support. They also help parents learn to teach their children to improving family functioning and employability. Early Childhood Development programmes have demonstrated that if they are well and effectively implemented they can have a long lasting effect. Ornstein and Levine agree to the fact that the learners

who participate in such programmes are less likely to be later placed in special education or to repeat grades.

Mhone and Edigheti (2003:183) point out that education is seen as central to the process of nation building because it empowers people to participate effectively in all processes of democratic society. The emphasis is basically on the involvement of stakeholders in the first stages of the development of the child. During the apartheid period, stakeholders had a limited voice in decisions that affected the learning of their children. Now, however, they are encouraged to take a proactive role such as playing advisory roles in as far as day-to-day activities are concerned and even becoming members of the SGB.

### **2.3 THE INVOLVEMENT OF STAKEHOLDERS IN ECD**

Ornstein and Levine (2000: 556) maintain that if involvement of stakeholders started today, we could ensure that virtually every child born in the 21st century would be reading well by age nine, and that every child now in primary school would graduate from high school a reader. Foundations for Learning (FFL) is a campaign that is now in place and used by the government to remedy the situation of learners who are unable to read and write, a situation which at a later stage, affects their performance at matric level. Through this campaign, stakeholders are encouraged to get involved in the learning of their children from an early age. Daily Sun Newspaper (Friday 20 August, 2010:15) notes that every child has the right to the best possible start in life and that early childhood education (0 to 9 years) represents the most critical phase in the development cycle of human beings. ECD services are recognised as the ideal phase for the passing on of values that are important for the building of a peaceful, prosperous and democratic society. The Department of Health and Social Development is therefore geared towards increasing support for ECD centres in an effort to build a solid foundation for future leaders. Support is provided by immunizing the learners to prevent diseases, monitor cleanliness around the centre by deploying inspectors to check the surroundings once a month, and even providing food for them considering the fact that some are from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Rudolph and Cohen (1984:10) argue that what happens to children long before they dream of entering school markedly influences their capacity to grow in school. Relationship with the parents, the outside world, health, nutrition and space are among the many factors that are necessary for a positive growth. Criessel (1992:23) notes that parents are also given an educational responsibility in as far as raising their kids are concerned. He further mentions that the child appeals to the parents to act as helpers, especially during the first years of schooling such as helping them with their school work at home. This results in parents accepting a particular responsibility for the well being of the child, his care, protection, development and growth towards adulthood. A link, therefore, should be established between home and school to assist the child. Educators should also have knowledge of the child and respect the child so that the development process does not get compromised.

According to De Vries (1986:21) the appearance of the most fundamental characteristics and functions of man depend upon an event known as child development. In the concept of child development there is in it the idea of change or progress. Child development stage is a vulnerable stage which calls for stakeholders to work together with the school in order to develop the child holistically. Child development as a process is guided by specific principles of development such as the principle of biological growth, principle of helplessness, principle of safety and protection, principle of exploration and principle of emancipation.

Fleish (2008:64) suggests that there should be a link between literacy in the home and pre-literacy development in early childhood centers. He indicates that if children do not acquire basic pre-literacy skills it might be due to lack of books and literacy objects at home and in the pre-school environment. Many families struggle to play an enabling role in pre-literacy skills development due to lack of information. The District Development Support Programme (DDSP) is an initiative by government to improve primary education. The programme is intended to give a boost to universalization of

primary education, by increasing enrolment, retention, attendance and simultaneously impacting on nutrition for learners in primary classes.

Meier and Marais (2007:143) define parental involvement as a dynamic process whereby educators and parents work together for the ultimate benefit of the learner. The process involves collaborating on educational matters, setting goals, finding solutions, implementing and evaluating shared goals as well as inspiring and maintaining trust between home and the school. The term “parents” therefore refers to all adult caregivers, whether legally appointed or not. Parental involvement is therefore seen as a very important aspect of the successful schooling and education of the young learner, and it requires commitment from both parent and teacher.

### **2.3.1 The significance of parents participation**

The participation of parents in ECD is significant in the new South Africa for the following reasons:

#### **2.3.1.1 South African Schools Act (SASA) requirement**

According to the education policy of South Africa, parents’ involvement in the schooling of their children is not only a good thing, but necessary. According to the South African Schools’ Act (SASA) Act 84 of 1996, parents must be part of the school governing body (SGB). The SGB is responsible for the governance of the school and focuses on the school policy and budgetary issues.

#### **2.3.1.2 The outcomes- based education approach**

One of the characteristics of an outcomes-based approach is greater parental involvement in education. Parents must share the responsibility for the education of their children with the state.

### 2.3.1.3 Benefits to the child

Learners who receive attention from their parents early in their lives are able to deal with schoolwork independently later. When providing ECD services for young children, good relationships between parents and staff make the child feel emotionally secure, and contribute towards the parent's trust of the ECD centre. Meier and Marais (2007:11) indicate the activities of the parents in as far as involvement is concerned such as involving them in planning and implementing of educational activities, conferring with teachers regarding the children's educational progress, and their involvement in school activities in a variety of ways. Parents are therefore regarded as important stakeholders in education and their participation in education management and governance is indispensable. Parents also have to pay for their children's education and have been granted an important voice in the management of education.

Meiers and Marais (2007:209) agree to the fact that the idea of having ECD centre and home complementing each other can be achieved if the parents are involved. When planning daily programmes, time must be set aside specifically for parents. This can be done by including enough time during arrival and at the end of the day to talk to parents, who should also be welcomed to visit the centre during the day. There is a two-way relationship in the ECD centre, the children and the parents. The children are the connecting link between the parents and the ECD centre, but parents should play an active role in their children's education at the centre. Parents can be a real asset and can make valuable contribution to the ECD centre. They may be more willing to assist in an advisory capacity such as field trips, donations, repairs of toys, legal advice and bookkeeping. However, there should be limits for parental involvement. If there are no limits they can end up forgetting their area of operation and ultimately end up encroaching in the teachers' territory, thus disturbing teaching and learning.

## 2.4 THE ROLE OF PARENTS IN ECD

Meier and Marais (2007:64) highlight the role of parents as stakeholders in ECD:

- i. Parents have the right in terms of guiding, caring for and educating their children and they are also agents and legal guardians who act for and on behalf of their children.
- ii. Parents have to care and support their children. They are required to provide for their physical and emotional needs in the form of shelter, nutrition, health, education and safety.
- iii. Parents are compelled to send their children to school regularly (Schools Act Section 1). Schools are therefore given responsibility for ensuring that parents fulfill their duty to educate their children; and legal steps can be taken against parents failing in their duties.
- iv. Parents have the right to be informed of their children's performance, progress and behaviour, and should have the opportunity to meet educators regularly.
- v. Parents can request that certain information be kept confidential and not placed on any record, on the ground that it could prejudice the child later in life. They conclude by saying in democratic education system, parents are regarded as important stakeholders in education and their participation in education is indispensable.

Conolly et al. (1995:132) agree to the fact that without engendering parental support, schools will most likely fail in their efforts to teach children generalizable skills. Parents are believed to be their children's first teachers, having taught hundreds of skills before a child enters the first year of school. Hence, their involvement is much needed. They further believe that parental involvement is more than helping learners at home. Parental involvement may take many forms, including school tutors and classroom volunteers. The school must create an environment in order to stimulate the interest of the parents. Parents should be involved in activities such as curriculum nights, sharing school lunch with their children and policy development. Children simply do better when

their parents are involved. As stated in an African proverb, it takes an entire village to raise a child.

Lemmer et al. (2000:131) suggest that to create or strengthen the harmonious relationship between the school and the home, educators need to understand their learners' community and home life. They need to be knowledgeable about parents' educational expectations for their children, the language spoken at home, the family and community values and norms as well as how learners are taught in their homes and communities. Likewise, parents need to know what the school expects their children to learn, how they will be taught, and the books and materials their children will use in school. Parents also need to know how educators will assess the learners and how they can support the learner at home. Parents' involvement is intended to promote and support learners learning school performance and general wellbeing.

## **2.5 THE ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATOR INVOLVEMENT IN ECD**

Meier and Marais (2007:52) agree to the fact that educators fulfil different roles and positions in ECD, depending on the particular situation and legal relationship involved. Educators need to involve themselves in activities that enhance the quality of their lives and the lives of the children they teach and care for. They need to demonstrate love and respect for children, knowledge of children and their families, caring, compassion, courtesy, dedication, friendliness, helpfulness, understanding and warmth in teaching children. They further stress the fact that success of an ECD programme depends largely on the quality and role of educators in relation to one another and with parents and children. The roles of educators are that they must be able to design an environment that motivates children to participate actively, design developmentally appropriate activities that stimulate children to develop holistically, model language usage, listen and respond to children's communication, help children to experience success, promote effective learning in an unbiased and multicultural manner and to assess children's learning and the effectiveness of his or her own teaching effort.

Lemmer et al. (2000:132) outline the advantages of successful parent involvement programmes. There are benefits for learners, parents and educators. Parent involvement in education has a positive effect on learners' academic achievement. When schools work together with families to support learning, children tend to succeed not just in school, but throughout their lives. Other benefits to learners include decreased truancy, improved behaviour, and a decrease in the drop-out rate. When educators and parents improve the quality of their relationship and make it part of school practice, parents increase their interaction with their children at home and feel more positive about their abilities to help their children. Parents also have an understanding of what is happening in school and a feeling of empowerment. Parents are often their children's first and most important educators. Parents indirectly help to shape their children's value system and orientation towards learning. Parents can, therefore, help educators to improve and develop their knowledge and understanding of learners who come from diverse backgrounds. Parental involvement therefore improves and promotes positive home school relations, reduces misunderstanding and conflict, and prevents the school from being isolated from the community.

## **2.6 EDUCATORS STRATEGY IN INVOLVING PARENTS**

Lemmer et al. (2000:134) discuss the strategies by educators for involving parents in that they need to be knowledgeable about all the parents in order to communicate effectively as well as work together as equal partners. Educators are also advised to visit the parents' neighbourhoods as a way of trying to know them. Such visits will give educators insight into their community, environment and socio-cultural circumstances and assist educators in gaining a wider perspective on each learner's life world. Educators can also organize family fun events for parents and learners. Such gatherings are not on school work, but on getting to know each other as partners. They also need to provide a warm and genuine welcomed to all parents. Parents who come to school with a problem need to be given clear information about what is happening. Educators need to take into account the different languages, traditions, faiths and abilities of the parent population. To develop successful home-school relationships,

educators need to establish two-way communications. Where effective communication is established, there are many positive outcomes for learners, parents and educators. Communication creates openness between educator and parent.

Communication between school and the home can take various forms such as written communication which includes letters, notices and even reports. Open days, for example, provide parents with the opportunity to visit the school, talk to educators and peruse their children's schoolwork. Ways of communication with parents are:

- i. Informal contact includes using phone calls and glad notes, which is a way of complementing a learner.
- ii. Parent educator meeting. Formal discussions between parents and educators regarding the education of learners is the most important form of communication. Parents' meetings provide an opportunity for parents and educators to share information and ideas with the aim of improving the learners' learning experience.
- iii. Assist parents in their parenting tasks. This is about holding regular workshops or discussions on topics relevant to parents such as developmental stages of a child, health and safety, supervision, nutrition, discipline, guidance and parenting approaches.
- iv. Institute a parent volunteer programme. Parent volunteers can be used as classroom assistants. Involving them in classroom activities influences educators' interaction with parents. Assistance can be in a way of supervising classes when educators are absent, preparing material and equipment, serving as interpreter for non- English speaking learners, transporting learners and fundraising.
- v. Include parents in decision-making. Parents can be involved in decision- making by including them in class committees. This is an effective and informal way of bringing parents and educators together, which also provides opportunities for them to get to know each other. A parent room could be set up where parents are able to meet on a regular basis.
- vi. Manage parent involvement. One way of ensuring that parent involvement is managed is to establish a team that is tasked with improving parent involvement.

The task of the team is therefore to determine the strength and weaknesses of the various aspects of parental involvement.

## **2.7 CHALLENGES FACED BY ECD**

Engelbrecht and Green (2001:59) identify the challenges that may adversely affect development of learners during the early years. These are that many parents seem uninvolved with their children's school work and are absent from home for long periods. Some parents work long hours and do not respond to letters and notes that learners are sent from school. This may result in learners feeling excluded from certain activities, because they did not bring the materials for certain activities such as baking and fantasy play. They further remark about the diets of the learners as that is also important for growth and development of the child. They further indicate that some children arrive at school hungry, some with unhealthy and unbalanced diet.

Christie (2008:159) acknowledges the fact that since 1994 a number of policies have been implemented and legislation promulgated to create a framework for transformation in education. The Education White Paper on Early Childhood Development (2000) provides for the expansion and full participation of 5 year olds in pre-school reception grade education by 2010 as well as for an improvement in the quality programme curricular and teacher development for 0 – 4 year olds.

Meier and Marais (2007:144) regard the factors stated below as challenges hampering parental involvement.

i. Changes in family structure

The family structure in today's society has changed and this can result in families that need more help from ECD centers. This is due to parents dying and leaving the children in the care of grandparents and caregivers, thus creating a problem for the child to adjust in a new family structure.

ii. Extended families are disappearing. Parents do not have a support system in the form of other adults in the household to assist with the upbringing of the children.

In most cases, extended family relationship is no more important as it was before. Previously, families would share a house together in that way strengthening the bond amongst themselves.

- iii. Communities are not as closely knit as they used to be. In those days, people believed that it took a village to raise a child and not an individual. Today it is common not to know one's neighbour. People do not value each other; hence there is less support for individual parents in parenting task.
- iv. Parents can feel burdened by their parenting and work roles. They may feel they do not have time to get involved in their child's school activities. This is because of the pressure experienced from the type of duties they are performing during the day at their workplaces. When they arrive home they feel tired that they are unable to help with home activities.
- v. Some parents move around for work reasons. Children and parents in such situations do not always know how to handle change, because when they are about to adjust to a new environment parents are moved to another place. This type of a move impacts negatively on both of them.
- vi. Some children are cared for by caregivers, needing support as well as appreciation for the effort they put in. Sometimes caregivers are illiterate; hence they are unable to help the children with home activities.
- vii. Difficult family circumstances due to the devastation of the HIV/AIDS pandemic or other diseases may result in young children being cared for by older siblings or elderly grandparents. To raise younger brothers and sisters is not an easy task for any older child, and therefore these child headed households need support in every possible way. Grandparents too may be in poor health themselves and battling to survive on a pension.
- viii. Single or divorced parents may have special needs, often related to difficult financial circumstances or long working hours. Such parents struggle to make ends meet as they cannot afford to buy materials that are needed at school for the education of their children. This naturally impacts negatively on the learning of the child.

Rudolph and Cohen (1984:393) point out that different perceptions by stakeholders can be viewed as a challenge in that parents know their children's detailed history from birth, remember special events and their effects, and know just how the children will react to certain kinds of people and happenings. Most parents do not know how their children act among strangers and friends without familiar faces nearby, and how they react to an authority who is not a parent. The teacher, on the other hand, knows how each child fits into a group, what his or her social techniques are and how he or she takes to learning. However, the educator may have no idea what the children's fears are, the effects some illness may have had on them, or the frustrations they may face each day before and after coming to school. The teacher may also not know how the family's customs and values differ from the school's, thus confusing the child. Some parents tell their children to behave at school, others tell them to learn or do as the teacher instructs, hoping that the child will not incur disfavor or reflect unfavourably on the parents. Therefore, many parents seem uncertain of what to tell their children about school.

Rudolph and Cohen (1984:409) agree to the fact that there is difficulty for a teacher in facing a parent if he/she does not like that particular parent's child. There may be those children in class who do not arouse the teacher's love. There may be a nagging one, one with unpleasant mannerisms or an irritating bully. Such children may be a challenge. Yet the educator, by virtue of being an educator and because he/she is an adult, must look at him/her and notice all the good qualities and constructive interests the child might have. In this way, the educator can gain some understanding of the child's positive drives as well as the causes of distress. The educator then may share such observation and understanding with the parent.

They further indicate that reporting of bad news to the parents is a challenge to the educators because they do not enjoy being the carriers of news that causes person anguish. Many parents deny the possibility that something is wrong with their children. In every community or school there is someone who is well informed concerning the various health, social and psychological agencies and organization that can support families in need. Educators must therefore know these people are for the parents' sake.

Sometimes an educator faces a parent who is hostile, resentful, or who makes false accusations, and that is also seen as a challenge. The educator is perceived as a societal representation and not as an individual. It is therefore helpful for teachers to realize this and not feel personally attacked or threatened. Patience, interest, the effort to understand what the parents are trying to say and time, often help to open the parent to a more helpful level of communication.

Connolly et al. (1995:131) regard the fact that working mothers, cultural and economic diversity, children in poverty, families with special needs, homeless families and children in extended day care centers as one of the major challenges facing ECD. They further mention that educators are increasingly charged with the responsibility of providing extended use of school facilities to serve children and their families, particularly those at risk. Often these parents have had negative relationships with schools as students themselves, thus they come to their children's schools with preconceived negative expectations. This is therefore exacerbated by children who are difficult or have special needs. The focus then becomes one of assigning blame rather than finding the best way to help the child.

Connolly et al. (1995:142) outline the five challenges facing ECD.

- i. Apathy. This is about parents that have given up on their children and make statement to that regard. It is important to say and do things that model hopefulness.
- ii. Unreliable parents. Is about parents who are not committed to their children's learning due to lack of knowledge or poverty. Language barrier may also prevent parent involvement, therefore it is important to communicate in a parent's first language for them to be motivated.
- iii. Hostile and uncooperative parents. Educators are advised to remain calm and professional when faced with an angry parent. Expressing empathy may defuse the situation, and even telling the parents that their input is valued.
- iv. Severe personal problems of parents. This is a difficult area to change due to lack of control that teachers have over parents' behaviour. Educators must

therefore resist the caution to act as counselor except to refer parents to psychologists or social worker.

- v. Abusive and neglectful parents. Abuse and neglect when discovered must be reported to the appropriate state agencies.

Fleish (2000:60) notes that the educational attainment of parents is the strongest predictor of under achievement of learners. He regards this as a major challenge to the development of the learners. He further states that there is a strong positive association between the duration of parents' school careers and children's success at school. Parents who have not achieved convey low expectation to their children. He also cites the impact of poverty in families as the other challenge facing the development of a child. He indicates that there is a relationship between home characteristics and reading-related measures, which have an impact on the learning of a young child. Poverty leads to family units regroup and children are forced to go to live with relatives. The impact of instability and change of institutions contribute to the slow take up of literacy and numeracy skills.

## **2.8 CONCLUSION**

From the viewpoints and perspectives of various education experts, it is clear that parental involvement and participation in school activities such as attending parents' information evenings, parents consultations and parents' meeting is vital. Any answer to the question of how to deal with stakeholder participation in Early Childhood Development requires a multi-faceted approach consisting of education, clear public standards and personal responsibility. All these elements are important for effective implementation of the programme.

Parental involvement requires that parents participate in one or more school activities such as assisting educators during school trips, fundraising and even providing some resources. In order to achieve maximum effectiveness, all stakeholders must take centre stage in the child's educational process. It is imperative that a good parent or

stakeholder should always take the interest of children into account. To make provision for the interest of children, stakeholders must actively participate in school activities in these centers. Effective two way communication between school and home is the key function of the school which enhances the child's learning.

The next chapter will discuss the research design and methodology used to collect data. This will be done by indicating the research approach, kinds of data, target population, data collection and analysis methods.

## **CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the research design and the methodology adopted in this study. The study used both qualitative and quantitative research design. The targeted groups were from selected schools in Polokwane Circuit, Limpopo Province. The purposive sampling method was utilized to identify key informants. This method was advantageous and easier to understand. Each school in the circuit had an equal chance of being selected for the sample. The chapter will also provide the area of study, population sampling and data analysis.

### **3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN**

Mouton (199:107); Brynard and Hanekom (1991) and Brynard and Hanekom (2011) described a research design as “[a] goal the research has set for himself/herself”. Mouton further stated that the research design could be viewed as the blue print of a research project that preceded the actual research process. The research design therefore specified clearly what a researcher wanted to find and determined the best way to do it. The present research study employed a qualitative method to gather and analyse data. Although the research was qualitative, some of the data were quantitative but the analysis was basically qualitative. The qualitative method used in the study incorporated consideration of the following: the respondents, the activities that participants were asked to perform and data analysis. The present researcher’s method of data collection entailed personal interviews with the respondents through a structured interview questionnaire.

### **3.3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.3.1 Study area**

The area of study is schools offering ECD programmes in Polokwane Circuit, which comprises 105 schools. The sub-circuits are Pietersburg with 22 schools, Bahlaloga with 16 schools, Koloti with 15 schools, Maune with 16 schools, Maraba with 18 schools and Seshego with 18 schools. Polokwane Circuit is located within the capital city of Limpopo Province, Polokwane. The administrative districts of education in the province are: Mopani, Capricorn, Sekhukhune, Vhembe and Waterberg. Polokwane Circuit is controlled by Capricorn District.

Early Childhood Development (ECD) is offered in various primary schools within the circuit. Statistically the number of schools offering ECD programmes differ per sub-circuit. Currently the statistics per sub circuit are as follow: Pietersburg (22), Bahlaloga (16), Koloti (15), Maune (16), Maraba (18) and Seshego (18).

#### **3.3.2 Population**

The target group of the present study was parents, educators and government officials in schools offering ECD programmes. This target group was chosen for a specific purpose namely, to find out why stakeholders do not participate in ECD activities in Polokwane Circuit.

#### **3.3.3 Sample size and selection method**

McMillan and Schumacher (2001:175) put sample size and selection method as a method whereby a researcher selects particular elements from the target population that will be representative or informative about the topic of interest. About 30 schools were selected to complete categories of questionnaires. Purposive sampling method

was used because according to De Vos (2005:328), in purposive sampling, a particular case is chosen because it illustrates some feature or process that is of interest for a particular study. It is further indicated that in purposive sampling the researcher searches for information-rich key information, groups, places or events to study. The samples were chosen because they are likely to be knowledgeable and informative about the phenomenon that is investigated (McMillan and Schumacher, 1998:378). The researcher believed that the targeted group, stakeholder in Early Childhood Development in Polokwane Circuit in Limpopo Province are likely to be knowledgeable about their participation or non participation.

### **3.3.4 Data collection method**

Structured interview questionnaires and literature were used to collect data. Data were collected using secondary sources from appropriate and relevant written documents such as policies and legislative framework governing education e.g., South African Schools Act (SASA) Act 84 of 1996. The Constitution of RSA 1996, Act 108 of 1996. Primary data from the respondents were also used.

### **3.3.5 Data analysis**

Data were analysed manually. The researcher interpreted data collected from the respondents and gave them meaning and translated them so that they were understandable. Data interpretation and analysis was done by finding out how respondents saw the non-participation of stakeholders in Early Childhood Development, how they defined the situation or what it meant to them.

## **3.4 CONCLUSION**

This chapter discussed the research design and methodology used in the study. The study area, population and sample size were also discussed. The researcher designed a structured questionnaire for the respondents and interview schedule for the key

informants as the data collection instruments. Through the research design the researcher was able to come up with a detailed way of how the research would be conducted to achieve the aim of the whole study. The population that was chosen to find out why stakeholders do not participate in ECD programmes was relevant because they have quality knowledge of what is happening.

The schools visited were chosen using purposive sampling method. The participants in those schools were regarded as knowledgeable in as far as participation in ECD programmes is concerned. The participants in this case are government officials, parents and educators of Grade R learners. Rich information was derived from the participants. The data collection was successfully done through a structured interview questionnaire. The data collected were interpreted and translated for it to be understandable.

In the chapter that follows the study will concentrate on the research findings, analysis and interpretation of data.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESEARCH FINDINGS, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF DATA**

### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents the findings, analysis and interpretations of data. This study was conducted in Polokwane Circuit in Limpopo Province. The purpose of the study was to investigate stakeholder participation in ECD. The study used the qualitative approach in which a structured interview questionnaire was used. The questionnaire targeted parents and educators of the Grade R learners, in ECD programmes and government officials.

### **4.2 RESEARCH FINDINGS**

The study used a structured interview questionnaire to obtain information from the respondents, who were parents, educators of Grade R learners (ECD) and departmental officials. The structured interview questionnaire consisted of questions for the parents, for the educators and for the government officials. The three categories of the respondents were to respond to their specific questions. The purpose of the investigation was to determine stakeholder participation in the ECD programmes. The researcher will present the findings in three sequential orders namely, data from parents, data from educators and data departmental officials.

#### **4.2.1 Data from parents**

Thirty structured interview questionnaires were conducted with parents from 30 primary schools in the circuit. Those primary schools include Dorothy Langa, Florapark Comprehensive, Nirvana, Pietersburg Comprehensive and Snell Phoshoko in Pietersburg sub-circuit. In Seshego sub-circuit the primary schools are Matolo Khalo, David Nkoana, Mochocho, Mphareng and Rev M.P Malatji. In Bahlaloga sub-circuit the

primary schools are Kaputla Nkoana, Koroso, Ralema, Masegela and Phuti Makibelo. In Maraba sub-circuit the primary schools are Doornspruit, Makgwareng, Malema, Paxana and Mahlodumela. In Koloti sub-circuit the primary schools are Komape Molapo, Manamela, Sebokela, Morupahale and Mabokelele. In Maune sub-circuit the primary schools are Letlakana, Malopeng, Maune and Rantsu.

The data are representative of urban, semi-urban and rural schools in Polokwane Circuit. Parents were required to state whether they attended parents' briefing sessions, how often they visited the ECD centre and whether they were members of SGB or not, whether they contributed in donating toys or other items and whether they are willing to undertake educational trips with their children. The parents were also required to say whether they were conversant with ECD programmes, whether they were able to help their children with home activities, and whether they were able to provide their children with the necessary items needed at schools. They also had to point out their relationship with the educators as well as mentioning whether they were satisfied with how ECD centers were run. Data from parents unfolded as follows:

#### 4.2.1.1 Parents attendance of consultations and briefing session at the centre

Most of the parents (27) responded that they attend and consult at the centre so as to be kept up to date on how ECD programmes work and to learn about the progress of their children. Only a small number of parents (3) do not do so because of their work commitments and the location of such schools. These schools are located in rural areas. The overall picture from this is that in general, most parents (27) in Polokwane Circuit participate in the education (ECD) of their children irrespective of the location of the centre.

#### 4.2.1.2 Visiting the centre to offer assistance

Fewer parents (2) reported that they do not visit the centre at all due to the fact that they work very far. Nineteen parents responded that they sometimes visit the centre and 9

always visit the centre. The location of the schools where parents responded that they sometimes visit the centre is mostly in rural areas (16), 2 in semi-urban and 1 in urban areas. The conclusion drawn from this is that most parents in the rural areas are unemployed and therefore have sufficient time to visit ECD centers and offer assistance, while those in urban and semi-urban areas have little time to do that.

#### 4.2.1.3 Membership in committees that support teaching and learning

Ten of the respondents indicated that they are members of school committees, whereas most parents (20) do not participate in any of the committees. This gives a clear picture that most parents are not interested in being members of any committee, hence a smaller number (19) of those who sometimes visit the centre to offer assistance. Parents are only interested in attending meetings and consultations.

#### 4.2.1.4 Contributing through donating toys or items that may add value to teaching and learning

Most of the respondents (17) are not contributing anything as compared to 13 that are able to contribute something. Most parents who are not contributing are mostly found in rural schools, whereas those that are able to donate are mostly from urban areas. This shows that poor backgrounds have influence on teaching and learning. This could also mean that rural parents are unable to donate because of poverty or because they fail to acknowledge the value of their role in the education of their children.

#### 4.2.1.5 Willingness to undertake educational trips with their children

Most of the respondents (23) are interested in accompanying their children in as far as educational trips are concerned. Seven parents indicated that they are not able to, citing reasons such as they are not SGB members, that they work very far from home and that they trust educators. This is an indication that they are interested in the education

of their children, hence most of them are able to accompany their children on educational trips.

#### 4.2.1.6 Conversant with ECD programmes

Twenty-two parents responded that they are conversant with ECD programmes and 8 said that are not clear with the programmes. Parents who are clear with ECD programmes (22) are amongst those who indicated that they are able to attend parents' meetings and consultations (27). The location of schools where parents' say that they attend meetings and consultations are in urban, semi-urban and also in rural areas.

#### 4.2.1.7 Ability to help with homework activities

A good number of parents (22) is conversant with ECD programmes and 27 parents are able to attend parents' meetings and consultations. Further, 20 parents are able to help their children with homework activities. Ten parents also indicated that they are sometimes able to help. This gives a clear picture that most parents are conversant with ECD programmes, and are keen to help with homework activities.

#### 4.2.1.8 Ability to provide children with the necessary items needed at school

Most of the parents (23) responded positively that they are able to provide with items, especially stationery that is needed at school. Seven parents indicated that they are sometimes able to provide. This is an indication that they are interested in the education of their children, but are not always able to provide stationery due to financial constraints. Most respondents who are sometimes unable to make a contribution are from schools in rural areas.

#### 4.2.1.9 Relationship with educators

All the respondents (30) indicated that their relationship with educators is good, hence the majority of them (23) are able to provide items needed at the centers, 27 able to attend parent consultations and briefing sessions and 23 willing to undertake educational trips. This generally shows a good relationship between parents and educators at the ECD centers of Polokwane Circuit.

#### 4.2.1.10 Satisfaction on how the ECD centre is run

Parents are satisfied with how the centers are run in the Circuit because most of them (27) responded that they are satisfied with how the centers are run. Only 3 indicated that they are not satisfied. Among the unsatisfied respondents, one is from a semi-urban area and two are from rural areas. They cite reasons such as poor buildings and the neglect of some activities due to lack of resources. Generally, however, parents participate and are satisfied about how the centers are run in Polokwane Circuit.

### **4.2.2 Data from educators**

Thirty structured interview questionnaires were conducted with educators from 30 primary schools in Polokwane Circuit. The interview questionnaires were conducted in the same schools where parents' structured interview questionnaires were conducted. The data are representative of urban, semi-urban and rural schools in the area. Educators were required to indicate whether they hold parents meetings and consultations, how often they workshop parents, what strategies they employ to involve parents in the learning of their children, how often they attend workshops on ECD programmes, whether they are conversant with ECD programmes to ensure that such are offered in classes, how often learners go out for educational trips, whether they are willing to accompany them to such trips, whether they find ECD programmes challenging, whether they are satisfied with how the department of Education is supporting them concerning the learning in ECD centers, whether they are satisfied with

the support offered to them by parents concerning the learning of their children, whether the resources are helpful in as far as teaching and learning is concerned, whether learners are able to understand the programmes without the use of resources and how lack of resources influence teaching and learning in ECD centers. Data from educators unfolded as follows:

#### 4.2.2.1 Holding of parents' meetings and consultations

All the educators interviewed (30) responded that they do hold parents meetings and consultations. This is a clear indication that educators regard parents as partners in the teaching and learning of learners, and that without parents learning and teaching will not be effective. Educators in Polokwane Circuit be it in urban, semi-urban or rural schools do organize parents' meetings and consultations, the aim being to interact with parents on ECD programmes.

#### 4.2.2.2 Workshops for parents

In responding to whether parents are workshopped, 2 educators said they do not workshop parents because of the fact that they hold parents' meetings and consultations, and therefore do not see the necessity of calling them for workshops. Eighteen educators responded that they sometimes workshop parents. Ten respondents said they always workshop parents. This is an indication that most educators in urban schools do workshop parents more than educators in schools situated in semi-urban and rural areas.

#### 4.2.2.3 Strategies employed to involve parents in the learning of their children

Most educators (14) involve parents by giving learners homework, 13 involve them by inviting them to workshops and 2 educators do not actually know how to involve parents and these are in rural schools. Only one indicated that the involvement should be in the form of electing parents to committees. This generally indicates that parents are

involved and that different strategies are employed to involve them in the learning of their children.

#### 4.2.2.4 Attendance of workshops on ECD programmes by educators

Twelve educators responded that they always attend workshops on ECD programmes, hence they earlier indicated that they are able to workshop parents on ECD programmes. Sixteen indicated that they are sometimes able to attend workshops, hence they are also able to workshop parents when a need arises. Only a small number (2) said that they do not attend any workshops on ECD programmes and these are from schools in semi-urban areas. Generally educators attend workshops on ECD programmes, hence they are able to workshop parents because of the understanding they have of the programmes.

#### 4.2.2.5 Knowledge of ECD programmes to ensure they are effectively offered in classes.

Most of the respondents (25) indicated that they are knowledgeable in as far as ECD programmes are concerned, hence they are able to workshop parents. Few educators (5) said that they are not able to workshop parents. They are amongst those who said they do not attend any workshops on ECD programmes. It is therefore an indication that generally educators are conversant with ECD programmes because they are able to involve parents in the learning of their children.

#### 4.2.2.6 Educational trips for learners

Twenty-two educators responded that they are sometimes able to arrange educational trips for learners, whereas 4 said that they are not able to organize trips for learners, and another 4 said they always organize trips. Overall, this indicates that educational trips are not fully considered, whereas they form a key part of the learning experience.

#### 4.2.2.7 Willingness to accompany them to such educational trips

All educators (30) responded that they are willing to accompany learners on educational trips, but are not willing to organize such trips. This is due to the policies and procedures that are applicable to trips such as letters that should be written to the department asking for permission, certificates for roadworthiness of vehicles which should be submitted a month prior to the trip, and finding quotations for the transport, procedures which they regard as time consuming. This indicates that they know the importance of educational trips, but are not interested in organizing them due to the cumbersome process of obtaining permission.

#### 4.2.2.8 Challenges posed by ECD programmes

Twenty-five educators indicated that the ECD programmes are challenging, hence they said that they attend workshops. Five said that they do not find the programmes challenging and because of that they do not attend workshops at all. This is an indication that educators are taking workshops seriously, hence they are able to workshop parents, involve them in the learning of their children. Twenty-five are conversant with ECD programmes. Challenges such as helping learners with reading, numeracy and life skills activities are mostly dealt with during workshops.

#### 4.2.2.9 Support by the department of Education concerning learning in ECD centers

Most of the educators (17) are satisfied with how the Department of Education is supporting them because 28 earlier indicated that they attend workshops organized by the department. Thirteen indicated that they are not satisfied with how the department is supporting them. Most of the schools where dissatisfaction occurs are in urban, semi-urban and rural areas. They give reasons that there are no sufficient workshops given, departmental visits are infrequent, resources are not enough and co-coordinators are not conversant with ECD programmes. It is an indication that the support is not sufficient, hence educators are not satisfied.

#### 4.2.2.10 Support by the parents concerning learning of their children

Most educators (21) are satisfied with the support offered by parents in ECD centers. Twenty-seven parents are able to attend meetings, 20 are able to help with home activities, and 23 are able to provide their children with the necessary items requested. This generally indicates that educators are supported by parents. The majority of them (30) indicated that the relationship with educators is good, and 27 said that they are satisfied with how the centers are run.

#### 4.2.2.11 Importance of resources in ECD centers

Most of the educators (28) regard the use of resources as helpful, whereas 2 do not regard resource as useful, pointing out that the department does not provide such resources to schools. The usefulness of resources is clearly indicated in workshops. Generally, educators use resources from the department as the majority indicated that they are happy about how the department is supporting them.

#### 4.2.2.12 Understanding of ECD programmes without the usage of resources.

Most of the educators (26) regard resources as important and stimulative. Four regard teaching without resources as successful, hence 2 earlier indicated that they do not attend workshops. Two educators do not regard resources as helpful. This generally gives a picture that educators understand that teaching and learning will not be effective without the use of resources, especially in ECD centers where learners learn through seeing and touching.

#### 4.2.2.13 Influence of lack of resources in ECD centers

Most of the educators (27) regard the lack of resources as influencing learning and teaching in a negative way, whereas 3 regard a lesson to be successful without resources. Generally, educators feel that the lack of resources has a negative impact on teaching and learning in the ECD centers of Polokwane Circuit.

#### 4.2.3 Data from Departmental officials

Six structured interview questionnaires were conducted with departmental officials from 6 sub-circuits in the Polokwane Circuit. The sub circuits are Pietersburg, Seshego, Maune, Maraba, Bahlaloga and Koloti. Departmental officials were required to tell how often they visit schools offering ECD programmes, whether they supply learning materials and other resources to ECD centers, how often they workshop ECD practitioners to ensure effective use of resources, how they ensure that cleanliness is maintained around the centre, how they ensure all learners receive a balanced meal every day, whether they are satisfied with how ECD programmes are offered in centers, whether there are incentives offered to ECD practitioners for the hard work well done, what the right age is for the child to be enrolled in Grade R, how lack of resources impact on the teaching and learning in ECD centers, whether they supply resources to schools and how often such resources are supplied. Data from departmental officials unfolded as follows;

##### 4.2.3.1 Visiting of schools offering ECD programmes

Three departmental officials said they visit schools always, whereas the other 3 said they do visits only when it is necessary. This is generally an indication that they all visits schools but not regularly. The above statement is supported by most of the educators (17) who indicated that they are satisfied with the support offered by the departmental officials, hence most of the educators (25) are also conversant with ECD programmes.

This generally indicates that the support is sufficient enough for the ECD centres in Polokwane Circuit.

#### 4.2.3.2 Supply of learning materials and other resources to offering ECD programmes

All the departmental officials (6) said they supply learning materials to schools offering ECD programmes. This indicates that they also believe resources are helpful. Most of the educators (28) agree with that proposition.

#### 4.2.3.3 How often workshops are held

Most of the departmental officials (4) said they workshop educators when there is a need, like with the new curriculum in place (CAPS). Two officials responded that they hold workshop sometimes. It is a general indication that workshops are done with the exception of some few (5) schools where educators indicated that they are not conversant with ECD programmes.

#### 4.2.3.4 How cleanliness is ensured

All the departmental officials (6) said the responsibility of ensuring cleanliness around the centre lies with the management of the schools. The officials' major concern is the supply of resources and the holding of workshops. They trust that the management in schools will take care of the cleanliness around ECD centers.

#### 4.2.3.5 Surety on whether all learners receive balanced meal everyday

Most of the departmental officials (4) responded that there is a programme in place run by the Department of Education to ensure that learners from poor backgrounds receive balanced meals and that this is done through feeding schemes. All of them believe that it is the responsibility of the principal to ensure such programmes are applicable to the

schools as they help in physical and mental development purposes, hence all of them (6) said their involvement is mainly to supply resources and conduct workshops.

#### 4.2.3.6 Satisfaction on how ECD programmes are run in centers

All the departmental officials [6] said they are satisfied with how ECD programmes are run in the centers. Three indicated that they visit the schools always and the other 3 visit sometimes. They believe that as long as they all [6] supply learning materials, the learning and teaching will be enhanced. It gives a clear picture that they are all satisfied with the way ECD programmes are run.

#### 4.2.3.7 Incentives offered to ECD practitioners

The departmental officials [6] said there are no incentives as ECD practitioners receive salaries from the department. This is an indication that ECD practitioners are not treated differently from other educators.

#### 4.2.3.8 The right age for the enrolment in Grade R

Most of them [5] said the right age for enrolment is 5 years turning 6 before June the same year, but [1] further added that due to changes in curriculum 4½ turning 5 years before June was previously recommended. Therefore, most of them recommended the age of 5 turning 6 before June because the child is by then developed and mature enough to learn easily. For 4½ turning 5 proves a bit of a problem as they are not easily coping and also not fully developed.

#### 4.2.3.9 Impact of lack of resources on the teaching and learning in ECD centers

The departmental officials [6] agree that lack of resources impact negatively on teaching and learning, hence they all said they supply learning materials. This is a general indication that resources are important in as far as teaching and learning is concerned. They also agree that lack of resources has negative impact on teaching and learning.

#### 4.2.3.10 The frequency of supplying resources

Three officials responded that they supply resources once per year, whereas the other 3 indicated that they supply them when needed, meaning they supply per request made by the school.

### **4.3 CONCLUSION**

Stakeholders, namely parents and educators of Grade R learners and departmental officials, all participate in ECD programmes in different ways and at different levels. This is supported by the fact that educators as stakeholders do hold parents' meetings, are able to employ strategies to involve parents, have knowledge of ECD programmes, are able to workshop parents, and are willing to accompany learners to educational trips. Parents as stakeholders amongst other things are able to attend parents consultations, are conversant with ECD programmes, are able to provide items needed at schools and are also satisfied with how the centers are run. The departmental officials, on the other hand, are able to visit ECD centers, workshop educators and even provide resources to the centers. It is a clear indication that all stakeholders do participate differently in as far as ECD programmes are concerned. The next chapter concludes the study and gives recommendations.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter presents conclusions drawn from the research findings on stakeholder participation in Early Childhood Development in Polokwane Circuit, Limpopo Province. It also provides the recommendations that should be considered to improve and ensure the full participation of stakeholders.

#### **5.1.1 Data from parents**

Parents are interested in their children's education. Most of them are able to attend parents consultations and briefing sessions at the centers so as to be kept up to date on how ECD programmes work. Parents who always visit the centers are from schools located in rural areas. Parents who seldom visit the centers are from schools in semi-urban and urban areas. It can be concluded, therefore, that parents in rural areas are able to visit the centers because they live next to the centers and that most of them are unemployed, hence they have enough time to visit the centers. Parents living in urban and semi-urban that are not able to visit the centers due to the fact that these schools are situated far and also because of work commitments.

The findings revealed that most parents are not participating in committees that support teaching and learning in the centers. The findings reveal further that parents from urban areas are able to contribute by donating toys as compared to those in the rural areas. This is because most parents from urban areas are employed. It has become clear in this study that parents from rural, urban and semi-urban areas are interested in accompanying their children on educational trips to ensure their safety. They are also interested in helping the educators. Most of the respondents are conversant with ECD programmes, hence they indicated that they are able to help with homework activities, and also because they attend parents' consultations and briefing sessions. The fact that parents are able to provide with stationery needed at schools shows that they are

interested in the education of their children, though most are unable to donate items such as toys, which enhance teaching and learning.

The study revealed that the relationship between the educators and the parents is good because it has been noted that they are able to attend parents consultations and briefing sessions, and are willing to accompany learners on educational trips. They are also able to provide stationery and other assistance.

To conclude, parents as stakeholders participate in ECD programmes and are also satisfied with how the ECD centers are managed.

### **5.1.2 Data from educators**

It has become clear in this study that educators hold parents meetings and consultations to acquaint parents with ECD programmes; hence they are able to help with homework activities. This is an indication that they regard parents as partners in ECD, and that without them learning and teaching will not be effective.

Educators in schools situated in urban areas workshop parents more than those situated in rural and semi-urban areas. This is because most parents in urban areas are employed and they easily understand what the programme entails, hence they are also able to donate toys and other items needed.

The findings revealed that educators involve parents in the learning of their children in different ways, such as giving learners activities to complete at home, inviting parents to visit the centers to offer assistance, as well as inviting them to workshops and encouraging them to be members of committees.

The findings further revealed that educators attend workshops on ECD programmes, hence they are able to workshop parents who in turn are able to help their children with home works. This shows that educators are knowledgeable in as far as ECD

programmes are concerned. It has become clear that educators are not willing to organize educational trips, but are willing to accompany learners to such trips. This is because of the processes and procedures that need to be followed such as requesting permission from the department, ensuring the roadworthiness of vehicles etc. This aspect of trips is overlooked though it also forms part of teaching and learning. It is therefore an indication that educators regard educational trips as important.

Most of the respondents are satisfied with how officials in the Department of Education are supporting them, by way of organizing workshops for them and also supplying resources to the centers, which according to them are helpful in as far as teaching and learning is concerned. It can be concluded, therefore, that educators as stakeholders fully participate in ECD programmes and are satisfied with the support by departmental officials and parents.

### **5.1.3 Data from departmental officials**

The study revealed that departmental officials do visit schools but differently. This is supported by the fact that educators indicated that they are satisfied with how departmental officials are supporting them in terms of holding workshops and supplying resources.

The findings further revealed that the responsibility of ensuring cleanliness around the centre lies with the school management team. It can be concluded that the departmental officials' duty revolves around curriculum implementation as part of the schools' activities. It has also been indicated that the aspect of balanced meal lies with the management teams in all ECD centers.

Departmental officials are satisfied with how ECD programmes are run in the centres because educators indicated that they are satisfied with their support in supplying resources and organizing workshops. This enables some of them to visit the centres albeit regularly because of the trust they have on educators.

It has become clear that the right age for enrolment in Grade R is 5 years turning 6 before June as it is believed that by that age the child is physically and mentally mature and well developed to cope with the exigencies of formal learning.

Most of the respondents agree that lack of resources impact negatively on teaching and learning. It can be concluded that they regard resources as helpful in ECD centres, hence they supply resources and even encourage educators to improvise. The supply is also done regularly in case there is a need. This indicates that departmental officials as stakeholders participate fully in ECD programmes, ensuring that programmes are correctly offered.

## **5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

Following the above conclusions, the following recommendations were made. Based on the findings that were revealed during the data collection stage, the researcher makes recommendations to improve stakeholder participation in ECD.

### **5.2.1 Parents visitation to the centre**

Parents should all visit the centers to offer assistance. The findings of the study revealed that most of the parents who visit the centers to offer assistance are mainly those from rural areas. It is clear that they are able to visit because they are unemployed and reside closer to the schools. Those from urban areas are unable to visit the centers because of work related commitments. It is therefore important that during workshops parents should be advised and encouraged to take full responsibility of their children's education and therefore visit the centers regularly to offer assistance irrespective of whether they are employed or not, whether they live near the centers or not. They should regard this participation as an obligation.

### **5.2.2 Parents membership to committees**

Membership to committees emphasizes commitment. Most parents are not interested in becoming members of committees that support teaching and learning. Most of them are unable to become members because of work related commitments, lack of information and even lack of interest. The study therefore recommends that parents should be encouraged to take membership in committees because that is where issues related to the general running of the centers are discussed. Issues such as fundraising for buying some of the resources or items that are not supplied by the department, hiring of health practitioners for ensuring the children health is well monitored are all discussed in these committees and parents' input is needed.

### **5.2.3 Donation of toys**

The findings revealed that parents who are able to donate toys are mostly from urban areas. This is due to the fact that they are employed. Those who are unable to donate are from rural areas and some from semi-urban areas because they are unemployed. It is therefore recommended that parents, irrespective of their financial backgrounds, should support teaching and learning through donating relevant educational items. They should be encouraged that even if they are not employed they can improvise and create valuable items out of recycled materials. They can weave mats from plastic bags, make jungle gym from logs cut from trees and design counting frames from old wires and bottle tops.

### **5.2.4 Effectiveness of the use of resources**

The study revealed that educators regard the use of resources as effective when used in ECD centers, although a few number hold the view that teaching without resources can also be effective. Lack of supply of resources is blamed on the departmental officials. It is therefore recommended that during workshops it should be clearly mentioned that teaching and learning without resources is fruitless, hence they need to

request supplies from departmental officials, devise any means through the centre to purchase the necessary materials or even improvise.

### **5.2.5 Workshops**

It is important that parents be workshopped, as they are regarded as an important part of the stakeholders in learning. Without them teaching and learning will not be successful, hence they need workshops in order to know exactly what their children are taught at school and what is expected of them at home regarding the completion of tasks. The study revealed that most parents who are workshopped are from urban areas. Those from semi-urban and rural areas are less workshopped because government officials do not visit ECD centers in rural areas with regularity because these areas are not accessible enough. It is therefore recommended that departmental officials should encourage educators to workshop parents more often and that they must always visit such centers.

### **5.2.6 Educational trips**

Educational trips are very important in the development of a child, hence they need to be planned based on the topics dealt with in classes. Most of the educators are not willing to organize trips. It is because of the processes and procedures that do not seem to be favourable to them, procedures such as requesting permission from the department in writing and even ensuring the roadworthiness of the vehicle to be used. These are some of the issues that demoralize educators. The study therefore recommends that educators should be encouraged and supported to plan and organize educational trips because this will enhance teaching and learning, making learners to enjoy and understand the contents of the subjects. Educators also need to be supported in as far as organizing trips are concerned. Departmental officials should assist and take the responsibility of organizing trips. This will help in monitoring the trips and offering support where needed.

### **5.2.7 Visits by departmental officials**

The study further revealed that departmental officials do not visit the centers regularly. Some visit when they are requested to come for assistance or when they supply resources. It is important for them to visit regularly. It is therefore recommended that department officials must not wait for educators to invite them or come only when they are supplying materials, but should make sure they visit regularly even when not invited. This will help in monitoring progress and helping educators design effective plans and activities to enhance teaching and learning.

### **5.2.8 Enrolment age**

The study has revealed that children are enrolled in Grade R when they are 5 years turning 6 before June the same year, whereas some recommended 4 years turning 5 before June the same year. It is therefore recommended that children be enrolled in Grade R when they are 5 years turning 6 before June because by that time they are physically and mentally developed and able to cope with all types of activities and tasks.

## **5.3 CONCLUSION**

The present research investigated stakeholder participation in ECD in Polokwane Circuit. The study has revealed that overall parents and educators fully participate in these programmes. However, the Department of Education needs to improve their involvement. At this stage in their lives, children need the full support of all those involved in their academic development.

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## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR PARENTS

1. Are you conversant with ECD programmes offered to your child?

Yes   
No

2. Do you attend parents' consultations and briefing sessions at the centre?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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3. How often do you visit the centre to offer assistance or to discuss your child's progress?

Always   
Sometimes

4. Are you a member of any committee that supports teaching and learning at the centre or SGB member?

Yes   
No

5. Do you contribute to the learning of your child through donating toys or other items that may add value to the learning of your child?

Yes   
No

6. Are you able to help your child with school home activities?

Sometimes   
Often   
Not at all

7. Are you able to provide your child with the necessary items needed at school?

Sometimes   
Often   
Not at all

8. How is your relationship with the educators at the centre?

Good

Bad

9. What can you suggest that can improve teaching and learning at the centre?

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10. Are you satisfied with how the centre is run?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATORS

1. Are you conversant with ECD to enable the programmes to be offered effectively in classes?

Yes   
No

2. How often are you workshopped?

Sometimes   
Often   
Not at all

3. How do you do with learners who experience learning barriers?

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4. How often do learners go out on educational trips?

Often   
Sometimes   
Not at all

5. Are you as educators willing to accompany them on such trips?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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6. Are parents also willing to accompany their children?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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7. Are you satisfied with the support offered by parents concerning the learning of their children?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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7. Are you satisfied with how the Department of Education is supporting you concerning the learning of the children?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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8. What are the strategies that you employ to involve the parents in the learning of their children?

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10. Is your relationship with parents and departmental officials good?

Yes

No

11. How often do you workshop parents?

Sometimes

Often

Not at all

12. Do you have parents' meetings and consultations?

If yes, what information is shared? \_\_\_\_\_

If no, why?

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13. Do you find ECD programmes challenging?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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14. What are some possible solutions that you suggest in order to improve teaching and learning in ECD centers?

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## QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DEPARTMENTAL OFFICIALS

1. How often do you visit schools offering ECD programmes?

Often	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometimes	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not at all	<input type="checkbox"/>

2. Do you supply learning materials and other resources to schools offering ECD programme?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

3. How often do you workshop ECD practitioners to ensure effective use of resources?

Yearly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Monthly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Weekly	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>

4. What is a prerequisite for one to be employed as an ECD practitioner?

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5. What do you think should be done to improve learning and teaching in ECD centers?

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6. How do you ensure that all learners receive balanced meals every day?

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7. Are you satisfied with how ECD programmes are offered in the centers?

If yes, why? \_\_\_\_\_

If no, why? \_\_\_\_\_

8. Are there incentives that are offered to ECD practitioners in a way to thank them for the hard work they are doing?

If yes, why?

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If no, why?

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9. How do you ensure cleanliness is maintained in the centers for the benefit of the learners in as far as health is concerned?

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10. What is the right age for the child to be enrolled in Grade R, and why at that age? \_\_\_\_\_

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