

DEVELOPMENT OF ECD POLICIES FROM COLONIAL PERIOD TO INDEPENDENCE ERA IN ZIMBABWE

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ABSTRACT

In this article, the development of ECD in Zimbabwe is described from pre-colonial to post-independence era. The desk study focused on international ECD policies, Zimbabwe ECD policies ECD programme reports and literature from other authorities in an effort to present progress made since 1980 on early childhood development policies. It was found that a lot still needs to be done to improve the needs of the young children in terms of physical, intellectual, emotional, social, health and safety development nationally. The researchers recommended the following: improvement of dissemination processes on ECD policies to the user system, provision of well- defined ECD policies, consistency in ECD curriculum, provision of inclusive education and child-friendly schools and improvement on the participation of different stakeholders in ECD activities.

Keywords: Early Childhood Development (ECD), ECD policies, Policy development, Colonial era, Post-independence

1.0 INTRODUCTION

This paper provides an overview of the development of ECD policies from the colonial era to the post-independence era in the Zimbabwean context. Aspects covered include a brief description of pre-colonial education, ECD policies put in place internationally and nationally and evaluation of post-independence ECD policies being implemented in Zimbabwe. The study gathered data in an effort to improve ECD policy formulation and ECD policy implementation.

1.1 Background Information

The challenges that Zimbabwe is facing in restructuring its education system are partly embedded in the colonial legacy. Colonial inequalities created childhood adversity for the majority of black Zimbabwean children in areas of health care, education, social services and

quality nutrition. There existed a fragmented system of ECD services during that colonial period. Zvobgo (1996) points out that when Zimbabwe was under colonial rule, the majority of indigenous people had no say in or influence on government policies and political decisions that affected the education system. Indigenous people were oppressed and not politically empowered to make fundamental decisions affecting their education. Moore (1997) in Shizha and Kariwo (2011) also echoes that indigenous Zimbabweans were defined and portrayed as inferior to Europeans and were deliberately taught to despise their cultural identities and to internalize the racial stereotypes of the colonizers.

Zvobgo (2007) in Mangwaya, Blignaut and Pillay (2016) asserts that during the pre-independence era, ECE was largely provided in different urban areas whilst rural areas had no such provision. Colonial education policy planners did not make any effort to design an education system that harmonized the needs of the different racial and ethnic groups in Zimbabwe. The education system was so divisive that it promoted hatred and disharmony between the two racial groups. Education Commissions and policies were means by which the colonial regime organized the education system around the existing political order of economic domination and social repression (Shizha 2006a)

The 1979 Education Act was devised to promote a degree of school integration and reduce polarization between groups which led to a partial integration of the European and African education. However, it restricted entry into each category of school. Entry was strictly based on the zoning system (Dorsey, 1989 in Makokoro, 2017). Thus, schools were grouped as Group A, B, and C. Group C or community schools which consisted of non-fee paying schools, mainly primary schools in rural areas. These were controlled by District Councils and formerly controlled by missionaries. According to the William's Commission p. 29 "---- programmes which we suggest Zimbabwe should now establish should be of a high standard, but we also regard it as crucial to ensuring that in a proper enthusiasm for creating new structures and institutions, the authorities do not overlook the current needs of existing institutions or neglect to strengthen and consolidate what is already in place" (Chisaka et al, no date)

Colonial inequalities, for example, the politics of exclusion in ECD education provision among the different racial groups in colonial Zimbabwe influenced education policies reforms after independence in 1980. The address of imbalances in the education sector formed the basis for the post-independence policies, among others, ECD policies. A number of initiatives affecting the lives of young children directly were positive and others less successful. Zimbabwe's post-independence education reform policies made provision of children's basic education and protection from neglect, abuse and exploitation.

The concept of ECD-A and B classes was necessitated by the need to avail pre-school education to all children in Zimbabwe as recommended by the Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education (Nziramanga Commission, 1999, Secretary's Circular No. 14 of 2004). It is believed that ECD programmes promote better social and cognitive functioning that would result in a smoother transition to formal school. In support, Pence (2004) believed that early childhood must emphasize links to family, home culture and home language by uniquely caring for each child.

1.2 Concept of ECD

Keenan and Evans (2009) define ECD as the process physical, cognitive, social and emotional development from 0-8 years. In concurrence, Santrock (2002) purports that ECD involves the processes and experiences through which ECD children go through from birth to 8 years and these include; physical, intellectual, emotional, health and social development. ECD in the Zimbabwean context can be summarized as a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for children from 0 to 8 years of age in an effort to develop the whole child with the active participation of parents. Therefore, the establishment of ECD programmes in Zimbabwe was to protect the children's rights to develop his/her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. This is supported by Mawere (2017) who believes the first years of life are important because what happens in early childhood can matter for a lifetime. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) is responsible for ECD programmes in primary schools for the 4 to 8-year-old age group which is named the "Infant School"

According to the Principal Director Circular No. 20 of 2011 statistics show that, as at August 2011, 5 689 out of 5 730 registered primary schools in Zimbabwe had attached ECD-B classes and 3 610 registered primary school had attached ECD-A classes.

1.3 Overview of ECD

According to Mangwaya et al (2016), Early Childhood Education (ECE) in the pre-colonial era, now formally known as ECD, was provided in line with statutory instruments and Education Acts which portrayed bias, racial discrimination and segregation. Examples given are; the Child Protection and Adoption regulations of 1972 which provided for the establishment of custodial and health care centres for African children between ages zero to three and, the Nursery school regulations of 1973 which stipulated that provision of nursery education should benefit pupils who are not Africans to prepare for formal learning. This implies that ECE service was meant to provide a foundation for future development as only utilized by the elite (non-Africans) thereby perpetuating the social and economic injustices at the earliest stage of child development.

UNESCO (2006) observed that from the late 1970s up to 2003, ECE in Zimbabwe was largely run by local authorities, private individuals, non-governmental organizations and self-help groups. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Community Development and Ministry of Labour and Social Services coordinated rural pre-schools. The Ministry of Education (1989) only provided a policy framework for ECE operations with minimum guidelines for its supervision.

Zimbabwe realized these injustices and led to the establishment of early childhood education and care centres throughout Zimbabwe. The majority of them operated under trees and manned by untrained staff under the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare. Early childhood education and care were brought under the Ministry of Education in 1989. The Ministry only provided a policy framework which guided the operations of ECE centres run by a variety of stakeholders outside the Ministry, for example, local authorities and communities and their centre development committee structures, NGOs, church groups, as

well as private organizations and individuals. According to the Ministry of Education (1987), the various stakeholders effectively ran ECE programmes which prepared children for primary education beginning at the age of 6 years. Several programmes are known as crashes, nursery schools, daycare centres, kindergartens and pre-schools served children from 3 years of age. By the 1990s, the government found itself faced with a huge budget for the provision of books, construction of buildings, for training and salaries of teachers which automatically derailed the process of ECD education.

The researchers can conclusively say that there exist success stories and challenges during the development of ECD from colonial to post-independence era. The success stories include the signing of the Convention of the Rights of the Child by the Zimbabwean government and the ECD policy priority. The main ECD policy priority of the Zimbabwe government in 2005 was the establishment of ECD classes (3-5 years) in primary schools under the MoPSE. According to Mawere (2017), the goal of ECD policy priority was partially achieved, although much has to be done. Areas of concern that need review include; improving ECD policy dissemination processes to the user system, having well-defined ECD policies, improving organization and management of ECD programmes in terms of utilization of resources, being consistent in curriculum development, having inclusive education in ECD programmes, provide child-friendly schools and improving participation of stakeholders in ECD activities.

1.4 History of ECD policies

Internationally, the development of education policies is normally influenced by many factors like; politics, history, sociology and economic aspects, as well as the current forces of globalization (Shizha and Kariwo (2011). States have an obligation to protect, respect and promote the right of the child. This is governed by international, African and national laws and policies like;

- The Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (General Assembly, 1979)
- The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UN's CRC 1989)
- The African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union, 1999)
- The Millennium Development Goals (UN General Assembly, 2000)
- UNESCO's Education for All (UNESCO World Education Forum, 2000)
- The UN's General Comment No. 7: Implementing the Child's Rights in Early Childhood (UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2006).

ECD policies originated from the 1989 United Nations Adoption on Human Rights of Children (Soud, 2009:14; Hyde and Kabiru, 2003). These policies are meant to place education in the category of basic human rights, ensuring that every child has an opportunity to develop her/his physical, and emotional facilities (The 1999 African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children). In support to this ideology, the 1990 World Conference on Education for All (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, the 2000 World Education Forum held in Dakar, Senegal and the Development of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the United Nations has led to the development of government policies in the domain of ECD

(UNESCO, 2005:20; Soud, 2009:23). The United Nations General Assembly, General Comment No. 7, 2005 clearly stipulates that state parties are required to render appropriate assistance to parents, legal guardians and extended families in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities (article 18.2 and 18.3), including assisting parents in providing living conditions necessary for the child's development (article 27.2) and ensuring that children receive necessary protection and care (article 3.2).

Policy development included the ratification of these international child-related policy instruments and commitments. Zimbabwe took into consideration these obligations after gaining its independence in 1980 and made reforms in the area of ECD. During its independence period, Zimbabwe put in place several policies to eradicate the imbalances in governance and quality in the country's education sector. This agrees very well with Pence (2004) who purports that policies are influenced by the contexts in which they develop like, historical, cultural, social, economic and diverse conceptual dimensions operating at international, regional, country and local levels.

Firstly, ECEC centres were established and these were manned by the Ministry of Community Services and Social Welfare and Women's Affairs. These ECEC centres were established all around Zimbabwe including the rural, mining and farming communities. Children would assemble at community halls, church sites and schools for play activities and feeding. NGOs like UNICEF, Red Cross and others provided the food for children. Parents from the community assisted with the cooking and feeding of children. In the early 90s national ECD policies transformed the random crashes' and play centres to the current ECD centres in order to follow standards and practices on the international platform.

Several ECD policies came into being designed from various governing bodies and the CIET (1999) recommendations, providing guidelines on the implementation of ECD programmes in Zimbabwe. These include;

- The Education Act 1999 as Amended 2006- stipulates that every child in Zimbabwe should not be refused admission to any school or discriminated in education, including gender and physical incapacity.
- The Children's Protection and Adoption Act (CPAA) 2001- the emphasis is on respect of the rights of children: not to cause unnecessary suffering or affect his/her health or morals.
- The Secretary's Circular No. 14 Of 2004- called for all primary schools to attach two ECD classes, that is, ECD-A (3-4-year-olds) and ECD-B (4-5-year-olds). This facilitated children's access to ECD by the majority of children.
- Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005- provision of regulations on the operation of ECD classes; registration, curriculum, ECD staff, age of attendance and teacher/pupil ratio, health and safety, duties of the head.
- Director's Circular No. 12 of 2005- provision of ECD in the primary schools in two phases, that is, 4-5-year-olds from 2005 to 2010 then 3-4-year-olds from 2011 to 2015.

- Director's Circular Minute No. 41 of 2006- the emphasis is on considering children's rights in accordance with the C.R.C (1989) and the millennium goals, networking and creating child- friendly schools.
- Director's Circular No 48 of 2007- Aspects resemble those in Secretary's Circular No. 14 of 2004 and Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005 on registration, enrolment, curriculum, resources and supervision.
- Director's Circular No. 12 of 2003 as Amended 2007- inclusive education in ECD programmes, which include, attachment and placement, operations, administration and management, curriculum.
- Director's Circular No. 74 of 2007- child labour and abuse in schools and communities;-protection of the child
- Principal Director's Circular No. 46 of 2010 - handling of disciplinary cases involving child abuse;- infusing victim-friendly facets in the education ministry procedures.
- Principal Director's Circular No. 49 of 2010- provision of ECD-A classes in primary schools, operations of ECD- A classes.
- Principal Director's Circular No. 20 of 2011- deals with how to curb with mushrooming of unregistered ECD centres, specifications to register a centre, that is; indoor and outdoor space area, toilet closets, washbasins, teacher-pupil ratio and
- Secretary's Circular Minute No. 2 of 2014- to fully implement the 1999 CIET recommendations through the New Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

A lot of developments occurred in ECD education since the production of the CIET 1999 Report and ECD policies. Most primary schools in the country implemented the policies designed from the CIET (1999) recommendations by 2005 of attaching ECD classes to the mainstream. The establishment of ECD classes was done in phases, that is, ECD-B classes were established from 2005 to 2010 and ECD-A classes from 2011 to 2015. Later teacher primary colleges embarked on ECD teacher education programmes. A review was made on the CIET (1999) recommendations in an effort to meet global education standards. The Curriculum for Primary and Secondary Education (CFPSE) 2015-2022 was operational in 2017. The changes on the ECD curriculum enabled children to develop to their full potential bearing Zimbabwe's socio-economic transformation. The curriculum was also informed by the country's heritage, history, national ideas and aspirations which is supported by Lawton (1982) that curriculum is a culture of the home, school peers and the larger community is all fused to bring about an individual who should fit in different cultural environments.

1.5 The rationale for ECD policies

National policies are roadmaps of practices in education in a country. The national policies provide standardization, uniformity and give confidence to the service provider. In concurrence, Oduol (2006) states that policy when established assures the client of biased service through standardization and uniformity. ECD policies promote holistic early childhood care, development and programme packages that address the physical, mental, social, moral and spiritual needs of the child (UNICEF, 2000). ECD policies also shape the future of education by evaluating the children and caregiver's/teachers' performance, creating and implementing effective education policies. They seek to empower both teachers and learners to improve the quality of learning in the classroom. However, the degree to which

they succeed depends on certain variables, environments, resources, political, economic, capacity and the implementation process (Angelo and Cross, 1993).

According to UNICEF (2005), ECD is a comprehensive approach to policies and programmes for young children, their parents and caregivers (ECD teachers). ECD policies encourage parties to work together to promote the holistic development of children. It is believed that early childhood years make a template of the child's later years, thus, the establishment of ECD centres in primary schools of Zimbabwe creates enormous future benefits to the country.

2.0 CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

The government through the Ministry of Primary and Secondary (MoPSE) should improve on ECD policy dissemination processes to enable all ECD personnel to access ECD policy documents. If possible, every ECD personnel should have copies of ECD policies. It should ensure adequate distribution of ECD policies to primary schools and that more workshops and meetings are held to enlighten school heads, TICs, ECD teachers and parents on effective ECD policy implementation.

It is also recommended that clarity measures on ECD policies be put in place to avoid distortions and misunderstanding. The ECD policies need detailed and well-defined information which enable the school heads, ECD teachers and other significant stakeholders to carry out their duties properly, knowing exactly their roles and responsibilities. Clearly laid down structures, operations and expected effectiveness should not be left out. This can only be achieved through intensive staff development workshops and seminars which are developmentally oriented. Confidence and competence are also developed by the school heads and ECD teachers.

The researchers recommend coordination and collaborations across all levels and ministries in the government in order to develop a strong and cohesive ECE policy as advocated by Oduol, (2006). It is recommended that intervention measures be taken for curriculum planners and implementers to create conditions that enable primary schools to be ready to implement ECD education.

The researchers also recommend the strengthening of the Psychological Services and Special Needs personnel by providing educational psychologists in primary schools. The educational psychologists would assess children for appropriate ECD placement. They would also look for pre-learning gaps in children with severe and profound disabilities that exist then find appropriate intervention strategies. The Police need to improve its activities of providing services that promote child-friendly environments free of child abuse in the district.

The MoPSE need to continuously monitor and evaluate ECD programmes and policy implementation to see whether stipulated guidelines and regulations are being followed, for example; space, teacher-pupil ratio, toilets and methodology. The MoPSE may carry out implementation monitoring and evaluation exercises with school heads, ECD teachers and parents considering their prior knowledge, attitudes, experiences, beliefs, norms and values.

Future decisions on the form, retention, composition, obligations and responsibilities should be guided by concrete or empirical evidence generated through research.

We can conclusively say that there is a need for proper planning and actual provision of resources to enhance primary schools chances of effective ECD policy implementation. Therefore, the researchers recommend that financial, material and human resources provision be improved. More classrooms, indoor and outdoor play equipment, toilets, qualified personnel should be put in place to enable ECD programmes to grow and develop in accordance with the ECD policy stipulations and regulations.

The researchers further recommend the involvement of different stakeholders in ECD activities and address the shortage of funds for training so that they can gain knowledge and skills in organizing and managing ECD activities. A training programme for strengthening the financial management schools fund as produced by Simkins and Williams (1991) would be most ideal in this situation. There is also a need to appreciate the community in the establishment of the ECD programme, their contributions in bringing the children to school, paying for levies and being involved in school development projects.

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