I recently completed a study that answered the question: “What was the ECD policy trajectory in post-apartheid South Africa and how did it unfold?” In answering this question, I traced, described and interpreted the ECD policy trajectory in post-apartheid South Africa, and critically analysed the ECD policy-making processes, viewed through an interpretive lens.

The study explains how the ECD policy trajectory shaped the evolution of ECD in post-apartheid South Africa during a period of unprecedented social, political, economic and education transformation. This study is significant since it contributes to knowledge building about ECD policy-making through the voice of ECD policy-makers and activists who had been central to ECD policy-making in South Africa. The study findings and recommendations have global relevance given the increased focus on ECD and ECD policy-making across the world.

Data was constructed from a comprehensive examination of ECD policy documents, including policy statements, government White Papers and government reports over the period 1990 to 2015 and from structured, face-to-face interviews with 19 key stakeholders who were centrally involved in ECD policy-making in South Africa over this period.

In undertaking this study, I had the benefit of having been involved in the ECD policy-making processes in South Africa from 1990 to 2015, on various ECD policy-making teams, firstly set up by the anti-apartheid structures and thereafter by the new democratic government.

In analysing the findings of the study, I adopted an interpretive approach aiming to provide an understanding of the ECD policy trajectory. The study found that the ECD policy-making process in South Africa had been haphazard, contradictory, unplanned and confusing. In addition, the study found that:

- There is no political will to implement the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy approved by the Cabinet in December 2015.
- Government officials in the DBE and DSD do not have the capacity to deliver on the policy; and
- Government has not allocated nearly sufficient funding to implement the policy.

If you would like a copy of the thesis simply email me on eatmore@cecd.org.za and I will mail it to you.

Enjoy reading this edition of EARLY YEARS.

ERIC ATMORE
Director
have a high degree of educational attainment and a history of employment, compared with peers with no connection to the project.

For example, the offspring of Perry Preschool Project participants were over 30 percent more likely to have never been suspended from high school than the children of the control group participants. They also had 26 percent higher odds of being employed full time.

Part of the reason for the difference in the second generation, researchers said, was that children of the Perry participants were more likely to grow up in a stable, two-parent home with more resources during childhood. But new research also posits that these intergenerational effects are still present no matter where families lived – the survey found that Perry families live in neighbourhoods similar to, and in some cases worse than, the control group.

According to Heckman (pictured above), this means that family structure may be more important than location alone in charting the way families were impacted by the Perry Preschool Project.

“There is a lot of interest by journalism in outlets about research arguing that zip code is destiny,” Heckman said, on a phone call with media yesterday. “The evidence there is weak.”

In addition to looking at the children of original study participants, Heckman and his colleague Ganesh Karapakula found that siblings of children involved with the Perry Preschool Project enjoyed lifelong benefits. Siblings who were in the home prior to the family’s enrollment in the Perry programme enjoyed positive “spillover” effects, such as being more likely to graduate high school and obtain employment when compared with others in the control group. According to Heckman, increased parental activity around the home and the benefits of the home visit may have carried over to the whole home environment, including other family members.

The iconic High/Scope Perry Preschool Study showed the benefits of early childhood education based on a programme
As evaluations of the Perry Preschool Project have shifted from IQ to other measures in recent decades, Heckman suggested that researchers are now learning how to better understand the benefits of high-quality early childhood education.

"We’re in it for a lifetime here, and we also know that there are a variety of skills that we are currently only now starting to measure that lead to the success of individuals in life," Heckman said.

STABLE HOUSING IN FIRST THOUSAND DAYS A POWERFUL PREDICTOR OF CHILD DEVELOPMENT

~ Freya Lucas

New research from PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PwC) and the Strong Foundations collaboration has found that housing stability in the first thousand days of a child’s development has a potential economic benefit of $3 billion annually.

Living in a stable housing situation in the first thousand days of a child’s development (from conception to two years of age) leads to societal benefits of approximately $36,000 over a child’s lifetime, with 94 percent of those benefits occurring as a result of increased adult earnings.

The economic analysis by PwC Australia was developed with the support of experts from the Murdoch Children’s Research Institute.
Annette Schmeide, Bupa Health Foundation Executive Leader, said there were a number of steps to be taken to improve outcomes by targeting the first thousand days. "In terms of policies, programmes and initiatives, we can focus on improving information and education, we can improve services and supports provided to families during this period, and we can improve the environment families and children live in," she said.

Four immediate steps are presented in the report, to improve policies, programmes and initiatives targeted at the first thousand days:

- Raising awareness of the impact the first thousand days on lifelong health, wellbeing, learning and development outcomes;
- Investing in environmental determinants of health and disease, to avoid the need for later expenditures addressing inequalities;
- Improving and targeting services to the earliest stages of childhood and conception, and on programmes that target the most impactful interventions; and,
- Undertaking further research to map current investments and gauge their success, and whether innovative ideas could work in future.

Home ownership was chosen as a proxy to estimate the potential economic benefits of housing stability for children within their first thousand days due to a paucity of data in relation to alternate examples of housing stability, such as long-term leasing, Zac Hatzantonis of PwC said.

The report also outlines the potential economic benefits of reducing the prevalence of smoking amongst pregnant women, in addition to the healthy development of children. For each woman who stops smoking during pregnancy, there is an estimated saving of $29,000 over her child’s lifetime. The figure is calculated on a reduction of obesity costs, totalling 50 percent, along with 35 percent of increased earnings, and 15 percent for a reduced likelihood of smoking as an adult. The annual potential benefit of all pregnant mothers choosing not to smoke during pregnancy is close to $1 billion.

Penny Dakin, ARACY CEO, said the question was how to turn the knowledge into practical outcomes for children. The report acknowledges the work already being undertaken by the government to improve early childhood outcomes.