

### QUESTIONNAIRE

#### **Professionalising the Early Childhood Development Educator (birth to 4) Workforce through a policy-driven initiative.**

*Thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. Kindly complete the questionnaire by answering the questions as fully as possible. The completed questionnaire can be returned to [Adendorff.z@dhnet.gov.za](mailto:Adendorff.z@dhnet.gov.za)*

**Participant**

**H 3**

#### ***A. Implementation of the Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators.***

The <sup>1</sup>MRQECDE policy, aimed at producing a graduate birth to 4 years educator workforce has far reaching consequences for the ECD sector. In light of this, please provide your considered responses to the questions below:

1. What role does your organisation/institution/department play in relation to early childhood development?

My institution has opted at looking at policy development with the ECD sector predominantly. Followed by research within the ECD sector and lastly minor training

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<sup>1</sup> Minimum Requirements for Programmes leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators

is provided. Research is done in conjunction with community partners such as the NDA and focuses on best practices and policy development in ECD.

The ECD degree programme is being developed. The Level 6 and 7 qualification is going to be implemented asap. DHET has also funded Post grad students in order to capacitate district officials. My institution has supervised some of these candidates.

2. In your opinion, does the MRQECDE policy have any implication for your work? Why or why not?

As an HEI where the training will be located it does have a role to play in various stages. Firstly the development of the national course, accreditation of the courses. But mostly with the facilitating/lecturing of the courses. Not many ECD trained practitioners/facilitators have a degree/post grad degree to teach these courses. I therefore suspect that they will be given to the nearest person who has a Doctorate or similar degree with very little practical experience of the ECD field. Which is to be expected as the professionalization of ECD is relatively new. Sort of the blind leading the partially sighted. My own personal opinion which is rather double minded. On the one hand we have some brilliant ECD facilitators in NGO's who know what they are doing, have the money, expertise, time and capacity to develop good ECD teachers.

Taking this away from this sector will compromise ECD quality even further. On the other hand the formulization of ECD courses will provide ECD with the long needed status that is required. Hopefully this sector will be better paid which in turn will entice quality teachers into this sector which will eradicate the 'baby farms' which a lot of ECD centres have become.

3. Do you think that your organisation/institution/department may have a role to play in contributing to the successful implementation of the MRQECDE policy either at present, or in the future? If so, what, in your opinion, would this entail?

I think we do but it will take time. Looking at our staff. Some have done an ECD course through Wheelock College in Boston. A brilliant course, but it was a thought provoking course and lacked the basics of setting up an ECD centre, the policies, procedures etc. Frankly I would not think their training was adequate enough for them

to conceptualise and practically teach and implement such a course. We have some excellent staff – but – once again my opinion – and which includes me – it is one thing to have the head knowledge but another to have actually done it and have had enough experience on the ground in an ECD centre.

I think more upskilling, but mainly a change of mindset. A paradigm shift in thinking and beliefs.

A large injection of start up seed money

Finding the right balance of teaching/training/lecturing between practical and theoretical. As well as the mind shift of the people on the course as to the true nature, purpose and potential of ECD away from baby farms to real education, stimulation and development.

4. Do you see the implementation of the MRQECDE policy as a necessary initiative for the ECD sector? Why, or why not?

Yes to get away from the minimizing of a critical developmental period in children's life. To professionalize the sector to give the people involved in the sector as sense of being more than mere nanny's perception of mothering of the ECD sector. Hopefully it will attract more men into the field.

With the status that a "proper" qualification will bring the salary scale of ECD teachers up to a liveable wage or not better.

5. What do you see as the constraining factors that may hinder or prevent the successful implementation of this policy?

have mentioned a few things above. My concern is that

- a) unqualified/underqualified people will be left to do the course
- b) as a TVET colleges have done – they have excess staff and so these staff members do the course even if their specialisation is in plumbing or dressmaking
- c) lose some of the personal one to one interaction that workshopping of practitioners by NGO's and other providers gives at the moment
- d) Many ECD practitioners are excellent at what they do but not all of them will be left with the opportunity due to entry qualifications into the more "professional" courses.

e) The offering of bursaries will lead to any person who can't get into law to apply

e) At present the quality programmes that I have seen have a balance of contact sessions and support visits which I do not see the universities having

f) It is going to be less practical and something will be lost - like moving teacher training to universities

Mostly lack of thought, careful planning and not just jumping in. even phasing in doesn't work because you never have enough time to go back and fix what needs to be fixed as you are too busy with the next cohort.

sometimes I wonder if it isn't a western conscript that we have imposed onto African culture e.g. reading a book, letting children take books and read for themselves. These are taught in courses but very rarely implemented

6. What do you see as the enabling factors which could contribute to the successful implementation of this policy?

Our university has an ECD aspect to our education programmes. This sector has been gradually hiring staff unfortunately the staff are mostly foundation phase trained and so they are employed as they have a Masters. Research has already started in the ECD field so that we are aware of the needs of the sector. We have established partnerships with other ECD partners and within the local communities. We have seen the need to develop the ECD staffing further and have the services of a social worker and an occupational therapist in the team.

7. Are there any aspects of the policy which you would recommend being changed?

Not sure. I like the fact that the ECD factor will be professionalised but not sure that Universities are best placed to handle this. I believe a minimum of a masters is needed to teach in the ECD field – all teachers in ECD should have a masters. But once again having a masters is not a guarantee of professionalism.

**B. Views on the professionalisation of the Early Childhood Development Educator (birth to 4) workforce.**

1. What in your view does the term “the professionalisation of the ECD educator (birth to 4) workforce” mean?

Good questions. To me, ECD is wide age range of developmental stages which include skills and practices. Most ECD centres that I have seen are merely child minders with little stimulation of children. So, to professionalise is to provide the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes to understand the development of the child, the stimulation they required, daily appropriate activities to implement. The development of the child in language – the skill and knowledge of how to do it. With this body of knowledge is a piece of paper which acknowledges the teachers competence both theoretically and practically.

The disposition to work with young children and families (a variety). A professional is able to use their knowledge to reflect on why, when and use this to know what to do next...a person who daily interacts appropriately with children, plans daily appropriate activities – knows how children learn and uses this. Who can adapt both personally and within the classroom.

2. Do you think that qualifications in higher education should be a requirement for becoming an ECD educator for babies, toddlers and young children from birth to 4 year old? Why, or why not?

On the one hand I am a strong advocate for ECD to be recognized as a profession that is so much more than merely minding children and would love to get of the mummification of the ECD sector. However, I have seen some practitioners who intuitively are brilliant with children and I would in fact send my own child to be cared by this person. I do think that we have downplayed what teachers of this age need to know and so I do think we should encourage higher qualifications. But this is going to have to come with a higher financial recognition. We also need to eliminate the problem of sending qualified teachers into a school which is structurally unsound, lacks equipment and facilities. The disparity in ECD centres reminds me of the differences in circumstances in our schools. Are we going to send them to an “inadequate” school and expect good results. It could be widening the divide between the have and have nots. As I have mentioned one of my pet hates are baby farms. Where ECD managers stuff as many children into a centre so that they can get the subsidy, the parents are relieved their children are being looked after, they are receiving

meal but no real quality programme or education is happening. Maybe better for children to stay at home.

3. Do you think that the higher education qualifications provided for in the MRQECDE policy should be a requirement for being a principal/centre manager of an ECD centre? Why, or why not?

Yes – to hopefully get rid of the baby farm mentality. You could have a situation where the teacher is more qualified with power plays occurring. The manager also needs to know what to do, to guide the teachers, ensure they are fulfilling their obligations, provides the manager with a good sense of what equipment /needs are of the school.

4. Do you think that the higher education qualifications provided for in the MRQECDE policy should be a requirement for being an <sup>2</sup>ECD supervisor? Why, or why not?

Yes – to ensure quality programmes are been done, to understand how and why the teachers are doing particular things. To be able to point out how to do things.

5. How do you think the MRQECDE policy will affect ECD practitioners currently involved in the care and education of babies, toddlers and young children from birth to 4 yrs old?

**Please explain.**

Yes. Those that are able to will rush to enrol in courses.this means leaving the classroom and children attended to by the staff that are left.  
those that do not have a matric or the necessary entry qualification but have been in the field for years will be left behind. Could breed resentment and conflict. Also the potential of the “older” practitioners not being able to access the course due to entrance qualifications.

6. Do you agree that the ECD educator workforce should be professionalised and if so, what are your recommendations for enabling and/or promoting the MRQECDE policy implementation, and for professionalising the ECCE workforce?

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<sup>2</sup> “ECD supervisor” refers to provincial supervisors employed by the SD or DBE or supervisors/mentors employed by NGOs

I do think they should be professionalised and be recognized for the essential work that they do. I think a good balance of practical and theory. I think that a practitioner should ideally spend a year with an experienced ECD teacher assisting and shadowing them. They should have practical tasks that are completed during this time. I also think that once you have a qualification within 2 years you have to do refresher courses regardless if you have a PhD or higher qualification. If we can identify enough excellent ECD practitioners and have the person who is studying assisting them or even changing mentors annually while the university helps to link the practical with the theory then maybe perhaps it might work.

7. What do you see as the constraining factors in professionalising the ECD educator workforce in South Africa?

The perception of ECD in society

The lack of agency that the practitioners have

the idea that opening a centre will get you money – poverty mentality

unequal distribution of resources and wealth amongst centres. Some centres parents pay R10 and others R5000.

Lack of accountability with the community that some centres have – absence on pay days, pension days

I asked a group of practitioners and parents how the ECD centre helped their children get ready for school. Only 1 practitioner could say something. Parents do not know the true value and importance of ECD>.

Too high expectations of parents for ECD centres to be mini-versions of schools with paper and pencil and learning of the vowels.

8. Please add any comments or other insights related to the topic of professionalising the ECD educator workforce or the professionalisation agenda of the policy on MRQECDE, should you wish to do so.

I do not think that qualification equals quality but I do think that qualification equals more knowledge and the potential for a better programme and development of children. But that it is more difficult to have quality without the qualification. ECD practitioners (female

labour force) need it for self-worth, esteem and agency and a shift in discourse on the way society thinks and deals with practitioners.