# Exploring Strategies to Strengthen the Integrated Inter-Sectoral Collaboration Among Early Childhood Care and Education Providers

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| | The study explored strategies that could be used to strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) providers in the Northern Cape province, South Africa. It is evidenced in the literature that early childhood education centers operate without maximum inter-sectoral collaboration. There is a need therefore for intersectoral collaboration among early childhood providers to ensure a smooth running of the program for children's development. Semi-structured interviews with a sample of 12 seasoned ECCE providers from the public and private sectors were used to gather the data. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, and themes were formed. The findings of the study among others indicate that a detailed provincial integrated Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) strategy is developed to ensure a properly resourced, coordinated, and managed Early childhood development (ECD) system that forms part of the national ECCE strategy. The study also found that the establishment of a financing model as a strategy can assist to strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers. |

## INTRODUCTION

Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is the most important stage in a child's development. The rest of a child's life is significantly impacted by how they develop throughout this stage. Marope and Kaga (2015) define the concept of ECCE as encompassing cognitive and mental developments, which are interrelated with physical growth and the general health of the child, to lay a foundation for constant development and well-being. ECCE entails the cognitive, psycho-social, physical, communication, social, and spiritual growth of children that takes place from birth until formal school-going age (Department of Social Development (DSD), 2015). Yoshikawa and Kabay (2015) define ECCE as a service and program that give care and education to children out of homecare and educational settings between birth and school entry. In addition, as Yoshikawa and Kabay (2015) explain further, ECCE is an essential feature of Early Childhood Development (ECD) policies and programs and includes health, nutrition, child protection, sanitation, water, and hygiene. The variety of delivery methods at various kinds of ECCE sites across the various ECCE sectors emerges from the integrated nature of the South African model (DSD, 2015).

The provision of early childhood care and education (ECCE) services requires solid, inter-sectoral and integrated coordination, commitment, and effort. This is because early childhood care and education (ECCE) involves young children's overall development, and it necessitates strong, cross-sectoral, and integrated coordination, dedication, and effort. According to Sebatana (2018), Shaeffar (2015); and Shokane (2017), the ECCE system needs to be well-resourced, coordinated, and managed. It also needs to include children with special needs (Viviers, Biersteker & Muroane, 2013). To ensure accessibility, quality, and integrated services, there is a need for collaboration among diverse ECCE providers and a focus on the

well-being of children. To integrate their efforts and effectively work, several essential role players or ECCE suppliers must form partnerships.

According to Mwoma (2019), early childhood development (ECD) programs differ in coordination and standard and are characterized by insufficient and unequal access, particularly for children younger than three years. Mwoma (2019) explains that this state of affairs calls for an increase in multi-sectoral coverage of quality programming that incorporates health, nutrition, safety, responsive caregiving, and early learning opportunities. There has been a growth of national, inter-sectoral, integrated ECD policies worldwide, including in Australia, Canada, and those sub-Saharan Africa (Mangwanya *et al.* 2016:4; Obed & Newman, 2015; Yoshikawa & Kabay, 2015). However, the policies on childcare and education in these countries have had separate historical trajectories, and have developed separately, with different conceptions of young children's needs and fragmented systems of governance (Biersteker *et al.* 2016; Friendly *et al.* 2018; Obed & Newman, 2015; Sibanda, 2018; Thorpe & Staton, 2019). Integration and inter-sectoral collaboration for ECCE services are vital and present a challenge all over the world.

While there have been concerted efforts to provide ECCE services to all children, particularly those who continue to be marginalized, there have also been systemic obstacles that prevent the efficient implementation of ECCE programs (Black, Walker, Fernald, et al. 2017). There hasn't been any seamless service delivery partnership for ECCE providing. Different concepts, values, regulations, professional cultures, and religious beliefs are owned and used by each sector. Despite the development of the family and young child services provided by ECCE, many young children still do not have access to high-quality ECCE services, (Ashley-Cooper, Van Niekerk, & Atmore, 2019). Policies emphasize the requirement of a constructive and integrated system that ensures that necessary ECCE services are accessible to all, particularly to those children with special needs (Viviers et al., 2013), guiding the role of government toward children's development.

The multi-dimensional kind of early development needs different partners with different skills and competencies to give services to young children to safeguard their holistic development.

According to Berry *et al*. (2013), there is a need for an inter-sectoral approach to ECCE provision across health, education, social protection, and socio-economic development, which has to be provided by national and provincial government departments, as well as local government. Despite efforts that have been instigated to develop ECCE policies and plans, and to make ECCE a government priority, there is still a lack of integration and collaboration among ECCE providers.

Therefore, an integrated, inter-sectoral approach and plan across government, NGOs, and the private sector are needed to achieve ECCE outcomes more effectively and sustainably than might be achieved by ECCE providers working in silos (DSD, 2015). According to Ionescu, Trikic, and Pinto (2015), the benefits of such integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers are that the different sectors will be involved in joint planning and budgeting, which will result in cost-cutting through shared resources, as well as agreement on targets for services. Ionescu *et al.* (2015), further affirm that various sectors will share and learn from one another and contribute to ECCE service efficiently. Despite ECCE services having received significant attention from researchers across the globe, it requires powerful and coordinated inter-sectoral vision, commitment, and action. Investigating methods to improve the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers is therefore very crucial.

Whilst there has been progress in the ECCE sector, there have also been challenges and barriers to multi-sectoral and inter-sectoral action for sustainable ECCE services, which are in contrast to the facilitating factors. There has been a shortage of secure educational sector plans for ECCE and a need for revised system-level planning proportional to resource allocation, implementation, and monitoring of the ECCE subsector. The underutilization of parents and communities as strategic partners to improve the quality of ECCE services and effective networking to support families and lessen inequity is a challenge. Infrastructure backlog has also been cited as the main factor that has limited ECD centers from registering with the Department of Social Development (DSD, 2014). Another challenge facing ECCE is that poverty-stricken children, underprivileged society, and those physically

challenged still have limited opportunities to be in the ECD centers and are denied quality ECD provisions (DPME, 2012). Therefore, irrespective of what the framework of legislation and the policy guidelines are prescribing, whether it be the Children's Act or the National Integrated Plan for ECD, underprivileged children are still restricted by inadequate access to services (Mbarathi et al. 2016).

According to Mbarathi et al. (2016), the delivery of quality ECCE services is also affected by a lack of funding, and conditional grants are insufficient, mainly for disadvantaged parents and children. In addition, Wills and Kika-Mistry (2021) affirm that some centers fail to meet the standards required to qualify for ECD center registration because of a lack of conditional grant subsidies to some informal and under-resourced ECD settings and budget constraints in the Department of Basic Education. These challenges can be addressed only if there is integration and inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers.

The general purpose of this study is to explore the strategies to strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among Early Childhood Care and Education providers. Specifically, the study intends to: (1) Explore the challenges facing ECCE providers in carrying out their roles and responsibilities as stipulated in the National Integrated ECD Policy 2015; (2) Explore the strategies that can strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers in the Northern Cape province.

## METHODS

The study adopted a constructivist research paradigm and employed a qualitative research approach. By using a qualitative research approach, the researchers gained an understanding and knowledge of the strategies that may strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers.

### Study Site

The study was conducted in the Northern Cape province, in the Frances Baard municipal district, located in Kimberley. The province has both provincial and district offices for all departments that were envisaged as participating, and the greatest number of ECCE centers in the province are found there.

### Participant Selection

For the purpose of this study, only participants who had been involved as role players or ECCE providers in the ECCE field for a period of at least five years were selected. The selection was focused on 12 experienced ECCE participants representing the government and the private sector. Six (6) were provincial and six (6) were district departmental officials from four departments key to the provision of ECCE, which are Health, Social Development, Education, and Local Government.

### Instrument Used for Data Collection

The researchers employed a semi-structured interview guide that set out flexible questions as a tool to collect data. The themes that informed the semi-structured interview guide included challenges and strategies. The interview guide made it possible for the researchers to ask questions and listen, while also allowing room for probing (Nardi, 2018; Nieuwenhuis, 2020). Triangulation was also used as a way to promote the credibility and validity of the research instrument.

### Data Collection Procedures

The researchers made use of a semi-structured, face-to-face interview guide with open-ended questions, to prompt participants to provide their opinions on integration and collaboration among ECCE providers. Each interview lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and was recorded with the approval of the individual participants. The venue, time, date, interviewer, interviewee, prepared questions, and a declaration acknowledging and appreciating the time spent by the interviewee during the interview and the cooperation given, were included in the data collection procedure of this study.

### Data Analysis Procedures

The study employed a thematic analysis strategy to interpret and analyze data. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns (themes) that surface from qualitative data (Braun & Clarke 2017; Feza, 2015). The thematic data analysis was used because it has the potential to reveal themes that are important in the data, and permits the researcher to engage rigorously with the data collected.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

**Possible Challenges that Impede ECCE Providers to Execute their Roles and Responsibilities According to NIECDP of 2015**

The challenges that stand in the way of ECCE providers carrying out their responsibilities according to the NIECDP of 2015 were viewed by participants in this study to be those that limit the chances of integrated inter-sectoral collaboration. Some of these challenges according to respondents included; Insufficient funding, lack of human resources, an infrastructure backlog, the absence of common, unifying legislation, and working in silos.

Some of the participants reported insufficient funding as one of the potential challenges that could prevent ECCE providers from executing their roles and responsibilities. The participant's voices below indicated how the delivery of quality ECCE services can be affected by lack of funding.

**P1** had this to say: Definitely the issue of the budget will always be a problem. And if, for example, other departments like treasury don't have an idea, they are not on board in these collaborations and they don't have an idea of where we are moving to, then the issue of the budget will always be a problem because we need budget to be able to ensure that all these children access quality education.

**According to P2:** We do not have enough budget and human resources, lack of occupational and speech therapists.

**P3:** I think for us the biggest issue is manpower so even though I mean over the years we've really tried to do a lot of work within the ECs our biggest challenge I think is resources.

**P7:** Yes, look ECD has not been taken seriously by our department, ECD has been seen as a by-the-way or an afterthought. So, at the district level, the challenge is always capacity and this has been raised on a number of platforms.

**P10** also stated that: We cannot run away from the issue of resources. Yes. And one of the resources that one will mention is funding. You see, to have programs, and you need a budget. To run programs, you need a budget. And when we do not have funding, that can become a problem. You will not get any other resources.

These findings are consistent with those of Makhubele and Baloyi (2018), who emphasize that insufficient funding is a factor that affects the delivery of quality ECCE services. Vargas-Barón (2015) refers to the continued dominance of fragmented and uncoordinated planning, inadequate funding, and inappropriate funding models that pose challenges to achieving integrated, inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers. Pearson (2015) reports that the lack of government financing of ECCE is mostly considered to be a major barrier to policy implementation. The researcher believes that funding of the ECCE sector is insufficient, inadequate, and inappropriately managed because it is managed by more than one ministry. Most of the participants reported that a shortage of human resources impedes them from executing their roles and responsibilities. Some referred to manpower and others to capacity.

DSD (2015) confirms that, for the provisioning of ECCE services, there needs to be a human resource structure established at the national, provincial, and local levels of government. According to the researcher, ECCE provision will remain uncoordinated and unmanaged without people with the necessary skills, especially at the district level, and this will encourage further fragmentation of the ECD sector.

On the issue that has to do with infrastructure backlog,

**P1:** Okay. The impact is, you know, like for example, if we have to ensure that all children have access to education, if people who are supposed to provide the infrastructure, for example, are not on board then definitely I will not be able to achieve my objectives, because I must just perhaps market and promote ECD programs. But if there is no sufficient infrastructure that is safe for children then that I will not be able to achieve my objective. ECD and if there is no access, I mean if there's no infrastructure for ECD centres to be built then definitely we will not be able to achieve that.

Atmore (2019) states that poor infrastructure at ECCE facilities presents health risks and unsafe environments for young children attending these facilities. Atmore (2019) confirms that many ECCE facilities function without basic services, such as clean water, access to electricity, and proper

sanitation. Infrastructure backlogs have an impact on universal access to ECCE services. On the absence of common, unifying legislation, participants indicated that some challenges are organization-related, and which makes it difficult to deal with the absence of common, unifying ECCE policies for different departments.

**P4 stated that:** The problem is our policies are clashing. You will find that the Department of Health will come with its own policy related to the ECD, the Department of Education will come with… But when you get them you clash. So, the policies are not speaking to each other, hence now implementation is a bit slow.

**P8**: Look, number one, legislation plays a big role as well. I think there is intention from the government to do things on a three-timing, that is national, province and local government, but there comes a hindrance where our financial model is modelled differently. You have the Municipal Financial Management Act on the one side, you have the Public Financial Management Act on the one side and then you have your national treasury. So, we might have a certain way that we must do things. Provinces has a certain way in which they must do their own things. So, to an extent you find that a project cannot materialise because municipality operate from DORA [Division of Revenue Act] and Treasury operates from Equitable Share and all that. So the acts are clashing.

Different ECCE policies that apply to different departments are not "talking to each other". This causes confusion and failure to be accountable in the ECCE sector. It also impedes the execution of the roles and responsibilities that must be implemented, because different activities contradict each other in relation to ECCE provision. Another challenge was working in silos. Working in silos was identified by participants as presenting a challenge. Participants alluded to people being comfortable about working alone and not with other people because work can be done quicker alone. The participants also indicated that failure to communicate encourages working in silos.

**P1** Well, silo working, I think people are comfortable to work in their own comfort zones, number one, and perhaps also the issue of working together is not well, marketed in terms of you can sit and do this but you need someone else to help you to do that or to supplement or to strengthen what you are doing.

**P5** I think we are maybe doing certain things separately which we are not always communicating with each other.

**P8** The systemic barriers are the silo planning number one of the different departments. Our priorities and that of education, we do not see them as one because provision for space for a school influences a lot of things in that particular setting in that particular community, you know. So, like I've said, there is not that synergy that is being created between this different departments and municipalities.

Aboud and Proulx (2019) confirm the views of the participants that working in silos is a challenge that can damage the sector. They state that most efforts are located in silos, such that practices, resources and skills are fragmented and inaccessible to all ECCE providers. The researcher believes that there is no governance structure in place to hold ECCE providers accountable for working in silos and fragmenting the ECCE system. ECCE providers continue to provide ECCE services to meet their targets and adhere to their plans. The researchers realised that there is no fixed governance structure that takes decisions and is influential in holding ECCE providers accountable for the fragmentation of the ECCE system.

**What are the Strategies that can Strengthen the Integrated Inter-sectoral Collaboration among ECCE Providers in the Northern Cape province?**

To proffer solutions that will strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers in the Northern Cape province, the views of the participants are as follows.

**Joint Planning**

Participants viewed joint planning as a strategy that could strengthen integrated inter-sectoral collaboration.

**P2** The planning together with other departments, so that each one can give their inputs. So it should be a costed planning.

**P12** A plan will assist us to see whether we are collaborating to meet our key performance

activities. The Office of The Premier as the highest political office in the province will be a watchdog and consequence management will be implemented to ECCE providers who are not working. The costed plan will give us an idea of how much should providers contribute from their budgets to meet the demand of the plan. The plan will be monitored and quarterly meetings will assist us to report the progress.

Joint planning is also emphasized by Ionescu *et al.* (2015), who confirms that the benefits of integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers are that the different sectors will be involved in joint planning and budgeting, which will result in cost-cutting through shared resources, as well as agreement on targets for services.

### Development of Communication Strategy

Participants had realized communication was a vital factor in strengthening integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers and suggested that a communication strategy be developed.

**P2** We need to advocate ECD in the community and all ECCE providers have one strategic planning and roundtable annually. I think probably some of those things will address the issues of people not cooperating, not getting involved and what. So you know, where you can have an Indaba, where you can have like in the media to say that for this to happen, these people must come on board.

**P9** Obviously first thing is communication strategy of ECCE. That is the first thing, and by that, I mean more formalized communication than just talking to each other telephonically. Secondly, I think we need to look at sitting around a table and formulating a either a district or a provincial policy that is more structured, that has got a better strategy taking into consideration the 2015 policy, the legislation regarding that, as well as our legislation. So, everybody we speak with from one voice, and I think that we need to formalize and structure some sort of strategy, taking into consideration all the stakeholders.

**P12** We also need to develop a communication strategy and ensure that we meet quarterly to evaluate our plan.

Richardson and Patana (2012:9) confirm that integration of services can happen through communication among service providers and collaboration among professionals across different sectors. The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2015b:12) agrees that this model could improve access to services and facilitate information and knowledge sharing among providers. The communication strategy will assist in advocating for and planning ECCE services.

### Establishment of Committees

Participants proposed establishing committees as one of the strategies to strengthen integrated inter-sectoral collaboration. Committees can be established nationally and provincially.

**P11** Yes, instead of having all the people coming in one place, you can look at what are the core areas and group people according to that. Then I think you get more active participation, more accountability unlike you take the whole lot of people in one thing. Look at for example training. Where you deal with training, you can have sub-committees and then you know that you deal only with the relevant people because at times people come to meetings and they feel that no it was just a waste of time, where you can just have them in different things to say let's deal with this. And then you take others dealing with infrastructure or something like that.

**P12** Establishment of a Northern Cape steering committee will be good that will be coordinated from the Office of the Premier to monitor the implementation of the plan.

Establishing various committees that can assist to strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral committees is recommended by various ECCE policies and acts. The White Paper on Education and Training of 1995, ECCE as a multi-disciplinary field, compels the national and provincial Departments of Education, Health, and Social Development to establish inter-departmental committees that will develop and promote a multidisciplinary approach to improve the well-being of children from birth to nine years of age, and to integrate ECCE services for children and their families (DoE, 1995:31). In addition, committees need to work in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, such as ECCE caregivers,

trainers, service providers, NGOs, the private sector, and, at the provincial level, local authority representatives (DoE, 1995).

**Accountability and consequence management**

A few of the participants identified accountability and consequence management as a strategy that could strengthen integrated inter-sectoral collaboration.

**P6** Most importantly, accountability, you know, because good policies are there, good guidelines are there, but if there is no accountability in terms of implementation. For me that's where the problem is, the issue of implementation. The policy clearly outlines who must do what and whatever but when it comes to implementation where there is no accountability then you will not achieve anything. So, no, we cannot change but what we can say is to just strengthen the issues of accountability and consequence management for us to be effective. And also putting also the issue of consequence management, if things are not done as they are supposed to be done

These findings are consistent with the claim by the WHO (2017) that accountability as a framework sets out the responsibilities of ECCE providers and provides a clear directive for inter-sectoral collaboration among relevant government departments involved in ECCE provision.

While several research are done to address the elements influencing fair access to ECCE, they are considered in isolation (Archambault, Côté & Rynault, 2020). Archambault *et al., (*2020) believe that an integrated, conceptual framework proposed in describing the complex, extensive, and influential concept of access to healthcare can also be applied to adopting a more integrated approach to access ECCE. The framework brings individual interventions into a coherent and comprehensive structure that recognizes the importance of the complementarity of interventions by different partners who are working towards achieving a common goal. As such, it serves not only as a framework by which to understand the overlapping processes, factors, and stages affecting access to ECCE but also as a model to help decision-makers coordinate their efforts and maximize their impact. An integrated conceptual framework concerns a holistic idea of early childhood provision and a

holistic view of the child; or the impossibility of imagining that education, care, and upbringing as shown in Figure 1 could ever be separated.

The findings report that the various situations experienced by ECCE providers that inhibit them from executing their roles and responsibilities, as stated in NIECDP of 2015, include insufficient funding, shortage of human resources, an infrastructure backlog, the absence of common, unifying legislation, working in silos, an uncoordinated ECCE sector, and target compliance plans, and duplication of services. The study determined that the challenges mentioned are system-related.

The ECCE providers who participated in this study confirmed that integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers is vital. Nevertheless, they continued to work in silos, for various reasons. Despite ECCE providers having a common understanding of the necessity of integrated inter-sectoral collaboration, they were not involved in joint action to provide ECCE (*cf.* 4.4.2). In South Africa, the rights of the child are promoted by various legislation and policies. Various sectors committed through these legislative frameworks to promote the inter-sectoral collaboration of ECCE provision but could not unite the main delivery matters (*cf.* 1.10.2.3).

In Northern Cape province, the challenges facing integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers are the lack of participation of the local municipalities, which are crucial to contributing to administration and infrastructure support in the planning, coordination, and monitoring of ECCE services. Leadership and coordination at local municipalities are critical. Local municipalities are expected to build centers and develop existing buildings into viable ECCE centers in areas of need. Furthermore, they are required to register ECCE centers by ensuring that health and safety standards for ECCE facilities are properly maintained, and to issue certificates of safety to complying centers (*cf.* 2.2.2). The study indicates that local municipalities do not have the same understanding of integrated inter-sectoral collaboration as other stakeholders. This was also evident from its tardiness in issuing health and safety reports, which are critical for the registration of ECCE centers (*cf.* 4.4.2). Local municipalities do not even coordinate or manage ECCE services. The

leadership of local municipalities are not aware of their role as stipulated by the NIECDP of 2015.

Despite numerous ECD-related legislative frameworks and programs, a lack of consistency and a shared vision amongst stakeholders remain obstacles to effective and coordinated implementation (*cf*.1.2). The study shows that the policies are silent on strategies for integrating inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers. This was confirmed by the views of the ECCE providers, who indicated one of the challenges as the absence of common, unifying policies (*cf.* 1.10.2.5 and 4.5.4).

In this study, the ECCE providers who participated expressed mixed opinions about the best institution to lead and coordinate the ECCE sector (*cf.* 4.6.1). Different responses were given, which points to fragmentation and an uncoordinated, under-resourced ECCE sector. In this situation, it becomes easy for stakeholders to shift the blame amongst each other if the service is not delivered, and it is one way of avoiding accountability.

On strategies that can strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers in the Northern Cape province, participants indicated possible strategies that can strengthen integrated inter-sectoral collaboration in the Northern Cape. These strategies include a joint plan with its budget, the development of communication strategies, the establishment of ECCE committees, and accountability and consequence management. The study indicates that the establishment of a financing model as a strategy can assist to strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers. It can be concluded that these are strategies that can strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher believes that ECCE services place the child at the center of a secure and enabling environment that brings together the factors needed for the growth and learning development of the child. Therefore, ECCE services cannot be provided by a single organization, department, or service provider working in isolation. Partnerships are needed amongst different key role players or ECCE providers, who should integrate and collaborate in

providing their services. Moreover, there is a need for partnerships among key ECCE players themselves, to address the holistic development of the child. An individual organization or ECCE provider cannot work in isolation to address ECCE services. Therefore, strategies to strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration of ECCE providers with their counterparts are required.

To achieve the integration and collaboration of ECCE provision, all spheres of government should be accountable for developing and implementing integrated policies. This includes properly resourced and established monitoring, support, and evaluation mechanisms, which use input from beneficiaries, collect and analyze data, and set up evaluations to assess the provision and impact of services. Multi-sectoral integration of different departments and NGO partners is compulsory (Vargas-Barón, 2015:273). Different departments are obliged to provide services and programs that advance the well-being of poverty-stricken households. All government spheres, national to local, are further obliged to guarantee support and provision of ECCE facilities for unsafe children. An ECCE forum should be established through the involvement of all stakeholders, including parents, in the delivery, planning, monitoring, and evaluation of integrated inter-sectoral collaboration for delivering ECCE services.

Given that services in early childhood are fragmented between the health and education systems, and that both health and education are essential factors in a child's early development, the concept of capacity building in ECD must be confronted as an inter-sectoral problem.

The following recommendations emanate from the findings of the study. The recommendations are viewed as strategies that could strengthen the integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers. (1) Knowledge and understanding of the necessity for integrated inter-sectoral collaboration among ECCE providers should be imparted to all ECCE providers. This can be achieved through advocacy campaigns for the ECCE services provided by ECCE providers to communities, and by presenting workshops and summits to promote communication among ECCE providers; (2) Regarding ways in which skills and resources can be shared, it is recommended that a detailed provincial integrated ECCE strategy is developed to

ensure a properly resourced, coordinated and managed ECD system that forms part of the national ECCE strategy; (3) The government and NGOs should collaborate on their funding by developing provincial inter-sectoral strategic plans that are costed and integrated. Doing so will assist in avoiding duplication of services that result in funds being insufficient for ECCE provision.

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