

## Management and Administration of Early Childhood Development Centres: The Roles of School Heads

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**Abstract:** The findings and recommendations of the Nziramasanga Commission into Education and Training [3], have contributed to major reforms in education. Among other reforms, they have contributed to the establishment of ECD-A and ECD-B classes at primary school. Such change at primary school has created extra responsibilities in the management and administration of schools. These reforms have far reaching consequences for the teachers and school managers. The area of ECD is a special area that needs special treatment and attention. It is a special area in that we are dealing with children from birth to 8 years, a stage that is very delicate in the development of the child, as it develops socially, physically, intellectually, creatively and emotionally. To support the implementation of this reform in education, policy guidelines were put in place. These include The Secretary's Circular Number 14 of 2004, Statutory (SI) 106 of 2005 (Zimbabwe), Director's Circular Number 12 of 2005 (Zimbabwe) and Director's Circular Number 48 of 2007. The legal framework on the operations of ECD was set and the standards that had to be followed were pronounced. Among the regulations were the stipulations that ECD centres were to be brought under the management and supervision of the nearest primary school; that the teacher pupil ratio had to be 1:20; that the ECD classes had to be manned by appropriately qualified teachers; and learning through play had to be emphasized (Statutory Instrument Number 106 of 2005). In addition to pronouncing the programme and curriculum that have to be followed, some of the legal framework spells out the curriculum and activities and the role of the school head at the ECD centre. The purpose of the study is to assess the extent to which the ECD programmes have been implemented in selected schools and centres in Chegutu District. The study focuses on the management and administration of ECD centres in Chegutu District. The study uses the qualitative methodology. It uses the case study design in which six ECD centres and primary schools were purposively selected. All the ECD teachers and school heads became respondents in the study. Data is collected through the use of observation, open-ended questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. The study gives an assessment on the management and administration of ECD centres which may contribute to policy formulation and improvement in the area of ECD.

**Keywords:** Early Childhood Development Education; Early Childhood Development Centres; Management; Administration; Programmes; Curriculum

### INTRODUCTION

#### Background to the Study

The Zimbabwean government declared primary education a basic human right in 1980. This declaration was supported by the enactment of the Education Act of 1987. The enactment brought with it policy changes. The Act stipulated, among other things, that every child in Zimbabwe should have the right to school education. It also declared that education would be compulsory and free at primary school. It further placed education in the category of human rights and viewed it as a vehicle for social transformation [1]. As such many resources were expended on primary and secondary education as a result of the increase in enrolment. Early Childhood Development programmes

were under the Ministry of Community Development and Women as from 1982. The focus was to establish child care centres. These were meant to take care of children for four hours from eight o'clock to twelve o'clock to enable mothers to engage in other activities. These were known as Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) centres. These were adopted as community-based programmes in which the communities had to build and furnish the centres, paid the teachers, provided equipment and contributed to infrastructure development [2]. As such these centres operated outside schools. In most of the cases there was no link between the ECEC centres and the primary schools.

However, in 1988 the ECD programme was transferred to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The ECD programme however remained a voluntary community initiative. It was in a sense informal. As noted by the Nziramasanga Commission [3] the provision of Early Childhood Development in Zimbabwe was irregular and varied in quality. It was also noted that its provision was characterised by lack of relevant policy and adequate resources. Other challenges noted included limited access to Early Childhood Development education.

Some of the challenges associated with ECD centres becoming a community initiative include disadvantaging children, as access and provision of ECD programmes was largely determined by parents' interests and ability to pay ECD tutors and provide necessary infrastructure as noted by the Nziramasanga commission [3]. It was further noted that private pre-schools charged very high fees which the majority of the population could not afford. The regularization of the ECD programme and putting it under the direct control of the central government was envisaged to address a number of problems. This would put the charge of fees and levies under the control and regulation of the central government. At the same time it has to be noted that the provision of ECD programmes by private individuals or organisations may have dire consequences on quality, at the same time formal rules and regulations are expected to ensure uniformity, standardisation and regulate action.

In the initial stages, the ECD programme operated without a syllabus. Tutors and caregivers had to rely on a manual [2]. However, the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education introduced the ECD syllabus in 2011. The ECD programme has now been absorbed into the existing primary school management and administration structure, thus raising the question on the extent to which the school head and deputy head can plan, organise, command, co-ordinate, and control the ECD programme. This has increased the need for qualified teachers at ECD level. In response to this Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development are to train 10 000 ECD teachers between 2014 and 2018. Such a plan was designed to address the shortage of qualified personnel at the ECD level. At the same time universities were to offer pre-service and in-service programmes to teachers. On the other hand, regulations and statutory instruments to promulgate the implementation of ECD programme at primary school were enacted. These included Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005: Education (Early Childhood Development Centres) Regulations, 2005; Secretary's Circular Number 14 of 2004; and Early

Childhood Development; and Director's Circular 12 of 2005.

#### **Secretary's Circular 14 of 2004**

The circular offered guidelines on the implementation of the recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training. Among other recommendations adopted, was the need to make Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) part of formal learning. Children would have to attend ECEC for two years before enrolling for grade one. The circular made it mandatory for primary schools to attach at least one ECEC class of 4-5 year olds with effect from 2005. This was considered to be the first phase of the implementation of the commission's recommendations and phase two was to be implemented in 2006. This phase involved the creation of another ECEC class of 3-4 year olds. The classes were to be manned by qualified teachers. The class of 3-4 year olds became known as E.C.D. (A) and the 4-5 years became known as E.C.D. (B).

#### **Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005: Education (Early Childhood Development Centres) Regulations, 2005**

To regularise the implementation of the ECD programme, a number of statutory instruments were enacted. These include, Statutory Instrument of 106 of 2005: Education (Early Childhood Development Centres) Regulations, 2005. The instrument stated the following regulations and requirements: the need to seek the secretary's approval for the establishment of an ECD centre; registration of ECD centres; cancellation of registration of ECD centres; inspection of premises; Age of attendance; curriculum and other activities of an ECD centre; accommodation and facilities to be provided at ECD centres; and the duties of the head or supervisor [4]. Such duties included the need to keep a register of enrolment and a register of daily attendance of children; should be able to furnish the Secretary of Education with particulars of periods of instruction given at the ECD centre; and keep a register of teachers employed at the ECD centre. The statutory instrument specified the requirements for indoor playing space to allow for at least 2.25m<sup>2</sup> for each child, and outdoor playing space should allow at least 5.5m<sup>2</sup> for each child. The statutory instrument also stipulates the requirements for water and sanitation facilities at the ECD centre. For example, flush water closets or squat hole toilets have to be provided in the ratio one squat hole toilet to 12 children for a centre; and many other requirements relating to running water, separation of toilet facilities between staff and children. The statutory instrument also stipulates the following: the teacher pupil ratio as one teacher to a minimum enrolment of 20 children; one supervisor to a minimum enrolment of 60 children at each centre; one additional teacher to every 7 children; and a head to a maximum

enrolment of 60 children. It also stipulates the need for staff to undergo medical examination.

A number of policies were adopted to operationalise the implementation of the ECD programme. These gave school heads additional responsibilities. Such responsibilities included performing management functions for the ECD centre. Such management functions include planning, organising, staffing, coordinating activities at the ECD, budgeting, controlling, supervision, staff development, monitoring and evaluation, management of human and material resources.

### Statement of the Problem

Following the findings and recommendations there have been attempts to implement the ECD programme in Zimbabwe. The study aims at assessing the challenges faced by ECD centres in implementing the ECD programme. Since its institution, the implementation of the ECD programme has continued to be of concern to parents and the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education as demonstrated by the efforts and issuance of circulars that attempt to come up with strategies to achieve the full implementation of the infant school education module, which encompasses ECD-A, and ECD-B classes. The research problem can therefore be stated in question form: How are ECD centres being managed and administered in Chegutu District?

### Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to assess the management and administration of ECD centres with special reference to the role of the school head in the implementation of the ECD programme.

### Objectives of the study

- To examine the approaches used by ECD teachers in the teaching of ECD programmes.
- To assess the extent to which facilities at the ECD comply with the requirements for teaching and establishing ECD centres.
- To examine the extent to which resources cater for children's needs at the ECD centre.
- To evaluate the extent to which the ECD curriculum is being implemented at the ECD centre.
- To examine the extent to which school heads are playing their roles in the management and administration of ECD centres.
- To assess the role played by parents in the implementation of the ECD programme.
- To identify challenges faced by teachers and school heads in the implementation of the ECD programme.

### Research questions

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- What are the teaching approaches by teachers at ECD centres?
- To what extent do facilities meet the set standard?
- To what extent do the resources cater for the children at ECD centres?
- How is the ECD curriculum being implemented at the centres and schools?
- How are school heads playing their roles in the management and administration of ECD centres?
- How are parents playing their roles in the implementation of the ECD programme?
- What challenges are ECD centres facing in the implementation of the ECD programme?

### Assumptions of the study

The study is based on the following assumptions:

- The management and administration of ECD centres have been characterised by lack of resources.
- Some ECD centres have faced challenges in the implementation of the ECD programme.
- School heads have focused on the supervision and administration of the mainstream school at the expense of the ECD centre

### Significance of the study

The study is important to different stakeholders. The study will show the extent to which the selected schools and ECD centres have implemented the provisions of the legal framework that established ECD centres. The study is therefore envisaged to assist in the improvement of the implementation of the ECD programme. It is important to teachers at ECD, school heads, and ECD tutors as this will help improve the implementation of the ECD programme. It is also important to policy makers, educational planners and the government as it will provide an assessment of the role of school heads and parents in the management and administration of ECD centres. In that regard, it may guide policy making, monitoring and evaluation of ECD programmes.

### Delimitations of the study

The study is confined to six purposively selected ECD centres in Chegutu, in Mashonaland West. These include two private ECD centres, two from government schools, and two from church related schools. The respondents that are drawn from these centres comprise ECD teachers and school heads. The study focuses on the management and administration of ECD centres. It is concerned with the implementation of the regulations that regularised the implementation of

the ECD programme. It also focuses on the interpretation and implementation of the ECD curriculum at the selected centres. It also deals with the roles and functions of the school head in the management and administration of ECD centres.

### Limitations of the study

The lack of resources limited the area and number of centres the study had to focus on. The coverage of a wider area could have helped in the generalization of the findings. Purposive sampling has its own limitations in terms of generalizations. The findings are therefore confined to the centres that were studied.

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

### Conceptual Framework: Management and Administration of ECD centres

There are three concepts that are central in this study. These are management, administration and early childhood development. The two terms management and administration are at times used synonymously, and yet they do not mean the same. Everarrd, Morris and Wilson [5] view management as involving different functions. These include planning, organising, staffing, directing and controlling. The managerial roles of the school head in performing these functions involve interpersonal roles, figurehead role, leader role, liaison role, informal role, monitor role, decisional role and resource allocator role. In order for the school head to effectively perform these roles and functions, they should possess personal skills. These include technical skills, human skills, conceptual skill and diagnostic skill. Possession of the different skills noted above should contribute to setting direction, planning for goal achievement, efficient and effective, efficient and effective organisation of resources and controlling the process so as to improve the performance of the organisation. In that regard in management we are concerned with effectiveness and efficiency in the execution of duties to achieve the goals of the organisation. The school head as a manager has to manage both human and material resources.

On the other hand, administration involves the monitoring and implementation of policy. In addition to this, administration involves record keeping and implementation of rules and regulations. Among other functions educational administration involves providing school supplies such as textbooks, teaching materials, and learning materials; organisation of the instructional programme; keeping school records; budgeting for school requirements; and planning for new buildings.

It can be noted that management and administration in education involve different functions. In that respect a school head in Zimbabwe has to

perform both the administrative functions and management functions. With the implementation of the ECD programme, these functions have brought in extra responsibilities to the school head at primary school.

### Early Childhood Development (ECD)

Early childhood development covers the period from birth to eight years. This stage is crucial in the development of the child as the child develops physically, cognitively, emotionally, socially, and morally. Morrison [6] observes that the ECD period is unique and critical as children learn specific skills, and is characterised by greatest growth and development. Such growth and development should facilitate a holistic development in children through increased access and provision of resources. There should be resources to support the development of different skills and practices in the child. These skills and practices to be demonstrated include physical health practices, physical skills, emotional skills and well-being, social skills, cognitive skills, and technological skills [7]. In order to promote the development of such skills different methods of teaching have been suggested. These methods include discovery, problem solving, experimentation, discussion, word games, storytelling, song and dance, field trips and drama among other methods.

### Theoretical Framework

There are many models that have been used to guide the implementation of the ECD curriculum. These include the Japanese curriculum model, and the Montessori approach. The adoption of these models has contributed to diverse curriculums being implemented at ECD.

### The Japanese Curriculum model

The Japanese curriculum model caters for children from birth to six years. The centres are in two categories according to age groups. These groups are the 0-2 years, and the 3-6 years age groups. The former category attends nursery school and the latter attends pre-school. Such an arrangement aims at protecting and caring for orphaned babies; relieving women of their child care burden; provides compulsory education in early childhood development; and provision of opportunities to train ECD teachers. Kelly [8] noted that the Japanese preschool education is child-centred and is based on the principle of whole person education. Such education focuses on social and emotional development, friendship and responsibility. Among other features of the Japanese curriculum model, it is characterised by collaboration between authorised kindergarten and authorised day care centre to mane comprehensive operations. As noted by Jeff and Smith [9] there is an exchange of ideas in classroom observation. Such exchange of ideas provided for learning of educational

practices between the Japanese nursery school and Yuki kindergarten. The Japanese Curriculum model caters for two types of preschools. These are the Christian preschools and the Buddhist preschools. The two types of preschool generally focus on the development of faith, physical development of the child, cognitive development, language development, and morale development. The areas of difference tend to emerge from religious teachings and virtues.

### **The Montessori Approach to ECD Education**

The Montessori approach to education focuses on at least five principles in the development of the child. These are sensitive periods, the absorbent mind, respect for the mind, the prepared environment, self or auto-education and the role of the teacher. As noted by Morrison [6] respect for the child is the central principle on which all other principles are based. Respect for the child is shown in many ways. These are allowing children the freedom to learn for themselves, make choices, and develop an effective learning autonomy that contributes to a positive self-esteem.

The other principle is the absorbent mind. Whilst it can be said that we all acquire knowledge by exerting our minds, children learn by absorbing knowledge into their psychic life. As such children are viewed as remarkable learning systems that learn through their interaction with their teachers, experience and the environment. Other principles of the Montessori Approach as noted by Morrison [6] are the sensitive periods and all children experience the same sensitive periods but the difference comes in the sequencing and timing; the prepared environment which focuses on the need to provide a conducive learning environment that makes the child an independent and active learner. Such an environment should allow the child to explore materials and the surroundings. The other principles are auto-education and the role of the teacher. Whilst these are treated separately, it should be noted that they both focus on the relationship between the teacher and the child. Within the context of the auto-education principle, the teacher has to provide guidance to the child without making such presence interfere with the child's operations. On the other hand, the teacher's role is to promote the child-centred approach to learning. In that regard the teacher has to make use of relevant learning materials, guide the child, treat children as individuals who progress at their own pace, respect each child and make the child the centre of learning all the time.

These principles have wide implications for the teacher, the child and the school. They focus on the need for well trained teachers in the area of ECD. It is an area that demands specialisation if children are to be developed based on the Montessori approach.

Specialisation as a trait of bureaucratic theory entails division of responsibilities to enhance efficiency. Such specialisation is expected to contribute to a holistic development of the child. Such specialisation should not be confined to the teacher only, but extend to the management and administration of the ECD centres. In relation to the need for highly qualified personnel, Mugweni [10] found out that there were still untrained teachers at primary school level. This also affected the ECD level.

On the other hand, the requirements for running an ECD centre demands much more than the requirements of the mainstream school. Fall [11] noted that in most African countries funding for ECD programmes was poor. Fall [11] further notes that generally countries had inadequate financial resources. This was exacerbated by lack or limited funding by central government. In the same vein, lack of policy guidelines on the implementation of the ECD programme, and lack of trained personnel in ECD in the teaching, and management of ECD centres impacted negatively on the implementation of ECD programmes. On a similar note, Colletta and Reinhold [12] observed that in sub-Saharan Africa countries like Malawi and Ghana had national ECD policies, but at times lacked comprehensive operational plans. They also observed that most countries in sub-Saharan Africa did not have systematic training programmes for ECD teacher, ECD co-ordinators, and school heads.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The study dealt with the views and perceptions of school heads, teachers-in-charge and ECD teachers on the management and implementation of the ECD curriculum. As noted by Key [13] qualitative research is characterised by the need to understand people's interpretations, the nature of reality which changes with people's perceptions and their values. Key [13] further notes that qualitative research focuses on the complete picture of the problem. In this regard qualitative research focused on the implementation of the ECD programme as a whole in order to gain a deeper understanding of the management and administration of the selected ECD centres. Qualitative methodology gave the researcher the opportunity to intensively study single units and small units that provided reach and detailed data. Qualitative research attempts to find answers to the 'how' and 'why' things are. The focus of the study was on how the management and administration had progressed in schools and ECD centres.

The study uses the case study design. Merriam [14] observes that a case study as a research design involves the examination of specific phenomena, such as a programme, an event, a person, a process, an

institution or a social grouping in order to gain an in-depth understanding of the situation and the meanings of those involved. This is supported by Yin [20] who points out that a case study is used in many situations to contribute to our knowledge of individual, group, organizational, social, political, and related phenomena.

### Sample and sampling procedure

The study used a sample of six ECD centres in Chegutu district. The school heads, TICs and ECD teachers at these centres became respondents in the study. The sample was purposively selected. The selection was purposive in terms of accessibility to the researcher. A sample refers to a set of elements selected in a way from a population, which in practice can be a collection of elements from sampling units drawn from a sampling frame [15]. The study had to come up with samples for the sites and the respondents. These were purposively selected.

### Data collection methods

Data was collected through observation, open-ended questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The data collection methods gave the respondents the opportunity to freely express themselves on how ECD programmes were being implemented with special reference to the role of the school head in the management and administration of ECD centres. The study dealt with asking people to talk about their experiences. As noted by Glassner in Silverman [16] interviews are special forms of asking people to talk about their experiences as they are a special form of conversation. The interviews played a complementary role to the open-ended questionnaires and observations. Face-to-face interviews were able to collaborate in producing retrospective accounts of their past actions, experiences, feelings and thoughts, at the same time enabling the researcher was able to read beyond the words as such, was able to interpret the stress and analysis contained in non-verbal actions which added meaning to the said words [17].

### Data analysis procedures

The data collected through observations, face-to-face interviews and open-ended questionnaires by inducing themes from the responses. The data was analyzed qualitatively based on the themes that emerged from the responses of school heads, TICs and ECD teachers.

## DATA PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION

A number of themes emerged from the data collected using open-ended questionnaires and face-to-face interviews. The responses enabled the researcher to merge the themes that came from the open-ended questionnaire and face-to-face interviews. The data

which was qualitatively analysed came up with the themes that are discussed below.

### Qualification and Experience in Education and ECD

On personal data the study was interested in the respondent's qualification, area of specialisation and experience. Out of the six school heads who took part in the study, three (50%) had Masters of Education in Educational Management and the other three (50%) had a Bachelor of Education in Educational Management. Out of the ten ECD teachers, 10% of ECD teachers were paraprofessionals, 10% had degrees in other areas, 80% were qualified in ECD. Out of the six TICs, 40% had General Certificate in Teacher Education, 60% had Diploma in Education in Early Childhood Development. The data shows that the ECD centres were manned by teachers who do not have special qualifications in ECD. Similarly, school heads and TICs did not have qualifications in ECD. When it came to experience all the ECD teachers had less than six years of teaching experience at ECD level. The TICs, deputy heads and school heads had experience ranging from 20 years to 30 years in service. However, they were mostly experienced in the mainstream primary school system, not the ECD level. Most TICs had specialised in infant, thus 6-8 years, not well qualified in the ECD-A (3-4 years) and ECD-B (4-5 years). In the same vein, school heads were not specialist in the ECD programme.

### Resources at ECD centres

Of the six centres visited, two had classrooms for both ECD-A and ECD-B, one used a church as a classroom, two had one classroom which they used for both ECD-A and ECD-B classes and the other centre had its own facilities independent of the school. In most of the cases the requirements for indoor play space were not being observed. As noted in Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005, total indoor playing space should allow for at least two comma five metres (2,25m<sup>2</sup>) for each child [4]. On a related note ECD teachers were asked to indicate the number of children in their classes. The number of children both the ECD-A and ECD-B classes ranged from 30 to 45 in all the centres visited. In that regard the stipulations of the Director's Circular on enrolment and teacher to pupil ratio were not being followed at the six centres. As stated in Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005 Education (Early Childhood Development Centres) Regulations, 2005, there shall be one teacher to a minimum enrolment of 20 children at each centre [4].

Other materials and facilities checked include furniture, toilets, classrooms, indoor space, outdoor space, availability of water, play equipment, computers, computers, sleeping area, sand area and play materials. Three (50%) of the centres visited had small plastic chairs, and tables that were age appropriate. The other

three (50%) did not have appropriate child sized furniture for ECD children. They were using furniture that was of the same size as the mainstream school pupils. This appeared to suggest that some of the centres did not follow appropriate practices in relation to age appropriate equipment and materials for ECD programmes. All centres had safe sources of water, however at all centres there were no tapes that were specifically meant for ECD children. Some ECD centres did not have play grounds that were specifically for ECD children. Only one (17%) centre had separate playgrounds for ECD children and five (83%) had no play grounds reserved for ECD purposes. Whilst two (34%) had computers at their school, they were not used for ECD purposes neither did the children gain access to the computers. The other four (66%) centres did not have computers at all. One of the five key areas of the ECD curriculum is Technology. In this curriculum area children are expected to be involved in both computer play and appliance play. Lack of computers and lack of exposure to computers is most likely to impact negatively on children's technological development. The ECD centre is expected to be child-friendly in terms of the resources used at the centre.

When it came to space, most centres did not have enough space for both indoor and outdoor learning and play. As noted by Olds (2001) a child's development programme has to meet a child's environmental needs. Such basic needs should foster an environment that encourages movement, an environment that supports comfort, encourages sense of control, fosters safety, and encourages a sense of belonging and self-esteem [18]. At the same time outdoor play equipment has to be well maintained and be safe for children to use. The child's playing and learning environment contributes to a child-friendly centre. As noted by Faber [19] in order for ECD facilities in centres to be child-friendly buildings should be protective, and large enough to give each child space to move and explore; at the same time provide plenty of light. Other indicators of a child-friendly ECD centre include cooking space and adequate facilities; functional indoor learning centres and outdoor learning centres; and safe and available water for drinking purposes (ibid). In that regard a number of centres were found not to be child-friendly due to a shortage of resources and facilities.

#### **The role of the ECD teacher**

All the ECD teachers had time-tables and ECD syllabi. The curriculum areas shown on the time-tables included Expressive Arts, Language Arts, Mathematics and Sciences, Social Sciences and Technology. The curriculum areas are further broken into specific subjects. Director's Circular No. 12 of 2005 stipulates that there should be no formal teaching as children have

to learn as they play, and play as they learn. This is in line with the Montessori approach to learning, which advocates for learning through play. In that regard the role of the teacher is to facilitate play. The researcher did not have an opportunity to observe the ECD teachers, but from the list of common approaches used in teaching they indicated, the teachers were aware that the activities had to be child-centred. According to the ECD teachers the four most common teaching methods were discovery, play, song and dance, and games. The responses show that apart from the four common methods stated above, the other approaches used by ECD teachers included experimentation, problem solving, poems and rhymes, drama and field trips. From the teaching approaches used by ECD teachers, it could be observed that all ECD centres had embraced Montessori educational ideas which are based on the principles of respect for the child, a prepared environment, and the role of the teacher as that of making the child the centre of learning. The different methods used emphasize a child-centred approach to teaching and learning.

#### **The role of the manager**

The role of the school head is to manage the ECD centre. In order to manage the centre efficiently, the school head has to perform the five basic management functions. These are planning, organising, controlling, leading and staffing. In all the centres visited, the TICs played the most active roles in the management of the ECD centres. In that regard all school heads had delegated the role of running the ECD centre to TICs. In the same vein, only one (17%) school head indicated that they he written supervision reports on their ECD teachers. The rest indicated that this was the responsibility of the TIC. This appears to suggest that most school heads have left the running of ECD centres to TICs. This can be best explained in two ways. The first explanation could be related to other commitments that leave school heads with little time to supervise the ECD centres. Another explanation could be lack of interest in the activities at ECD level. In that regard, it could be noted that schools heads in some instances may not be giving the ECD programme the importance it deserves. All other duties and responsibilities like checking indoor and outdoor play centres, toilets, indoor and outdoor equipment had been delegated to the ECD teacher and the TICs. In all cases the deputy head did not play much of a role in the management and administration of ECD centres.

#### **The role of parents in the implementation of ECD programme**

In all the six ECD centres, there were School Development Committees (SDCs). These were responsible for governance issues that related to the raising of funds and embarking on development

projects. It was noted that the SDCs made decisions on school levies that included the ECD centre at the school. Since decisions at SDC meetings are arrived at by voting, the views of the parents may be stifled due to the small number of parents at ECD level. Apart from paying levies, parents were involved in the paying of wages for support staff and paraprofessionals. In some instances parents had organised themselves to support the health and nutrition programme at the centre. They took turns to help and prepare food at the centre. This was common in four (67%) centres; whilst in the other two (33%) children brought their own food.

### **Challenges in the Management and Administration of ECD centres**

All ECD centres visited were working hard to implement the ECD programme as stipulated in the different statutory instruments and circulars referred to above. Despite these efforts there are many challenges that are associated with the management and administration of ECD programme. Some of the challenges faced by the ECD centres include classroom sizes that do not meet the required standard, inappropriate and inadequate play materials. Other challenges included limited indoor and outdoor space. It was also noted that most ECD centres did not have adequate equipment. The ratio of teachers and children in all the ECD centres shows that all ECD teachers had more than the limit of 20 children per ECD teacher. Most centres tended to use furniture that was not age related. This was due to limited funding as parents played a major role in financing education at ECD level. The performance of ECD centres were therefore a reflection of the economic conditions of the community in which the centre was found. It would appear that the government did not play any other role in the funding of ECD centres, except the provision of trained ECD teachers. Statistics and the ratios given may be an indication that there is still a shortage of trained ECD teachers.

Another challenge in the implementation of the ECD programme is related to the qualifications of school heads and TICs. All the school heads did not have any special qualifications in ECD education. The same applies to the TICs, though some of them were in the process of studying for the Bachelor of Education in ECD. Lack of training in ECD education, compromises the school heads' attitudes towards the ECD programme.

In summary the major challenges in the management and administration of ECD centres as noted by ECD teachers, TICs and school heads were lack of qualified ECD teachers, inadequate play centre equipment, lack of technology equipment, late payment of levies, absenteeism in winter, lack of skills in some

teachers, shortage of classrooms and toilets, the mixing of ECD-A and ECD-B classes and high teacher to pupil ratio. When it came to teacher to pupil ratio, one TIC and two ECD teachers indicated that they had classes that had fifty children and at times 3 times the recommended size of 20 children. The shortage of facilities was also demonstrated as responses showed that in one case the ratio of wash basins at the centre was one basin to fifty one children.

### **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The study came up with the following conclusions:

- The teaching approaches used by ECD teachers are child-centred and therefore relevant to the development of children at ECD level. This can be attributed to the effort by Teachers' Colleges and Universities. However, the shortage of qualified ECD teachers is negatively impacting on the management and administration of the ECD programme.
- Most centres did not have adequate facilities for ECD children. In most centres ECD children were sharing facilities with the mainstream school. This was common when it came to outdoor playing space and water sources.
- The interpretation of the syllabus, subjects that were being taught and the teaching methods that were applied demonstrate that all the centres were implementing the curriculum areas as designed in the ECD syllabus.
- The management and administration of ECD centres were being delegated to TICs. School heads did not play much of a role in the monitoring and supervision of ECD centres. This can be explained in two ways. Firstly, this could be due to other management and administrative responsibilities that the school head has to perform. Secondly, this might be due to an attitude problem as a result of lack of training in ECD education on the part of the school heads.
- Parents play crucial role in the management and administration of ECD centres. They provide funding for the running of the centres through the levies they pay. Parents also donate and contribute equipment. They play an active role in the governance of the ECD centre through the School Development Committees (SDCs).
- The major challenges were related to lack of resources due to limited funding. This has compromised the implementation of the ECD programme as stipulated in the statutory instruments and director's circulars referred to above.

### Recommendations

In view of the conclusions above the study makes the following recommendations:

- There is need to come up with innovative ways of training ECD teachers in order to reduce the burden of overcrowded classes found in most ECD centres.
- The government has to play an active role in the funding of registered ECD centres. This will help improve the quality of education at ECD centres through the provision of equipment and construction of standard classrooms for ECD centres.
- The school heads are responsible for the management and administration of ECD centres. There is need for capacity building in that regard. This can be done through workshops and staff development programmes.
- The area of ECD is very crucial in the education of the child. However, due to limited time and resources the study had to focus on a small sample and used a case study design which can impact negatively on the generalizability of the findings. It may be necessary to conduct a similar study at national level using a different research methodology and design.

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