

August each year in South Africa is Women’s month. Rather than writing an editorial of 300 words, I thought that saying THANK YOU to 20 outstanding women in ECD – our staff – is more appropriate. Colleagues, you are the reason why CECD is thriving - thank you and the 180,000 ECD teachers across our country for what you do; living the Mandela Legacy each day.



We hope you enjoy this issue of Early Years.

ERIC ATMORE
Director

FOUR MILLION CHILDREN ENROLLED AT ECD CENTRES CAN CREATE JOBS FOR OVER 450 000 WOMEN

~ Zodidi Dano

The enrolment of nearly four million children in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres could open up job opportunities for over 450 000 women in South Africa.



According to the 2021 Women's Report issued by the University of Stellenbosch Business School, registering children under the age of six at ECD centres would not only help in equipping children to reach their full potential but also be one of the most effective ways of creating new jobs in the "care economy".

The report compiled by Laura Brooks, a development economist and Senior Manager ECD Expansion & Financing Support at Ilifa Labantwana, revealed that less than 40% of South African children under six were enrolled at ECD centres.

Brooks, in her report, cites that an estimated 300 000 people are employed in early childhood care and education, 95% of them women, serving approximately 2.5 million children. These ECD centres are mostly operating in the informal and non-profit sector.

"For each woman who works in caring for children, whether as a child-minder or day mother in a private home or community facility or working in a formal ECD centre, another six to 10 women are able to take up full-time employment," said Brooks.

She said that increased investment in ECD care would "deliver a triple social and economic benefit".

"Firstly by promoting young children's development and capacity for learning in formal schooling; secondly, enabling greater participation by women in the workforce; and third, by creating more and better-paid jobs in the care economy," Brooks added.

However, the economist urged that the government should shift its notion that ECD was a social welfare service but rather a socio-economic development opportunity to grow it and make it more sustainable.

Framework

"This will require an urgent overhaul of the regulatory framework and excessive red tape, which currently excludes rather than enables providers of this vital service. State funding of early childhood care and education is minimal and needs to be greatly increased – this would secure better conditions and meaningful livelihoods for workers and in turn improve the quality of services provided to children," she said.

ECD's are exclusively provided in the private and non-profit sector, by NGOs and private individuals, unlike in basic education. To register for government funding support meant a lot of red tape, and in most cases, centres through the process were dubbed not eligible.

The government funding rate is at R17 per child per day, of which only 30% can be used for salaries, and the subsidy reaches only about 620 000 children, less than 25% of the children reported to be accessing ECD programmes.

Article available at:

<https://www.iol.co.za/education/four-million-children-enrolled-at-ecd-centres-can-create-jobs-for-over-450-000-women>

EDUCATION SECTOR ASSESSES COVID-19 DISRUPTIONS

The Department of Basic Education has encouraged all stakeholders in the education sector to support its efforts to ensure that learning is not disrupted or delayed any further during this school year.

Director for Research at the department, Dr Stephen Taylor, says the department's observations show that large parts of crucial learning time were lost last year due to Covid-19 related disruptions.

"We have now begun to measure Covid-19 related learning losses in South Africa by comparing how much children learned in 2020 with how much they learned in a normal school year before that. These measures indicate that between 50% and 75% of a normal year's worth of learning was lost during 2020.

"Although we only have this information for certain grades and

EARLY YEARS

learning areas, it is likely that learners across grades and subjects would have been similarly affected,” Taylor said.

He said further delays in the reopening of schools at the beginning of the year and an extended winter holiday would have a negative effect on society and the education sector.



Early Childhood Development

The department also raised concern about children attending Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres and primary schools.

“The impact on early learning for children attending ECD centres is also likely to have been significant, since attendance rates at ECD centres have dropped considerably since the pandemic. There is now evidence from the NIDS-CRAM [National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey] ...that more school-aged children are not attending school than usual.

“It is not clear whether this is temporary non-attendance or will become permanent,” the department said.

The department warned that if the schooling system does not recover to pre-pandemic levels, the knock-on effect will be felt in years to come.

“[It is] predicted that grade 12 outcomes may be expected to be lower over time. In the long run, the learning losses in primary school may lead to an increase in dropouts when these children reach grades 10, 11 and 12. This creates an urgent need to recover learning that has been lost,” the department said.

Despite these challenges, the department said the introduction of comprehensive school Covid-19 safety protocols and the vaccination of teachers has now “created the possibility to keep schools open and return to everyday attendance”.

“The second step, which will take some time, will be to introduce measures to catch up what was lost,” the department said.

Article available at:

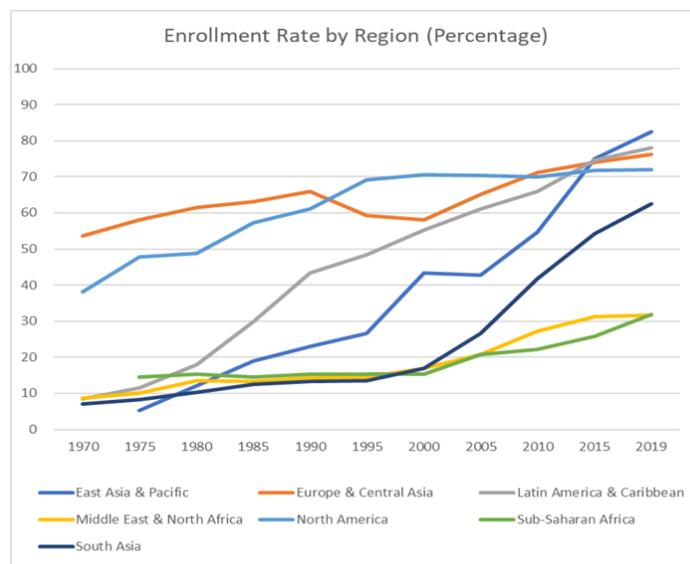
<https://www.bizcommunity.com/Article/196/498/219223>

SCALING UP QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: WHAT GETS MEASURED GETS DONE

~ Adelle Pushparatnam and Elaine Ding

Globally, access to early childhood education (ECE) has been expanding rapidly (Figure 1), with the most dramatic increases occurring in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). However, we know that even when children are in school, schooling is not the same as learning. This can be seen in the paradox of high levels of learning poverty despite near-universal primary enrollment rates. We cannot allow this trade-off between access and quality to continue.

Figure 1: Enrollment rates in ECE by region



Source: UIS 2020

Evidence shows that ECE sets a strong foundation for later learning, helps make education systems more effective and efficient, and is an effective strategy for promoting economic growth as it reduces achievement gaps and inequities and builds skills for future employment (for an overview of the evidence, see, for example, Chapter 5 of the 2018 World Development Report or Chapter 5 of the OECD’s 2017 Starting Strong report). Yet, none of these promises can be realized without an emphasis on quality alongside access.

In the research literature, quality of ECE is often divided into structural and process quality. Structural quality refers to inputs such as aspects of the physical environment (e.g., infrastructure), group characteristics (e.g., adult-child ratios), and caregiver or teacher variables (e.g., initial education and training). Process quality, on the other hand, refers to the interactions with teachers, peers, and materials that children experience in ECE settings – in essence, the children’s learning experience.

In scaling up ECE, countries tend to focus on aspects of structural rather than process quality. For example, teacher-child ratios are often used as an indicator within ECE quality standards. It is critical to invest in structural quality, as some level of structural quality is necessary for process quality. However, structural quality is not sufficient to guarantee process quality. Globally, there is almost no systematic data on process quality. Without this information, countries are “flying blind” in their efforts to scale up quality ECE.

When discussing how to scale up process quality alongside structural quality and access to ECE, the conversation needs to center on the ECE workforce. This is because the quality of the ECE educator is a key determinant of the quality of children’s learning experiences in the classroom. However, the global ECE workforce faces many challenges – there aren’t enough teachers to meet the target of universal enrolment in ECE, these teachers are faced with a lack of parity in pay and in conditions of service with primary school teachers, and ECE teachers often do not have access to opportunities for professional development, to name only a few (see Chapter 3 in UNICEF’s 2019 A World Ready to Learn report). These issues will need to be tackled from multiple fronts.

One key entry point to improving process quality and better supporting the ECE workforce is through measurement, because – like most things – we can’t fix what we don’t know or understand. Standardized measurement of ECE classroom quality can provide a common language to drive policy dialogue on the importance of focusing on quality alongside access. It can help create a shared understanding of what quality ECE entails, which can feed into quality standards and regulatory mechanisms. It can shed light on the critical role that ECE teachers play in scaling up quality ECE, and help shape interventions aimed at improving ECE quality, particularly those focused on teacher training and support.

This why we [recently launched](#) Teach ECE to support measurement of ECE process quality at scale. [Teach ECE](#) is a free, open-source classroom observation tool that has an explicit focus on both (i) the time ECE teachers spend on learning activities and the extent to which children are on task during those learning activities, and (ii) the quality of ECE teaching practices that help develop children’s cognitive and socioemotional skills (see Figure 1). Teach ECE also measures cross-cutting themes throughout its different behaviors, such as inclusion, language facilitation, and child-centered teaching practices.

Figure 1: Teach ECE Framework



Teach ECE is available in English, French, Portuguese, Spanish, and Arabic, and is accompanied by a suite of resources, including materials to support stakeholder consultations, resources to support video collection, sourcing, and coding, scripted training materials to support enumerator training, and resources to support data cleaning and analysis. There is also an accompanying literature review that provides the theoretical and empirical evidence on the effective ECE teaching practices captured in Teach ECE, drawing from evidence-based teaching practices from countries around the world.

Teach ECE aligns with Teach Primary, a classroom observation tool developed for primary classrooms, launched in 2019 and applied in over 20 countries to date. This alignment facilitates measurement of process quality across different education levels. The team is also in the process of developing Teach Secondary.

The scale-up of ECE globally presents both an opportunity and challenge in ensuring children are reaping the benefits and the promise of the early years. We hope that Teach ECE will support education systems to capture the quality of teaching practices in ECE classrooms and contribute to longer term efforts to make ECE teacher professional development more ongoing, practical, focused, and tailored to the needs of teachers, thus ensuring that ECE teachers receive the support they need to ensure that all children have access to quality ECE.

If you missed the launch of Teach ECE, re-watch it [here](#) to see a presentation on Teach ECE, which covers what the tool captures, available resources to support implementation, and initial findings from pilot applications. The presentation is followed by a panel discussion featuring Nirmala Rao (University of Hong Kong), Janeli Kotzé (Ministry of Education, South Africa), and Ingrid Bjerke (World Bank) on best practices around measuring and supporting effective teaching in the ECE classroom, drawing on perspectives from the field, research, and policy.

Also, we’d love to hear from you! Do you have ideas or suggestions for us? Would you like to implement Teach ECE in your context? Are you responsible for ECE teacher professional development in your country/region? Contact us with your suggestions, comments, and ideas for collaboration at teach@worldbank.org.

Article available at:

<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/scaling-quality-early-childhood-education-what-gets-measured-gets-done>