

# Grade R Research Project

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# Grade R Research Project:

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## Final Report

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## ***Disclaimer***

The research findings do not necessarily represent the position of either the Department of Basic Education or the Department of Higher Education and Training.



**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
CSD	Centre for Social Development
DoBE	Department of Basic Education
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DoSD	Department of Social Development
EC	Eastern Cape
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ELRU	Early Learning Resource Unit
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ETDP SETA	Education Training and Development Practice
FET	Further Education and Training
FP	Foundation Phase
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
GET	General Education and Training
GETC	General Education and Training Certificate
GRADE R	Reception Year
HEIs	Higher Education Institutions
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
HoD	Head of Department
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
INSET	In-service Education and Training
IPET	Initial Professional Education and Training
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
NGOs	Non-government Organisations
NIP	National Integrated Plan for ECD
NPDE	National Professional Diploma in Education
NPFTED	National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OSD	Occupation Specific Dispensation
PED	Provincial Education Department
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAIDE	South African Institute for Distance Education
SGB	School Governing Body
UNISA	University of South Africa
WCED	Western Cape Education Department



## Executive Summary

This report is the result of a research project, funded by the Zenex Foundation, which investigated the readiness of the South African education system to formalise Grade R. We examine the readiness for Grade R at the level of the system, the teachers and the children in relation to what we want children to be able to do in Grade R, how we want teachers to teach and how teachers are prepared to teach.

In order to do this we conducted a desktop review of relevant policies and other research, and we conducted regional discussions and interviews, invited written submissions and conducted a limited number of site visits. A further component of the project consisted of 1<sup>st</sup> level programme reviews during which gaps were identified, particularly in relation to content but also to some extent in relation to how teachers are taught, the appropriateness of programmes for the widely diverse target audience, the level of support provided and assessment.

It quickly became clear that there is substantial research that has already been done, from which relevant and comprehensive recommendations have been put forward at the level of the system and at the level of teachers. We make the point that many of these recommendations are corroborated by this project.

The first issue raised was about the perception of Grade R in relation to the 0-9 continuum of childhood development and the National Curriculum Statement. It was highlighted that Grade R has the potential to play a bridging role into formal schooling, but that children's needs are still centred on the developmental domains and play. The needs of children are central to what teachers need to know and understand in order to provide quality teaching, and this should determine the kind of training they receive, including an understanding of how to facilitate learning through play, a critical understanding of the NCS, emergent literacy and numeracy facilitation, an ability to identify barriers to learning and provide appropriate support, an understanding of the relationship between parents, families, the community and school, and a sense of confidence and clarity on what it means to be a teacher.

This is related to the status of Grade R in general and the lack of status of Grade R teachers in particular. There is a lack of clarity on what qualification a Grade R teacher is expected to have, and a lack of access to appropriate further teacher education opportunities for many existing Grade R teachers. There appears to be some consensus that a BEd should be a goal for all Grade R teachers, but that given the diversity of the target audience alternatives may need to be explored.

A further concern is expressed about the drive to achieve universal enrolment in Grade R by 2010, and the possible resultant focus on quantity rather than quality. Although there may be a large budget for Grade R the perception is that there is not enough money, and that money is being spread too thinly. It is noted that the target has been shifted to 2014, and this provides an opportunity to focus more on the quality of Grade R.

A number of resources have been provided to Grade R teachers, which seem to have been widely distributed, although not always used. It is noted that some of the support documents, such as milestones for children, lesson plans and teacher guides are appreciated by teachers, although many of them are written in jargon and at a level of English that may not be easily internalised. Some anxiety was expressed about the lack of cohesion across the documents.

A major challenge identified is that of capacity on the ground to provide ongoing support and monitoring, including in the form of training workshops and the mediation of some of the resource materials. Other challenges surfaced, such as a lack of appropriate space and furniture.

Another theme that emerged highlighted the need for collaboration across the ECD sector and coordination within the provincial departments. This would apply to the relationship between curriculum support and institutional development support within the provincial departments, and when it comes to procurement of teacher training services. It is argued that collaboration is also going to be necessary to begin to address capacity challenges in provision of teacher training and ongoing support for teachers in their sites.

At the level of the system general recommendations are summarised under the headings of Policy and Strategy, Planning, Structures, roles and responsibilities, Systems and processes, Funding, Infrastructure, Teaching resources, Human resources, Monitoring and reporting, Risk management, Monitoring and Support, and the conceptualisation of Grade R.

In relation to teacher education we recommend a possible qualifications route which requires the development of a Level 6 ECD qualification that facilitates access from a Level 5 ECD to a Level 7 BEd.

Further recommendations pertain to collaboration and communication, in which we suggest that standard setting, programme development, and programme delivery including ongoing monitoring and support all require a collaborative effort to be effective and comprehensive.

In relation to programme development we summarise the key Grade R recommendations from the Wits research (GDE, 2009). We make some further recommendations, key among them being the setting of a standard set of core competencies for Grade R teacher education programmes nationally.

We end our general recommendations with suggestions for post-training support, for making teacher support documents more accessible, and for a deepening of existing support materials such as lesson plans.

Finally we take the general recommendations a step further by suggesting a way in which some of them can be packaged to address the ongoing professional development and support needs of Grade R teachers in three categories, namely teachers who are qualified teachers but not qualified to teach Grade R, those who have ECD Level 4 or 5 and who still need CPTD opportunities, whether or not they go on to a Level 6 or a BEd. These specific recommendations focus on the development of a programme outline for an ECD Level 6 qualification, and the development of CPTD course outlines and materials that incorporate collaborative ongoing support for Grade R teachers.

The report ends with a recommendation that the Zenex Foundation engage with the Department of Education to consider ways of disseminating not only this report, but also recommendations from other research more widely and of putting them into action.

## Overview

### Overall context

Grade R sits on the continuum of Early Childhood Development (ECD - defined in policy as 0-9 years), between care and development of children from 0-4 years and Grade 1-3 in the Foundation Phase. Since the issuing of White Paper 5 (DoE, 2001) there have been efforts to incorporate Grade R into the formal public and private schooling system. In large part, however, these efforts have not been informed by a common national vision. At meetings with the ECD directorate it was emphasised that Grade R needs to be seen as part of a continuum, integrated into the Foundation Phase and not a separate grade. The department is keen to be sure that the links between one part of the system and another are clear to teachers, teacher educators and other stakeholders. Due to the history of Grade R being perceived as a new and/or separate year, these links may be a challenging mind shift for some.

In this research project we have tried to find out what it means to integrate Grade R into the formal system, with a focus on three levels:

- readiness of children;
- readiness of teachers; and
- readiness of the system.

### Questions and objectives

Three main questions have been identified that need to be addressed:

- A. What do we want children to be able to do in Grade R?
- B. How do we want teachers to teach Grade R children?
- C. How does Grade R teacher education address the needs of Grade R children and their teachers?

### Area One

An analysis of the readiness for getting Grade R into the system will include analysing existing national and provincial standards, guidelines, and other policy and research documents, to identify what may be obstacles to effective implementation of Grade R in the Foundation Phase.

### Area Two

A critical evaluation of programmes across HEIs, FET Colleges and NGOs, in relation to standards and qualifications will result in recommendations for curriculum and curriculum guidelines for the implementation of Grade R as part of the Foundation Phase. The recommendations will be made with a view to the development of tools and materials that help teachers, teacher educators and other stakeholders to see the link between the standards and the practice. The project will review what exists, identify gaps and make recommendations about how to overcome barriers to effective implementation of Grade R in the Foundation Phase.

### Outputs

The project will produce:

- a. A desktop review, which will include analysis and recommendations for addressing obstacles to effective implementation of Grade R in the Foundation Phase.
- b. Based on the programme evaluations, a report that will outline:

- Recommendations for curriculum design and content for Grade R teachers
- Recommendations for teacher education materials and/or guidelines in the foundation phase with specific reference to Grade R
- Recommendations for a delivery plan for a pilot to test Grade R teacher materials and a Grade R component of Foundation Phase teacher education

## Methodology

There were several components to the research:

### Desktop review

A desktop review of relevant policies, policy documents, guidelines and research highlighted issues relevant to Grade R. There was a focus on more recent research, in particular:

- Eastern Cape Department of Education, Evaluation of the Accredited Training of Early Childhood Development Practitioners, Year One: of a three year cycle of research, Baseline study: Quality of Teaching and Learning in Grade R, 2008
- Gauteng Department of Education Directorate: Curriculum Development – GET, Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement in the Foundation Phase, March 2009, Wits School of Education.
- National Treasury of Republic of South Africa, Technical Assistance Unit, TAU ECD Grade R diagnostic Project: Consolidated Report and Recommendations, December 2008.

### Regional discussions, interviews and submissions

Regional discussions took place in W Cape, E Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal. In addition we conducted interviews with or received written submissions from departmental officials and other stakeholders who could not attend the regional discussions. The following table outlines the nature of the participants who contributed:

	Training providers	Government Officials	Teachers
<b>Submissions / interviews / site visits:</b>			
Limpopo	1		1
Free State	1		
KZN	1		4
Western Cape	1		
North West Province	1		
Gauteng	3	1	2
Mpumalanga			
Northern Cape	4		
Eastern Cape	1		6
<b>Regional discussions:</b>			
Western Cape	11	2	31
Gauteng	10		2
Kwa-Zulu Natal	10	2	
Eastern Cape	23	3 plus 2 national	

### Site visits

Six Grade R sites were visited, and they were all in the Eastern Cape. These sites covered a range of contexts. Three sites are in primary schools, and of those we felt that one showed good practice,

one showed mediocre practice and one showed practice that needs to be greatly improved. There were also a community site, a demonstration school, and an independent school.

### Programme reviews

A number of programmes and guidelines that deal directly or indirectly with Grade R were reviewed. The following table gives an indication of the spread of those programmes across the sector:

Institution	Number of Programmes
NGOs	7
FET colleges	2
HEIs	6
Government Guidelines	6

### Limitations

There are two notable limitations to this research. The first is that we were not able to conduct regional discussions in Limpopo Province, North West Province, Free State, Mpumalanga and Northern Cape. The response to over 50 invitations was disappointingly poor from those provinces, and since we had clustered all except the Limpopo Province with other provinces, it did not warrant the cost of extraordinary arrangements. This is unfortunate, since it is often those provinces which are neglected and unexplored. This could provide an argument for focusing follow-up work in one or more of those provinces.

In addition, the site visits were limited. Given some of the logistical challenges required to visit some of the sites we had intended to conduct the site visits at the same time as the regional discussions. Since these did not happen, once again the additional cost was not warranted.

Nonetheless, we tried to compensate for these limitations by inviting everyone to make a contribution by completing the regional discussions instrument. Many of those who were not able to participate in regional discussions managed to send in their responses in writing. These responses were then fed into the regional discussions.

We also believe that there is still a strong teachers' voice in this research. Many written responses included, directly or indirectly, comments from Grade R teachers, including 27 Grade R practitioners from the W Cape and . From comparison with other research done that involved extensive site visits we believe that the issues raised here are widespread.

### A History of Grade R research

We want to point out that many of the findings and recommendations emanating from the National Treasury research (National Treasury, December 2008), and indeed the research done for the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE, March 2009.) and the E Cape Provincial Department of Education (E Cape, 2008) were corroborated by this Grade R research project. In the light of this, and bearing in mind a frustration expressed generally that 'nothing happens from the research we do'<sup>1</sup>, the findings and recommendations from those reports will be referred to, re-asserted and/or

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<sup>1</sup> Participant in Gauteng regional discussion group, and echoed in other provinces

summarised here, as appropriate. The section of this report reflecting the conversations, observations and reviews will, we hope, add to some of these recommendations by focusing on quality, both within the system in relation to monitoring and support to Grade R and at the level of teachers in relation to quality teacher education and quality teaching and learning in Grade R classes.

We hope that this will serve to emphasise the high degree of consensus around what the challenges are, and the urgency of addressing the issues in order to make a difference to Grade R teaching and learning.

One of the overwhelming sentiments expressed over the years in many policy documents, research reports and discussions in this project is the need for Grade R to be conceptualised, and planned for, within the 0-9 continuum. This is expressed well in the National Treasury Report: 'In looking at Grade R in the context of a primary school, it may be sensible to look at the whole of the primary school catchment area, and look at what is best in terms of overall provision, including 0-4 and Grade R. In other words strategy should be both about the school and the ECD centres that are providing the schools with learners of Grade R age.' (National Treasury, 2008, page 9)

An overall finding of the National Treasury report is that quality Grade R is not achievable in the timeframes (by 2010) and that 'the key problem could well be the setting of 2010 as the final year for achieving the establishment of universal Grade R in schools.' (National Treasury, 2008, page 4). It was noted in the course of the conversations held for this research project that this finding appears to have been taken seriously, and that the timelines for universal access to Grade R have been shifted to 2014.

## **Desktop Review**

Much has been written about the challenges in ECD (0-9). During the course of this research many people commented that "we all know what the challenges are ...". The focus of this desktop review will be on more recently published research, in particular the report of the Technical Assistance Unit of the National Treasury (National Treasury, December 2008) which deals more specifically with some of the system issues, and the reports submitted to the Gauteng and Eastern Cape departments of Education respectively (Gauteng Department of Education, 2009; and Eastern Cape, 2008), which deal more with issues around quality in teacher education and in the Grade R classroom.

## **The Children**

The National Integrated Plan for Early Childhood Development (DoE, DoH, DoSD, 2005) proposes a range of services to support children's holistic development. Grade R could presumably fall within the third level of support, namely formal services such as crèches, day-care centres and preschools, though formal schooling within the Foundation Phase is not specifically mentioned in the NIP because the focus is on 0-4. This begins to point to one of the first challenges with Grade R – the fact that it appears to straddle the 0-4 phase and the 6-9 phase in childhood development within the system. The National Treasury report notes that

There is much confusion as to what quality Grade R entails. It is vitally important that the DoE sets out clearly what a quality grade R class is, including being explicit about the importance of structured play for this age group, the expected methodologies to achieve Grade R learning

outcomes, and a number of measures and indicators that can be used to judge the quality of provision. Without such clarity it is likely that the focus will continue to be on numerical targets ... Unfortunately, these ... do not equate to quality,' (National Treasury, 2008, page 11).

In the Report of the National Commission on Special Needs in Education and Training and the National Committee on Education Support Services (NCSNET, NCESS, 1997), they note that the 'link between the 6-9 phase and previous years is often not adequately noted and addressed.'

Since at a policy level Grade R is part of the ten year compulsory schooling band the Grade R curriculum needs to be treated as part of the NCS and related curriculum guidelines. This means it should comprise three learning areas, namely Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills (DoE, 2002). It should be noted however, that in the Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement (DoBE, 2009) a recommendation was made to change the Foundation Phase Learning Programmes to four subjects, namely Home Language, First Additional Language, Mathematics, and General Studies. A question arises here about the organisation of the curriculum in this way is appropriate for Grade R, which needs a much more integrated approach with an emphasis on play. We need to examine what it actually means to have Grade R as part of the Foundation Phase. Should it be strictly incorporated into formal schooling, and therefore have the same curriculum components as Grade 1, or should it be seen as a bridge into formal schooling from home and/or preschooling, with more emphasis on the role it plays in facilitating continued childhood development on the 0-9 continuum? The authors of the Eastern Cape research raise the same question (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008, page 9) when they caution that

The usefulness of the Reception Year to assist children to be literate, numerate and life-ready at the required levels must be called into question in the light of the evidence of illiteracy of children in Grade 6 as cited in the National Reading Strategy 2008. Will the Reception Year assist in raising levels of literacy or will it be absorbed into the status quo and become part of the problem?

## **The System**

There are two main documents that guide the implementation of Grade R: White Paper 5 (DoE, 2001) and the National Norms and Standards for Grade R Funding (NSF-Grade R) (DoE, 2009c). According to White Paper 5, public schools are intended to carry the mainstream of Grade R.

The National Treasury Report (National Treasury, 2008, page 6) highlights several 'key system failures'. These are directly related to planning, finances and procurement, though they obviously have a bearing on resources and education and training of practitioners too. The National Treasury Report makes several comments about the lack of planning according to project management principles, including the lack of quality targets, measures and indicators, and including the problems of not involving important stakeholders in planning.

In their view this has led to at least an impression being given that numerical targets are a priority, at the expense of quality implementation (National Treasury, 2008, page 5). This view is supported by the Eastern Cape research (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008, page 9) which says that

The province has increased access to Reception Year. The quality of the classrooms and of the educational programmes, however, may generally be harmful to the wellbeing of children.

This raises concerns about the readiness of schools to incorporate children into the Reception Year.

## **Funding**

In the long run Grade R funding is intended to be accommodated within the normal, overall functioning and budgeting of public schools. Provincial departments take responsibility for registration of Grade R facilities, subsidization of Grade R and funding of Grade R programmes.

Paragraph 208 of the NSF-Grade R (DoE, 2009c) states that “the per learner cost determined by the PEDs must cover the full cost of a basic package of inputs. This basic package of inputs must include the cost of an educator working as an ECD practitioner, teaching a class of a size deemed reasonable by the PED, as well as non-personnel recurrent inputs required by the Grade R learners such as learner support materials, minor building repairs, utilities such as electricity and water, administrative support, copying of materials and media collections.”

According to the National Treasury report “... the reality is that not many provinces have made special provisions for Grade R infrastructure, furniture, outdoor play areas, security and ablution facilities.” (National Treasury, 2008, page 4) The National Treasury report notes that there are difficulties and inconsistencies with delegation of funds once they get to the provinces.

‘There is a very large budget for Grade R and the national Department has ensured very clear allocation to provinces. However, within provinces the financial planning processes are not conducted in a consistent manner. In most provinces, funds are not delegated to districts, but rather are held centrally and paid directly to providers, contractors, schools and suppliers. ... When questions are asked at district level there is no knowledge of funding allocations, and at a school level the perception is of very limited funding being available. ... the general consensus is that money is being spread too thin, and that this is the result of the emphasis on 2010.’ (National Treasury, 2008, page 7)

It is noted that in some provinces much has been done since the National Treasury report. Continuing challenges in relation to funding and procurement are reflected in the regional discussion section.

The Eastern Cape research (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008, page 91) indicated that ‘... the Department at all levels was not yet ready for roll out of the Reception Year programme, since regular monitoring and support programmes were inadequate in all districts and in many districts were not yet in place at school level for the Reception Year. As a result, ECD practitioners were not able to carry out their roles and responsibilities as they have been taught.

## **Human Resources**

It seems to be widely understood that a prerequisite for ensuring quality teaching is ongoing monitoring and support. In an earlier report SAIDE (SAIDE, 2007) found that with the exception of Western Cape, which has a dedicated provincial office for ECD and Foundation Phase, and where there are up to 20 dedicated regional positions, most provinces lack the capacity and experience to run a comprehensive Grade R programme. Our conversations and more recent research appear to indicate that this is still the case. According to the National Treasury Report ‘Adding Grade R to the existing responsibilities of people with no previous knowledge of Grade R, and limited understanding of what it entails, is viewed as a problematic approach’ (National Treasury, 2008, page 6). The report suggests that this is exacerbated by the lack of planning which leads to

confusion over responsibility and accountability within the system. 'It would appear that there is a deep problem related to the assumption of schools and school management being able to take on this complex project.' (National Treasury, 2008, page 6). But it is also pointed out that in addition to staff capacity, a key challenge in monitoring and evaluation of Grade R is having agreed on quality criteria and 'systematic reporting within a detailed strategy and plan in each province.' (National Treasury, 2008, page 9)

### **Teaching resources**

In 2008 the Foundations for Learning campaign produced an Assessment Framework for the Foundation Phase (DoE, 2008). This document does not include Grade R. Other Foundations for Learning materials found on the Thutong website (in the Foundation Phase space) included 'Assessment Guidelines for Foundation Phase Grades R-3' and a 'Numeracy Handbook for Foundation Phase Teachers Grades R-3'.<sup>2</sup> In the Foundations for Learning space there is a link to a 'Grade R Teacher Resource Book', but the link does not work.<sup>3</sup> A Grade R Toolkit, known as the 'pizza box' because it comes in a brown cardboard box, consists of, inter alia, lesson plans for Grade R, milestones and posters. The 'pizza box' has apparently been distributed to all schools where there is Grade R. The researchers were unable to get hold of a copy of the 'pizza box'. We were able to do a quick review of a copy that one of the district officials had borrowed from a school. Even she did not have a copy of her own. These teaching resources were included in the programme reviews for this research, and are incorporated into that section of this report.

A concern was expressed in the National Treasury report that 'resources need competencies at practitioner level that are generally not yet in place, in particular in relation to organised play and teaching in a multi-lingual environment.' (National Treasury, 2008, page 8)

### **Teacher education**

In White Paper 5 (DoE, 2001), paragraphs 21-28 deal specifically with reception year schooling. Inter alia it states that:

- Implementation of Grade R must run parallel with the preparation and upgrading of teachers with specific skills, within a recognized and respected career path framework, and
- Implementation should also be accompanied by an appropriate curriculum, the availability of learning and teaching materials, appropriately trained support staff and resource centres.

White Paper 5 (DoE, 2001) also recommends that Grade R be incorporated into a career path for non-formally trained ECD practitioners, implying that the majority of Grade R teachers will have received training from non-government ECD agencies. In the SAIDE report (SAIDE, 2007) it was indicated that there was "no clear statement ... anywhere as to who is employable as a Grade R teacher, what their minimum qualification levels should be (both in terms of certification and in knowledge or skills terms), which institutions or agencies should be training them and certifying them, etc."

The Norms and Standards for Educators have not yet been finalized to include Grade R. This is because there is not yet a clear requirement in terms of teacher qualifications for Grade R, although

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<sup>2</sup> Both accessed at <http://www.thutong.doe.gov.za/Default.aspx?alias=www.thutong.doe.gov.za/foundationphase> on 24 Feb 2010.

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.thutong.doe.gov.za/Default.aspx?alias=www.thutong.doe.gov.za/foundationsforlearning>

in the National guidelines for costing Grade R the recommended qualification for a Grade R educator is an ECD NQF LEVEL 4 (DoE, June 2008). It became clear that this is not applied consistently across the provinces. For example, in Gauteng the appointment of a Grade R teacher by an SGB should require at least an ABET Level 4 qualification and 3 years' ECD experience (GDE, 2008). In the Guidelines for ECD Services (DoSD, 2006) the DoSD sets the requirement for ECD practitioners in registered centres as Level 4 for the supervisor and Level 1 for other practitioners. Government-employed Grade R teachers have to register with SACE, which means they need an ECD Level 4 qualification for provisional registration, and an ECD Level 5 qualification for full registration. However, there have been reports of challenges even regarding the Level 5. One ECD training provider in KZN reported the following challenge with educators who have a National Diploma in ECD Level 5 which is an M+2 qualification:

Our concern is that there are many ECD training centres in SA who are fulfilling the skills gap in that they are graduating ECD educators – unfortunately when the graduates apply for a job (of which they (sic) is a huge demand) at a public school they are declined as they do not meet the minimum requirements of M+3, or they are offered a GB [governing body] post with a paltry salary, or as with the ETDPSETA given a stipend, obviously most discouraging for would-be-educators.

The National Treasury research indicates that while there appear to be large scale plans for the training of practitioners, through the EPWP, the ETDP SETA and the Higher Education Institutions, they are concerned that 'none of the programmes specifically focus on the practitioner for a Grade R class (National Treasury, 2008, page 8). The report also points to the need for Grade 1 teachers, school principals, Heads of Department in schools and district personnel to be included in some way in the training of Grade R teachers. The report comments that it is 'appropriate to focus on how the entire system is working, ...' (National Treasury, 2008, page 8 and page 4), and not just the Grade R teacher.

In an informal interview with Linda Biersteker about the work she did with the HSRC in researching the scaling up of ECD in SA, she expressed the opinion that the issue of take-up of higher level qualifications is directly related to issues of salaries, career pathing and progression. Minimum salaries for ECD practitioners should be set and linked to qualifications and responsibility. In practice Grade R teachers are paid between R1000 and R1500 compared with R6000 for other teachers. Anecdotal evidence suggests that this has increased in some provinces to between R3000 and R5000, and may be formally increased by 2014 to the minimum salary of an unqualified teacher.

In relation to quality assurance of teacher education the HSRC (HSRC, 2008) indicates that In 2007, there were 156 providers accredited to offer ECD qualifications, mostly with the ETDP SETA but some with the Council for Higher Education. While the quality assurance process including provider accreditation, approval of learning programmes and verification of results is seen to be positive in theory, a number of concerns have been raised by training providers who perceive a lack of consistency with which the processes are applied, the administrative and paper work burden and whether the system measures quality at all.

The requirement for all private providers and NGOs offering FET qualifications to register with the DoE as a Private FET institution has been subject to a number of difficulties, and very few ECD NGOs and private providers had yet done so although this is mandatory from January 2008. Some

NGOs have solved this problem by 'linking' with an FET college and offering ECD and/or fundamentals courses through them. For example, in the Western Cape FET colleges are awarded the learnerships and they sub-contract all or part of the training to an NGO. Nonetheless, since much of the Grade R teacher training is done through NGOs this will have to be resolved if NGOs are to play a role in training Grade R teachers.

ECD (prior to schooling) is not recognized in the Criteria for the Recognition and Evaluation of Qualifications for Employment in Education based on the Norms and Standards for Educators (Government Gazette, 2000). This means that teacher training institutions do not receive a subsidy for ECD training. Most HEIs that previously offered an ECD qualification now offer a BEd with a small Grade R component.

In a SAQA study (SAQA, 2007) it was noted that articulation and progression have a sound basis in policy but not in practice. This is due to:

- Lack of incentive due to poor salaries
- Credits not given for transfer between institutions
- HEIs not giving credits
- Challenge of numeracy component

This SAQA study also noted some challenges in relation to difficulties that many learners have with mathematical literacy components for the qualifications and a serious lack of the articulation between different training providers at the same level or vertically from FET providers to HEIs.

The Draft Findings of the HSRC Teacher Qualifications Survey (TQS) (DoE, 2009d), commissioned by the DoE, provide some interesting insights into the qualification status of Grade R teachers. The survey was of a statistically significant sample of schools nationally. 7380 serving teachers in 580 public schools completed survey questionnaires. In the sample there were 374 Grade R teachers, of which only 42% have a professional teaching qualification. By contrast, of the 1424 Foundation Phase teachers in the sample, 93% have a professional teaching qualification. Of the 42% with recognised professional qualifications such as a Teacher's Diploma or NPDE, only 12% have a specialisation in pre-primary teaching. Less than 5% of the professionally unqualified Grade R teachers (i.e. the other 48%) have ECD/ABET qualifications. The survey also found that 82% of serving Grade R teachers have a Senior Certificate (Grade 12), but mostly without exemption. From this it was concluded that most Grade R teachers need upgrading and/or targeted professional development. Even those who have professional qualifications need to receive upgrading or continued professional development specifically for Grade R.

In the Eastern Cape research (Eastern Cape Department, 2008) reported that

The quality of learning and teaching in 250 Reception Year classrooms, however, has been found to be exceptionally low. Fully competent ECD programmes (according to the NCS for Reception Year and the Level 4 ECD practitioner outcomes) exist in only about twelve schools of the two hundred and fifty which were visited in this first cycle of research.

It further suggests that

- Training at Level 4 is a necessary but not sufficient condition for positive, holistic development of children as well as positive 'school-readiness' to occur. The primary condition is the support and monitoring of the Reception Year Practitioner within the Foundation Phase and the school. (page 10)

## The Teachers

### Quality Grade R teaching and learning

In White Paper Five (DoE, 2001) the DoE undertakes to “expand ... its work on practitioner development and career pathing for Reception year practitioners and pre-reception year practitioners ... (and) to develop best practice models for the management and quality development of pre-reception year programmes” (paragraph 5.3.4). It indicates that Grade R should be supported through:

- Training in teaching methods
- Monitoring and support of practitioners
- Provision of books
- Registration criteria (including safe and educationally sound environments)
- Registration of practitioners

From various interactions with the ETDP SETA and the DoE we understand that consideration is now being given to the issue of ECD teacher qualifications requirements and pathways. For example, in the ETDP SETA’s presentation at the ECD Conference in July 2009 (ELRU, CSD, ETDP SETA and SAIDE , July, 2009, page 4) we were reminded that

the level 4 ECD Qualification (ID 23116) was reviewed and replaced in 2007 and the Level 1 ECD Qualification will fall away eventually. What is available now is the GET ABET Qualification with an ECD specialisation or skills programme made up of Level 1 and 2 Unit Standards.

This GETC ABET qualification specialising in ECD has a fundamental (home and additional language) and a vocational component. According to a diagram presented by the ETDP SETA as an NGO forum meeting hosted by the ECD Institute in Gauteng it was expected to be offered at Levels 2, 3 and 4 (ETDP SETA, undated).

The EPWP focuses on training, job creation and expanding services in ECD, with a focus on 0-4 year olds. The main components are learnerships for practitioners, skills programmes and parenting programmes. Under the EPWP ECD programme (DoSD, DoE & DoH, 2004) Grade R teachers are the target for NQF Level 5 qualifications. The Level 5 (Higher Certificate in ECD and Higher Diploma in ECD) was registered in 2003, and can include a Grade R specialization. However, the Higher Certificate in ECD only offers 120 credits and is widely regarded as a waste of time. The Higher Diploma offers 240 credits.

There is a relatively new entry-level occupational qualification for ECD, registered in October 2007, at Level 4, the FET Certificate in ECD Level 4. The ECD Alliance has been developing a national curriculum for the ECD core of this qualification, and providers such as READ, Klein Karoo, and some FET colleges, also offer the new FETC.

Given some of the other challenges mentioned already, especially that of time and a lack of capacity within the system, and given that many Grade R teachers are being, or have been trained at Level 5, we note the suggestion made by the HSRC (HSRC, June 2008, page 33) in relation to 0-4 training provision.

Research suggests that distance education, which seems better suited to learners with higher formal education levels, may with proper support systems be a way of dealing with the lack of accredited Level 5 training providers in many areas. The learnership model faces a number of

challenges but is seen to be the best option for upgrading the qualifications of those already working in the sector. With the development of model work sites/centres of excellence in different areas for practical experience it could be even more effective. RPL is still very undeveloped but given tight time frames for public funded learnerships becomes even more important so that training could focus on top up of existing competencies. More research is needed on the effectiveness of different delivery formats including IT based technologies with less reliance on face to face training.

## **Conversations, observations and reviews**

The following is a summary of conversations, interviews, observations and reviews held over a number of months. While there was mostly consensus on the issues raised we have also recorded those instances where there was some disagreement.

### **The Children**

The international definition of early childhood education/development includes children from birth to 9/10 years of age, which in South Africa includes children in pre-primary education and the Foundation Phase. Although in this country, Grade R is the first year of a 4-year Foundation Phase, from a philosophical and methodological point of view, it should also be seen as the last year of pre-primary as it should employ a similar educational approach. In this sense it is a bridge between the two phases.

Accordingly, Grade R children need what all pre-school children need – a safe, hygienic and stimulating environment with warm, caring and appropriately qualified teachers, who deliver an interactive, play-based programme which is aimed at the holistic development of each child (encouraging social, emotional, physical, intellectual, aesthetic and moral development).

Grade R continues to lay the foundation blocks for learning in Grade 1-3. Skills required for future learning, such as those developed as part of emergent literacy and emergent numeracy, need to be developed. In general there was consensus that Grade R children need to use all their senses to explore through experimental and developmental play, and to develop concepts. Through play and movement they develop physical large and small motor skills. Their play may sometimes be structured, either by an adult or by themselves. Through play they learn problem solving, creativity, concentration, perseverance, curiosity, coordination, confidence, a sense of order, independence, self-discipline, perseverance, cooperation, and a sense of wonder. Grade R children need to be exposed to music, drama, language and numeracy. Grade R children need to be met and guided at their own level with less regard for their age. They need to be active participants in their own learning and to get support and encouragement. From this they build strong relationships of trust. This was passionately emphasised by one participant who said “With all of these anything is possible!”

There was some debate about the extent to which Grade R children should learn to read and write, but there was no doubt about the importance of the development of emergent literacy (and numeracy) in the children’s home languages, with accompanying exposure to spoken English. This is linked to the provision of a child-friendly environment which, amongst other things, is a literacy-rich environment.

Just because a child has finished Grade R does not mean that all the necessary skills are in place. That's why it is a continuum. The Primary Schools need to be challenged on how "ready" they are for the Grade R learner, rather than vice-versa. Grade R is the transition to more formal learning, so certain skills and concepts have to be developed, while still employing appropriate pre-primary methodologies.

### **Curriculum**

It was argued in a number of conversations that if we accept the continuum between 0-4 and 5-9 as described above, then we should be seeing all foundation phase learning, but at least Grade R, in the framework of the developmental and progressive domains of early childhood. These are the emotional, cognitive, physical, social and spiritual domains. This has also been referred to as the three domains of psychomotor (sensorial and physical); socio-affective (social and emotional) and cognitive (building of synapses between brain cells for positive learning) development. (Eastern Cape, 2008, page 9)

Most participants agreed that teachers should be taught to critically understand the NCS within, or at least linked to, a developmental framework of progressive domains. Many Curriculum advisors or district officers and teachers have found the provision of milestones to be useful, though 'they weren't linked to the curriculum.' The point was made that somehow the National Curriculum Statement Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards of at least Grade R, but probably the whole of the Foundation Phase, need to be mapped onto the developmental domains and stages, as described, for example, in the National Early Learning Development Standards (DoE, 2009b). For example, we need to be sure that the NCS sufficiently covers perceptual skills in the Grade R Statement, and that this in turn is linked to the developmental domains of children, and the kinds of opportunities they need to be given to develop these skills. This sort of mapping would also help to emphasise progressive, holistic teaching and learning and make the link between Grade R and the rest of the 0-9 continuum. This sort of exercise also needs to help teachers to understand the underpinning and related methodologies that support progressive, holistic teaching and learning.

There should be a focus on the positive impact of holistic development on emergent literacy and numeracy, leading to continued literacy and numeracy development in the Foundation Phase.

### **The System**

Striking and consistent comments from respondents in the project highlighted the discontinuity between 0-4, Grade R, and the Foundation Phase within the system. On the one hand "there is a tug of war between the Department of Education and the Department of Social Services about who is responsible for which children"<sup>4</sup>. There appear to be only pockets of relative success in bringing together these two government departments in particular. It was noted during a presentation at the Eastern Cape ECD Colloquium<sup>5</sup> that one of the priorities for ECD for the Eastern Cape Department for 2010 is to provide accredited training to pre-Grade R practitioners and resources to pre-Grade R sites.

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<sup>4</sup> Western Cape participant

<sup>5</sup> The regional discussion for the E Cape was assimilated into an ECD colloquium that was organised by Rhodes University, and which was attended by a number of stakeholders across the sector, including departmental officials, NGOs and HEIs in the E Cape.

On the other hand there is a lack of cohesion and articulation between the different ECD qualifications, between levels on the NQF, including between the vocational and professional bands, and between different institutions offering teacher education.

There was fairly widespread criticism of the ECD learnerships. The issue of recruitment referred to in the desktop review was reiterated, as well as issues around the assessment processes in the learnerships and the funding of the learnerships. This is dealt with more under 'teacher education'.

Also, in at least three provinces some of the NGOs feel that they are not drawn in sufficiently and/or supported in the provision of Grade R training. This reflects the finding of the National Treasury Report that other stakeholders, such as Resource and Training Organisations (RTOs) have not been sufficiently involved in the planning process for the implementation of Grade R (National Treasury, 2008, page 5).

### **Government departments and schooling**

During one of the presentations given at the Eastern Cape ECD colloquium (Eastern Cape, 2010) the DCES for ECD Curriculum, W. Pretorius, outlined some of the challenges that the Eastern Cape is experiencing. One of the main challenges is the problem of understaffing in the districts to monitor implementation of curriculum. For example in Cradock, Graaff-Reinet and Sterkspruit there is only one DCES to attend to all Grade R-3 activities. In general there is a lack of support staff at District level to co-ordinate ECD programmes. Nonetheless it was pointed out that one of the National deliverables is for "A programme of support by districts to be developed with district advisors for a qualitative focus on improving outcomes." (Eastern Cape, 2010, page 9)

Other challenges outlined in a number of provinces include delays in infrastructure projects, procurement procedures and organisational challenges. For example, one province indicated that there is a structural separation between Curriculum Support and Institutional Development Support within the department. This leads to a number of challenges, including a lack of clear lines of communication between the two. So, often the institutional support doesn't correspond with the curriculum challenges facing Grade R teachers. An example was given of a procurement challenge in which a submission for a training tender is submitted, but the staff issuing the submission are not involved in any way in the briefing and decision making about awarding that tender. This can lead to criteria such as quality and cost being inappropriately valued. It was suggested that while it may be a good thing that the National Department is now taking over materials development as a result of the curriculum review recommendations (DoBE, 2009), there is uncertainty about what the National procurement procedures are in relation to quality.

### **Infrastructure and Resources**

It was reported that there has been an increase in infrastructure projects and distribution of resources such as jungle gyms and support materials to schools. For example in the Eastern Cape between 2007 and 2009 a number of guideline documents for Grade R were produced and used in training. This included a CD of best practice for teachers to watch during departmental visits, Grade R lesson plans for all 4 terms, and milestones for Grade R learners. Given the new directive about the development of resources at provincial level referred to above (DoBE, 2009) this work has now been put on hold.

Apparently the Grade R Toolkits, or 'pizza boxes' (referred to in the desktop review) have been sent to all schools with Grade R, though in Gauteng, for example, they have yet to do an audit to

find out exactly which schools received them. It was pointed out in other discussions that there have been challenges with distribution of all these resources to all the districts. A further challenge is that teachers may receive guideline documents, including lesson plans, but do not necessarily use them. It was not made explicit why teachers don't use them. It was pointed out, however, (EC participant) that the relationship between the lesson plans<sup>6</sup>, the milestones and the NCS is not always clear. From the programme and guideline reviews it became clear that often the guideline documents are complex, written in a jargonised, formal language that is not easily accessible. During many conversations the issue of the need for content gap workshops for in-service teachers was raised. So it is possible that a lack of alignment with the curriculum, a lack of content knowledge and inaccessible language, among others, could all have something to do with why lesson plans are not used.

It was noted that often where teachers don't have resources, such as lesson plans for example, they are often unable to improvise in creative ways. However, in most of the sites visited teachers were able to find and collect consumable resources, including from the children.

In most of the sites that were visited the most common challenge was the size of the classes relative to the space that they have. Particularly where the Grade R is attached to the primary school a common complaint was that the furniture was inappropriate for Grade R, and that the children couldn't play separately from the other children. Fencing and security were also common challenges.

### **Teacher education**

An important question that came up repeatedly in the regional discussions and interviews is 'Why is ECD 0-4 not seen as integrated into the formal pathway for Grade R?' Historically training for teachers in the 0-4 phase will have been non-formal, through either the Department of Social Development, or through NGOs. The question is do we want it remain that way? While 0-4 is not strictly speaking part of the brief of this project, if we are talking about a 0-9 continuum then we are obliged to give it some consideration. If that 0-9 continuum is to be mirrored in a teacher education pathway then 0-4 qualifications, and the 'practitioners' or teachers who study those qualifications, are the beginning of that pathway.

All respondents reported that once teachers had studied ECD Level 5 they struggled to continue with their studies and to get employment as a Grade R teacher in a public school. Some training agencies reported managing to put some of their Level 5 practitioners through the UNISA ECD course. Others reported problems with provincial departments not recognising the ECD Level 4 because they do not also have Grade 12. Another agency reported the poor quality of the Level 4 that practitioners received. They felt that the provider was not properly accredited to deliver a quality programme. This immediately limited real access even to a Level 5.

Many providers reported that the training offered through EPWP learnerships was hampered because the funding was insufficient to allow for enough training time and site support time to do justice to the courses. They also reported poor screening of learners, which often resulted in 'setting learners up to fail', because the level of the learnership is inappropriate for the learners. This also points to a lack of proper quality assurance of EPWP learnership programmes, particularly in relation to issues of assessment and site support. Some participants went as far as to

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<sup>6</sup> Accessed <http://ecdfoundationphase.250free.com> on 22 February 2010 at 10h30

say that the learnerships attracted the wrong people because they offer free training, plus a stipend, to unemployed people. This means the incentive is too heavily skewed towards getting an income, rather than getting quality training to be an ECD teacher. It was also suggested that the EPWP, run through the Department of Labour emphasises skills training, rather than a balance of skills and theory. It was felt that this devalues the ECD field. It was suggested that the DoL funding should rather be through SETAs and HEIs to ensure quality training.

There was a high level of consensus that eventually all Grade R teachers should have a degree in education. There was also agreement on the notion that a person with a Level 4 in ECD should move through a level 5 or 6 diploma to gain access to a BEd in which there are core subjects generic to children on the 0-9 continuum, and which then offers specialisations in ECD (0-4) and/or Grade R and/or Foundation Phase. This then provides students with a qualification which holds equal status and remuneration. The CSD model was offered as an interesting one in this regard (ELRU, CSD, ETDP SETA and SAIDE, 2009). We give a summary of the model under our recommendations.

However, a strong feature of teacher education in the ECD sector is the nature of the target audience. Historically many of the ECD practitioners are women who do not have Grade 12, but who have completed either the ECD Level 4 and/or the ECD Level 5. A large number of these women are good teachers, and some of them have gone on to teach Grade R, either in public schools or in community schools, as envisaged in White Paper 5 (DoE, 2001). We need to think about what we are expecting of these teachers in relation to, for example, interpreting and implementing the NCS, language issues, etc.

It was strongly felt that it may not be possible to come up with a single teacher education qualification pathway that caters for the diversity of the target audience. Either courses and programmes need to build in bridging to deal with issues such as literacy and numeracy fundamentals and academic literacy, or alternative routes need to be provided. It was suggested that consideration should be given to introducing teaching assistants. This could help particularly in relation to large classes, and could become a career option for someone who does not want to move further along the qualifications route. In the Western Cape it was noted that there had been a course for teaching assistants that was very useful and helped in classes, but that it is now being phased out. We are also aware of a teaching assistants' course in Kwa-Zulu Natal. We understand that the Department of Higher Education is keen to give careful consideration to developing career pathing for ECD.

The ECD Level 4 needs to be accessed by people who have training or qualifications in Community Development Work, since this is regarded as an important component of the work done with young children and their families. It was suggested that Community Development is a very important component for ECD outreach workers. It is noted that there is provision for an ECD specialisation in the Community Development Qualification though there may be insufficient credits assigned to it. It was felt that for teachers the standard on working with Families and communities should be sufficient. Some participants expressed that idea that this aspect of Community Development Work should in fact be carried through all ECD programmes at all levels right through to the BEd.

In terms of delivery the idea of NGOs and FET colleges offering training from Level 2 to 5, and then working in partnership with HEIs beyond Level 5 was popular. It was recognised that while

NGOs do not have capacity to provide Level 6 training they could be contracted by universities to offer certain, in particular practical components.

This would require cooperation on a number of levels, including collaborative design of qualifications across the different quality assurance bodies (ETDP SETA, CHE, Umalusi and the QCTO), and collaborative programme and course design and delivery across institutions. Qualifications and programmes would have to be cognate to allow for articulation between programmes and institutions. This would have to include paying attention to the relationship between the vocational, professional and academic strands of teacher education. It was emphasised that in relation to teacher education all these stakeholders have a common purpose.

The need for communication, cooperation, teamwork, support and supervision in and between ECD, Grade R and FP teachers was identified. This could be facilitated by curriculum advisors or district officers within the department, but to do this they would need to build capacity.

A Western Cape participant summed up her opinion of what needs to be done to improve implementation by saying “We need better qualified teachers who are registered and properly paid, and who have a pride for their profession.”

### **The Teachers (and parents)**

There was agreement in all the conversations that the continuum of needs of children 0-9 should be at the heart of the teacher education programmes that are offered. Because Grade R is in the middle of the continuum, both developmentally and structurally, a balance needs to be reached between a purely play-based approach and preparing children for formal learning. It is possible that Foundation Phase teaching could also benefit from finding that balance. Teachers need to understand the link between all the developmental domains, how development is facilitated through play-based learning, and the role of mediation in early childhood teaching. This is illustrated by the following submission:

“... some of the 5 or 6 year olds come into a school at a 2 – 3 year old level in some of the domains, needing support and guidance. It is important that a teacher understands the development of the child from 0 – 4 in order to guide such a child.”

Children in Grade R are still learning about who they are and coming to terms with themselves as individual people separate from others, in particular from their parents or parent figures, so parental involvement is critical.

The optimal age for language and literacy development is in the early years, starting prior to the age of 1 year! Parents need to be supported and helped to see their role and responsibility, and to understand the importance and nature of multilingual language development.

In order to facilitate developmentally appropriate learning teachers need to themselves have a good understanding of the content. This is particularly relevant in relation to numeracy and language. Teachers need to have numeracy understanding themselves, and know how to teach it appropriately. They also need to have a good grasp of their own home language at least, if not that of the majority of the children, but also of English, and how to teach second languages, particularly in spoken form.

From the conversations and interviews we have categorised what Grade R teachers need to know, understand and be able to do into seven categories:

- Language
- Numeracy
- Children's background and understanding the community
- Child development and learning theories, and curriculum
- Methodologies that support those frameworks and application of those methodologies
- Teacher agency, including what it means to be a teacher, the understanding of roles and the development of self-esteem.

While the following is not exhaustive we felt that it was useful to include at least some of the many ideas that emerged about the kinds of things teachers should know and be able to do in relation to each of these categories.

#### Language

- Be fluent in at least two languages
- Understand the role of language in teaching and learning
- Understand how children learn language and literacy
- Understand the role of stories in language (including R & Wr) development
- Understand the role of mediation in drawing and emergent writing process

#### Numeracy

- Have a sound understanding of number concepts
- Understand how children learn number concepts
- Understand how to teach numeracy in appropriate ways

#### Children's background and understanding the community

- Engage with parenting issues (parenting approaches such as attachment parenting), community issues (such as community reinvestment, child rights, cultural appreciation), and basic counseling skills that enable teachers to fulfill their pastoral role.
- Access resources within communities and the environment;
- Understand barriers to learning

#### Frameworks for how children develop and learn, and curriculum

- Know how children develop and learn
- Understand the frameworks within which they operate (policies and regulations about ECD learning sites and children's rights and the curricula);
- Engage with theories of child development
- Incorporate children's prior experience, maturation rate, style of learning, needs and interests into teaching and learning.
- Engage critically with the Grade R curriculum as described in the National Curriculum Statement.

#### Methodologies that support those frameworks

- Understand and implement methodologies that facilitate progressive, holistic and integrated teaching and learning.
- Facilitate children's learning in a non-threatening and caring manner
- Enforce positive discipline

- Provide programmes appropriate to the developmental levels of children
- Observe and conduct formative assessment of children.
- Understand and apply the principles of first and second language teaching
- Understand the limitations of workbooks and worksheets for young children

#### Application in the classroom

- Critically apply learning and teaching theories and methodologies with children
- Create a physical and emotional environment conducive for learning and development;
- Effectively manage a classroom using different strategies;
- Write and keep records of observations, progress of children, health issues, attendance matters and relevant administration;
- Conduct and implement appropriate short- and long-term planning;
- Understand, identify and refer early barriers to learning and children who need special care;
- Adapt to official changes and demands in the curriculum;
- Adapt plans to suit the abilities, needs and interests of the children;
- Access and develop teaching and learning resources;
- Value children's constructive errors
- Provide appropriate and supportive feedback

#### Teacher identity

- Have a critical self-awareness
- Have respect for children and their cultures.
- Be a life-long learner
- Reflect critically on cultural values and children's rights
- Perceive her or himself as part of a wider community
- Understand teaching as a process of reflection-in-action.
- In summary, need to have the 3 R's – Respect, Reflection and Responsibility

In particular, it was pointed out that not only should we pay attention to what teachers are taught but also how they are taught. Many student teachers will not have had model teaching themselves. Teacher education programmes need to model the way that we want them to teach.

#### **Barriers to effective teaching**

In response to a question about what the barriers are to implementation, one of the biggest barriers mentioned was the lack of relevantly trained teachers who can use appropriate resources and who understand the developmental stages of young children. Inexperience and poor qualifications are "compounded by a low self-image of the Grade R teacher. There is reluctance from teachers to accept Grade R teachers as their peers. Practitioners who qualify move to better positions because the remuneration and status are better."<sup>7</sup>

A number of cases were cited where a Grade R teacher moves on to other opportunities, to be replaced by a Grade 12 learner with no Grade R experience. This is just one of the reasons given to explain why there appears to be a lack of motivation and a lack of content knowledge.

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<sup>7</sup> Limpopo submission

Many respondents cited the teachers' attitudes as barriers to effective teaching in the classroom. This ranged from a lack of motivation for reasons related to salaries, working conditions and status, to a lack of confidence stemming from not knowing what to do, to the need for a shift in the way teachers think about Grade R and the way in which they see themselves as Grade R teachers. For example, it was suggested that teachers need to be more creative and flexible about what a 'classroom' is, and what can and should be learnt in such a space. One headmaster visiting a good ECD centre was cited as saying, "I cry for the children in my grade R classes. This is where they should be, doing what you are doing with the children"<sup>8</sup>. It was suggested that "Grade R teachers are in fact play facilitators with specialised skills ... There are too many formal and mindless worksheet type activities."<sup>9</sup>

A lack of understanding of ECD and Grade R by Heads of Department (HODs) and principals points to a lack of leadership in many schools around Grade R implementation. This is related to a pressure from Grade 1 teachers for children to already know and be able to do things which are part of their ongoing development on the 0-9 continuum. In other words there is often a break in the teaching continuum from 0-9. In those sites where there was reported to be a supportive relationship between the Grade R and the rest of the school implementation seemed to be easier.

Other barriers included:

- The exclusion of parents and the community, not taking advantage of the valuable role they play in supporting real learning. Related to this is the expectation that parents have of formal education for young children.
- Teaching in large and overcrowded classes with no assistants - it was suggested that not only do the large numbers of children in classes hinder good teaching, but that it also brings out the worst in teaching, making the teacher more authoritarian and directive.
- Language barriers when the language of instruction in Grade R is not the child's mother tongue.
- A lack of early identification of barriers to learning including barriers caused by a basic lack of nutrition through to simple screening for hearing, sight and other barriers.
- A low level of partnerships among all potential stakeholders, including the community, teachers, government departments, non-government providers (NGOs), FET colleges and HEIs. This lack of partnerships has resulted in challenges in programming and progression and inconsistencies in standards. Issues such as a lack of capacity have the potential to be at least partially addressed through cooperative strategies.
- A lack of time for adequate training and ongoing support, since teachers are expected to be in class and often cannot find substitutes to be with the children. It was noted that Saturday classes are not as effective as afternoon classes or classes during the holidays, though even these have their own associated challenges.

### **Programme and Guideline Reviews**

A number of existing Grade R teacher education programmes and provincial guidelines were reviewed. Not all the programmes were explicitly aimed at training Grade R teachers, but had Grade R components or electives.

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<sup>8</sup> Cited in a Limpopo submission

<sup>9</sup> Free State submission

The first level reviews were intended to identify in what way the programmes help us to answer the three key research questions:

- A. What do we want children to be able to do in Grade R?
- B. How (and what) do we want teachers to teach Grade R children?
- C. How does the teacher education system and teacher education prepare teachers to teach Grade R?

The analysis of the programme reviews was based on the extent to which the programmes facilitated access to learning. In this way we begin to see not only whether the programmes address the needs of Grade R children and their teachers, but also how they do this. In other words the issue of the quality of the programmes is brought into focus. In essence quality is about how the process of learning is made accessible to the learner. We believe that a quality programme will ensure that '...learners ... have access to and ... [are] supported in the entire range of practices that ground new knowledge they are expected to acquire.' (SAIDE, 2003, page 26) ... in a range of different situations.

SAIDE's concept of access and quality involves understanding programme (and course or materials) design in terms of ten strands:

- Planning
- The learning process
- Context
- Resources
- Support
- Assessment
- Administration
- Content
- Structure and links
- Quality Assurance

Due to the nature of the review we were not able to comment on a couple of the 'strands', namely administration, quality assurance and, to some extent, planning. In relation to the other strands, we have identified a number of gaps in the programmes overall. Many programmes had a number of strengths, and these are included in our recommendations. It should be noted that not all the programmes highlighted all the gaps we identified, as follows:

#### Planning

In some cases, due to the nature of the documentation and materials that we had access to, we were not able to review the extent and nature of the planning in the programmes. It should be noted here that we believe that a quality programme will take all of the 'strands' into careful consideration for planning purposes. From the discussions and interviews it is clear that one of the clear issues for planning programmes is how to attract new teachers into Grade R and how to ensure that existing teachers are providing quality teaching. While this may primarily be a departmental quality assurance mandate, nonetheless programme design and development needs to consider ways in which courses are relevant, accessible and attractive to potential students.

#### Learning Process

With the exception of one or two programmes there was a general tendency to provide unmediated and some times long texts, for students to read. It is suggested that lengthy notes and a reliance on lecturing inhibits access to the learning process by student teachers. The learning needs to be interactive and mediated either by the teacher educator and/or the materials, otherwise opportunities to model best practice teaching are lost.

### Context

Programme developers need to be more acutely aware of the diversity of the target audience. If this is ignored then barriers to learning such as language and contextual barriers are created by the programmes themselves. This has significant consequences for implementation in different contexts, including the ways in which barriers to learning experienced by the children are addressed, or perhaps not addressed.

### Resources

To the extent that this is about access to resources for children, many programmes do not place enough emphasis on how to use appropriately the resources that they make. In addition programmes could be encouraging more creativity and innovation in relation to children's resources. But this is also about access to resources that will increase teachers' own understanding of quality teaching. This would include things such as access to additional reading materials, and the opportunity to practice teaching in optimal environments.

### Support

The idea of support is related to the target audience and to the learning process. Support, in various ways, is a non-negotiable for quality teacher education. We are aware that there are many difficulties associated with providing support, including time and, therefore, funding. However, the reviews revealed the need for more frequent visits during and after training, more systematized monitoring of student implementation, and for clearer and more accessible guidance through the materials and through interaction.

### Assessment

Assessment in teacher education is always a challenge. There is a concern that a portfolio is seen as an easy option for assessing teachers. Portfolios are often experienced as challenging and stressful by trainees, and they are not an effective assessment of practical implementation in the classroom or on site. Some of the reviews revealed limitations of assessment practices in relation to reflection by teachers on their own learning and practice, and peer assessment.

### Content

The content gaps we identified were dealt with to different degrees and at different levels within the programmes. We have simply stated here that content which we believe could benefit from a review of the extent to which they are adequately and appropriately covered. Of course, this should ideally be done with consideration for the minimum qualifications for a Grade R teacher.

- Positive and constructive discipline
- Planning for teaching, including classroom management
- Assessment of young children
- Facilitating learning and sustained critical and creative thought in children through play, movement, creative art activities, music
- Universal values
- Understanding early childhood development on a continuum between 0-9

- Translation into practice / application
- Teacher identity and agency
- Encouraging creative, innovative and flexible teaching in the classroom
- Differentiated teaching
- Early screening, identification, assessment and support of barriers to learning
- Opportunities for making and using teaching materials and building up age-appropriate resources, for example choosing quality stories that we know children will enjoy.

In general it was felt that there is an over-emphasis on records that should be in place, and administration and compliance with policies.

In addition, later in the report, we have recommended that compulsory core content should be prescribed for all Grade R programmes (see page 32), addressed with the relevant content and emphasis and at the appropriate levels within different qualifications along the ECD qualifications pathway.

#### Structure and links

It was felt that insufficient structural and content links are made to the 0-4 phase and to the Foundation Phase. In addition to this programme developers should consider building in more backward and forward links to create constructive repetition that emphasises the holistic nature of early childhood development and teaching. For example, a module or unit in a programme that examines emergent literacy would usefully link it back to a previous unit or module on developmental stages of children, and forwards to a unit on theories of language learning.

In relation to the over-emphasis on policies and administration required for teaching it was felt that this would be more usefully dealt with in an integrated way and consolidated towards the end of the programme, with clear exemplars given.

#### Quality Assurance

While this strand could not be sufficiently reviewed in relation to each particular programme, it should be noted here that many providers complained about the lack of coherence and consistency in relation to quality. This perhaps points to the need for the development of clear quality criteria across the system for the quality assurance of Grade R training programmes.

## Recommendations

### General Recommendations for improved implementation of Grade R

At this point we would like to reiterate that there is a clear and detailed analysis of options and recommendations for improving the systems for the implementation of Grade R, contained in the National Treasury Report (2008, pages 10-25). There are also extensive recommendations in both the E Cape report (Eastern Cape, 2008) and the GDE report (GDE, March 2009). We are aware that in some cases attention is being given to these. Rather than simply repeating these recommendations, many of which were corroborated in this project, we would like to lend our support to at least the overarching analysis and recommendations, but to most of the detail as well. We have reiterated these recommendations in appropriate places in this section. As we have already indicated we hope that this project will add depth to some of the quality issues around monitoring and support and teacher education.

From the different components of this project we have identified a number of issues. These are:

- System
- Teacher Education
- Collaboration and Communication
- Programme Development
- Ongoing Support for Implementation

We have set out the recommendations according to these trends. It is important to note, however, that there are overlaps between these trends. For example an ongoing support strategy could well be built into programme development; or the teacher education system may need to support the development of RPL practices used in programmes.

Essentially the recommendations, whether they are about the readiness of the system or the teachers, are dealing with issues of ensuring that quality teaching is taking. This quality needs to be facilitated by the systems and the programmes that we put in place. This emphasis on systemic quality is supported by the discussions and by previous research, such as that done in the Eastern Cape with over 250 schools: 'The Department of Education must now focus upon the quality of the Reception Year programme within the quality of the Foundation Phase programme. (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2009, page 91)

The issue of how Grade R is perceived was a common theme that came up in a number of different ways. It was repeatedly emphasised that Grade R needs to be perceived as part of the 0-9 continuum. Some went so far as to suggest that it would be better to separate Grade R from the formal schooling system in order to change perceptions about what children in Grade R need, since they require a very different type of 'structure' compared to formal schooling environments. An alternative to that would be to designate a different area of the school for Grade R that advocates a different teaching style and objective. In any case, there was a strong feeling that perceptions of Grade R and the role it plays must be rigorously addressed. Resolving this will require clarity about the role, purpose and nature of Grade R within the conception of child development from 0-9.

### System

The Eastern Cape research (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2009, page 91) suggests that

'The major issue to be confronted by the Department of Education lies in the provision of essential safe, secure premises for the Reception Year, within schools which are struggling as it is, to provide safe suitable accommodation for other classes. The quality of access of this newly incorporated year of schooling is very low. In addition, resources, including stably run nutrition programmes must be put in place. Thirdly, support and monitoring systems need to be put in place at school and Grade R classroom level.

Broad recommendations from the National Treasury report (National Treasury, 2008 page 21) in summary cover policy and strategy, project management, a review of systems and M&E. It is worth summarising the related options outlined in Section 4: of the National Treasury Report (National Treasury, 2008 page 10-20). This section outlines a number of options for improving implementation of Grade R, under the headings of Policy and Strategy, Planning, Structures, roles and responsibilities, Systems and processes, Funding, Infrastructure, Teaching resources, Human resources, Monitoring and reporting, and Risk management.

The National Treasury report pays considerable attention to strategy. The report argues that

“ ... when so much of implementation seems to be going wrong, questions have to be asked about the strategy. Whilst there can be a discussion as to how the various strategic issues that have been raised are matters for the national Department, and how many could be left to provincial leadership to address, it is important to establish that they are issues of strategic importance and not mere implementation challenges. The intention is to promote a strategic discussion that can help redirect the 'Grade R project' and ensure that all in the system are helped to see with greater clarity what it is they need to do to achieve the strategic goal of universal access to quality Grade R provision.”

**“... Policy and strategy**

... It is suggested that there should be a clearer articulation of the strategy and that the priority should change in favour of sound programmes, rather than integration into the schooling system. This would enable phasing to occur in a different manner than is currently planned.

... It is vitally important that the DoE sets out clearly what a quality Grade R class is, including being explicit about the importance of structured play for this age group, the expected methodologies to achieve Grade R learning outcomes, and a number of measures and indicators that can be used to judge quality of provision.

... The policy is clear [that] home language will be used. However, it is a voluntary policy ... which poses serious challenges for the schools, the practitioners and the children, and strategy needs to be clearer. It is suggested that more needs to be done to explain to parents the importance of home language, but at the same time more could be done to provide appropriate materials and prepare practitioners for the complex task of teaching in what is becoming effectively a multi-lingual environment. The vital issue is to approach this matter strategically and not leave practitioners, most of whom have little training or language skills, to cope.

... It is clear that the task of implementing universal access to quality Grade R provision requires a phase approach ... There are options in relation to phases, which include: Option 1: Get children into schools, and address quality issues at a later date; Option 2: Build quality provision in a percentage of schools and community sites, and expand provision over a period of years. ... The circumstances appear to point to the need for a more nuanced strategy of phased implementation. Some suggestions for how phasing could be achieved:

- Build on existing provision, strengthening and improving what is in place already;

- Establish quality criteria, including indicators and measures, that enable both schools and ECD centres to self-assess, and which can be used for M&E at provincial and national level;
- Whereas the current choice facing an ECD Grade R site is to merge with a school or register as an independent school, perhaps a third option of registration with the DoE could be considered, based on meeting the quality criteria ...
- Self-assessments, as well as audits that have been done or are planned, could be used to establish [a range of data] ...

The 'Policy and strategy' section of the National Treasury report goes on to suggest 'possible criteria for a Grade R class that could be used for self-evaluation, M&E, and also "registration" if this approach is adopted ...' (page 14). The report also suggests that 'there is a need to think more carefully about [policy and strategy] levers and to develop them in such a way as to achieve the strategic goal.' (page 15).

Under the remaining headings of Planning, Structures, roles and responsibilities, Systems and processes, Funding, Infrastructure, Teaching resources, Human resources, Monitoring and reporting, and Risk management, we summarise the options put forward by the National Treasury report as follows:

**“ ... Planning**

... It is suggested that the DoE move to project management principals in planning for Grade R. ... Specific recommendations include:

- A project plan for the national Department. This plan would address the work of the Department and would include national plans to address all the strategic issues identified in the previous section of the report;
- A provincial project plan, again addressing strategic issues and how they will be addressed provincially;
- District plans that address the roles and responsibilities of district officials in relation to all the schools and the identified Grade R classes;
- School plans that treat the Grade R class as a specific project, and address each element of the criteria for a quality Grade R service.

**... Structures, roles and responsibilities**

... There are three possibly linked ... options that could address ... apparent contradictions, namely a restructuring of the Department, a review of reporting and accountability protocols, and project management. ...

**... Systems and processes**

Systemic problems are a serious challenge to Grade R implementation. Each of a number of processes requires a solution. The key processes are:

- Payment of practitioner salaries ...
- Resource planning and provisioning ...
- Practitioner training and development ...
- Infrastructure procurement processes ...

**... Funding**

... It would seem sensible to review the approach of spreading limited resources thinly. A more targeted approach, with pilots and building on existing strengths in the ECD and schooling systems, would be sensible. Greater clarity is needed in relation to where money is

allocated, what it must be spent on and who is responsible. It is important that spending is tracked better, and that deviations from agreed spending plans are agreed and reported on.

**... Infrastructure**

It will be important to develop a clear and agreed understanding of Grade R infrastructure needs, ... adopting a pragmatic approach that acknowledges the limits of funding and capacity, and where realistic targets are set, ... and for a longer period to be allowed to achieve readiness.

**... Teaching resources**

... there is a need to do more advocacy amongst parents on the importance of home language LOLT ... and for more training and support to be provided to practitioners grappling with the language question.

**... Human resources**

... It will be important for qualifications and skills needs to be clearly defined and for procurement processes to be adjusted to ensure competent providers and sound provision of programmes.

**... Monitoring and reporting**

The key challenge is to set out clearly the targets, indicators and measures for quality Grade R ... to develop effective monitoring instruments and to ensure that roles and responsibilities in relation to monitoring and reporting are clearly set out. ... A concerted effort is required to establish consistent monitoring and reporting, as well as establishing some in depth evaluations.

**... Risk management**

Assumptions should be set out in all project plans for DoE, provinces, districts and schools ... Risks need to be identified ...

The Eastern Cape research (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2009, page 91) suggests, amongst other things, that monitoring and support needs to be provided at a number of levels, namely

- district support of circuit managers who support approximately 30 schools each
- school support for and monitoring of the Reception Year within the Foundation Phase
- Foundation Phase support for and monitoring of the Reception Year
- full Foundation Phase and school support for the primary educators of the children: the families
- full support for the holistic development of the children within the Reception Year and Foundation Phase
- so that there can be full support for the programme by the families of the children and full support for the programme by the children themselves.

It also suggests that:

- ... competent support and monitoring systems will need to incorporate the strengthening of
  - The relationship between the Service Providers and District Officials so that Level 4 training and support can go hand in hand, but without either party encroaching upon the other's own mandate

- The district ECD officials' mandate and ability to visit schools for support and monitoring purposes (time and transport set aside to do this on a very regular basis)
- The school's ability to incorporate and manage the Reception Year programme competently
- The Foundation Phase personnel's competence in delivering not only a 'school-readiness' programme but also a 'child-readiness' and 'learning-readiness' programme for each child

In addition research done by the Wits School of Education made some systemic recommendations for Grade R (GDE, 2009, pages 169-170), as follows:

- “ ...
- Classroom place, space and resources  
**Recommendation 14**
    - (i) Patterns of inequalities between schools remain evident in terms of class size and provision of learning and teaching support materials. Equalising these conditions should be a continuing priority for the GDE.
    - (ii) The position of Grade R classrooms should be carefully considered, as the position can impact on programme delivery.
- ... ”
- Reconceptualising the Grade R year  
**Recommendation 19**
    - (i) The unique structures and characteristics of this year should be recognised and fiercely protected in order to meet the pedagogical requirements of the Grade R child.
    - (ii) Grade R policies should be revisited in an attempt to narrow the differences between Grade R practitioners and other Foundation Phase teachers.
- ... ”

During our discussions and interactions across this project a number of suggestions were made that concur with the views expressed above.

Firstly, we would suggest that all of the above can be facilitated more easily if there is a clear, accessible definition of the philosophical approach in Grade R, that includes placing value on non-formal learning through active play experiences, and that is undertaken by well trained and compassionate teachers. We believe that this will increase the status for the work undertaken.

Secondly, we believe that the department specialists need to be more centrally involved in the procurement processes to ensure links in quality provision between Curriculum Dev Support (CDS) and Institutional Dev Support (IDS).

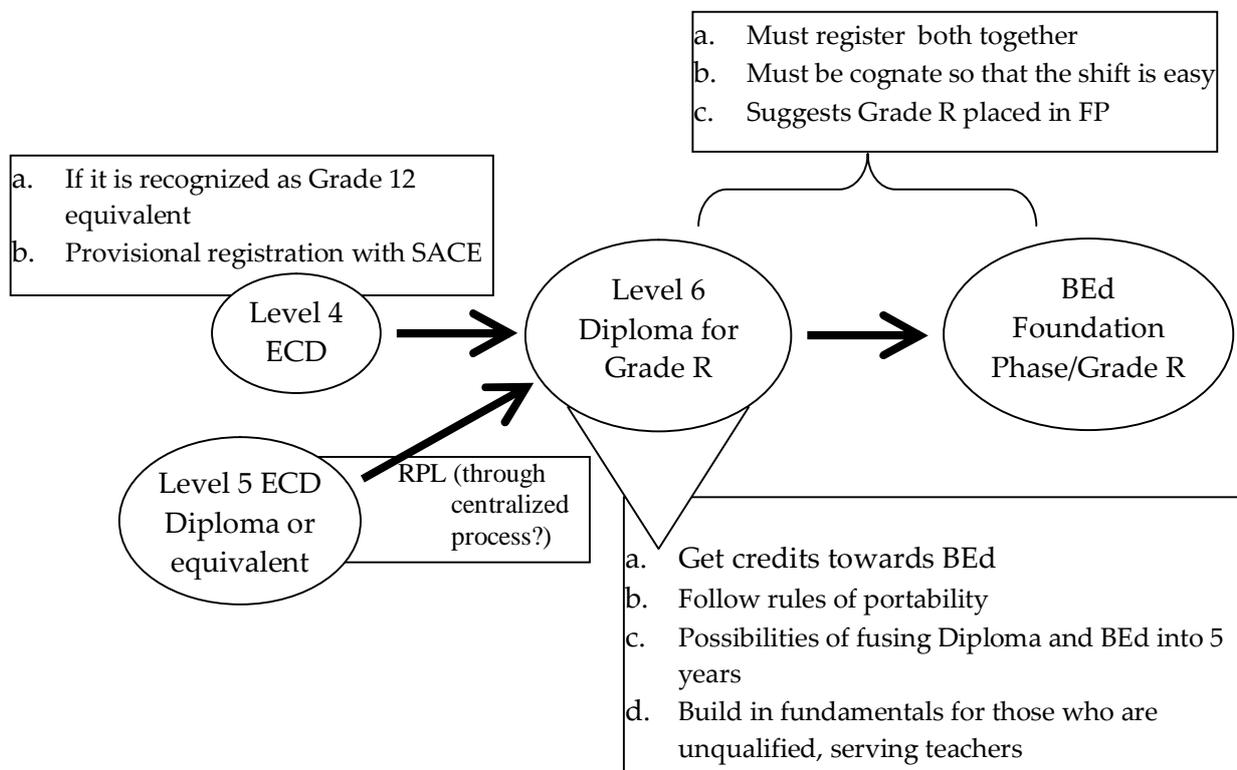
### **Teacher Education**

We can see that to study beyond Level 5 ECD vocational training there are real challenges for ECD practitioners. This is because on the one hand most HEIs set matric as an entry requirement, and an ECD Level 4 is not recognised as such. In addition, while much training has happened at ECD Level 4 and 5 in various ways, there is 'a mismatch between course content, structures and academic requirements between the FET and HEIs [which] is creating road blocks for those with levels 4 or 5 seeking to upgrade to the BEd degree.' (ELRU, CSD, ETDP SETA and SAIDE, July, 2009)

During the course of this research, however, the HSRC was commissioned to conduct a Teacher Qualifications Survey. In the light of the statistics provided in this survey, the following policy *recommendations* for Grade R practitioners / teachers were proposed in the draft research report on Teacher Upgrading (DoE, 2009a):

- “Those teaching Grade R with ECD qualifications should be called ‘practitioners’ rather than ‘teachers’, and the current minimum qualification of ECD level 4 (core unit standards) for teaching Grade R should be retained in the short to medium term.
- However, should Grade R practitioners wish to become Foundation Phase teacher in public schools, a level 6 Diploma in the Foundation Phase / ECD (0-9 years), followed by the final 240 credits of a B Ed in Foundation Phase should be made available to them. Access to this could also be made available through an RPL process.

It was pointed out that the Higher Certificate in ECD only offers 120 credits and therefore does not usefully contribute to access to further study. From subsequent discussions about possibilities for qualification routes for ECD, within the context of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework, it became clear that serving un- and under-qualified teachers could use the level 5 Higher Diploma (or equivalent) followed by a cognate level 6 Diploma followed by the last 240 credits of a B Ed with a cognate specialization, to upgrade their qualifications. We represented this option to the ECD Pan-African ECD Conference (ELRU, CSD, ETDP SETA and SAIDE, July, 2009) as follows:



This is not dissimilar to the model that CSD / Rhodes use, and which they outlined in the same presentation (ELRU, CSD, ETDP SETA and SAIDE, July 2009). The CSD/Rhodes model is described as:

A Level 6 B Ed in-service qualification, which focuses on 0 – 9 years but largely Foundation Phase. The first year of this 3-year course looks at issues of family and environment for the

whole age range. The second and third years zone in on literacy, numeracy and life skills. The three-year B Ed programme can be accessed with the NDECD or Level 5 diploma. Students get 240 credits from the NDECD plus 60 RPL credits, then cover the remaining 180 credits over 3 years of the part-time course. This is a collaboration between CSD and the University - CSD focuses on the younger child and the university on Grades 1 2, 3.

We are aware that the Department of Higher Education is intending to develop a career path for ECD. From this research we would like to recommend that in that process consideration be given to the following:

- there is a 'lack of Level 6 practitioner qualifications in ECD specifically. Personnel are referred to as practitioners until the end of Level 6' (ELRU, CSD, ETDP SETA and SAIDE, July, 2009);
- there is a need to articulate between levels 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7, and between vocational and professional training;
- we need to think about whether we have packaged our learnerships and skills programmes to address the needs. (ELRU, CSD, ETDP SETA and SAIDE, July, 2009, page 4)
- enabling/facilitating collaborative, inter-sectoral standard setting processes for ECD;
- allowing for alternative routes to accommodate the diverse target audience in ECD;
- introducing teaching assistants;
- including community components in teacher education. The recommended ECD pathway can begin with / include Community Development Practitioners. This can help to facilitate real partnerships between families, communities, teachers and schools.
- developing RPL processes, perhaps centralized, to facilitate easier movement through pathways.

### **Collaboration and communication**

In addition to collaboration around qualifications, standard setting and programme development described above, we believe that a collaborative approach to monitoring and support is vital.

There is a strong need expressed for district personnel to work very closely with the service providers in all areas of their work. In particular, support and monitoring visits to ECD practitioners, within the Foundation Phase and the school is vital. (Eastern Cape Department of Education, 2008, page 9). Monitoring and support programmes should draw on existing and planned work, such as that which the Eastern Cape Department of Education had planned for 2009, in collaboration with other stakeholders. It will be important to use the opportunity to incorporate the development of departmental Curriculum advisors or district officers where necessary into the monitoring and support programmes. An important component of monitoring and support is the development of partnerships between schools and parents/caregivers, leading to real support for informal learning at home and in the community.

### **Programme Development**

In Chapter 6 of the GDE report done by Wits University (GDE, 2009, page 154) there is an extremely useful 'Analysis and evaluation of classroom practice in Grade R'. At the end of the chapter a number of recommendations are made that pertain to programme development (GDE, 2009, page 169), which we would like to reiterate here:

" ...

- Working towards a model of effective pedagogy

**Recommendation 12**

To ensure effective learning and teaching, more structured curriculum support should be provided for the practitioners.

- Growth of the practitioner

**Recommendation 13**

Practitioners should be provided with professional development targeting the unique requirements for Grade R teaching in the South African context.

...

- Inclusion

**Recommendation 15**

The policy of inclusive education requires greater support if it is to be implemented as envisaged.

- Observation and assessment

**Recommendation 16**

The GDE should give consideration to the steps that might be taken to improve practitioners' capacity to carry out differentiated forms of assessment, including the possibility of changing assessment and recording instruments.

- NCS values

**Recommendation 17**

A distinction should be made between values teaching that is implicit and modelled in classroom practice, and values teaching that is explicit. If values are to be explicitly taught, the research suggests that teachers need guidance on how to do this.

- Language

**Recommendation 18**

- (iii) The Grade R setting should provide a language-rich environment where learners are afforded a variety of learning opportunities throughout the day to develop both their receptive and expressive language skills, and to acquire the underpinning perceptual-motor skills and concepts to become confident and competent language users.
- (iv) If children's first language is not the language of learning and teaching, practitioners should ensure that structures are in place to ensure that language is a carrier of and not a barrier to understanding.

... "

Chapter 7 of the report (GDE, 2009, page 172) presents the recommendations in more detail.

### Access

Whether programmes are for initial teacher education (IPET) or in-service teacher education (INSET), central to any recommendations about programme development is the question 'What are the quality criteria for programmes that meet the new challenges and do they facilitate pathways for practitioners?' An important consideration in quality programme development is access. Access to teacher education programmes needs to be thought about on a number of levels, including access to the language, access to the learning process through appropriate methodologies, access in terms of funding, access in terms of level in relation to prior knowledge including fundamentals and academic literacy, and access in terms of progression and articulation.

### A teacher framework

One of the primary questions guiding programme development is about what kind of teacher we want. A useful framework for teacher education which looks at benchmarks, domains of professional development and knowledge structures for teachers, was developed by SAIDE (SAIDE, 2009). This is linked to the provision of training that fosters critical, reflective and creative thinking, helping teachers to understand themselves as respected professionals.

### **Alignment**

There is a constant tension between, on the one hand the need for holistic development through play-based learning, and on the other the demands of a formal school curriculum. Teachers need to understand that tension and be able to interpret curriculum appropriately, and be familiar with alternative teaching approaches and how to implement appropriate programmes. On the one hand we need to be sure that teacher education programmes help teachers to do this, and are aligned primarily with children's 0-9 developmental needs, including emergent home language literacy, emergent second language literacy, and emergent numeracy. On the other hand curriculum and curriculum support documents need to make more explicit the link between the NCS, childhood development and appropriate approaches.

### **Core content**

In addition to the need for a review of the extent to which certain content is adequately and appropriately covered (see page 22), we believe that many of the challenges could be addressed by setting a standard set of core competencies that are covered in Grade R teacher education programmes nationally. This standard core could include, inter alia:

- Fundamentals at level 4 and 5 need to be more carefully considered. We believe they are critical in preparing teachers for facilitating emergent literacy and numeracy, as well as preparing teachers for their own further studies. We are aware of a pilot towards national foundational learning.
- Level 5 and 6 qualifications have to provide for literacy and academic literacy by building it into the programmes.
- Critical understanding of NELDS and NCS
- A level of language required to be a teacher, including an additional language;
- African language and second language emergent literacy instruction;
- Teacher agency, values in education;
- Community development / psycho-social support

Given the continuum on which this teacher education needs to happen consideration should be given to including these core competencies in 0-4 and Foundation Phase programmes too.

### **Teaching practice**

A final general recommendation in relation to programme development is concerned with teaching practice. First and foremost teaching practice or mentoring, needs to be built in to programme development, and carefully planned for. In addition to providing a range of opportunities to see and practice best teaching, including observations, simulations, role-plays and working in contextually appropriate model environments, there was a strong recommendation coming through this research that practice teaching, whether it is IPET or INSET, has to include some form of mentoring in classrooms. This could be implemented in a number of complementary ways, including site visits by service providers, supportive coaching by district Curriculum advisors or district officers in collaboration with field workers from NGOs, support visits between teachers in clusters particularly between well established and well-functioning schools, and mentoring by appropriately trained Senior or Head teachers within public schools.

## **CPTD**

Continuing professional teacher development (CPTD) and short courses can be drawn from existing high quality teacher education programmes, and new CPTD materials can be planned into programmes. It was felt that CPTD should focus on appropriate teaching methodology for Grade R, in particular on methodologies to support teaching and learning through play, links to the NCS, home language and second language literacy instruction, including multi-lingual teaching and learning, and teachers' language and academic literacy development.

## **Ongoing support for implementation**

### **Post-training Support**

It was noted that even when there is on-site support during training, often what is required is some form of post-training on-site support for a period. This should be the same kind of post-training support that is built in to teaching practice during training, and it should be just as carefully planned.

### **Support Materials**

From the discussions and the programme reviews it is suggested that all guidelines, whether they are lesson plans, frameworks or other curriculum support documents, should be simpler and more straightforward. It should be noted here that there was some debate about the value of providing prescriptive materials, particularly lesson plans. One of the limitations of prescriptive lesson plans is that they simply cannot cover all the needs of children, and all the diverse ways in which those needs can be met. This can only be done by a teacher who is competent at observing the children, identifying the needs of all her children, and planning accordingly. The essential question we must ask ourselves is 'What kind of lesson plans do we really need for Grade R teachers? We have suggested in this report that we do not need to have lesson plans that adhere strictly to the NCS in a formalised schooling sense, since Grade R should not be just another Grade 1. During discussions it was suggested that Grade R lesson plans should serve as exemplars, and should not be stand alone. They should be accompanied by carefully constructed, clear and understandable teacher guidance that tries to answer 'what if ...' questions about the lesson plans. This is related to another feeling that was strongly expressed by many participants, that the use of work books in Grade R should be limited, and that teachers should be helped to understand the limitations and appropriate use of worksheets, in certain circumstances.

## Specific Recommendations for Grade R support

We understand that some of the above recommendations may be long-term issues that will need to be dealt with as part of a wider strategy and fall outside of the scope of this project, although it may be possible to begin to raise them through the dissemination of this research.

The specific brief for this research was to make

- recommendations for curriculum design and content for Grade R teachers
- recommendations for teacher education materials and/or guidelines in the foundation phase with specific reference to Grade R
- recommendations for a delivery plan for a pilot to test Grade R teacher materials and a Grade R component of Foundation Phase teacher education

It is clear that recommendations have to take account of three types of teachers in the system:

- a. Teachers who are qualified teachers but who are not qualified to teach Grade R
- b. Teachers who have Level 4 or Level 5 ECD training who want to continue their studies to a B Ed.
- c. Teachers who have Level 4 or Level 5 ECD training who do not want to go on to a B Ed but who will need to have some form of upgrading to stay in the system.<sup>10</sup>

In order to try and address these three categories of teachers, we would like to isolate and develop some of the previous overarching recommendations a bit further. We believe that these recommendations can be packaged to begin to address some of the more urgent quality issues. We believe that we need to address quality assurance across the system. For example, one of the specific recommendations is the production of quality CPTD materials. But we believe that quality materials will only be useful if they are developed against some idea of what quality in Grade R means. In our view, they also need to be developed in line with the curriculum design and content recommendations that have been made above, so that they contribute to the future development of quality components of teacher education programmes. Even so, we doubt that these materials alone will make a real difference in the classroom unless they are facilitated by departmental curriculum advisors or district officers and field workers in a quality process.

All of the following specific recommendations will require collaborative work, across the NGO, FET, HEI and government sectors, and in most instances will supplement and build on existing plans and work that has begun or been done.

### Recommendation One

Review and refine quality criteria for Grade R, in collaboration with provinces, NGOs, FET colleges, HEIs etc., to be presented to the DoBE for consideration. While we understand that the determination of qualifications and standard setting is the mandate of the Department of Education and the Council for Higher Education, we hope that this will contribute to the collaborative development of national standards for a possible new Level 6 ECD qualification, incorporating Grade R. In addition the consolidation of these quality criteria will enable

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<sup>10</sup> It is worth noting that the third category of teacher will have to be accommodated differently in the system if it is decided that the minimum qualification for a Grade R teacher is a BEd. These are teachers who are teaching already and who we don't necessarily want to lose. It is possible that they would study until Level 6, and then, for example, either be allowed to teach only Grade R and not the whole Foundation Phase, that they could be employed as teaching assistants, or another option.

providers to review their existing programmes and adjust them accordingly. The development of the CPTD programmes and quality support materials will be based on these quality criteria.

### **Recommendation Two**

Develop a program outline for a Level 6 ECD qualification, making sure that it is cognate with Level 4/5 qualifications and the B Ed. This would have to include critically analysing the existing B Eds that offer ECD in the light of the Higher Education Qualifications Framework (HEQF) and the emerging revised Norms and Standards for Educators. The target group for this programme is the second category of teachers outlined above, namely teachers who have a Level 4/5 ECD and who want to access the B Ed.

### **Recommendation Three**

Develop national standard quality CPTD programmes and materials on identified gap areas:

- methodologies to support teaching and learning through play
- the NCS and early childhood development
- home language emergent literacy instruction, including multi-lingual teaching and learning
- first additional language emergent literacy instruction
- emergent numeracy instruction
- teachers' language, to support professional development and for meaningful participation in the professional teaching community
- fundamentals

It would be ideal to develop programmes and materials on all of these areas, but this would be dependent on available time and funds. We would therefore like to suggest that programme outlines are developed for all of the above, and that programme outlines and materials be developed for those that we believe are at the heart of quality teaching, namely:

- methodologies to support teaching and learning through play
- home language emergent literacy (and possibly numeracy) instruction, including multi-lingual teaching and learning
- teachers' language, to support professional development and for meaningful participation in the professional teaching community

The target group for the CPTD programmes is the first and third category of teachers outlined above, namely those who are qualified but not experienced in Grade R teaching, and those who may not want to study a B Ed but who need some form of upgrading.

These should speak to and supplement or adapt some of the useful materials that have already been produced in different provinces and nationally, not limited to, but including lesson plans appropriate to Grade R. Sound, guided ongoing support will be built in to the CPTD programmes. The materials will be written in line with sound distance education principles. In this way they can be used for CPTD in various contexts. They can also then be used by programme developers to supplement existing teacher education programme materials, thereby filling the gaps that may be identified in the review against the Grade R quality criteria.

### **A plan for implementing recommendations**

- A. Develop a clear project plan:

Outputs for the project will include:

- Quality criteria for Grade R
- Outline for Level 6 ECD programme
- National standard quality CPTD materials, including guided ongoing support
- Reports on implementation of one or more of the CPTD programmes.

B. Identify partners:

The partners will be interested and suitably qualified teacher education service providers and researchers across the ECD sector, in particular those who were identified in this project as having components in existing programmes and materials that could benefit the project. There may be different partners for different components of the project.

C. Develop quality criteria for Grade R:

- Identify a team of qualified experts.
- Develop criteria through a process of review and refinement of existing criteria, policy documents and policy guidelines. Documents to draw on would include: departmental guidelines for costing a package (DoE, 2008), the Department of Social Development guidelines for ECD (DoSD, 2006), to some extent in other national department documents (DoE 2008, 2008a)
- Develop criteria at the level of quality in the classroom, quality materials (including support materials), and quality teacher programmes.
- Test and verify the criteria through the pilot of the CPTD programmes.

D. Develop programme outline for Level 6 ECD

- Identify a team of qualified experts in programme design and provision.
- Deepen the programme reviews conducted in this review against quality programme criteria, in order to inform the programme outline.
- Develop programme outline according to:
  - Purpose
  - Admission requirements
  - Target learners and learning assumed to be in place
  - Recognition of Prior Learning
  - Progression
  - Exit level outcomes
  - Structure
  - Content
  - Learner Support
  - Resources
  - Assessment

E. Develop CPTD programmes and materials

- Identify a team of qualified experts in programme design, materials development and ECD teacher training provision.
- Develop CPTD course outlines according to:
  - Purpose
  - Prior learning
  - Course / module outcomes and assessment criteria
  - Structure

- Content
- Learner Support
- Resources
- Assessment tasks
- Develop and/or adapt materials from existing programmes through a rigorous process of workshops, development or adaptation, editing, critical review and re-development, in line with sound materials development practice for high quality education materials, including access, support, mediation of concepts and opportunities for reflective practice.
- Develop support components of the CPTD programmes
  - The design of support components will draw on existing research findings, plans and evaluations. In particular the research referred to in this report done by the Eastern Cape Department of Education, which outlined a plan to strengthen the support and monitoring system, as part of Cycle 2 of their research, needs to be drawn on. An integrated plan will draw in DoE, provinces, districts, schools and parents.
  - The design of the support component should include the identification of needs, response to needs and reporting on delivery of the CPTD programme/s.
  - The support component should include integrated monitoring and support guidelines for Curriculum advisors or district officers in districts and field workers.

#### F. Pilot the targeted CPTD courses

The CPTD programmes will be piloted by selected providers in collaboration with provincial curriculum advisors or district officers and field workers with selected schools in one or more of the provinces. The target group should include ECD and Grade R and Foundation Phase teachers, Heads of Department and principals. There should be a targeted approach to selecting schools, and therefore provinces, districts, curriculum advisors or district officers and field workers.

- Identify suitably qualified providers to deliver the CPTD course
- Develop a pilot plan in the context of the selected target group. The plan should include:
  - Training of trainers to deliver the course, if necessary
  - A model of delivery
  - A model of support
  - Assessment strategies
  - Monitoring and evaluation
- Implement the pilot plan for the CPTD course/s:
  - Project managers and departmental officials will collaborate to lead the implementation of the course/s
  - Departmental Curriculum advisors or district officers, and field workers from experienced teacher education service providers, will collaborate in the field.
  - Through this process facilitators and field workers will provide monitoring and support, and in turn, will gain valuable experience and insight into implementing and supporting Grade R.
  - Clear records will be kept and reports written against the quality criteria developed for the project.
- Monitor and evaluate the pilot. The purpose will be to review and refine the materials, the model of delivery, the nature and level of support, and to evaluate the impact on the practice of the teachers and to make recommendations for the possible upscaling of the courses.

- The project will end with the refinement and finalisation of criteria, programmes, materials and processes for quality CPTD.

### **A final recommendation for the dissemination of the report**

During the course of this research it was noted that there was an intense keenness to take discussions forward into actions, based on this and other recent research. Already, presentations and conversations have taken place and we would suggest that this interest and momentum needs to be nurtured.

We would therefore recommend that the Zenex Foundation engage with the Department of Education to initiate a national conference, or provincial conferences, in partnership with the DOE and ECD directorate that would bring together relevant stakeholders, to table various of the findings and recommendations, and to develop a way forward for improving the implementation of Grade R.

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