



Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority



Key Skills Change Drivers:

ETDP SETA CHAIR

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AT THE CUTTING EDGE OF SKILLS DEVELOPMENT

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List of acronyms

BELA	Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (2022)
DBE	National Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECCE	Early childhood care and education. According to UNESCO (2015), the term ECCE is often used interchangeably with ECD, but it is a term chosen to refer to educators who are able to support and promote early learning and development for babies, toddlers and young children.
ECD	Early childhood development. It is defined as “an umbrella term, which applies to the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially” (DOE, 1995:33).
ECD practitioner	An ECD practitioner is described as an adult person who works with young children up to the age of four through formal services in early childhood development (ECD) settings and can include people who provide management support (DHET, 2017). ECD practitioners are persons who provide ECD services by means of formal ECD programmes, family services and playgroups.
ECD-ESRF	Early Childhood Development Employment Stimulus Relief Fund
ELPs	Early Learning Programmes
ETD	Education, Training and Development
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority
HET	Higher education training
ICT	Information and communications technology
MTSF	Medium-Term Strategic Framework
NIECDP	National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015)
NCF	National Curriculum Framework
NDP	National Development Plan 2030
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPO	Non-profit organisation
PEST	Political, Economic, Social and Technological

PYEI	Presidency and the International Development Cooperation and the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative
RSA	Republic of South Africa
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SEP	Social Employment Programmes
SSP	Sector Skills Plan
TVET	Technical and vocational education and training

1. Introduction

This report will provide a clear framework to identify Key Skills Change Drivers within the early childhood development (ECD) sector. It will also provide answers to the following questions:

- What are the factors affecting skills demand and supply within the ECD sector?
- What are the implications of these change drivers for skills planning in the sector?
- What major national plans and strategies affect skills demand and supply in the sector?
- What measures should the ETDP SETA put in place in support of national strategies and plans?

To understand change, we need to understand the factors that drive it. Change drivers are critical factors that affect a particular sector, and this report is concerned with what factors influence skills demand and supply in ECD. Change drivers include external (e.g., government policy, economic influences, national pandemics, technological innovations and socio-cultural influences) and internal factors (e.g., increased demand for ECD, changing ideas about the importance of ECD, motivation/satisfaction of employees), all of which ultimately impact either negatively or positively on the quality of early childhood education. External drivers are imposed on the sector and the sector reacts to them, whereas internal drivers can be manipulated to some degree by the sector itself (Mdletye et al., 2014). However, they do have reciprocal influence, and it is therefore important to understand how they interact to affect skills demand and supply (Van Neuss, 2019).

Change drivers can be further categorised as developmental, transitional, and transformational (McKimm & Till, 2015). These are explained with reference to the ECD sector in Figure 1.

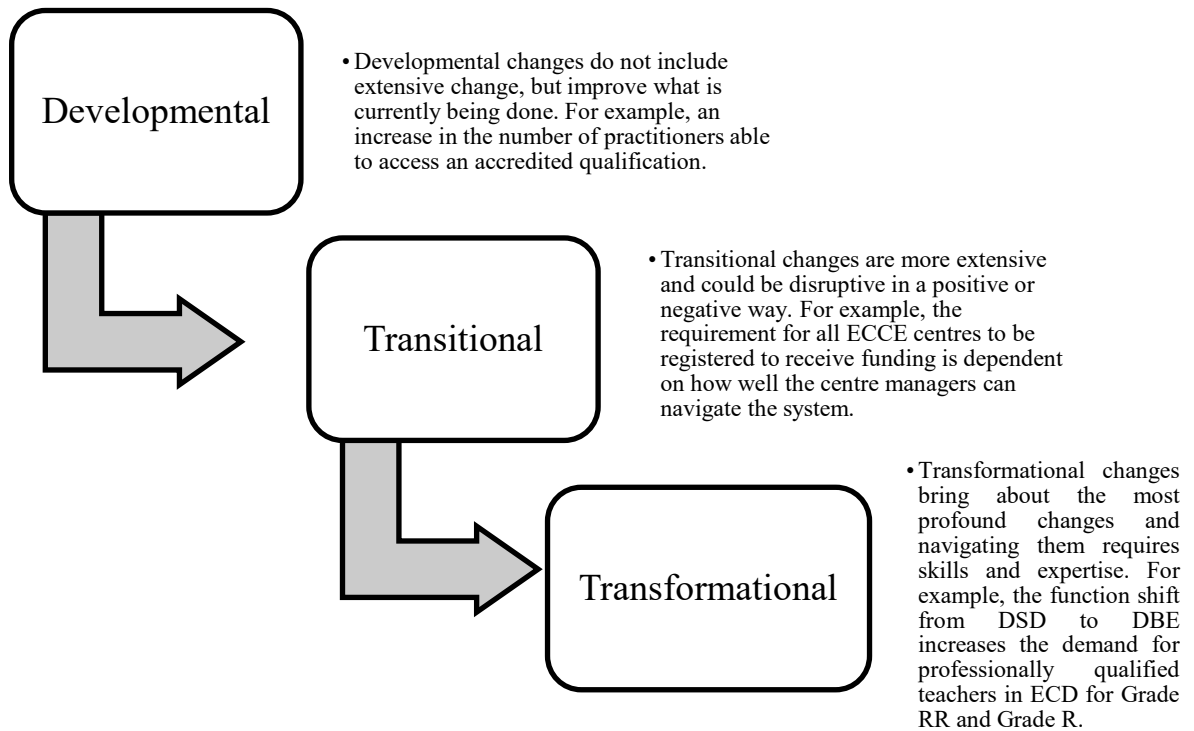


Figure 1: Three levels of change drivers

First, some of the main change drivers currently affecting skills demand and supply within ECD as a whole, with a specific focus on early childhood development, are discussed. The concept of PEST analysis was introduced by Aguilar (1967) as a framework to analyse the political, economic, social and technical factors that influenced the development of businesses (Frue, 2020). PEST analysis is used in this report to identify the change drivers and to determine their implications for the ECD sector. External, transformational change drivers require the ECD sector to respond effectively in order to maintain a sufficient balance between skills demand and supply. However, before we can discuss change drivers, it is important to have an overview of the ECD landscape in the Republic of South Africa (RSA).

2. Context of the ECD sector

The ECD sector in South Africa is changing rapidly, affected by both global and local trends. The global trend towards universal access, more child-centred pedagogies and increasing awareness of the need for integrated and holistic approaches to early childhood development (Sims & Brettig, 2018) has influenced local curriculum and policy development, such as the move of the ECD function from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) to bring about gradual professionalisation and regulation of the sector. However, at present, ECD services, at least in low socio-economic communities, are mostly delivered by an un- or under-skilled workforce (DBE, 2021). The increasing awareness of the

importance of ECD has stimulated research in the field leading to the identification of the many challenges facing the system in a country where the majority of people live in extreme poverty (Visser et al., 2021). The cognizance of the influence of change drivers on the sector is thus imperative for understanding the implications for skills development (Haslip & Gullo, 2018).

The conclusions and recommendations presented in this report are deduced from a review of current grey and peer-reviewed literature in the field as well as from consultations with a variety of key stakeholders in the field, as listed in Table 1.

Table 1: List of stakeholders consulted

Date	Organisation	Focus of stakeholder
2 February and 28 June	Ilifa Labantwana (NGO)	Research and advocacy within ECD sector to support skilling and qualifications for ECD practitioners
17 February	SmartStart (NGO)	Supporting skills development within ECD sector, particularly in early childhood care and education (ECCE)
21 February	National Early Childhood Alliance (NECDA)	National network to support ECD service providers in skills development and service provision and advocacy to influence policy
28 April	Singakwenza (NGO)	Educating, training, and mentoring of ECD practitioners, non-governmental organisations (NGO)s and parents
10 May and 12 October	Embassy of Finland (DBE collaborator for ECD)	Supporting DBE to improve ECD
27 May and 13 June	Headstart Kids (NGO)	Improving nutrition and health care in ECD and training practitioners/teachers in this area
28 July	South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE)	Online and distance education programmes for skills development in ECD – design, implementation and evaluation
5 August	BRIDGE (ECD Community of Practice)	Facilitate ECD practitioners in low-resource contexts to build capacity to establish and facilitate sustainable peer-support networks and multi-sectoral collaboration (across health, care and education)
11 August	Ntataise (NGO)	Training NQF level 4 preschool teachers by distance mode and onsite support Network of 22 NGOs based in 8 provinces

17 February/10 August	Department of Basic Education	Improving access to quality ECD programmes for all children through support and monitoring and partnerships for skills development
3 November	Play for Africa (NGO)	Training for ECD teachers/practitioners in STEM and environmental subjects

3. Change drivers within the Early Childhood Development sector

Using the PEST analytical tool, the main change drivers that affect skills demand and supply in the ECD sector include political change drivers (the global and local drive to provide universal access to quality ECD and legislation within the sector); the macro-economic circumstances of the country, socio-cultural factors and increasing technology. These factors influence each other but they will be discussed separately for ease of understanding.

3.1 Political change drivers

3.1.1 Universal access to quality ECD

The move towards universal access to quality ECD increases the demand for appropriately qualified personnel within the sector. Globally, there is growing acceptance that universal access to quality ECD is of vital importance to the national economy (Delalibea & Ferreira, 2019). Studies have indicated that the return on investment in ECD is considerable, in that ECD interventions offer protection to children against the effects of poverty, as well as reduce poverty in general (Ashley-Cooper et al., 2019). The global early childhood education market is calculated to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 10.5% from 2019 to 2027, leading to opportunities for businesses to carve a market share, primarily aimed at those who can afford to pay for education. In countries such as South Africa where the educational divide is growing between rich and poor, it thus becomes even more important that the lower-income sectors can access quality ECD and opportunities to develop services as an income generating business. The government has recognised this and supported improved access and services in the sector through national policies and strategies.

As the President indicated in his 2018 State of the Nation address, “If we are to break the cycle of poverty, we need to educate the children of the poor” (State of the Nation Address (SONA), 2018). The President emphasised the pivotal role that early childhood development plays in

South Africa’s development when he wrote in his newsletter of 10 October 2022 that, “as a government, we have taken up the task to improve the standards of care and make resources available for ECD centres to run suitable activities for young children to prepare them for formal education” (News 24, 2022). The drive for universal access to ECD, mandated in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (NIECDP, 2015) and the shared commitment to adopting Agenda 2030, create an increased demand for services, and thus for trained people to run these services. This is a major, positive change driver for not only the ECD sector, but also the national economy as a whole, as ECD could be seen as one of the few growth sectors in the country, but only if the country has the capacity to respond to the demand. Although universal access is a long-term project, short-term interventions to benefit the lower-income population groups could focus on capacity-development to initiate and sustain ECD services as a viable business.

According to the General Household Survey (GHS, 2021) and the 2021 ECD census (DBE, 2022), there are 7 022 446 children in the 0-5 years age group. There is, however, an access gap of 2 249 677 children in quintiles 1-3 (see Table 2).

Table 2: Current access to Early Learning Programme

	All children			Children in Q1-3		
	Baseline	Universal access target	Universal access gap	Baseline	Universal access target	Universal access gap
Total number of children age 0-5	7022446			5358204		
Children aged 0-5 attending an ELP	1660317	4581013	2926696	1257329	3507006	2249677
Estimated number of ELPs	42420	117616	75196	32239	89923	57684
Registered or conditionally registered ELPs	16968	117616	100648			
Number of subsidised ELP places	N/a			626575	3507006	2880431

Sources: Calculations based on 2020 General Household Survey (GHS) and 2021 ECD Census

The DBE explains that while Table 2 shows the access for children aged 0-5 attending early learning programmes (ELP)s is closer to the universal access target, there are still challenges to providing access to all young children (Kotzè, 2022). The implications of the access gap to ELPs and the move towards universal access are that the supply of practitioners does not meet the demand and more practitioners and managers and will thus have to be recruited, (re)trained and retained within the sector.

In support of the expanded school system, Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), with the support of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), have embarked on developing qualifications to prepare teachers to work at Grade R (6 years old) and Grade RR (5 years old) levels, as well as introducing ECCE diplomas and certificates to enable practitioners to implement the national curriculum for children 0-4 years of age. This will lead to the eventual professionalisation of the sector, but it is a long-term project as only a relatively small number of workers in the sector can be accepted in these programmes each year and the first graduates will not enter the workforce until 2026 at the earliest. The government can only fund a certain number of candidates, and the success of those who can access higher education can be hampered by time and work commitments. Anecdotal evidence from those working in the field points to the likelihood that the eventual graduates from these programmes will prefer to seek employment in the expanded schooling system, since it offers more job security, opportunities for career advancement and higher benefits and pay than the more informal pre-school sector. This creates a critical skills shortage in the market for the provision of ECCE to children aged 0-4 and a demand for the training of practitioners who possess qualifications lower than NQF level 4.

According to the interviews conducted with trainers in the field, many non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and registered training organisations (RTOs) do provide quality training for this level, but it is uncoordinated, resulting in some areas not being adequately served. In addition, it is not always accredited, and therefore there is no career path for those in the field to advance professionally. The demand is not just for practitioners to teach/stimulate young children, but also for managers who can develop the skills to effectively run such centres or home- and community-based early learning programmes (ELP) (e.g. financial management, human resource management, marketing, record-keeping, meeting regulatory requirements). This also includes the support services (maintenance, cleaning, administration) and community liaison workers who can educate and mentor parents on the importance of and how to provide early stimulation, adequate nourishment and emotional support. The skills gaps identified

above, therefore, provide the ETDP SETA with many entry points for partnerships with various training organisations, other SETAs and public institutions to fund coordinated and accredited skills development.

Due to the high demand created by the need for universal access to ECCE, stakeholders in the field agree that it cannot only be centre based. There are thousands of crèches and day-care services offered by individuals as a means of generating income and these entrepreneurs also require training, both in providing quality early learning programmes and in running a sustainable business. Existing organisations such as GROW already provide free digital and print resources to enable such entrepreneurs to [establish ECCE programmes](#) and support them to do so, but, again, this organisation can only reach a limited amount of practitioners and managers. In addition, since ECCE is about the holistic development of the child, it is not only teaching skills that are needed, but also knowledge and skills to foster the wider health and wellbeing of the child. This is an important area where ETDP SETA can partner with the health sector (i.e. government and NGOs/philanthropic organisations) to upskill community health workers with ECCE training for the provision of training to parents in home-based stimulation and early childhood nutrition. [HeadStart Kids](#), for instance, provides a cheap source of micronutrients that are essential for adequate cognitive and physical development of children and train parents and practitioners in a holistic approach to ECCE. This kind of training can have immediate results on child development and prevent stunting or the impaired growth and development that children experience from poor nutrition, repeated infection and inadequate psychosocial stimulation. One in three children in Southern Africa are stunted, which has a lifelong effect on their health and ability to participate in skilled work (May et al., 2020).

Children who had access to *quality* ECD programmes scored higher in international benchmarks at age 15 (Balladares & Kankaras, 2020). In South Africa, social inequalities in education are among the highest in the world (Spaull, 2013) and one of the most compelling questions in education is how to reduce these longstanding inequalities, made even more evident by the recent COVID-19 pandemic. According to the GHS (2021) and Statistic South Africa (SSA, 2022) roughly 6% more children aged 0-4 stayed at home rather than attended an early learning programme in the last couple of years; and attendance at Grade R, pre-school, and other ECCE centres decreased by approximately 8%. This may have been a temporary decrease due to the lower standard of living as a result of job loss/reduced hours among parents in the lower socio-economic brackets, linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, which in turn led them to prioritise other needs over early childhood care. It may be some years before the

economy improves and such parents can afford childcare, as South Africa is also suffering from the current global recession. This situation means that parent education for home-based stimulation should be an important focus of training.

As a response to the pandemic, the Department of Social Development (DSD) allocated R496 million through the Early Childhood Development Employment Stimulus Relief Fund (ECD-ESRF) for *inter alia* employment protection and creation and registration rollout for ECD programmes of all types, both centre- and non-centre based. The DSD also launched the *Vangasali* ECD campaign to encourage ECD centres to register for government support. Despite such political support, the demand for quality ECD, particularly in the pre-school age range remains higher than existing services can supply. The recent ECD census and GHS (DBE, 2022; SSA, 2021) estimated that there are around 7 million children in South Africa between the ages of 1-5, with almost 6 million of those coming from lower-income households. Parents and guardians in the middle- and upper-income brackets can generally afford to pay for quality ECD programmes or are able to provide quality stimulation at home and through extra-mural activities. Currently, only approximately 1.6 million 0-4 year-old children attend the 42,420 early learning programmes recorded in the census (DBE, 2022), meaning that over 4 million children from low-income areas are not attending ECD centres. This implies that there are serious shortages in supply in the ECD sector to meet the goals of universal access. The implications for skills development are that the ETDP SETA could fund skills development for non-centre or home-based stimulation and care. This could also be an important area for encouraging the development of entrepreneurship opportunities in a dwindling job market. The stakeholders consulted also stressed the importance of any training being followed up by mentoring to improve implementation of learning.

In spite of the increased demand for quality affordable and accessible ELPs to meet universal access, whether home, community or centre based, the supply of skilled personnel is insufficient. There is an estimated need for 224 968 skilled practitioners/managers in lower-income communities to reach the political goal (DBE, 2022; SSA, 2021). However, the census (DBE, 2022) also indicates that 90% of practitioners and other workers currently employed in the sector receive less than the minimum wage of R3500 per month, making it a very undesirable employment choice for anyone, but especially for young people. This raises the question of how the increased demand for skilled practitioners/managers and support workers to provide universal access to children aged 0-4 will be attained if the workplace conditions are not conducive to providing a liveable income. Thus, there is tension between universal

access as a change driver and the current socio-economic reality of the sector, as discussed in Section 3.2.

This will call for creative thinking for immediate responses to improve the skills shortage, since it is unlikely that the situation will change in the near future. If a large number of people cannot be attracted to the sector, then the implication is that skills training will have to be brought to the home by educating parents to provide home-based stimulation; training of home- and community-based practitioners through local government/industry/non-profit organisation (NPO) partnerships; funding for the development of digital resources that can be used by parents and unskilled caregivers at day-care centres; training of community health workers to provide child health and nutrition education and support. Linked to the drive for universal access is the supportive policy environment.

3.1.2 Legislation

Political change drivers include legislated policy changes, national plans and strategies and other macro-level decisions by the government which affect the ECD sector. Given the multi-sectoral nature of ECD, this covers a wide range of plans and policies, the most important of which are contained in Appendix 1, attached to this report. In this section, the main change drivers related to policy and macro-political strategies will be discussed to draw some implications for skills training to support the implementation of the national plans.

Since the holistic development of the child is at the centre of ECD, policies around health, welfare, safety, and of course education are directly related to the field, with national-level development policies also providing the sector with sub-goals. These policies increase the demand for a skilled workforce in the sector. As explained earlier, the South African government has prioritised ECD in the NIECDP (2015). This child-centred policy positions early childhood as spanning the period from conception to five years, and therefore includes policy on pre-and post-natal care for the mother and quality stimulation and care, including health and safety, for children up to five years of age.

The migration or function shift of ECD from the DSD to DBE is perhaps the most significant legislated change driver in the sector that will increase the demand for qualified personnel and registered centres. The Minister of Education, in her foreword to the ECD Census (DBE, 2022) report, highlights three key priorities of her Ministry as: "... continued *professionalisation and training* of the ECD workforce, strengthening play-based curriculum implementation, and improving our processes for registering and funding ELPs in order to expand access" (DBE,

2022, p.3). These priorities are interdependent thus, to meet the demand created by this shift for skilled workers in the sector, the ETDP SETA has an opportunity to:

- 1) Fund higher and further education institutions and existing RTOs in enabling practitioners to attain qualifications based on a holistic, play-based approach to ECCE. The function shift is the first step in professionalising the sector by introducing policy around curriculum quality and content and minimum requirements for practitioners and teachers. The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children, from birth to four years old (DBE, 2015) sets out guidelines for programmes aimed at this age group, implying that practitioners will have to learn how to implement quality ECCE as stipulated by such policy. In addition, the Education White Paper 5 on Early Childhood Development (DoE, 2001) phased in Grade R as part of the formal schooling system (still not compulsory as the Act is not yet law) and by 2030 the aim is to also make schooling compulsory from five years of age by introducing Grade RR. The DBE is responsible for curriculum development, support and training of teachers, but those working in the birth to four years category are still classified as practitioners and will receive support from the DSD. The Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2019-2024 has developed a set of outcomes around the ECD sector that include the migration of pre-schooling to the DBE (but in effect, this is only for 5–6-year-olds).
- 2) Fund NGOs or further education and training organisations to train entrepreneurs to set up and/or run ECCE centres and non-centre based ELPs effectively. The Department of Social Development has allocated roughly 70% (3.2 billion) in early childhood development grants to provinces, enabling it to increase the subsidy rate per child to R18.17 and provide access to ECD for 692 469 children in the birth to four years age group by 2023 (National Treasury, 2021). If this is the case, then the pre-school sector will need between 30 000 and 50 000 practitioners to cater for the increased access (at 1:25 practitioner-child ratio or less), as well as a similar number of support workers and managers. If parents cannot afford to send their children to a centre, then alternatively, community- and home-based care becomes vital. Again, it is evident that this area could be one where ETDP SETA could partner with the government and other stakeholders to fund training for such initiatives.
- 3) Fund further and higher education training (HET) organisations to train people to support ECCE centres to attain registration and funding, not only from DBE but also from other sources. Many ELPs do not receive this funding because they are not able to navigate the complex system of registration, and even those who are registered often do not receive the

subsidy (Kotzé, 2022). In addition, the subsidy only provides for around 25% of their income, leaving them dependent on fees. The DBE outcomes for the function shift include developing and implementing ECD planning, funding, registration and information systems; and developing and implementing improved school readiness assessments. These initiatives call for improved leadership, implementation and monitoring in the sector and require more funding to train the ECCE sector to make use of these services.

Plans and policies to reduce unemployment include Social Employment Programmes (SEPs) such as those run by the Presidency and the International Development Cooperation and the Presidential Youth Employment Initiative (PYEI) to reduce youth (aged 18-34) unemployment. The PYEI focus on priority growth areas and ECD has been prioritised as such in the NIECDP (2015). The estimated rate of unemployment among the youth varies depending on the source, but in some regions, it exceeds 60% (Statistics South Africa (SSA), 2022). However, the reach of any one programme is limited and there is an opportunity for non-profit training organisations to develop internship/learnership programmes to skill youth in providing teaching/care and support services at local level (Nutbrown, 2006). According to the stakeholders consulted, initial learnerships could open up doors in other areas such as IT, management, logistics, health, etc., but in order to do this, the learnerships would need to offer entry into NQF level 5 to enable future access into higher education. There is also a need for recognition of prior learning policies to enable those already working in the field (predominantly Black, female, low socio-economic status women (DBE, 2022)) to be able to gain entry into South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA)-accredited programmes. Technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges could fill this gap to some extent, but access to such colleges is not possible for many, due to time, geographical and financial restraints. Furthermore, it seems many TVET colleges are not functioning well (Sebola, 2022), although there are some private ones which offer quality ECD training, such as Embury Institute for Higher Education and Sparrow, which could be a useful source of training partnerships with ETDP SETA could explore.

National plans and policies in the ECCE/ECD sector have thus led to an increased demand for various skilled workers – ECCE practitioners, managers, entrepreneurs, and support workers – but unfortunately, despite unemployment being at an all-time high, this demand far outstrips supply. The non-governmental organisations we consulted blame the low salaries (often less than minimum wage), even in the formal Grade R schooling system (approximately R5000 pm for Governing Body posts) and the lack of a clear career pathway for the low status of the sector

and the inability to attract skilled people. Table 3 presents a sample of the main national policies and plans that impact on the sector in terms of skills development and the labour market, after which economic change drivers are discussed.

Table 3: Selection of national policies/plans that impact on skills development in the ECD sector

National policy/strategy/plan impacting on ECD sector	Main objectives of policy/strategy/plan related to ECD sector	Implications for skills development and labour market in ECD sector
National Development Plan 2030	Aims to reduce inequality and poverty in country and prioritises ECD through channelling resources towards physical, cognitive and emotional development	Training should focus on most indigent populations to reduce inequality Funding for training and ongoing support needs to be directed to ECD Priority area that could lead to jobs for unemployed
Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators	Professionalisation of ECD workforce. Standardises training in line with National Curriculum Framework and provides a career pathway for birth to Grade R educators	More institutions need to offer programmes, especially at lower than NQF level 5 to keep up with demand created by drive for universal access to ECD
Draft policy on Recognition of South African higher education	To reclassify Higher Education institutions	More institutions will be able to offer formal qualifications for practitioner development, especially NQF level 4 and lower. Universities will not be keen to offer programmes less than NQF level 6
National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy	Child-centred policy to improve care and stimulation from conception to 5 years in line with the National Development Plan 2030 (NDP) goals. Focus on involvement of primary caregivers; creation of integrated systems of service delivery at all levels of government	Need for integrated approach to skills development to provide comprehensive services involving various government departments Training of municipal employees to provide/support integrated service Need for primary caregivers to be given education/support in child care and stimulation Many more practitioners/educators need to be trained specifically in STEM-related subjects to stay abreast with increasing technology Need for integrated health, welfare, education services and staff to run them
Function shift from DSD to DBE for ECD	Delivery of an integrated, aligned service model to provide universal access for all children. DBE will develop curriculum, support and training of workforce and roll-out of Grade R; DSD remain	Increased need for skilled and qualified practitioners/teachers who can deliver the holistic/play-based curriculum More Grade R facilities needed, staffed by trained personnel Need for co-ordination and accreditation of existing programmes offered by various NGOs

National policy/strategy/plan impacting on ECD sector	Main objectives of policy/strategy/plan related to ECD sector	Implications for skills development and labour market in ECD sector
	responsible for social support and care.	
Basic Education Laws Amendment Bill (BELA)	Aims to make Grade R compulsory (2022) and Grade RR by 2030	Many more posts will have to be created in government school sector More private institutions will be needed but support for funding
Presidential Youth Employment Interventions	To provide skills development through internships for unemployed youth	Large supply of unemployed graduates who could be trained/skilled to contribute to ECD sector
Various government projects such as Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education; Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme	Strengthening teacher education	Professionalisation of the workforce increases demand for qualifications

3.2 Economic change drivers

Economic change drivers refer to positive or negative factors that affect the economy and the labour market. In this section, the main economic change drivers will be discussed, namely the poor economic state of South Africa and how it affects skills development opportunities in the ECD sector to enhance quality education.

South Africa's fragile economy shed almost 120,000 jobs, a fall of 1.2%, in the second quarter of 2022, according to the latest Quarterly Employment Statistics. The fact of the matter is that employment remains below the dismal levels recorded before the pandemic. The population of the RSA is estimated to be 60.6 million by the end of June 2022, with nearly 32 million people living below the poverty line (Business Tech South Africa, 2021; SSA, 2022). This poor economic state poses numerous challenges to facilitating equal access to health, nutrition and quality education for all young children. The poor living conditions and high unemployment rates victimise young children living in the poorest households where there are no opportunities for optimal development (Jansen & Palmer-Phillips, 2021). Many parents cannot afford to send their children to ECCE centres, but if the centres do not receive fees, they cannot continue to function.

The ECD sector experiences poor working conditions, low salaries, an inability to attract qualified practitioners and low retainment rates (Luthile, 2021). Theron (2022) confirms that the South African Government spend only 2% of its 75-billion-rand budget on ECD, despite declaring it a priority area. The majority of the township and rural centres are not viable businesses (Shai, 2022), in that they cannot afford to pay decent wages or purchase the required teaching and learning materials and resources. The DBE (see Figure 2), for example, explains that although 94% of centres charge fees, 62% of ECD programmes allow children who cannot pay to attend (Kotzé, 2022).

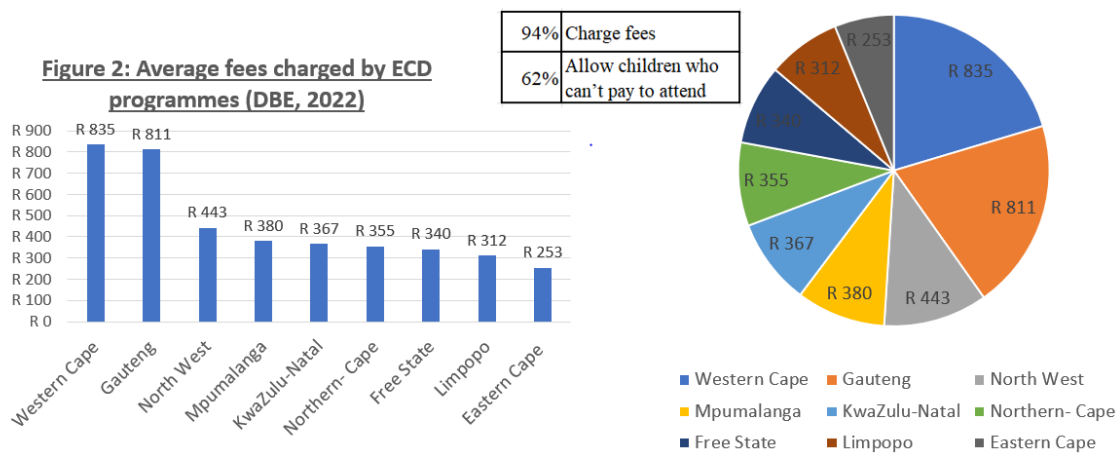


Figure 2: Average fees charged by ECD programmes (DBE, 2022)

This has major implications for the sector, as managing an ECD centre is a complex business and many ECCE managers lack skills and need ongoing support to deliver quality education (Chambers, 2022). An estimated 90% of childcare enterprises are owned by women, with over 50% from the poorer income population who lack the financial and social capital and access to technology that the more affluent can obtain (Dladla, 2022). The outcomes of the Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Workshop (2022), gathered from a wide sample of stakeholders involved in ECD and youth development, emphasised that ECD workers must be supported to become strong micro-entrepreneurs that could establish their own businesses and offer a decent income to staff. This is an area where ETDP SETA could play an important role. ETDP SETA is working within a weakening economy but could improve skills supply by forming partnerships

with higher and further education to fund short learning programmes or other courses to develop entrepreneurial skills to improve the quality and quantity of ECCE offered.

The findings of the recent Oppenheimer workshop also indicated that the ECD sector could be supported by enabling youth to fill some of the circa 400 000 potential jobs in order to improve the quality of ECD delivery in SA (Oppenheimer Memorial Trust Workshop, 2022). Dano (2021) adds that supporting these potential jobs would not only improve quality education but would also be one of the most effective ways of creating new jobs in the country. There is funding available for this through the PYEI and SEP (Dladla, 2022), but relatively few NGOs and centres know how to access it or possess the skills to develop a feasible and fundable proposal. The implications of these policies are that ETDP SETA could partner with these government-funding initiatives to fill the demand for skills in the ECD sector, to help place children at the centre of “South Africa’s human capital development agenda” (Dladla, 2022, p. 1). Brooks (cited by Dano, p. 1) explains that increased investment in the ECD sector would deliver “a triple social and economic benefit”. First, it would promote the holistic development of young children; second, it would enable greater participation by women in the ECD workforce, and third, it would stimulate more and better-paid jobs.

Economic factors influence the social context that shapes the lives of young children. The social context is very important in the holistic development of young children and is influenced by language, values, attitudes, the family and the community. In the next section, important socio-cultural drivers that affect skills demand and supply in the sector are discussed.

3.3 Social change drivers

Social change drivers refer to socio-cultural factors that influence the thoughts and beliefs of different social groups. For example, attitudes towards education, social norms that limit or promote opportunities for specific population groups or factors that play a role in parental engagement. The implications for such thinking for skills development in ECD require a focus in training programmes on culturally relevant pedagogy, gender equality and attitude towards teaching and learning from birth to four.

Socio-cultural background provides young children with a sense of who they are. Because culture influences young children’s holistic wellbeing it is important for practitioners to understand socio-cultural influences in the classroom and how they will impact the way these young children will grow and develop. Practitioners should understand and embrace cultural,

language and ability diversity in order to support the unique strengths of each young child in their classroom. Culturally relevant pedagogy should be a crucial part of the skills development of practitioners and it is not always covered in detail in the NCF (2011). Mette et al. (2016) caution that if adults are not conscious of their own beliefs about young children's backgrounds, they may not be conscious of the potential impact these stereotypes may have on interactions between them, young children and/or the communities.

Gender equality in ECD is a matter of social justice, concerned with rights, opportunities and freedom. South Africa is a patriarchal society where social roles determine certain thoughts, behaviours and expectations (Blakely & Dziadosz, 2015). The idea that working with preschool children is a job for females has led to the sector becoming overwhelmingly female. Factors such as low status, poor salaries, potential complaints of child abuse and sexual harassment and a lack of male peer groups have been cited as major contributing factors to the lack of male educators in the ECD sector (Peterson & Pekter, 2011). Okeke and Nyanhoto (2021) emphasise that these ideas lead to gender inequality and that children suffer from the lack of a male role model in the early years, particularly since many households are female-led. If more men are engaged in early learning, this will bring gender equality in the ECD sector. This could also lead to the raising of the status and an increase in the salaries of practitioners. Male ECD teachers could provide a male role model for young children, especially for young children who are growing up in an environment where fathers are absent. The implication is that ETDP SETA could partner with existing youth development initiatives to support training for young male practitioners to enter the sector.

Another socio-cultural factor that affects the sector is the attitude that early childhood education is not as important as formal schooling, particularly among lower-income groups who prioritise education for older children. Researchers emphasise that the primary responsibility for quality education is not only the responsibility of the ECD centre, but also of parents (Atmore, 2019). It does not matter how much parents earn or what their background is; when young children are supported at home, they are likely to have more success in school and later in life. It is, however, a concern that there is a lack of parents being actively involved in young children's development. Maluleke (2014) identifies poor economic status, limited education, lack of clear policies and a lack of collaboration between parents and teachers as the main reasons for this absence. In addition, if parents are not involved in the education of their children, they are reluctant to pay school fees. The implication for skills development is the opportunity to partner with NGOs and other government departments to develop and implement training for parents

to make them aware of the importance of ECCE. Another main change driver is the increasing digitalisation of education.

3.4 Technological change drivers

The use of information and communications technologies (ICTs) presents many opportunities to improve the supply of trained personnel in the ECD sector, as well as create a demand for the development of ECD specific applications and digital tools. Advancing technology is changing how training is conducted and can make it accessible to a wider target group, especially those that do not have the time, resources or opportunity to attend face-to-face courses. Given the lack of practitioner digital literacy and resources in the sector (Mukhari, 2016), it would be important to investigate how existing online training/education tools could be adapted to be more low-tech, i.e., not requiring much computer literacy or access to unlimited data. This would allow opportunities for practitioners in low-income settings to gain access to innovative teaching methods, improve communication with ECD counterparts in other areas, and participate in online training (Mwapwele et al., 2019). Existing online training programmes include those available on the [GROW](#) website, which also provide training for setting up an ECCE centre (improving the supply of trained managers and entrepreneurs) and provide an application that makes the courses very accessible; the [P.L.A.Y](#) initiative funded by the LEGO Foundation and the DBE and administered by [Cotlands](#), a SETA-accredited provider; [BRIDGE](#) and [NECDA](#) are organisations that link ECD NGOs and providers together via digital means to strengthen skills development in the sector and increase supply of quality ECD providers. These are only a handful of the numerous available online initiatives that can make skills development more accessible, and there is scope for the development of more applications and sites that can be downloaded onto mobile devices. Ongoing mentoring, a vital component of any skills development training according to the stakeholders consulted, could also take place via online applications, as could the education of parents in the holistic stimulation and care of young children. Developing practitioners' basic ICT knowledge will not only contribute to the holistic development of young children including developing literacy, science and digital skills (Ogegbo & Aina, 2020), but it would also represent a new source of economic growth and a powerful tool for social transformation (UNESCO, 2011). ETDP SETA could thus explore how they could partner with organisations to fund training to make ICT more accessible and user-friendly for practitioners/managers and non-centre-based initiatives

to increase the supply of skilled service providers in the sector and create demand for the development of user-friendly digital applications for training.

4. Conclusion

This report has highlighted the implications of four broad change drivers that affect skills supply and demand in the ECD sector and opportunities for skills development that ETDP SETA can pursue. These implications in relation to the current national policies and strategies are summarised in Table 3 and the implications for skills development are summarised in Appendix 1.

The figure below also summarises the points highlighted in this report that relate to the measures that ETDP SETA can take within the short-term to partner with NGOs, government, private education or skills development agencies to recruit, (re)train and retain workers in the sector to support the national strategies and plans for ECD.

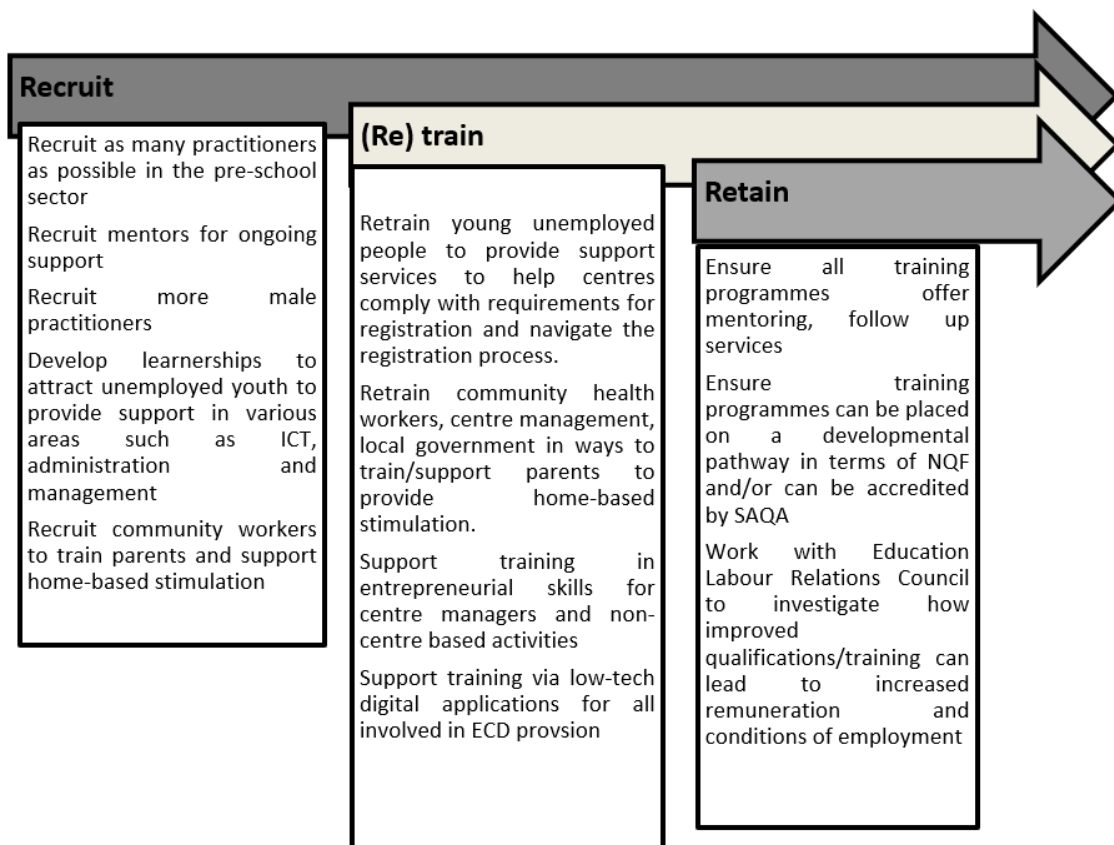


Figure 3: Skills development opportunities to recruit, (re)train, and retain workers in the sector

In conclusion, although many of the change factors such as the weakening economy and macro-political events are extrinsic, ETDP SETA can act to bring about improvement in skills training by responding to internal change drivers. Conclusions derived from this report lead to the following recommendations to enable ETDP SETA to fulfill their [mandate](#) within the ECD sector to “promote and facilitate the delivery of education, training and development in order to enhance the skills profile of the Education, Training and Development (ETD) sector and contribute to the creation of employment opportunities especially for those previously disadvantaged.”:

- Support training opportunities to meet the demand for accredited and co-ordinated skills training not only for practitioners, but also for managers/entrepreneurs in partnership with further education, government and other SETAs.
- Fund short-term interventions to benefit the lower income population groups to develop capacity to initiate and sustain ECD services as a viable business.
- Fund training for personnel in non-centre-based ECD services located in public venues such as libraries and local clinics to provide education and resources.
- Explore partnerships with organisations with a national footprint or with the Department of Health (training of Community Health Workers in holistic stimulation of young children) to meet the demand for training to increase the awareness of the importance of ECD among primary caregivers and upskill them to provide home-based stimulation and care.
- Work with the existing government initiatives to address youth employment to train them to provide both direct and indirect services to the ECD sector.
- Explore with unions/Education Labour Relations Council how to make working conditions more attractive in the sector, linked to level of qualifications.
- Partner with organisations who are already active in the sector to fund the development of online resources and training to meet the demand for more accessible, user-friendly digital training opportunities.

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Appendix 1: Change drivers and implications for skills planning

Change driver	Influence on skills demand/supply	Implication for skills planning
Political		
Universal access to quality education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of suitable personnel does not meet the demand • Increased demand for formally qualified teachers/practitioners for Grade R and RR • Increased demand for people able to run non-centre and centre-based ELPs as micro-enterprises • Immediate demand to upskill existing service providers who do not have formal qualifications or skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-the-job training and mentorship for those working in the 0-5 year-old context to meet the immediate demand for skilled practitioners and managers for pre-schools • Increased offering of formal programmes offered by higher and further education to meet the ongoing demand for skilled practitioners/teachers with bursaries • Training for micro-enterprise management in areas of finances, marketing, human resources, fundraising, etc. • Training for parents in home-based stimulation and care in economically challenged sectors of the community • Accreditation of more training providers to meet the increased demand for an integrated, holistic view of ECD, as well as monitoring of provision
Function shift of ECD from the DSD to DBE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for skilled personnel outstrips supply • Growing demand for private Grade R and Grade RR centres as government policies and plans take time to come to fruition • Inadequate supply of teachers in STEAM subjects in ECD 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Higher and further education and accredited RTOs to offer qualifications that enable practitioners, Grade R and RR teachers to implement the national curriculum • More funded programmes are required for the training of practitioners/teachers already working in the sector in a play-based, holistic approach • Training in how to meet DBE requirements and navigate the system for registration • Training for starting and maintaining ELPs as micro-enterprises • Need for more STEAM-trained teachers/practitioners

Change driver	Influence on skills demand/supply	Implication for skills planning
National legislation/plans	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased funding to strengthen skills development in the sector • More regulation of the sector • Supports high-quality ECD provision by increasing the output of trained personnel • Prioritises ECD as a growth area; therefore a greater demand for skilled personnel • Draft policy to reclassify Higher Education Sector 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased support for skills development (teaching, management, ability to meet requirements for registration) through accredited programmes • Integration of sectors to support holistic skills development (e.g. health, welfare, and other SETAs) • Bursaries for students attending further and higher education for ECD programmes • Accreditation of training less than NQF level 4 to bridge into the National Qualifications Framework • Career path development for ECD from NQF level 0-10 to attract more people to the sector • More institutions will be able to offer training lower than NQF level 5 (but conversely universities are less willing to offer these)
Economic		
Worsening economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Centres cannot afford to pay staff • Less money available to pay for ECCE services; therefore a demand for primary caregiver support/training in ECCE • Threat to potential growth in the sector • Students cannot afford higher/further education • Existing practitioners cannot afford to leave their job to enrol in contact courses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of entrepreneurial skills for managers via inter-SETA collaboration to strengthen viability of ELPs • Development of skills to run non-centre-based ELPs • Need for primary caregiver education and training • Bursaries provided to students • Workplace-based training prioritised and internships • Low-tech online training to cater for those already working in centres in low-income communities

Change driver	Influence on skills demand/supply	Implication for skills planning
Rising youth unemployment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased supply of people available to enter the ECD sector • Need training to meet the demand for ECD skills/knowledge/attitude development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract unemployed youth to the sector through funded, accredited training as part of a career path • Reskilling of unemployed graduates with STEAM degrees to support the ECD sector • Programmes must be holistic in nature to include the development of soft skills (communication, empathy, problem-solving, etc.) to ensure well-rounded professionals who can deal with contextual challenges
Social		
Status of the sector in society (gendered attitudes, seen as low-status work)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient supply of male practitioners/teachers • Demographic of the sector (low income, female, Black) leads to low status; therefore not able to attract a sufficient supply of qualified personnel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attract more males into accredited higher education programmes to change the demographics of the ECD sector • Develop a career path within the sector
Technological		
Increasing the digitalisation of the workplace and learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supply of workforce trained to use digital means for teaching and management in the sector is insufficient • Demand for more training/education via digital means 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low-tech digital literacy skills development for existing practitioners and parents to support learning • Literacy skills development for managers to comply with requirements of DBE for registration, monitoring and assessment • Skills training for the development of digital resources for the sector for use by unskilled practitioners/parents

Change driver	Influence on skills demand/supply	Implication for skills planning
Incorporation of coding, data analytics, robotics and increased STEAM focus into ECD curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand for teachers/practitioners who can teach these subjects 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Retrain unemployed graduates to specialise in STEAM and coding support in the ECD sector • Retrain the current workforce in these skills • Train mentors for the ongoing support of teachers/practitioners/managers in these areas