

Opportunities and Risks for the ECD NPO Training Sector in the light of new developments



FACILITATING A
QUANTUM LEAP IN EARLY
CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
IN SOUTH AFRICA



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OPPORTUNITIES AND RISKS FOR THE ECD NPO TRAINING SECTOR IN THE LIGHT OF NEW DEVELOPMENTS

Early childhood development is receiving significant official attention, and features prominently in South Africa's National Development Plan and its Vision 2030 and the current development of a National ECD policy and comprehensive ECD programme. A 'window of opportunity' thus exists for the renewed development and scaling-up of ECD in South Africa.

Scaling up of ECD services will require harnessing of all resources. The ECD Non-Profit (NPO) training sector has played a prominent role over a period of decades in the design and implementation of ECD projects. Because there was little accurate, up-to-date information on the size, scope, capacity and geographic distribution of ECD NPOs involved in training Ilifa Labantwana, a South African donor partnership which supports policy implementation of integrated ECD, commissioned a survey of NPOs offering ECD training services for children aged 0 – 4. The survey report provided a platform for a national consultation meeting with the ECD NPO sector and others to discuss implications of the report.

This Brief outlines the main findings from the survey (www.ilifalabantwana.co.za), identifies some opportunities and risks for ECD NPOs in the light of current national developments in ECD policy and programming and consultations with the ECD sector, and presents some of the steps to which NPOs committed themselves at the consultation meeting.

The ECD NPO Survey

A database was established of 96 ECD NPOs involved in training for services and programmes for children birth to four years. 76 ECD Training NPOs completed the comprehensive survey questionnaire. This included a section where they indicated what would need to be in place in order to enable them scale up training. The survey did not include a number of ECD NPOs offering a range of support services other than training which could also be drawn on for expansion of service access and quality.

Key Findings

Scope and Shape of the Sector:

- The ECD training NPO sector is relatively small and diverse, and currently lacks capacity for the scaling up of ECD services and programmes for children aged

0 – 4. Table 1 presents a provincial breakdown of the 0 – 4 population, number of registered ECD centres and training providers. We do not have data on the number of unregistered ECD centres or programmes for children in out of centre provision, which would substantially add to the numbers requiring training and support.

- There is a significant imbalance of distribution, with most ECD training NPOs located in metropolitan areas, particularly Gauteng and the Western Cape, whereas, in terms of child numbers, the rural provinces are significantly under-serviced. In addition there is attrition in the sector, six ECD NPOs having closed over the last five years and another four since the survey.



Table 1: Provincial Child Population, Registered ECD Centres and Training Providers

Province	Child population 0 – 4 ¹	Registered ECD Centres ²	Surveyed ECD NPOs offering training	ETDP SETA Accredited NPOs	FET colleges offering occupational ECD
Eastern Cape	767 216	2 938	10	5	1
Free State	295 896	3 002	6	5	2
Gauteng	1 191 418	3 520	17	7	1
KwaZulu-Natal	1 198 134	3 398	9	7	3
Limpopo	680 163	2 442	5	3	2
Mpumalanga	461 559	1 402	4	3	2
North West	404 347	1 033	1	1	2
Northern Cape	121 918	580	2	2	2
Western Cape	564 800	1 825	22	8	6
Total	5 685 452	20 140	76	39	21

Learning Programmes:

ECD NPOs offer both accredited and non-accredited training. Table 2 indicates the number and percentage of surveyed NPOs which are accredited and have offered qualifications at NQF Level 4 and 5 between 2010 – 2012.

Table 2: Accreditation and Qualifications Provision

Accreditation status and qualifications offered 2010 – 2012	Number and % of Total Survey Respondents
ECD NPOs registered with the ETDP SETA:	48 (63%)
ECD NPOs accredited for ECD [NQF Level 4]	33 (43%)
ECD NPOs that have offered NQF Level 4	33 (43%)
ECD NPOs accredited for NQF Level 5 Qualifications	16 (21%)
ECD NPOs that have offered NQF Level 5 qualifications	10 (13%)

The ECD NQF Level 4 (Further Education and Training Certificate: ECD) is currently the principal ECD qualification requirement. Level 5 qualifications are critical to bridge the gap towards professionalisation. Table 2 indicates that relatively few accredited learning programmes, have been offered. Only 15 respondents trained learnerships between 2010 and 2012. Providers indicated that this is as a result of the Department of Higher Education’s policy to shift public funding to public Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. Surveyed NPOs provided qualifications training for around 6000 trainees between 2010 and 2012, less than a fifth of the estimated train-

ing needs for practitioners currently working in registered ECD centres, and about 30% of the total qualifications training offered in this period.³ In fact, most ECD training programmes are short, non-accredited, cover a wide range of content, and focus on ECD practitioners working in centres.

1 Census 2011
 2 National Department of Social Development ECD Statistics March 2012. Provided by Louise Erasmus Social Work Policy Manager: Partial Care and ECD
 3 Department of Education (June 2013) Presentation on ECD Training to the Portfolio Committee

**Trainees:**

Almost all trainees are female, half are younger than 35 years and many have matric. Over two thirds work in ECD centres. Despite a policy focus on out of centre programmes, training is predominantly for ECD centre practitioners. In 2011 these constituted nearly 70% of trainees compared with 30% trained as home visitors, playgroup facilitators and parent educators.

Support Services and Programme and Materials Development:

Many of the surveyed NPOs offer other services to support quality of delivery. These include implementation support for practitioners during and after training including on-site support, learning groups, workshops and media. The bulk of available curricula for qualifications training have been developed by the ECD NPO sector. In addition a third have developed and/or supply teacher guides, and a fifth posters and charts, toys and games, children's books and materials.

Staff:

The total full-time staff complement of ECD Training NPOs is less than 1 000 of whom 377 are ECD trainers with a further 105 part time trainers. Half the organisations have a staff complement of eight or less. Just over half the ECD trainers are tertiary trained but nearly half have no adult education or facilitation training. Based on their qualification levels, nearly half could train practitioners up to NQF Level 5 certificate, while a quarter should only train below NQF Level 4. English is the main medium of instruction and there is a need for more African language training. Most directors are professionally qualified but half have little or no management and leadership training. A staffing challenge is that nearly half of all the directors and a quarter of trainers are over 50 years old, indicating a need for succession planning for the sector.

Funding and Financial Sustainability:

Almost all respondents commented on the need for funding to sustain and increase their ability to provide quality training. Donor funding is still the major source of funding, with few respondents accessing public funds. Most providers rated their funding status as shifting from good

to fair between 2011 and 2013. Less than half have an endowment or reserve fund.

In the following section we consider the survey findings in relation to what ECD Training NPOs could offer to the scaling up of ECD.

Scaling to Universal Access with Quality

Increasing access to good quality ECD services especially for vulnerable children is recognised as a means of promoting equity.⁴ This will involve offering additional service components where necessary (e.g. child nutrition; support for parenting; a focus on pre-birth to three years, ; greater opportunities for early stimulation), improving quality, as well as rapidly moving to universal provision, prioritizing the most vulnerable. While government is responsible for provisioning, there are key areas in which the ECD NPO sector could add value and the National Development Plan highlights the importance of expanding comprehensive quality ECD services in partnership with the non-state sector to improve education and reduce poverty and inequality. This provides a powerful opportunity to energise, mobilise and unite the sector.

What are the opportunities for NPOs?

ECD NPOs have developed varied strategies for delivery of integrated and coordinated programmes and services for young children at district level, have considerable curriculum and materials development, as well as training experience; are known for quality improvement interventions and for locating ECD within a community development framework. In this section we touch on contributions that they could bring to scaling in these areas.

Share Model Programmes and Delivery Strategies

Many ECD NPOs have

- contextually adapted programmes for meeting children's holistic needs. These include areas such as parent education or inclusion of children with special needs which have been identified as service gaps;⁵

4 Walker, S, Wachs, T, Grantham-McGregor, S, Black, MM, Nelson, CA et al (2011) Inequality in early childhood: risk and protective factors for early child development. *The Lancet* 378, 1325–38.

5 Richter, L et al (2012) Diagnostic Review



- experience implementing programmes especially for those who are hard to reach (through delivery strategies such as home visiting, community playgroups, toy libraries, mobile outreach services as well as from ECD centres, supporting uptake of government services) and have a footprint in some of the areas where very vulnerable children live;
- experience in working in an integrated way drawing in all available stakeholders and resources and in working collaboratively;
- documented guidelines and materials relating to programmes and approaches;
- provincial, district or site based initiatives to design and work together with government and civil society to offer a full package of ECD services.

Contribute to Improving Quality

ECD NPOs have extensive experience and

- provide curricula, materials and resources to programmes which could be packaged for broader use;
- are good at teacher and fieldworker support and mentoring especially in the work place;
- can offer accredited training and custom designed programmes to address scarce and critical skills or train and supervise others taking on the direct training role;
- have a core of experienced staff, qualified in ECD who could provide technical support for the growth of new services provided by government and others involved in scaling up;
- could deploy experienced leaders to mentor and develop other and emerging leaders;
- could be harnessed to help design and implement a quality rating and improvement strategy for both centre and out of centre provision.

Communication/ increasing demand as well as supply

The need to drive the demand for quality ECD services as well as provide information on child care, protection and development is widely recognised. ECD NPOs

- are experienced in grassroots awareness raising around young children's issues;
- have materials and staff who could contribute to an advocacy campaign.

What would be necessary?

While there are opportunities these could not be realized without support and facilitation. The following are key areas:

- Organisation of the sector so that there is a strong structure at national and provincial level to advocate for and develop the necessary partnerships with government (especially social development, education, health and local government) and other role players and to secure appropriate resourcing to contribute to the scaling up process. A critical area is to include accredited ECD NPOs in state funded training opportunities. Such an organisation could be developed from strong ECD forums that exist in different provinces. Alternatively the ECD sector needs to ensure that current national structures are actively working on these issues.
- Access to information on developments affecting the sector. The database compiled for the ECD NPO Survey could be used to keep the sector up to date with developments, promote debate, engagement and guidance around key issues.
- Support for the national vision for young children and alignment of programmes and services to national ECD priorities and implementation strategy, as well as the development of provincial strategies and implementation plans.
- Programmes and delivery strategies need to have proven impact, be cost effective, relatively simple to implement and manage, supported by good training, programme materials and monitoring systems, with accurate, standardised data collection, analysis and reporting against agreed outcomes.

What are the threats?

While there is a current window of opportunity for ECD, the NPO sector needs to be proactive, position itself at the forefront of change and address some of its shortcomings.

- **The ECD sector is fragmented with no clear unifying or organizing framework.** Unless it addresses this challenge, it faces the risk of becoming irrelevant in the discourse of scale up initiatives by government. Government is seeking for solutions for scaling up quality ECD services, and needs a unified sector to engage with.



- **ECD NPOs need to see the significance of the work they do in the light of national priorities.** This may mean sacrificing promotion of individual organisations and programmes, turf protection and unwillingness to share or adopt models, materials or approaches from other sources.
- **ECD NPO reach is limited and there are huge geographic coverage gaps.** Although many deliver quality services, impact and reach are small in relation to need. Other service providers will need to be brought on board and potential new service providers identified or initiated.
- **Many ECD NPO interventions may not be suitable for scaling because they are complex, depend on highly skilled teams and may be costly to deliver.**
- **There is no standardization in ECD NPO programme content and outcomes.** Aligning with a national programme will require compliance with programming priorities and external quality assurance measures.
- **There are insufficient qualified ECD trainers.** There needs to be a clear human resource development strategy for ECD that includes the increase and up skilling of ECD trainers.
- **State funding mechanisms for ECD Human Resource development are currently directed to the public FET Sector and are insufficient for the scale of training needed.**

Opportunities to take the sector forward

There are current initiatives that could be catalysts to take the sector forward.

- The development of the National ECD Policy and Comprehensive Programme could be used to promote ECD NPO collaboration with provincial and district government departments (including local government) to develop provincial and district integrated ECD strategies and implementation plans.
- The opportunity presented by the Ilifa Labantwana Call for Collaboration and investigations into the potential of a Social Franchise model as a strategy for scale up could assist the ECD NPOs to re-look at their role in scale up and how to maximise their experience and expertise.
- The commitment given by ECD NPO leaders from each province at the Ilifa Labantwana national meeting in November 2013, to convene provincial structure meetings to discuss the potential of collaboration and partnership in planning scale up of quality ECD services. They will report back by the end of February 2014 on the current status and achievements of provincial forums. 36 organisations participated and input was given by the National Planning Commission, Departments of Social Development and Basic Education as well as various donors. A process is required to pull this together.



POTENTIAL GAME-CHANGERS FOR THE NPO SECTOR

FROM → TO

PLANNING & SERVICE DELIVERY

- Fragmented ECD sector with no clear organizing framework for input to government policy and implementation plans
- Limited NPO reach and gaps in geographic service provision coverage services.
- Limited partnerships and collaboration between public and NPO providers
- Insufficient funding to support ECD NPOs to assist with service delivery
- Lack of understanding of importance of the early years

- ✓ National and provincial young child advocacy/organizing structure to engage government on role in scale up
- ✓ NPOs support scale up of public and new service providers
- ✓ A framework for collaboration and partnerships to deliver provincial and district integrated ECD strategies and implementation plans
- ✓ Funding mechanisms that provide sustainable multi-year funding
- ✓ Communications and advocacy campaign

PROGRAMMING

- Programme content, processes, systems and quality highly variable.
- Many ECD NPO interventions are small scale and complex, without clear guidelines, making them unsuitable for scale up.
- Insufficient evidence of outcomes to justify scale up
- Lack of/cumbersome monitoring systems

- ✓ Programme models are aligned with agreed essential package of services and quality standards
- ✓ Key service elements with simplified delivery mechanisms and clear guidelines
- ✓ Promising models piloted prior to scale up
- ✓ Effective use of technology to underpin effective, efficient service delivery

HUMAN RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

- ECD NPO sector training role eroded by policy support for public sector providers
- No ongoing quality improvement plan

- ✓ HR strategy draws on capacity of all accredited providers through partnerships of public and NPO sector
- ✓ NPOs contribute to quality improvement of ECD programmes through support and monitoring at district level.

Ilifa Labantwana is a national programme which supports integrated early childhood development (ECD) in South Africa, initiated and supported by a multi-donor partnership. The donor partners include the ELMA Foundation, the DG Murray Trust, the FNB Fund and the UBS Optimus Foundation.

The aim of Ilifa Labantwana is to provide the implementation evidence, build national capacity and galvanise informed political support to provide quality ECD services at scale, with particular focus on the poorest 40 per cent of the population under six years of age.



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