

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 in as much detail as possible. The completed questionnaire can be returned to Adendorff.z@dhet.gov.za

Participant:

S 2

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

The ¹MRQECDE 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?

Answer deleted for protection of privacy

¹ Minimum Requirements for Programmes leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators

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

Answer deleted for the protection of privacy

1. 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?

Answer deleted for protection of privacy

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

The policy is critical for the sector because it is important that the career path does not have a “ceiling” anywhere on the NQF. The sector cannot operate only with low-level skills and the need to have a range of different opportunities is critical. Currently, in other sectors, like Health and Social Development, the professionals do not have specific areas in their qualifications that deal with ECD and understanding how children grow and develop. The policy could be helpful to ensure that there is a common understanding as well as inter-relationship between the different disciplines.

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

There are three areas that I think might be constraining factors:

- a) **Higher Education Institutions** (HEIs) and their capacity to deliver the qualifications outlined in the policy, both in terms of pedagogy as well as the number of students that they are able to work with annually; and
- b) **The broader ECD sector** that believe that they have the knowledge, skills and competencies, even though they do not have the qualifications. There might be resistance to participating in the training offered if the Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) is not effectively dealt with by the HEIs; and
- c) **The DBE’s ability to finance the appointment of educators in the sector.**

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

The policy is dependent on:

1. DBE offering the jobs;
2. SACE using the minimum criteria for registration of educators;
3. HEIs working with the ECD sector in ensuring that the best trainers and lecturers are appointed.
4. Blended models be utilised to reach large numbers of candidates. Cannot rely on face-to-face tuition only.
5. Put in place mechanisms to deal with non-adherence to the policy and sanctions for those who do not follow.
6. Phased approach to the full implementation of the policy to ensure that the systems are ready e.g. phasing in of fully qualified educators into the sector over a 10-year period.
7. Providing an opportunity for unqualified or under-qualified practitioners to get the minimum qualification and recognise what they currently know, do and understand.
8. Departments and entities working together in the implementation of the policy.

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

I think that all qualifications offered at Level 4 should be part of the entry requirements for the new qualification.

Allow for other disciplines to use part of the qualification as a compulsory module, if they intend working in the sector e.g. the module on Child Development for all those wanting to be Paediatricians; social workers and not only educators.

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?

There are three components in my understanding:

1. Professionalisation – system that is developed to uplift the status of people in a profession, in this case ECD;
2. ECD educator – all those working with children contributing to their development;
3. Workforce – in ECD the workforce is not only educators but also health and social development professional.

The professionalisation of the ECD workforce needs to allow for cross-registration or inter-disciplinary registration which is difficult because each of the professional councils is very protective of their specific discipline. Development of young children requires all the disciplines to work together in an integrated way.

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?

In an ideal world all practitioners working with young children should have a tertiary education, however, to be more realistic my dream would be that at least one person at the establishment needs to have a tertiary level qualification. In this way the programme offered to the children can fully meet the needs of the children. It is at this stage that early identification is critical. Someone needs to be able to have the knowledge as well as expertise to identify barriers early enough for them to be addressed. The research is clear that the earlier the disability is recognised and intervention put in place, the better in the long term. So, in summary, yes at least one person should have a tertiary qualification.

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?

If the principal is not qualified at a tertiary level, there might be tension at the centre in that the educators earn more than the principal. The principal/centre manager should be the one with the qualification and as part of their job description should be responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the programme at the centre. In this way it would circumvent any problems with hierarchy of jobs at the centre. If the proposal that I

made earlier about the phasing in of the policy is accepted, this could be the second stage of implementation; stage 1 – a fully qualified, tertiary level educator appointed to oversee the development, implementation and monitoring of the programmes at a cluster of ECD centres (10 in a cluster); stage 2: all principals must be fully qualified and responsible for the development, implementation and monitoring of the programmes at their own centres; Stage 3: all personnel to have a tertiary qualification.

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

I believe it should be a requirement as it is important to know how to support practitioners, managers and other staff in the sector. Currently supervisors might be ex-teachers, social workers, health practitioners who do not necessarily know how to deliver curriculum at this stage. Not only supervisors, but also training personnel.

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.

As I indicated earlier, there might be resistance from ECD practitioners as they believe that they are fully competent already. The sector, although there are regulations, has not been regulated enough or measures are not in place to ensure that the minimum requirements are adhered to. Although there is a narrative that ECD is important, many people think that allowing young children to “play” or sing only will provide them with the necessary stimulation. I even find that people involved in curriculum development or training treat the practitioners as though they are children. Practitioners are expected to do what children do and not necessarily know why or the theory behind what they are doing. Parents have also not put enough pressure on them to deliver and their main expectation is that the children can “write their name” or recognise their name or “read”.

² “ECD supervisor” refers to provincial supervisors employed by the DSD or DBE or supervisors/mentors employed by NGOs

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?

(I think I answered this in question 2. If you need more, I'll try to provide)

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

(Again, see 6 and 7 above)

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 can't stress enough the need for working with all department, entities involved in professionalisation in the sector, within education sector as well as health and social development.