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# SCALING-UP EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

INTRODUCING A RECEPTION YEAR (GRADE R) FOR  
CHILDREN AGED FIVE YEARS AS THE FIRST YEAR OF  
SCHOOLING

**Linda Biersteker**



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## ACRONYMS, ABBREVIATIONS AND TERMS

### Acronyms and abbreviations

ABE(T)	Adult Basic Education (and Training)
ACCESS	Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security
ANC	African National Congress
BPP	Bridging Period Programme
CCECD	Coordinating Committee for ECD
CEPD	Centre for Education Policy Development
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DET	Department of Education and Training
DHS	Demographic and Health Survey
DoE	Department of Education (National)
DoH	Department of Health
ECE	Early Childhood Education
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPWP	Expanded Public Works Programme
ETDP	Education Training and Development Practice
FET	Further Education and Training
HDI	Human Development Index
HEDCOM	Heads of Education Committee
HOD	Head of Department
IAC	Interim Accreditation Committee
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NECC	National Education Crisis (later Coordinating) Committee
NECDA	National ECD Alliance
NEF	National Educare Forum
NEIMS	National Education Infrastructure Monitoring System
NEPI	National Education Policy Investigation
NIWC	National Interim Working Committee
NIP	National Integrated Plan for ECD (0 - 4 Years)
NPA	National Programme of Action for Children
NPP	National ECD Pilot Project
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OBE	Outcomes Based Education
ORC	Office of the Rights of the Child
PED	Provincial Education Department
RSA	Republic of South Africa
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACE	South African Council of Educators
SACECD	South African Congress for ECD
SADTU	South African Democratic Teachers' Union
SASA	South African Schools Act
SETA	Sector Education and Training Authority
SSA	Statistics South Africa
TAU	Technical Assistance Unit
WP	White Paper

### Terms

**Practitioner/educator** Practitioners and educators are terms used in Department of Education documents for those involved in facilitating the learning of young children. The term practitioner was introduced to avoid referring to formally qualified personnel as teachers and others as caregivers. For Grade R personnel, educator tends to be used because it is part of the schooling system.

**Learner** is the term used to refer to students/pupils in the South African education system

**Site** is a term used for an ECD centre based service providing a programme for more than 6 children.

# SCALING-UP EARLY CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN SOUTH AFRICA

## INTRODUCING A RECEPTION YEAR (GRADE R) FOR CHILDREN AGED FIVE YEARS AS THE FIRST YEAR OF SCHOOLING

**Linda Biersteker**

### PREFACE

**T**his case study tracks the development of the policy environment leading to the introduction of Grade R, the Reception Year for five year olds, in the years of transition to democracy in South Africa and its subsequent rollout towards universal provision originally set for 2010/11 but recently revised to 2014. It includes a reflection on what, in the Grade R scale-up process, would inform the current rollout of a national plan for integrated servicing for children aged zero to four years.

The paper was written by Linda Biersteker from the Early Learning Resource Unit, an ECD NGO specialising in policy, advocacy and programme development located in Cape Town, South Africa. The South African case study is based on a survey of published and grey literature, the author's own long experience as a role player and researcher for many of the processes described in this report, as well as interviews with several key stakeholders in the ECD sector in South Africa. These stakeholders have for the most part, not been identified in the text for ethical considerations. Key informants included:

- A senior education specialist in the National Policy Investigation Process
- An academic/activist involved in drafting the National Programme of Action for Children
- Leaders of the two major civil society bodies for ECD
- Five national and provincial education department staff (past and present)
- Members from the departmental review task team for Grade R
- Researchers involved in Grade R research, and
- An informant involved with early ECD policy formulation through the political process.

This case study is organised into seven sections. The first provides an overview of the context of ECD in South Africa, starting with key indicators of child status, and then outlining public sector institutions and civil society involvement in ECD, the policy environment and public programmes in support of young children, and how these are going to scale (or "massifying," which is the current terminology). In the second section, the components of the Grade R intervention are described - its historical roots, the piloting phase,

and the preparation for White Paper 5, which provides for rollout. The third section provides an assessment of the factors that led to the adoption of Grade R as part of the formal education system in South Africa, and the contribution of government and civil society to that. It also examines the funding mechanisms used for the start-up of this national programme. The fourth section focuses on requirements for the scale-up to universal provision, including governance, provisioning and capacity building for implementation, as well as advocacy trends in the scale-up period. In the

fifth section, evaluations of progress towards universal Grade R provision at an acceptable level of quality are considered, as well as the probability that Grade R will be sustainable. The critical issues for mass expansion of Grade R are analysed next, and lessons learned from this are considered in relation to the currently developing national plan for ECD services for younger children. The final section contains recommendations for the next steps in the scale-up of Grade R and some preliminary recommendations for the scaling of services for children zero to four years.

## THE CONTEXT OF ECD IN SOUTH AFRICA

**S**outh Africa is a middle income country with a population of approximately 48.7 million, is well supplied with natural resources and infrastructure, and had a per capita GDP of \$5,815 in 2008 (R 7.05 to the \$) (Republic of South Africa, 2008a). South Africa is, however, marked by stark inequalities with a Gini Coefficient of 57.8 and is ranked 121st out of 177 countries reflected in the 2007/8 United Nations Human Development Report.

Servicing for young children in South Africa has in recent years received increased levels of political commitment and higher budgetary allocations than in the past, and is currently at what is possibly its highest level. In December 2007, the 52nd African National Congress Conference in Polokwane passed two resolutions in support of young children:

- Resolution 28: Strengthen childhood development centres and urge communities to understand and deal seriously with the rights of children and,
- Resolution 29: develop a comprehensive strategy on ECD.

Following this, in his State of the Nation Address in January 2008, President Thabo Mbeki announced ECD as one of the “Business Unusual” APEX priorities, and the Finance Minister explicitly referred to it in his February 2008 Budget Speech.

### ***Status of young children***

The South African government has increasingly recognised the significance of investment in early childhood development services of different kinds to help address the rights and needs of all children. Racially discriminatory colonial and apartheid policies have left socioeconomic imbalances between

black and white, and between rural and urban South Africans. Poverty, unemployment, high crime and violence levels, and the lack of access to basic services such as potable water and sanitation adversely affect large numbers of young children. The migrant labour system and rapid urbanisation have eroded traditional family structures and poverty stricken female-headed households are common. HIV and AIDS are a serious threat to livelihoods and family structure. Low levels of literacy among many primary caregivers make it difficult for them to fully support their children’s early education.

Table 1 provides a summary of South Africa’s performance on key ECD indicators over the last decade and a half. This covers the period of transition from apartheid government policies to the implementation of those developed by the democratic government elected in 1994. While much has been done in recent years to improve data systems, there are still many gaps. For example, the first Situation Analysis of Women and Children in South Africa (National Children’s Rights Committee/UNICEF, 1993) had very limited data to draw on with respect to some of the poorest areas of the country, as the then so-called ‘independent states’ were excluded from official statistics<sup>1</sup>. In 2000 the National Programme of Action for Children in South Africa commissioned a report on the state of the nation’s children, which drew on diverse data sources available at that time. Current data is based upon a range of sources (Biersteker 2008a; Biersteker & Streak, 2008; Republic of South Africa 2008a) pending the availability of the Situation Analysis currently being completed for the Office of the Rights of the Child in the Presidency. Because each of these reports draws upon multiple data sources, definitions for indicators and measures are not necessarily consistent.

Table 1 on the next page indicates improvements in access to health services, early childhood development programmes, social security, birth registration and basic services as a result of new public policies. However it also indicates rising mortality rates which are a result of the HIV pandemic. The decline in the Human Development Index is due largely to declining life expectancy as a result of AIDS. South Africa dropped 28 ranks on the HDI between 1990 and 2003.

### ***Public sector institutions involved in ECD***

In South Africa, early childhood development (ECD) refers to “the processes by which children from birth to nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially” (Department of Education, 1995). This broad definition necessarily involves policies and programmes from several departments. Similar to governance arrangements in many other countries, three departments, those of Education, Health and Social Development (Welfare), have the primary responsibility for ECD services. The Office of the Rights of the Child in the Presidency is guardian of the National Programme of Action for Children and has a monitoring brief for the NPA and reporting requirements on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Government is structured in three levels with these national departments’ responsibilities largely limited to policy and monitoring, though they do run special programmes, particularly in support of policy development. Provincial departments have the responsibility for funding and implementation of programmes and service delivery. The provincial-level departments operate at district-level, and the district boundaries of these three different departments are not coterminous. So, education, health and social development district offices serve different areas. This is a challenge for integrated service delivery, including the development of integrated administrative data sys-

tems. Local government has an environmental health responsibility and is involved in inspection of facilities for young children (not schools) and may operate primary health services on behalf of the province. Provincial and local programmes of action for children are housed in the Premiers’ and Mayors’ offices, respectively (see Figure 1).

For children under school-going age there are two distinct strata of service provision:

- Services for children under the age of five years—normally crèches and preschools, often taking the form of home-based care, as well as programmes to assist parents and caregivers to support early childhood development.
- The Reception Year (Grade R), which is still being rolled out, is the year prior to commencement of formal primary schooling, catering to 5-year-old children.

Responsibility for the Reception Year (Grade R) falls to the Department of Education (DoE). It is being phased in as a first year of the Foundation Phase of public schooling (Grades R – 3 or children 5 through 8 years), though it is not yet compulsory. For younger children, inter-departmental committees at all three levels of government are responsible for integrating delivery of a comprehensive package of services, though each department is responsible for its own service mandate. The Department of Social Development (DoSD) plays the coordinating role for this programme, the National Integrated Plan for ECD (0 – 4 years).

### ***Civil society support and advocacy***

In a context where political and socioeconomic rights were denied to the majority of the population, awareness and demand for ECD-specific services was not a priority at the community level, although most child-

**Table 1: Key ECD indicators from time periods around situation analyses of children in South Africa**

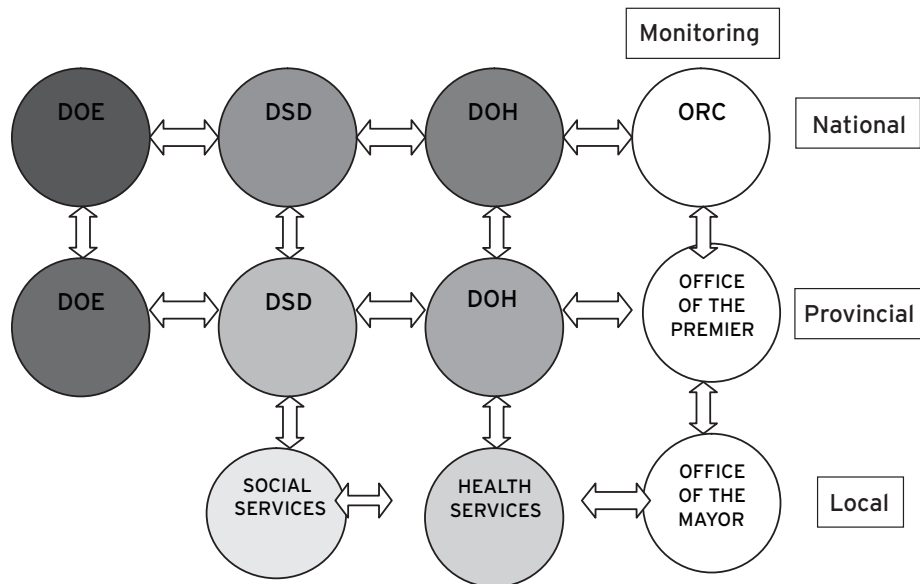
Indicator	1993	2001	2008
HDI ( from UNDP)	.73 in 1990	.67 in 2003	.674 in 2007/8
Population under 5	5,428,031	4,449,809 (SSA 2001)	4,985,176 (Naidoo 2007)
Population 5 - 6 years	963,588	968,395 (SSA 2001)	975,908 (Naidoo 2007)
Distribution	62% rural	55% rural (SSA 2001)	54% rural in 2004 (SSA 2006)
Poverty	3.5 million under 18 below minimum living level <sup>2</sup>	60% of children under 18 are poor <sup>3</sup>	66% of children under 5 are poor (Streak et al, 2008) <sup>4</sup>
Maternal Mortality Ratio	21.3 per 1,000 (1989 excluding homelands)	150/1,000 ( DHS 1998)	165/1,000 (DHS 2003)
Infant Mortality Rate <sup>5</sup>	41.4/1,000 in 1989	51.5/1,000 in 2001 (RSA 2008a)	45.2/1,000 in 2007 (RSA 2008a)
Under 5 Mortality Rate	16.3/1000 in 1986	59/1,000 (DHS 1998)	58/1000 in 2003 (DHS 2003)
Immunisation coverage	BCG 57%, Polio 73%, DTP 72%, Measles 76% (1991 excluding homelands)	63% complete (DHS 1998)	84.5% complete (RSA 2008a)
Female Literacy	67.2 % in 1995 (RSA, 2008a from SSA surveys)	67.4% in 1999 (RSA 2008a from SSA surveys)	73.2% in 2006 (RSA 2008a from SSA surveys)
Nutritional status	Estimated 82,800 children 6 months to 5 years less than 80% expected weight for age. Vitamin A deficiency unknown but considered a major problem	Children 1-9 years: 21% stunted, 10.3% underweight and 1.4% severely underweight. 1-3 years: 25.5% stunted, 12.4% underweight and 2.2% severely underweight. 1/3 of children under 5 have a Vitamin A deficiency	8.5 percent of children severely and moderately malnourished at birth (DHS 2003) 29 000 children under 5 with severe malnutrition (RSA 2008a)
<i>continued next page</i>			

Table 1: Key ECD indicators from time periods around situation analyses of children in South Africa (cont.)

Indicator	1993	2001	2008
Breastfeeding		< 2 % exclusive breastfeeding 4 - 6 month olds 10% 0 - 3 months (DHS 1998)	11.9% of children exclusively breastfed 20% were never breastfed (DHS 2003)
HIV + status	7.6% women attending antenatal care in 1994 (RSA 2008a from DoH national survey)	22.8% women attending antenatal care in 1998 (RSA 2008a from DoH national survey) 8.5% in 2001 (RSA 2008a from SSA calculations)	28% women attending antenatal care in 2007 (RSA 2008a from DoH national survey) 11.1% in 2007 (RSA 2008a from SSA calculations)
Access to ECD services (centres)	9% 0 - 6 years in 1992	9.5% 0 - 4 years 22.8% 5 year olds (Calculated from DoE 2001a)	22.6% of children 0-4 years attended an educational facility 58.4 % of five year olds in an educational facility (Naidoo 2007)
Hygiene, water and sanitation	Sanitation services started from a very low base of 50% of all households in 1994	60% of households with sanitation 73.6% of households with access to safe water (RSA 2008a from SSA)	73% households with sanitation in 2007 Access to safe drinking water 87% in 2007 (within 200 m) (RSA 2008a)
Birth Registration	No data	25% current registrations in 1998 (Dobbie, Masebe, & Nhlapo 2007)	72% current registrations in 2005 (Dobbie et al 2007)
Access to Child Support Grants by children under 5 years	Not applicable	December 1999 170,343 children (ORC 2001) <sup>6</sup>	July 2007: 2,857,340 under 5 or 86% of estimated eligible children (Biersteker & Streak 2008)

Sources: For 1993: NCRC/ UNICEF (1993) unless otherwise specified

Figure 1: Key line departments for ECD (0 - 4 years)



Source: Biersteker & Streak, 2008

care services were started and maintained by the local communities. Even today ECD is not on the agenda of most local authorities, despite consultative processes in developing local development plans. Relatively few trade unions have taken up ECD as an issue, though parental leave provisions are now included in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act No 75 of 1997.

The NGO sector however has played an important role in getting ECD into government plans, though it was stronger previously than it is at present (see the third section). During the apartheid era, as a response to the denial of children's most basic rights and increasing state violence against children on account of their political activism, a strong child rights movement developed in South Africa. This led to the formation of the National Committee on the Rights of the Child in 1990 following a conference in Botswana. This committee, with support from UNICEF, undertook the first

situation analysis on the condition of women and children in South Africa. Services for young children were an aspect of the agenda of the child rights movement and were included in this first situation analysis. ECD later became a priority area for the 1996 National Programme of Action for Children (by this time housed in the Presidency). However the Office of the Rights of the Child has not yet played an effective oversight role for ECD at the different levels of government (Statement of the Alliance for Children's entitlement to Social Security Conference on building consensus in building the comprehensive social security needs of young children 0 - 9 in South Africa 24 July 2008 ACCESS Young Child Conference Resolutions).

A representative ECD body, the South African Congress for Early Childhood Development (SACECD), which has provincial structures, played a significant advocacy role in the policy development phase for ECD. The

National Educare Forum (NEF), which had a very wide network of local structures, also played a role in information dissemination and input to the consultative processes. NECDA, the National ECD Alliance of NGOs involved in training and support services, was launched in 2005. Very recently government has set up an ECD Stakeholder Forum for national representative bodies as a communication vehicle. Other membership-based advocacy organisations such as ACESS (the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security) and the Children's Rights Centre have a broader focus on children's rights and have made a positive contribution to the lobby for services for young children.

### **Policy environment**

Policy formulation for ECD in a democratic South Africa began in the early 1990s as a focus area for the 1992 National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI). NEPI investigated policy options for education for the mass democratic movement. The ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training Discussion Document drafted in 1994 drew on the NEPI recommendations and included an ECD component.

With the advent of democracy in 1994, ECD was recognised as a key area in the process of reconstruction and human resource development. The 1995 White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995) identified early childhood as the starting point for human resource development. It committed government to providing 10 years of free and compulsory schooling per child, starting with a reception year for 5 year-olds. In the same period, the White Paper for Social Welfare (Department of Social Development, 1997) included a focus on young children, prioritising disadvantaged children under 5-years-old, especially those under three, and committing itself to subsidising a range of programme options to help meet the varied ECD needs of families.

White Paper No 5, Early Childhood Development (Department of Education, 2001b), states the policy priority of a national system of provision for the Reception Year (Grade R) for children aged 5 years. For children zero to four years, the White Paper prioritised the development of a strategic plan for inter-sectoral collaboration through the ECD priority group of the NPA (National Programme of Action for Children). This was developed into the National Integrated Plan for ECD zero to four years published in 2005 (Department of Education, Department of Health, & Department of Social Development, 2005) and overseen by the Interdepartmental Committee for ECD, now coordinated by the Department of Social Development. The Children's Act No 38 of 2005, as amended by the Children's Amendment Act No 41 of 2007, covers ECD services for children under school-going age and provides for norms and standards.

The larger framework for child-related policy is the South African Constitution (Act 108 of 1996), which is aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child ratified by South Africa in 1996. Section 28(1) specifically recognises the child's rights to basic nutrition, shelter, health care and social services, while Section 29 establishes the right to basic education (which does not include ECD at this stage). South Africa has also adopted the World Declaration on Education for All. These conditions have implications for the provision of a range of services to support early development.

### **Current public programmes and initiatives for ECD**

Key public programmes and initiatives for ECD in support of young children's rights in South Africa include:

- Free health care for young children under five, as well as pregnant and lactating women (introduced in 1994) <sup>7</sup>
- Social assistance in the form of a child support grant<sup>8</sup> accessed by over 80% of eligible young children (introduced in 1998)
- Poverty targeted per child subsidies in non-profit community-based ECD centres for children prior to school-going age<sup>9</sup>
- The phasing in of the Reception Year (Grade R) for five year olds as a first year of schooling (from 2001)
- The National Integrated Plan for 0 – 4 year olds is an interdepartmental initiative to coordinate and integrate service delivery to young children at home, in the community and at centres, including access to social security, primary health care and nutrition (all key public programmes), but also birth registration, psychosocial support and early stimulation. The NIP basket of services is intended over time to roll out to 3 million poor children. It is an ambitious plan, not least because of its intention to draw together different departments with the intention to service young children wherever they are found – at home, in the community or in the easier to access formal ECD centres. So far, the focus has been on increasing access and quality with respect to ECD centres with a Government APEX priority to expand the number of trained staff and double the number of children receiving subsidies to 600,000 by the end of 2009. This has included a drive to register ECD centres and increase budgets. So far DoSD officials, on whom the major responsibility falls, have indicated that they do not yet have a plan for the expansion of home and community services.

Currently there is a drive to increase access to ECD centres and quality, which is being coordinated through one of the government's leading short term measures to address poverty, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) (Department of Social Development, Department of Education, &

Department of Health, 2004). This includes training for practitioners working in centre-based ECD facilities and Grade R classes.

All public programmes prioritise poor children, though some services such as primary health care, birth registration and basic education are universal. In practice however, there are disparities in access to service provision across and within provinces. For example, children in the poorest two quintiles are least likely to have accessed the child support grant, due to the lack of appropriate documents or distances from service points.

In relation to distribution of ECD centre services (sites), this differential access is seen in Tables 2 and 3, and Figure 2, drawing on the analysis in Biersteker and Dawes (2008). Table 2 gives the breakdown of enrolment in ECD sites according to age, province and gender at the time of the Nationwide Audit in June 2000 (Department of Education, 2001a) prior to finalisation of Grade R policy. There are substantial provincial variations with higher enrolments in the urban provinces such as Gauteng and the Western Cape and lower ones in rural areas such as Limpopo, Eastern Cape and North West. Important from a gender rights monitoring point of view, there are no differences in access for boys and girls with enrolment in preschool (around 50% each), which is consistent with the population profile. There is however a difference in access between the three age groups indicated in Table 2 – access increases from youngest to oldest.

Table 3 gives the distribution by location, distinguishing urban formal, urban informal (city area with predominantly informal dwellings/shacks) and rural areas (commercial farms, traditional rural villages and resettlements). The majority of ECD sites, 49% of the ECD enrolment, were in formal urban areas (based on

**Table 2: Enrolment in ECD sites by province, age and gender**

Province	Under 3			3 -5 years			5 - 7 years		
	Male	Female	Total %*	Male	Female	Total%	Male	Female	Total %
E Cape	8,894	8,710	4.7	20,718	21,858	14.9	26,147	26,694	16.5
Free State	4,970	5,185	6.6	9,440	9,746	19.3	17,130	17,446	32
Gauteng	24,400	23,807	10.7	35,545	36,191	26.1	45,549	45,782	33
KZN	11,231	11,287	3.8	24,869	25,824	12.2	52,301	53,653	23.8
Limpopo	5,318	5,778	3.1	12,973	14,328	11	16,960	17,419	12.3
Mplanga	2,958	30,32	2.9	7,121	7,347	10.4	12,629	12,928	17.9
N Cape	587	603	2.4	2,795	2,637	16.8	5,094	4,894	29.7
N West	2,017	1,907	1.8	7,219	7,397	10.3	12,749	13,373	17.2
W Cape	11,541	11,024	9.1	20,111	19,790	25.4	28,855	28,634	35.3
S Africa	71,916	71,333	5.4	140,791	145,118	15.9	217,414	220,823	22.8

\* Total as percentage of provincial population

Sources: Department of Education (2001a) and Statistics South Africa (2001)

data on numbers of children enrolled). Service provision, cross tabulated by geographic location, indicates urban/rural inequities. Thirty percent of children are enrolled in the 40% of sites that are located in the rural areas, while the eligible rural child population is significantly greater than 30%. Fifty-two percent of children 0 - 17 live in rural areas and it is likely that a high proportion of these are under school-going age. Eleven percent of ECD enrolment was in sites situated in informal urban areas, which are home to 9% of children indicating that coverage was proportionate.

Figure 2, indicating enrolment by population group, shows, unsurprisingly, that in 2000 there was inequitable access to ECD services. This reflects the lack of, and differential in, public funding for ECD in the apartheid era and the exclusion of children whose parents could least afford to pay for ECD services. White children under 6 have higher access relative to their population size than African, Coloured or Indian children.<sup>10</sup>

## Civil society programmes for ECD

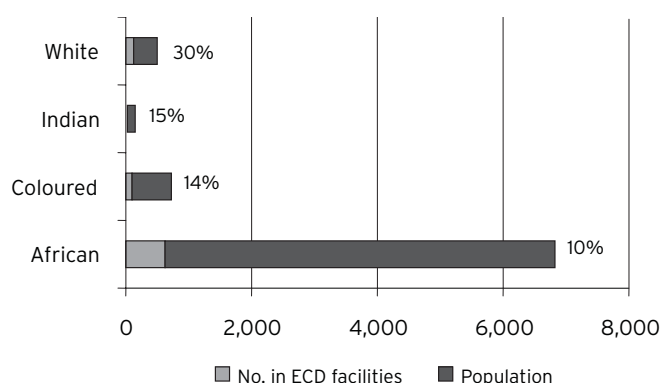
Historically non-governmental, community-based and faith-based organisations have provided the majority of ECD services for poor children, mostly in the form of ECD centres but also with some parent support and education and community safety-net initiatives. These services are locally-based and there are no large provider networks. In 2000 some 83% of ECD service centres were community-based, including those run from homes<sup>11</sup>, and 28% had only fee funding (Department of Education, 2001a). The funding model used by DoSD is to subsidise non-profit organisations to provide services. Other government departments contract NGOs to provide particular services, training, materials development and research in particular. Corporate and donor funding also support NGOs for direct service provision, training, capacity building and resourcing for direct service providers for young children. NGOs tend to be concentrated in urban areas and are thinly spread in the more rural provinces, where there are large service gaps.

**Table 3: Number (%) of ECD sites per province by geographical location 2000**

Province	Urban formal	Urban informal	Rural	Total sites
E Cape	883 (28)	292 (10)	1,940 (62)	3,115
Free State	1,223 (74)	155 (9)	279 (17)	1,657
Gauteng	4,324 (83)	821 (16)	53 (1)	5,198
KZN	1,750 (32)	333 (6)	3,456 (62)	5,539
Limpopo	200 (10)	92 (5)	1,638 (85)	1,930
Mpumalanga	367 (28)	444 (33)	517 (39)	1,328
Northern Cape	252 (64)	30 (8)	112 (28)	394
North West	253 (22)	106 (9)	786 (69)	1,145
Western Cape	1,973 (76)	292 (11)	343 (13)	2,608
South Africa	11,225 (49)	2,565 (11)	9,124 (40)	22,914

Source: Department of Education (2001a)

**Figure 2: Access to ECD sites by population group in 2000 (thousands)**



## Going to scale with Grade R

The three programmes in South Africa that have scaled up substantially and affect young children are free primary health care, social assistance in the form of the Child Support Grant and the introduction of Grade R.

Indications are that most young children access the health system. In 1998, 75% of children 12-13 months had a Road to Health Chart. The Department of Health

goal was to increase this to 85% by 2007 (Hendricks, Eley, & Bourne, 2006). Primary Health Care facility utilisation suggests national utilisation of 4.5 visits per child under 5 annually, mostly in the first year (Saloojee & Bamford, 2006). However there are concerns that service quality is not optimal, largely due to the pressure on the primary health care system of staffing shortages and the burden of providing treatment as well as preventive services in the context of increasing HIV and TB (e.g. Harrison, Bhana, & Ntuli, 2007).

A second programme which was initiated for children under six years of age is the provision of a poverty-targeted child support grant which has rolled out rapidly since its inception and has expanded progressively to older children. Current research indicates a positive impact of this non-conditional grant on household food expenditure and on crèche or preschool attendance (Delany et al., 2008).

Grade R officially became policy in 2001, though there had been classes prior to that. Uptake has increased

substantially in public schools from 226,630 in 2000 to 487,525 in 2008 (49% of eligible children). Many community-based facilities also have registered Grade R classes and the DoE estimates (on the basis of the 2007 Community Survey (Naidoo, 2007)) that a further 200,000 are accommodated in these. Nevertheless, there is some way to go before reaching universal access and the DoE freely acknowledges that quality is variable.

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE GRADE R INTERVENTION

In this section the Grade R intervention is described, the piloting phase and its evaluation is discussed and the preparation for White Paper 5, which provides for rollout, is considered.

### *Description of Grade R*

South Africa has prioritised the ECD provisioning option of lowering the age for state-supported education programmes to include a pre-primary or reception year. In 2001, through White Paper 5 - Early Childhood Development, the Department of Education committed itself to the establishment of a national system of provision for children aged 5 years,<sup>12</sup> the largest ever South African public sector policy commitment to ECD. The goal is for **all** children to have access to a reception year programme by 2010, and for 85 per cent to attend Grade R at a public school. Accredited Grade R programmes should be established at all public primary schools by 2010 (Department of Education, 2001b). Subsidisation of the Reception Year is poverty-targeted. Children falling within the poorest 40% of schools will receive the highest per capita level of grants in aid. The intention is that some community-based centres will form part of the public system of provision, but only if a public primary school option is not available or accessible to the child or for piloting purposes.

Three types of accredited Grade R are therefore provided for:

- programmes within the public primary school system
- programmes at community-based ECD centres and
- independent (private) provisions.

All Reception Year programmes are required to register with provincial education departments, accredited Reception Year educators should be registered with the South African Council of Educators (a professional body) and there should be approved training for all educators who do not yet have a specialised qualification to teach the Reception Year.

Curriculum for 5 year-olds forms part of the National Curriculum Statement for the Foundation Phase (Grades R to 3 or approximate ages 5 to 9 years). The focus is on Literacy, Numeracy and Life Skills programmes. South Africa follows an outcomes-based education (OBE) system which clearly defines the outcomes to be achieved at the end of the learning process with grade related assessment standards. Outcomes for each learning area are based on achieving a set of critical and developmental outcomes, which focus on producing learners with knowledge skills and values for productive engagement in the workforce and a democratic and caring society (Moll, 2007a).

While from a curriculum perspective Grade R is the first year of primary schooling, it is differently financed and staffed. Since 2001 the government has funded Grade R in two ways. Firstly, provincial governments funded grants to community-based ECD centres on a per-learner basis. Secondly, a direct grant in aid from provincial education departments (PEDs) to school governing bodies which employ the teachers, finances Grade R in public primary schools. Subsidisation of Grade R is poverty targeted but 'lags substantially behind funding for other grades in the same school and in 2005 was approximately seven times less than for a Grade 1 learner' (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008:200).

The 2008 Amendment (Notice No 26, Government Gazette 30679) of the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (Republic of South Africa, 2008b) provides for an increase of public funding through the provinces to Grade R with more favourable per-learner funding for poorer schools<sup>13</sup>. The norms and standards require PEDs to budget for Grade R in public schools both within the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF) 2008/9 - 2010/11 and longer term with the view to making Grade R universal and compulsory by 2010 (paragraph 203). White Paper 5 recommended the per-learner cost should be 70% of a Grade 1 learner cost. In the interim rollout phase in order to cover a larger number of schools, this may be lower - down to a minimum of 50% of the Grade 1 learner cost, as determined in consultation with the national department and provided that standards are not compromised. The norms and standards also provide for the option of PEDs to establish posts for Grade R in public schools drawn from the school's total Grade R allocation. This alternative to the employment of educators by the governing body of the school from their allocation for Grade R (as originally provided for in WP5) is the preferred model for all the provinces (Department of Education Communication to Parliamentary Portfolio Committee, June 2008). This provides for more stability for educators and it is felt that it will be conducive to quality.

In summary, the Grade R intervention is a government-designed, educationally-motivated intervention<sup>14</sup> that has built on existing school infrastructure. Although it is rolling out to all children, it is not at this stage compulsory - but is intended to have universalised and **compulsory** coverage by 2010 (Republic of South Africa, 2008b).

## The development of Grade R

### *Roots in the pre-democratic period*

Though the apartheid government had taken very limited responsibility for pre-primary education (except for limited provision for white children), pre-primary education came onto the agenda in the late 1980s. In 1981, the report of the De Lange Commission of Inquiry into Education in the Republic of South Africa (Human Sciences Research Council, 1981) cited 'environmental deprivation' as the main reason that children were not 'ready' for school, and recommended the 'partial institutionalisation of pre-basic education' in the form of a bridging period to achieve school readiness for as many children as possible prior to formal education. The 1983 White Paper on the Provision of Education in South Africa, took up the recommendation of a bridging period of one to two years aimed at promoting school readiness prior to entry into basic education and also recommended priority be given to financing this in the interests of improving efficiency in the education system.

In 1987, following a two-year inquiry into the introduction of a bridging period prior to basic education, a report from the Department of Education and Training (DET)<sup>15</sup> stated:

'On account of the necessity for developing school readiness, the selective introduction of a programme for bridging period education, where practicable, does appear to be desirable. It should be regarded as an enriched form of the entire pre-primary phase immediately prior to basic education, and will be made available to 5 to 7 - year-olds' (DET, 1987).

The Bridging Period Programme (BPP) was launched in 1988 as a pilot (Taylor, 1992). This took place within

the Grade 1 year, thus requiring no additional subsidisation. After a three-week orientation programme on school entry, children were streamed into two groups: one group that needed a 10 - 12 week orientation and another group needing longer school- readiness training. The second group transferred to Grade 1 work after the 10 - 12 weeks, or transferred to the bridging class. In large schools these made up different classes but in others they were taught within the same class. In practice many children had a full year of bridging (Padayachie et al, 1994). While there were numerous inadequacies in the implementation of the BPP and no formal evaluation, this school-based intervention involved substantial numbers of children both in DET and the education departments in certain 'home-lands,' and may well have prepared the ground for introduction of a Reception Year.

Policy formulation for ECD in a democratic South Africa began in the early 1990s as a focus area for the influential National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI) that investigated policy options for education for the mass democratic movement. The NEPI Early Childhood Educare report (NECC, 1992) presented options within the school system for 5 to 9 year olds including a pre-primary class for all five year olds and a range of options for services for children from birth to six years. The ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training Discussion Document drafted in 1994 included the NEPI recommendation of a reception year for 5 year-olds, as well as a commitment to a policy for child care and development in the community for younger children. The framework included the deployment of state resources and a commitment to career path support for all ECD carers and teachers.

A World Bank-funded study was commissioned the same year to provide recommendations for support for the implementation of the Reception Year

(Padayachie et al., 1994). The recommendation that NGOs be used to support ECD policy development was prominent. The research team also stressed the importance of provisioning for younger children as part of an ECD strategy and included recommendations for a range of options for younger children. To further emphasise the needs of younger children, when the World Bank (as part of an Africa Regional Integrated ECD Initiative) selected South Africa for a case study in 1996, members of the previous study team pushed for a study of 0 - 4 year olds (Biersteker, 1997).

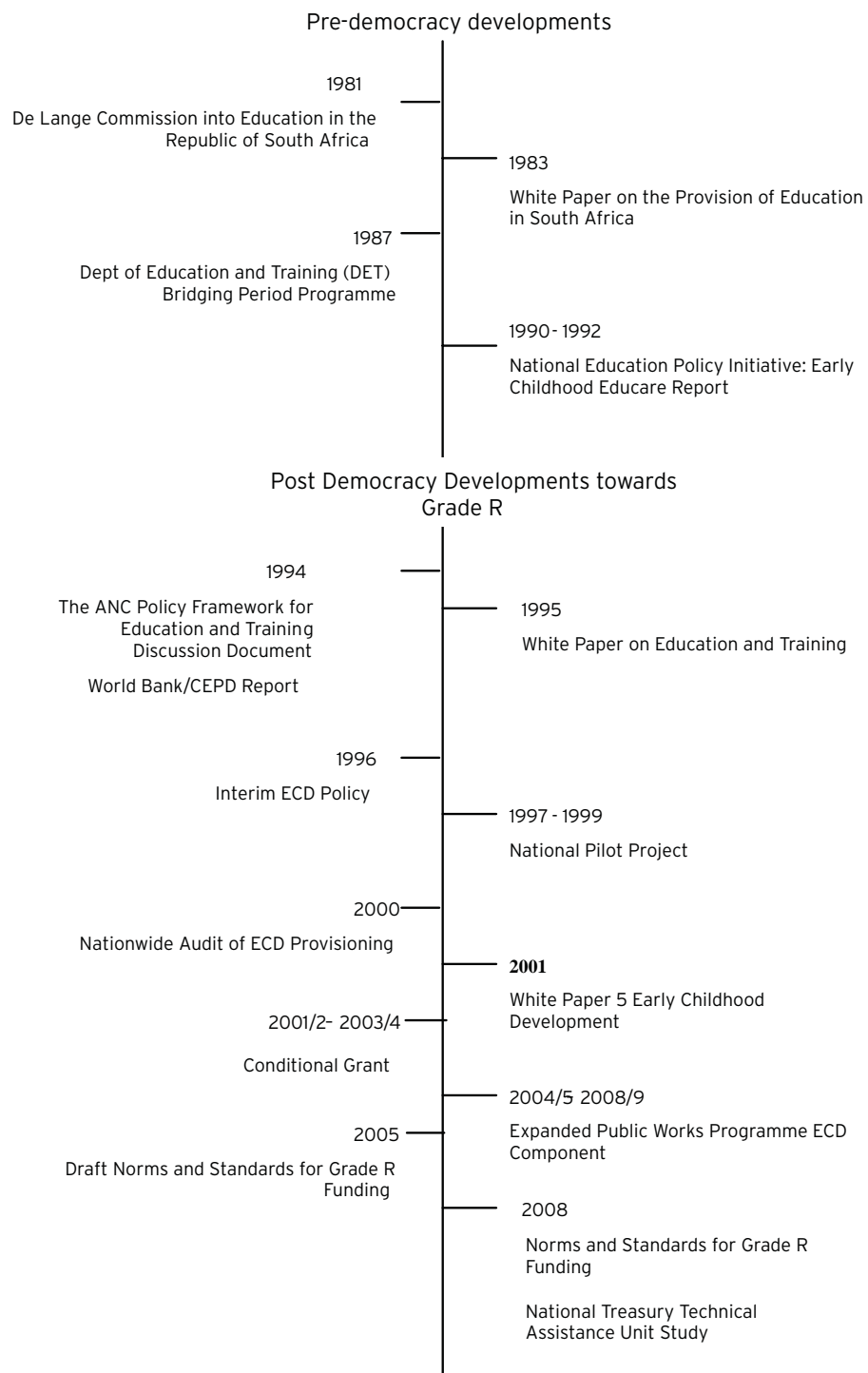
### ***ECD in the reconstruction of democratic South Africa***

Since 1994, ECD has been recognised as a key area in the process of reconstruction and human resource development. In 1995 a Director of ECD, Schools and Junior Primary, was appointed to the DoE. The 1995 White Paper on Education and Training identified early childhood as the starting point for human resource development. It committed government to providing 10 years of free and compulsory schooling per child, starting with a reception year for 5 year-olds. In 1996, an Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development was launched (Department of Education, 1996a). This covered children 0 - 9 years but had a particular focus on phasing in a reception year for 5 year-olds to facilitate the transition to formal schooling.

In 1996 the Coordinating Committee for ECD (CCECD), which had been set up to advise the DoE, suggested that a preliminary audit to inform the forthcoming ECD pilot project would be useful. The DoE, with funding from UNESCO, commissioned the two national civil society organisations on the CCECD, SACECD and NEF, to do an audit focused on:

- Training institutions for ECD, sources and levels of practitioners' training

**Figure 3: Timeline of key developments in the establishment and rollout of Grade R**



- ECD service delivery
- Data access in government and NGOs
- Employment of practitioners
- Subsidies for ECD and their sources
- The nature/extent of private sector involvement in ECD (Padayachie et al., 1997).

Questionnaires were sent to 150 institutions of which 28% responded; 250 trainers (a 48% response rate), 400 trainees (a 40% response rate) and 37 funders from the private sector (a 62% response rate). While the study was very limited, it highlighted, among other things, the need for training capacity in rural and informal settlement areas; the fact that the majority of funding for ECD was from private sources; the issue of career pathing for ECD practitioners; the need for research on how ECD could contribute to job creation; and the need for an in-depth audit study.

In 1998 the National Department of Education created a separate Early Childhood Development Directorate responsible for developing an ECD policy framework and planning and mobilising resources in support of large-scale provision of ECD.

### ***The Piloting Phase***

To assist with policy formulation, the DoE instituted a three-year national ECD pilot project in 1997. The pilot ushered in a new, formalised government-NGO partnership governed by service contracts. This was guided and monitored by the CCECD, comprised of national and provincial education department ECD personnel, appointed ECD specialists, and representatives of teacher unions and national representative structures (SACECD, its training arm the SA Training Institute for ECD, and NEF).

### ***Components of the National ECD Pilot Project (NPP)***

The NPP, following the recommendations of the World Bank/Centre for Education Policy Development study and the Interim Policy for ECD, utilised existing provision systems for piloting Grade R. These included community-based ECD sites with children aged five years, and pre-primary classes that were already in existence in some primary schools. Existing practitioners implemented the programme and NGOs provided training on a tender basis.

The Pilot Project had the following components:

- An Interim Accreditation Committee to develop interim guidelines for the accreditation of practitioners. Guidelines for developing learning programmes for Grade R children were also prepared.
- Subsidy funding for Grade R learners at R2 per child per day for 200 days a year for up to 30 children in a class was provided to a sample of community-based centres selected for the pilot on the basis of fixed criteria. These sites were spread across the provinces according to population, covering urban and rural areas and poverty targeted areas.
- Training by NGOs (selected by public tender) for practitioners working with Grade R classes in selected community-based and public primary schools. While provincial schools were required to participate, the incentive for community schools to become involved was high, firstly on account of the subsidy but secondly because there was a perception that this was a step towards state support of teachers and more sustainable jobs.
- A research and monitoring team, contracted by public tender, to assess the impact of the pilot and advise on the development of sustainable models for provision of a publicly funded Reception Year.
- Provincial pilot project coordinators located in the PEDs to oversee implementation in their provinces.

Provinces were responsible for paying subsidies and contracting and monitoring the training of practitioners.

- An ECD Information Campaign to publicise the programme and inform the participating providers.

Table 4 on the following page shows the number of sites, learners (children) and practitioners (teachers/educators) reached in the pilot. Noteworthy are the discrepancies between the numbers in the original business plans submitted by the provinces in 1997 and those actually reached. Two thirds reached targets lower than the original plan. Not all were able to provide learner information to the research team.

Gauteng Province adapted the NPP and, linked with other funding, started its own pilot known as the Impilo Project. This explains the higher numbers (over 40,000) of child beneficiaries than in other provinces. The Gauteng programme consisted of a series of linked pilot projects aimed at developing new multi-service approaches to early childhood care and development. This involved the development of broad forums of stakeholders who impact ECD and included work with parents, families and communities. Training was provided to practitioners in 1,000 sites and subsidies were paid at a higher rate than the formula. Interventions were not restricted to 5-year-olds. The Impilo project was profiled in UNICEF's State of the World's Children in 2001 (UNICEF, 2001). It foreshadows the National Integrated Plan for 0 - 4 year olds in many respects. Despite its high profile, it ended in November 2000 after a change in leadership within the Gauteng Education Ministry and Department; but aspects survive in the establishment of an ECD Institute to service the needs of children 0 - 5 years using an inter-sectoral approach. KwaZulu Natal (KZN) also deviated somewhat from the NPP in that it provided a salary of R1,000 per month for the

pilot practitioners, a quarterly subsidy for educational equipment and a model of satellite community sites linked to a primary school. This satellite model is currently being applied for all community sites in the KZN Province.

Tables 5 and 6 illustrate the subsidies paid to sites as well as training tenders awarded. Funding for the pilot was through a grant from the DoE (sourced from government funding allocated through a large programme known as the Reconstruction and Development Programme).

The evaluators' report on the project raises a concern that ECD is not regarded as a core activity in provincial departments. This has detrimental budgetary implications for ECD - as the national DoE found out when the Eastern Cape, Northern Province (Limpopo), North West and Free State absorbed the National ECD Pilot Project funds rather than spending them on the intended project, and in spite of completing detailed business plans. It influences the budgetary allocation to ECD, and when other educational sectors have overspent their budgets, money is shifted from the ECD budget (Department of Education, 2001c).

Only five provinces submitted all the data requested by the national pilot programme research team. Of these, the Eastern Cape and Northern Cape expended less than their budgets, Northern Province (Limpopo) and the Western Cape expended their exact budgets and KwaZulu-Natal exceeded the subsidy budget.

Not all the provinces had completed training at the end of 1999/00 financial year, which accounts for some of the discrepancies between the budgeted and expended amounts in Table 6. The inability to meet the pilot requirements in terms of allocation of funding and completion of training in the pilot period were

**Table 4: Numbers of sites, learners and practitioners by province (1999)**

Province	Sites in Business Plans 1997	Sites in 1999	Learners in Business Plans 1997	Learners reached 1999	Practitioners 1999 (at least one per site)
Eastern Cape	266	232	10645	7973	232
Free State	145	100	5000	450	100
Gauteng	540	935	7779	40,723	815
Kwa-Zulu Natal	275	248	10000	5082	250
Limpopo	468	450	9349	?	450
Mpumalanga	300	190	5868	?	190
North West	152	181	6141	5325	300
Northern Cape	384	149	5118	?	168
Western Cape	200	220	5870	6293	192
South Africa	2730	2705	65770	65846	2697

Source: Department of Education ( 2001c)

**Table 5: Summary of subsidies to pilot sites for the National ECD Pilot Project by provinces financial years 1997/8 - 1999/00**

Province	Total Budgeted R '000 1997/8 -1999/2000	Total Expended R'000 1997/8 -1999/2000
Eastern Cape	9,420	2,796
Free State	1,592	No data
Gauteng	13,247	No data
KwaZulu-Natal	6,400	8,463
Limpopo	1,305	1,305
Mpumalanga	0	0
North West	No data	No data
Northern Cape	1,600	1,123
Western Cape	7,500	7,500
Total	41,064	21,187

Source: Department of Education ( 2001c)

**Table 6: Summary of training tenders to resource and training organisations for the National ECD pilot project by provinces (1997/8 - 1999/00)**

Province	Total Budgeted R '000	Total Expended R'000
Eastern Cape	2,705	1,235
Free State	900	228
Gauteng	5,580	5,460
KwaZulu-Natal	2,150	1,551
Mpumalanga	900	No data
Limpopo	1,325	1,400
North West	No data	No data
Northern Cape	2,400	1,906
Western Cape	1,800	1,575
Total	17,760	13,356

Source: Department of Education (2001c)

problems that needed to be considered in planning for the further rollout of Grade R in the post White Paper 5 period.

#### *Evaluation of the National ECD Pilot Project*

The aim of the evaluation of the National Pilot Project (Department of Education, 2001c) was to draw out implications for policy. The evaluation team was asked to compare community-based sites' quality, equity and cost effectiveness with those of school-based Grade R classes and Grade 1 classes with a substantial number of under-age learners<sup>16</sup>; to examine the appropriateness of the norms and standards, adequacy of the subsidies and effectiveness of the accreditation system set up by the Interim Accreditation Committee, and finally to draw out policy implications on the basis of their findings and documentation of other related processes provided by the DoE.

The research team indicates in the report that given the focus of the pilot project, the policy implications for Grade R only would be discussed. They identify key concerns as including the best way to:

- 'Ensure that Grade R (and ultimately ECD) is a core activity of the DoE,
- Identify the most cost-effective means of providing Grade R,
- Ensure quality provision of Grade R classes, and ultimately of classes addressing younger learners,
- Discourage the acceptance of underage learners into Grade 1,
- Shift the burden of providing Grade R from poverty stricken families to the State,
- Support long term poverty alleviation and social development through the promotion of sustainable Grade R provision.' (Department of Education, 2001c: 5 - 6).

Conclusions from evaluation of the piloting project were that:

- Grade R should become compulsory thus fulfilling the commitment in the 1995 White Paper to 10 years of compulsory education.
- The new school admission policy would not eliminate underage learners in Grade 1 classes.
- The location of Grade R classes should be determined by PEDs' financial capacity and ability to monitor quality and build accountability - proposing a combination of community and public Grade R classes. Adaptation of the norms and standards for school funding to allow schools to include Grade R as a legitimate expense would transform incentives to enrol underage learners to incentives to set up separate Grade R classes. For community sites, the evaluators proposed that they link formally with a primary school which would provide the funding or that the South African Schools Act be amended to allow community-based sites offering Grade R to register as independent schools to encourage quality control and integrate them into the existing subsidy system for independent schools.
- The government is able to fund Grade R (there are many underage learners already in the system, increased efficiency, etc).
- Grade R quality needs to be improved - both public and community-based sites were offering similar quality but of a low standard.
- ECD needs to become core educational business (not peripheral) and this should include resources and authority being vested in provincial ECD Directorates. Further, the CCECD was too loose a structure for effective decision-making and should be replaced. The IAC process should be continued and expanded.
- Issues such as the ring fencing of ECD budgets, consideration of who the employer of ECD practitioners should be, as well as professional registration and

career pathing for non-formal practitioners should be examined.

Literacy and numeracy attainment was assessed for four children aged 5 or 6 years in each of a sample of sites, comprising 110 community-based sites and 99 Grade R and Grade 1 public school sites. Learners in community sites underperformed their counterparts in primary and reception sites as they had during the 1997 baseline. The 1999 results indicate that while community site scores were still lower than school-based sites, numeracy had increased by 1% while school sites declined by 5%. Literacy scores at community sites declined by -1% compared with -8% in reception sites at schools.

### ***Policy finalisation for rollout***

In 2000 the National Department of Education undertook a nationwide audit of ECD provisioning in which 23,482 ECD sites, providing services to just over 1 million learners in all nine provinces, were audited (Department of Education, 2001a). This audit, funded under a European Union technical support agreement, provided comprehensive quantitative information to inform ECD resource allocation and policy development. This remains the best data source on ECD centre provision for children up to 7 years, except for those in school-based provision.

Informed by the findings of the national ECD pilot project and the audit, the DoE launched White Paper No 5, Early Childhood Development, in May 2001 (Department of Education, 2001b).

### ***Rationale for selection of Grade R***

White Paper 5 explains that "Arising from the lessons learnt on the provision of the Reception Year in the National ECD Pilot Project, the government proposes to establish a national system for the provision of Reception Year programmes to children aged five

...(section 4)". It should be noted that the commitment to providing 10 years of compulsory school education was also a driver,

"...our medium term policy goal is progressively to realise our constitutional obligation to provide all learners with ten years of compulsory school education, including one year of early childhood development called the Reception Year (White Paper 5, 1.4.2)".

This built upon the recognition in the Interim Policy for ECD that Grade R was part of the government's commitment to compulsory general education.

As Wildeman and Nomdo (2004) indicate, the government's rationale for locating 85% of provision in the schooling system was based on claims that there are improved systems for accountability and quality control at primary schools and that service delivery would be able to use existing infrastructure. I return to the reasons behind this choice and the actors who shaped the decision in the third section.

## THE POLITICS AND FUNDING OF SCALING UP

**T**his section provides an assessment of the factors that led to the adoption of Grade R as part of the formal education system in South Africa, as well as the contribution of government and civil society that led to it. It also examines the funding mechanisms used for the start up of this national programme.

### Drivers for implementation of Grade R as a planned universal programme

The political climate engendered by the liberation struggle and transition to democracy in 1994 provided a generally enabling environment for the expansion and development of ECD services in South Africa. A strong child rights movement led by civil society, including ECD organisations, developed in response to the denial of children's most basic rights and increasing state violence against children on account of their political activism. In 1990 the National Committee on the Rights of the Child was formed and work towards a programme of action began. As Porteus (2004) puts it

“One of the central principles of the 1994 moment was an unambiguous affirmation of the rights of the child. It opened up a new conversation about the boundaries of the possible for the lives of South African children.”

The ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1996 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child in 2000, as well as inclusion of guaranteed child rights in Sections 28 and 29 of the South African Constitution of 1996, provide the framework for prioritising children in service delivery. The drafters of the National Programme of Action

for Children ensured that ECD became a priority area here too, basing it on an analysis of the provisions of the CRC. This has, however, been a rather separate stream with a focus on monitoring child programmes. The education route has so far proved to be the most effective channel for expanding ECD services.

Nevertheless, this alone would not have been enough as ECD specifically was not on the agenda of any political group. In the ‘planning for democracy period,’ politically well-connected and astute ECD members of the African National Congress and United Democratic Movement were able to use their influence to ensure that what was then known as ‘early childhood educare’ got onto the policy agenda. One roleplayer was ‘shocked’ by the discovery that ECD was not featured on the agenda at the first ANC Conference on Education Planning,

“We found it necessary to link up with the education structure NECC (National Education Crisis Committee). It was a movement within the schooling system; we sought links with NECC and forced for a special desk on ECD. I was the most senior ANC cadre who had the political connection in the movement and in tune with the political discussions on education reconstruction so I then was responsible for moving the policy decision at the ANC conference that the reconstruction for education for ten years must have a compulsory year of preschool education... and that decision which I successfully motivated and won at the ANC conference looking at Ready to Govern<sup>17</sup>” ECD stakeholder quoted by (Seleti, 2007).

Padayachie et al (1994) described three lines of action to ensure ECD was on the political agenda:

1. ECD proponents saw a need to develop a coherent vision with regard to national policy. This was accomplished through ECD getting onto the National Education Crisis Committee in 1990 and the creation of a National Interim a Working Committee (NIWC) on ECD with the mandate to build grassroots support to help formulate the vision.
2. At the same time an ECD commission became part of the National Education Policy Investigation (NEPI), which was critical in legitimising ECD.<sup>18</sup> The need to mobilise a broader support base was achieved through the process of disbursement of Independent Development Trust funding. This was a once off allocation of R70 million to ECD in 1991 for the poorest of the poor. A representative process was followed and very large numbers of grassroots ECD service providers were drawn in to determine how the allocations should be disbursed. This led to the establishment of the National Educare Forum (NEF).
3. There was a need to develop a process and structure to take ECD forward in unity during the political transition. This was achieved through bringing together the South African Association for Early Childhood Educare and NIWC to form the South African Congress for Early Childhood Development (SACECD) in 1994. Having a more 'progressive' organisation as the voice of the ECD movement is considered by many to have been a key enabler of getting ECD firmly onto the policy agenda. (Ironically, in the process of gaining political credibility, the movement lost much of its strong early education expertise in the form of more conservative but specialist ECE teachers).

All of this, as well as advocacy at the ANC Education Conference paved the way for the inclusion of ECD in the African National Congress Education Policy Framework for Education and Training (the 'Yellow Book'). The World Bank/CEPD South African Study on Early Childhood Development, which provided recommendations for the Reception Year, took place simul-

taneously with the formulation of ANC policy, which was spearheaded by Roy Padayachie, ANC member and then-chair of NIWC.

While university-based researchers spearheaded most education policy development, a dearth of ECD expertise in the tertiary sector meant that NGOs were centrally involved in the development of ECD policy. Early policy affirms community-based service provision, NGO innovation and service delivery and the need for a continuum of ECD services to reflect the need for public/private partnerships to deliver ECD services. In essence, the expectations for ECD servicing were far wider than the Grade R year prioritised in White Paper 5.

The NEPI Early Childhood Educare report proposed programme options within the schooling system for five to nine year olds including bridging within the first year of school or a pre-primary class for five year olds before school and a range of options for children birth to six years. However, it was the early schooling options that were selected in the framework report - locating it firmly within the basic education ambit. One can speculate that this was a financial trade off, which has been confirmed by the report writers, but this could also be seen as the inevitable result of locating ECD within education policy. This undoubtedly informed the terms of reference for the World Bank/CEPD study, which were "to assess the feasibility of adding a year for five year olds to the formal school system," (Padayachie et al, 1994:3). This study, however, recommended that a pre-primary year alone would be too little too late for the majority of young children and it made a number of recommendations for programmes for younger children, an integrated approach and partnerships with government, NGOs, parents, communities and the private sector.

The Interim Policy for ECD (Department of Education, 1996a) also took a broad integrative approach to ECD services following the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training, which clearly located ECD within a broader development framework, stating:

“RDP programmes which address the basic needs of families for shelter, water and sanitation, primary health care, nutrition, and employment, are therefore particularly vital, and their successful implementation will improve the life chances of young children, and enable families and communities to care for them more adequately. From this perspective, ECD depends on and contributes to community development, and the education of parents should go hand-in-hand with the education of children” (paragraph 74).

The National ECD Pilot Project (NPP) 1997 – 1999, while focused on the Reception Year, was implemented largely in the community-based sector with its community link and more holistic full-day care, which offers protection, nutrition and education.

### ***The choice of Grade R and its location in public primary schools***

As described previously, White Paper 5(WP5) was the vehicle through which Grade R was prioritised above other forms of ECD and in a departure from previous policy located the majority of Grade R classes in public primary schools. It is clear that up to this point the favoured approach was broader and community-based. Even in the pilot project, Gauteng had piloted a holistic integrated approach and community schools were used. So, what happened?

The progression from interim to final policy had been extremely slow. Seleti (2007) describes the departmental process. In 2000 the then-Minister of Education, Professor Kadar Asmal, gave instructions

for the development of WP5 and a time frame of three months for its production. Departmental officials looked to the Pilot Project for systems and models that had worked and could be adopted for Grade R and for Pre-Grade R as well as drawing on the Interim Policy. According to Seleti (2007), there was extensive internal consultation with National Cabinet and the National Treasury on its implementation. The DoE had to persuade the Treasury that WP5 did not provide for an additional cohort of ECD educators that would inflate personnel costs. The model adopted was to be developed through a preliminary conditional grant over three years with the intention that thereafter Grade R would be included in normal provincial budget systems. The intention to introduce Grade R gradually was articulated at department level (including PEDs) but not communicated to the wider ECD sector.

The development of WP5 was controversial not only in civil society on the grounds that the usual consultative processes were absent – but also within PEDs. It was however discussed within the CCECD, which had ECD civil society representation. Why this mechanism failed to alert the sector is not clear, but this, along with the lack of a formal communication strategy left the sector largely unprepared. Seleti (2007: 154/5) provides reasons given by her key informants that it

“...had to be an internal process ...because the department was beginning to look critically at policies in relation to available financial resources and systemic realities across both the national department and the provinces. The Department had to shape the policy in relation to what it felt capable of providing and not necessarily to what ECD wanted or wished to have...”

Further, there was pressure to make concrete the commitment to Grade R as a first year of compulsory schooling.

The government's decision to focus on Grade R has been the subject of a strong critique from civil society in particular (e.g. Porteus 2001; 2004; and several press reports). Porteus (2001; 2004) points out that neither international research cited in the WP5 nor the NPP itself (even though it was biased in direction of provision of Reception Year programming), supported a narrow focus on a reception year. Rather, the support was for the need for a more integrated servicing strategy, which would also be more consonant with the human rights approach to policy development within which ECD had been located during the transition to democracy. Concerns for the implications for weakening the community-based sector of moving towards school-based provision were also raised by ECD specialists in the NGO sector, through the media around the launch of WP5.

Porteus (2001:13) speculates that in regard to the 'policy jump' that "at some stage (and probably very early in the process) a decision had already been made that regardless of the viability of alternative models, the future policy would focus on Reception Year provisioning. It appears that more integrated models of ECD development were probably never seriously considered." International pressures, in that the Reception Year was an established model in industrialised countries and promoted by the World Bank, may, in her view, have been a factor.

Porteus (2004) also points to the prevailing policy in Treasury at the time, of budgetary restraint in social spending, when the MTEF policy statement concluded that the state was investing too much in education and prioritised ways to increase efficiency in the system. In its assessment for EFA 2000 the DoE noted the major challenge in finding adequate financial resources to meet the implementation costs of a compulsory Reception Year (Department of Education, 2000).

In similar vein, Wildeman and Nomdo (2004) observe the many references in the Interim Policy for ECD to the inherited situation of ECD funding and provision, including recognition of "difficulties arising from unrealistic regulations relating to norms and standards such as physical requirements for facilities and state-recognised qualifications for practitioners, thereby making subsidisation of community efforts very difficult" (Department of Education, 1996a: 7). They comment that:

"Already in 1996, the government was clear that although commitment to ECD was paramount, it wanted to fashion a policy view that did not place undue fiscal burdens upon the State. This naturally begs the question whether the roots of subsequent policy formulation in the ECD sector were primarily made with reference to the fiscal limitations of State funding." (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2004: 9)

Finally, it could be argued that WP5 is primarily education driven and in this way builds on earlier Bridging-to-School models aimed at addressing school readiness and preventing grade retention.

A widely contested aspect of WP5 is that the majority of sites would be established in schools and not in community sites. Both the NPP and (according to key informants) PEDS had argued for Grade R to be left in community sites. Their justification for this was partly that schools were not ready for Grade R and had a different, more formal pedagogical approach, and partly to develop the community and acknowledge the role it had played in the sector. The location in schools was contested within the CCECD.

"I still remember the meeting. With the exception of Gauteng province which argued strongly for integrated provision for children under school

going age, all the provinces opted for a focus on Grade R, as at that stage provincial education departments simply didn't have capacity to deliver both to Grade R and provide for children 0 - 4. The other reason was that the admission age was going up and down at that stage and all of us provincial reps said we needed a system where Grade R became part of foundation phase, but was treated as an active learning, introductory year. This would also provide a way of recognising Grade R teachers in the context that we were dealing with at the time. Grade R was housed mainly in preschools and by recognising these classes they could form the link between community and primary schools. We could not believe what came out in WP5, - none of us, we were stunned. We objected, as what was the point of us all having sat here, gone through all the many meetings, having consulted with all our people, and then to come back and find a very strong emphasis on Grade R being housed on primary school premises. We said we just don't have the classrooms, we just can't build them." (Ex PED employee)

However, the following assessment from an education policy specialist involved in the earlier stages of policy formulation is the most likely explanation for the approach that was taken.

"Systemically it makes more sense to have it in schools assuming the state has the capacity. So if I were a DG (Director General) and thinking 'How do you roll out?' - it would be easier to use existing infrastructure and systems".

Porteus (2004) suggests that the White Paper may have been a step backwards in relation to the definition of the scope of ECD and conception in the Interim Policy of a partnership model drawing in a range of

role-players (itself building on the 1995 White Paper). This left two models of ECD service provision - the community-based multi-age-group of integrated inter-sectoral provision on the one hand and the school-based Reception Year education on the other. There was a policy option to try to support quality within the community-based sector but government decided against it.

As a result:

"... the sector feels let down by the minimalist approach taken by WP5 especially with regard to the government partnership with community ECD centres" Seleti( 2007: 158).

In particular there was no commitment to training and employing Grade R practitioners, which the sector had hoped would be addressed. Training was mentioned but not jobs, as government was not ready to increase its financial commitment to teacher salaries.

In summary, the decision to roll out Grade R within the schooling system was made by the DoE in consultation with Treasury. While the introduction of Grade R is presented in terms of meeting the constitutional obligation to "provide all learners with ten years of compulsory school education, including one year of early childhood development called the Reception Year" (para 1.4.2), the identified target is universal coverage. PEDs were meant to fund it and primarily to use the school infrastructure with a small component of community-based provision for implementation. The argument for the policy was child rights, economic investment and redress of the disparities of poverty and apartheid.

With regard to the competing priority of a broader integrated multi-age approach, WP5 assigned this to future planning where it languished until the develop-

ment in 2005 of the National Integrated Plan for ECD (0 - 4 years) on the instruction of Cabinet's Social Cluster:

"The Department of Education shall, within the context of the ECD priority group of the National Programme of Action for Children, co-ordinate and support activities to develop national, provincial and local level strategies and services that are planned in an integrated and comprehensive manner, delivered through the effective use of existing resources, institutions and organisations, and are focused on our poor rural, poor urban and HIV/AIDS infected and affected communities." (Department of Education, 2001b: 6.2.1)

There are two interesting aspects here: firstly, many existing services were already targeting the youngest children e.g. primary health care, child support grants with a focus on the poor, so the missing elements were early development support and stimulation. Second was the placing of the DoE in the coordination role. This clearly relates back to the 1995 White Paper but the functions and age range are not primarily education's mandate. Key informants speculated that this may have been because Education was seen to be a strong Ministry.

### **Advocacy to increase public awareness and support for ECD**

ECD is a national priority but is competing with many other national priorities. Advocacy is essential to bring ECD to the forefront in provincial and local budgeting and servicing where competing priorities tend to marginalise it. For ECD, holistically defined, the emphasis has more been on access to social security and other more general child rights issues such as immunisation drives and child protection campaigns than on

ECD centre services and Grade R. This has been both from the side of government and advocacy groups (e.g. ACCESS which has driven the entitlement to Social Security through the media and on occasions the courts). Certainly as services for 0 - 4 year olds scale-up with more of a focus on households as the site of early childhood development, there is likely to be more messaging aimed at parents and local authorities. The implementation guidelines for the National Integrated Plan for ECD (Department of Education, Department of Health & Department of Social Development, 2007) speak of advocacy and communication strategies. One could speculate that while Grade R is not yet compulsory and is oversubscribed, advocacy to encourage enrolment has not been essential.

### **Government campaigns**

Even though there were no major advocacy campaigns, there were information sharing and advocacy elements in the rollout of the National ECD Pilot Project and during the second conditional Department of Education grant for the start-up of the Reception Year, both of which were deliverables that went to tender.

The Information Campaign for the Pilot Project was conceptualised as being "critical to inform ECD stakeholders of the interim ECD policy and interim procedures to obtain conditional accreditation, subsidies and NGO contracts" (Department of Education, 1996b:8). The campaign was intended for stakeholders including national and provincial departments of education, community-based ECD services, ECD NGO trainers and primary schools; rather than the general public. It was conceptualised as a 6-month campaign and the tenderer was required to facilitate stakeholder information at the local level and to produce posters and stickers. These articulate the position of the young child as part of the reconstruction and de-

velopment of South Africa, rather than talking to the policy. "Putting Children First in the Reconstruction of the Nation" was one of the slogans. According to key informants, planned stakeholder meetings did not take place in some provinces.

The implementation plan of the NPP also indicated that the department would raise donor funding for an advocacy campaign to build broad-based support among stakeholders for reconstructed ECD programmes. This took place during the initial scale-up or 'Conditional Grant' period. According to Departmental spokespeople interviewed for a study on educational broadcasting the Department of Education's ECD Media Campaign 2003/4 (which included TV, radio and pamphlets) aimed at helping parents and the overall community to understand the importance of involvement in ECD had generated a keen response with phone calls from parents, ECD practitioners and schools asking questions about where to place children, admission ages, programme quality etc. (SAIDE, 2007).

### ***Involvement of civil society***

As described above, civil society had provided the majority of ECD services and training and contributed to programming and policy development in the pre-democracy period. In the mid-1990s they were also exploring some of the curriculum and training issues implicit in the World Bank study and the ANC Policy Framework for Education and Training (ANC, 1994). For example, a national School Ready/Child Ready seminar was hosted in Cape Town in September 1994 (ELRU, 1994). This brought together NGOs, universities, the Education Department, teachers, publishers and colleges of education to discuss the implications of the policy investigations for scaling-up services including teacher training, location of programmes for 5 year-olds, appropriate curriculum and parent

involvement. It was recognised that while ECD had been placed in the Reconstruction and Development Programme Draft White Paper and was a priority area for Adult Basic Education, a lot of lobbying and advocacy was needed. In the same period the Human Sciences Research Council explored curriculum issues for Grade R.

In addition to organisations, certain individuals were recognised by both NGOs and government officials as having played a key role in the policy processes – all of these had been in NGOs at that time because there was no ECD policy in government. Seleti (2007:113) comments

"In the pre-democracy period the individuals who came to dominate the ECD sector played a critical role in the agenda-setting process of the ECE policy. According to the study there were one or two who were enormously instrumental in deciding who should be involved in the ECD agenda-setting process. The individuals were politically well connected especially within the ANC party political structures. ...They influenced the overall education agenda setting process to the benefit of the ECD sector."

Building on the existing NGO role in the ECD sector, the White Paper on Education and Training in 1995 made a very clear statement regarding partnerships, both intra-governmental and with other stakeholders:

"Since ECD is a multi-disciplinary field, the national and provincial Departments of Education need to establish formal inter-departmental committees on ECD with their counterparts in the Departments of Health and of Welfare and Population Development, and link these with RDP human resource development planning at

national and provincial levels. The role of the inter-departmental ECD committees will be to develop and promote a comprehensive and multi-disciplinary approach to the welfare and development of young children from birth to nine years of age, and effective integration and promotion of ECD services for young children and their families. The committees need to work in full collaboration with the representative bodies of ECD practitioners, trainers and resource specialists, and with the large array of non-governmental organisations, development agencies and private sector bodies which have responded to the demand for ECD services, particularly in impoverished communities.

At provincial level, the participation of **local authority representatives** will also be essential.” (Para 75)

Following this, policy formulation by the government in the mid to late 1990s was highly consultative.<sup>19</sup> The development of ECD policy required a stakeholder structure and SACECD provided a legitimate base with its national and provincial structures. Its representative along with representatives of teacher unions and other national ECD organisations, three ECD experts and key ECD departments formed the Coordinating Committee for ECD (CCECD). Its role was advisory and the responsibility of civil society representatives was to act as a link between the department and their memberships. In fact this was very uneven depending on provincial capability and commitment. In the later stages of policy formulation, stakeholder participation was elicited through more formal nomination processes and national representative structures. SACECD and NEF and the teacher unions nominated a number of representatives to different curriculum and accreditation processes.

Some provincial education departments set up their own stakeholder processes. For example:

“In our province it rolled out on the goodwill, passion and dedication of ordinary people. Because there were absolutely no structures for ECD we (the PED) set up consultative committees in each of the education regions and had a first indaba in 1997 that brought people in. It was an amazing time with committees comprising elected representatives from communities and some people travelled three hours at their own expense just to be part of the process. The first ECD provincial indaba was held in 1997. What came out [of the] consultative workshop was the strong conviction that nothing much could be achieved without paying teachers. So at that indaba the decision was taken to pool the R 2 per capita subsidy into an allocation for the class, or half class/site and out of that to provide a salary subsidy for the teacher, training for management committee and small subsidy for materials. It was a ‘pick up’ group to people who were interested.” (PED informant, KwaZulu Natal Province)

As time went on, civil society became less of a force. SACECD shifted from being an organisation concerned with advocacy and representing the interests of ECD practitioners towards service delivery. Since 2006, with depleted staffing, SACECD has not been very active in the policy process. The National Educare Forum had ceased operations some years before winding down in 1998/9, once the grant that started it had been expended.

A further weakening factor for civil society was that many key role players were lost to the NGO sector to better paying jobs in the new government or business. A new relationship emerged between former NGO

staff now in government roles and those active in NGO structures. This was often negatively perceived, possibly because NGOs were unaware of the bureaucratic processes of government, but also because government was now itself a service provider in the sector (Seleti, 2007).

Seleti's study of the role stakeholders played in the shaping of ECD policy records that stakeholders (and by this she means NGOs and CBOs) saw the establishment of the ECD directorate as a positive indication that government and the new political dispensation was taking ECD seriously, and anticipated that more structures and systems would be put in place for effective provisioning of the sector. What was not anticipated was that the government's role would extensively reduce the role of the NGOs in particular - with the government itself becoming one of the main service agents in the field.

In the years prior to democratic elections, substantial funding was channeled into the NGOs who had considerable expertise and had been performing the service. NGOs had hoped, through engagement in the policy process, to secure support for continuing scale-up of service provisions. However there was, and still is, some ambivalence in government departments about the role of NGOs, with some provinces more amenable to using them than others. In a climate where many resources once directed to NGOs are no longer available because the democratic government is in place, there is tension when NGOs are told by government that their help is needed but government would not be able to pay for it, or when government agencies put services such as training provision to tender at fixed amounts which do not fully cover delivery costs.

In 2005 the National ECD Alliance for NGOs (NECDA) was launched. It was started on the initiative of Eric

Atmore, outspoken advocate for ECD, and a few selected NGOs. By 2008 87 ECD NGOs had joined. NECDA now has elected representation but does not have local level or provincial membership structures. Its CEO has frequently challenged the Minister of Education on the slow pace of Grade R delivery, budgets and on quality issues, making skilful use of the media to do so. In 2006 NECDA lobbied for a Ministerial Task Team to Review Grade R and ECD. In 2007 a departmental task team was appointed to look at WP5 and the rate at which policy commitments were being met. Both SACECD and NECDA had members on this task team.

In August 2008 the National Department of Education started an ECD stakeholder forum for engaging with the National ECD Alliance, SACECD and other national groups.

"The ECD Stakeholder forum evolved from years of previous engagement as a collective with a whole range of stakeholders. The ECD sector doesn't have a clearly defined stakeholder group like schools. This forum is a vehicle for effective communication between the DoE and the national ECD structures. Grade R will eventually be part of [the] educational system and we would need to be considering including it as compulsory and it will then take its own trajectory. At the moment there is an ECD Stakeholder Forum, an Inclusive Education Forum and Parent Association set up. We are working on a Donors and Funders Forum for a coordinated strategy." (DoE informant)

ECD practitioners, though key to implementation, had little involvement in the policy processes as organisational structures, and did not function equally well in all provinces. Many had never heard of the policies, or did not understand the policy language. In the prov-

incentives, copies of policies are frequently not available at ECD sites, including schools.

## **Requirements for implementing at scale**

In this section the requirements for moving from a pilot project towards universal provision are discussed.

### ***Policy, norms and standards***

White Paper 5 indicated a number of areas to be incorporated within national policy, national norms and standards, and national programmes for establishing a high quality national system of Reception Year provision. Included were:

- the curriculum for the Reception Year,
- development of an adequate poverty targeted grant-in-aid system for primary schools and an adequate subsidy system for community-based sites,
- provincial management and implementation capacity, and ECD expertise,
- the system of accreditation of ECD providers,
- norms and standards,
- a qualifications framework and career paths for ECD practitioners, registration criteria for ECD practitioners with the South African Council of Educators,
- representation of ECD practitioners within the Education Labour Relations Council, conditions of service for ECD practitioners who are employed by school governing bodies and publicly subsidised community-based ECD sites,
- a governance model for the incorporation of publicly subsidised community-based ECD sites within the public system of Reception Year provision,
- a strengthened policy advisory forum with key social partners, and

- inter-governmental and inter-sectoral coherence and focus on ECD, with particular reference to the health and nutritional requirements of children aged 5 years (Department of Education, 2001b: 6.1.9).

According to key informants interviewed for this study, apart from the policy as set out in White Paper 5 and the Conditional Grant support at national and provincial levels, at the time of WP5 there was no implementation plan or costing developed for rollout of Grade R. This seems to have been the case until quite recently. The absence of legislation was a particular weakness. Because Grade R is not included in the South African Schools Act No 84 of 1996, PEDs were not compelled to provide it or allocate resources even if they had been made available in the national budget process.

The section “Knowledge Transfer, Capacity Building and Implementation” of this paper explores how far these areas identified in White Paper 5 have been addressed in the rollout.

### ***Funding for the rollout of Grade R***

It was extremely clear from the inequities in access to and quality of ECD provisioning in South Africa that roll-out of Grade R as a universal service would have to be publicly funded. This meant that Treasury and Cabinet had to be convinced that it was an affordable option. An international expert in education policy and financing was consulted on the development of WP5 and Chapter 4.2.2 of WP5 gives reasons for the fiscal affordability of the proposal and a cost-impact analysis.

The National Pilot Project had indicated that the provision of Grade R at community sites was substantially cheaper for the DoE than providing similar education at schools. This was because of low salaries for practitioners and parents covering food and other

costs. The evaluators pointed out the unfairness of this disparity, both for practitioners and parents who were paying three times as much as they would in primary schools (Department of Education, 2001c). Nevertheless in order to have an affordable option for the introduction of Grade R, the funding mechanism in WP5 made use of the fact that community-based sites operate at a lower cost and proposed a funding system which would enable a combination of the lower cost of community-based centres while putting the school-based Grade R within easier administrative reach of PEDs for quality control and accountability. The mechanism for financing the cost was directly through School Governing Bodies.

Based on this model, the argument was that expansion would cost less than originally thought and that Reception Year programmes could be expanded as a result of improvements in the flow-through efficiency of the system. Efforts to reduce bottlenecks in the early years of schooling through under-age enrolment and grade repetition had started to be successful (e.g. tightening school entry age, introducing age grade norms) and the 6 - 7 year-old school age cohort was declining. Based on a cost index value of 1 for public primary school, Reception Year provision in schools has an index of 0.7 and in community-based centres of 0.4. The analysis also examined trade offs of ECD expansion against other educational goals and concluded that "given the high priority of ECD as a social investment, we believe that a claim of about fifteen percent of the budgetary space created by economic growth, demographic transition and efficiency gains is reasonable." (Department of Education, 2001b: 4.2.2.6.11)

Consequently, some of the staffing and salary anomalies today relate to the funding model introduced by White Paper 5. Similarly, the delays in finalising norms and standards for Grade R funding, which would bring

it closer to school norms, were undoubtedly as a result of concerns for the affordability of the commitment. It is here that the policy commitment achieved early on for a year of pre-primary as part of basic education has been extremely significant as a lever for rollout.

### ***Funding the conditional grant phase of the rollout***

While financing of Grade R is a PED responsibility, in order to 'kick-start' the development and implementation of the Reception Year at provincial level the National Treasury introduced a Conditional Grant for ECD.<sup>20</sup> This would allow provinces a period in which to budget for the expansion of Grade R. The Conditional Grant targeted 4,500 sites with 135,000 learners and had the following components:

- Funding to sites
- Training of practitioners
- Supply of basic equipment
- Monitoring and support system
- Advocacy and information.

The national department oversaw the project and used its allocation to manage the supply of learning materials, provide district management training and run an advocacy component. Provincial allocations were for learner subsidies to sites, and the training of practitioners. Allocations are given in Table 7 below.

Table 8 shows that Conditional Grant funding was not the only source of provincial ECD budget allocations for ECD during that period. North West had the highest budget due to its use of professionally qualified educators and investment in infrastructure facilities. There were large differences across provinces with widely divergent commitments both in ensuring access and in per-capita allocations.

**Table 7: National and provincial allocations of the Conditional Grant for introduction of Grade R**

	2001/02 R'000	2002/03 R'000	2003/04 R'000
National Department	9,000	13,000	12,000
Eastern Cape	3,885	9,620	16,280
Free State	1,323	3,276	5,544
Gauteng	2,583	6,396	10,824
KwaZulu-Natal	4,641	11,492	19,448
Mpumalanga	1,533	3,796	6,424
Northern Cape	399	988	1,672
Northern Province	3,297	8,164	13,816
North West	1,680	4,160	7,040
Western Cape	1,659	4,108	6,952
National Total	30,000	65,000	100,000

Source: Biersteker (2001) from ECD Directorate National  
Department of Education and Division of Revenue Act No 1, 2001

**Table 8: ECD budgets by provincial education department 2001/2 - 2004/5**

Province	2001/02 R'000	2002/03 R'000	2003/04 R'000	2004/05 R'000	Real average annual change 2001/2 - 2004/5*
Eastern Cape	3,473	24,402	27,305	37,715	192.8
Free State	9,958	13,766	16,290	32,304	42.8
Gauteng	No allocation	5,455	88,178	49,000	792.8
KwaZulu-Natal	42,374	52,801	22,588	80,266	65
Limpopo	No allocation	12,193	12,809	25,203	144.2
Mpumalanga	24,369	27,857	35,075	34,518	5.6
Northern Cape	8,499	10,632	11,371	14,577	12.8
North West	128,130	107,033	107,259	124,972	-5.7
Western Cape	46,261	52,838	56,310	59,599	2.2
Total	263,334	306,977	377,195	458,154	13.1

\* Average annual change for Gauteng and Limpopo calculated over two year period and not included in national average of 13.1 percent

Source: Wildeman (2008) from Provincial Estimates of Expenditure 2005

In 2001, the capacity of departments to spend the Conditional Grant was a major concern, with only 29% of the total grant spent nationally, mostly by four provinces. The main reason was limited provincial personnel to implement the grant and limited capacity in the provincial ECD sites as well as the late award of the national training tender. In 2002/3 the situation improved dramatically to 62.1% (including the rollover from the previous year) and was up to 75% in 2003/4. The DoE found that it took at least a year to develop the necessary systems to transfer funds to sites and award all the necessary tenders (training, equipment, advocacy, design of a monitoring system) at national and provincial levels (Department of Education, 2003).

From 2004/5 rollout of Grade R became an item for the provincial education department budgets. Budget analysis (Seloane, 2004) indicated that ECD budgets showed real growth rates of 6.79% in 2003/4, 0.75% in 2004/5 and 4.3% in 2005/6. The dip in 2004/5 is attributed to provinces not yet having filled the gap left at the end of the Conditional Grant funding. Concerns expressed about ECD spending have been that it constitutes a very small share of both consolidated national and provincial allocated expenditure and does not appear to be growing fast enough for the phasing-in of a quality Reception Year (Biersteker & Dawes, 2008). However, provincial budgets have since considerably increased in order to work towards the 2010 target. Table 9 gives the most recent budget information by provincial education department derived from provincial budget statements.

Budgets are therefore projected to grow from R932 million in 2007/8 to R3.2 billion in 2010/11 at a real average rate of 44.2%, the fastest growing educa-

tion programme, in budgetary terms (Wildeman & Lefko-Everett, 2008). The point has been made by the current education minister that while this expansion is from a low base, it "signifies real resolve to do more for all young children."<sup>22</sup> Increased resources would provide expansion of access and provide for the application of the Norms and Standards for Grade R funding, discussed in the section on "Knowledge Transfer, Capacity Building and Implementation." The education infrastructure budget programme is set to expand to R5.2 billion in 2010. However there is no indication of what percentage is intended for infrastructure for Grade R. While the bulk of the budget is earmarked for rollout of Grade R, expanding the number of sites attached to public schools, and targeting support to community-based ECD centres, these budgets would also include an allocation for education responsibilities for the National Integrated Plan for ECD. Preliminary estimates for the provinces were R647,865,000. The national DoE also requested an additional budget allocation of R821,651,000 for the NIP (Department of Education, 2008). This request at national level would be for the policy and planning requirements for rolling out early stimulation programmes, piloting and research, and monitoring and materials development.

Additional budget allocations in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework therefore indicate substantial commitment to Grade R provisioning and expansion of quality services for younger children in the provinces. However, as has been found in the past, it is a battle to ensure that provinces direct the money where it is intended to go. Issues such as differing levels of funding across the provinces for subsidies, salaries and provision of learning materials need to be resolved.

**Table 9: ECD budgets by provincial education department 2006/7 – 2010/11<sup>21</sup>**

Province	2006/7 R'000	2007/8 R'000	2008/9 R'000	2009/10 R'000	2010/11 R'000
E. Cape	64,346	91,513	274,397	395,539	539,922
Free State	49,632	56,338	70,324	77,337	81,727
Gauteng	79,000	152,739	214,571	310,146	583,746
KZN	102,658	167,736	208,234	336,202	608,363
Limpopo	68,868	63,935	155,759	228,615	445,775
Mpumalanga	41,827	64,211	91,551	143,375	243,195
N. West	151,510	146,512	164,165	210,088	302,866
N. Cape	18,141	24,692	57,251	73,350	115,264
W. Cape	107,397	164,804	226,792	274,011	320,922
National	683,379	932,480	1,463,044	2,048,663	3,241,780

*Sources: Department of Education (2008); Wildeman (2008); Wildeman & Lefko-Everett (2008) from the Provincial Budget Statements.*

## KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER, CAPACITY BUILDING AND IMPLEMENTATION

In accordance with White Paper 5, South Africa is following a phased approach to introduce publicly funded Grade R classes across the whole public schooling system. Bringing a further 750,000 children into the system between 2001/2 and 2010/11 (recently revised to 2014) at an acceptable quality of service, requires, in addition to funding, the development of curriculum, coordination systems, improvement of the educator skills base through training and support, additional physical infrastructure, increased provincial and district systems, and staff capacity for implementation and monitoring. In this section I consider some of the provisions that have been, or are being put in place, as we move from small-scale pilot mode to full rollout. This section also highlights that once targets are reached and all Reception Year learners have access to a Grade R education, achieving quality of service may take considerably longer.

### Pilot and rollout

While the programme elements remain similar, there are some changes in the way that Grade R is being implemented at scale compared with the piloting phase. Primarily, the focus shifted from services being largely community-based, to provisions in the schooling system. Secondly, the requirements for assessment and planning for the National Curriculum Statement are far more demanding than previous curriculum guidelines. Location in the school system was justified on the basis that requirements could be more easily met there, but there are challenges. It places practitioners at the 'bottom of the pecking order' and subject to supervision by department heads who often have very little understanding of informal

learning. The greatest challenge is that while school infrastructure and systems can be used, the scale-up requires the provisioning of classes, specific systems and development of large numbers of teachers for the classes as well as additional district office and PED staff to support them.

An unfortunate consequence of the move to schools has been the weakening of the community-based sector. WP5 made note of the loss to the community-based sector, which in 2000 provided for some 83% of children. It was anticipated that some better-off parents would continue to use community-based schools and that places would open up to younger children. This was proven to be only partly true. Because Grade R in the public schools is cheaper, many community-based sites have been seriously weakened by the move of children to public schools, as well as the higher costs of caring for younger children who require higher adult to child ratios. The issue of aftercare is also a critical one, as almost all community-based sites offered a full day programme but Grade R is only part day, which can put young children at risk in the afternoons, particularly if parents are working. Only recently, since the 2005/6 financial year, has the drive to scale-up the number of ECD sites registered by DoSD and subsidies for children under 5 years offered a life line to non-profit community ECD provisions.

### **Capacity for implementation**

There are several aspects of implementation for which capacity needed to be developed once the project moved beyond the pilot stage. Significant investments were required for learner support material, teacher training, increased education department staff at national and provincial levels, and physical infrastructure.

### ***Location of ECD in National and Provincial Education Departments***

Initially Grade R fell under the ECD, Schooling and Junior Primary Directorate in the DoE (which focused on schooling from Grade 1 and the NPP). This was because of attempts to link lower primary and ECD more effectively. However, in 1998 an ECD Directorate was formed. The move to an ECD directorate was very useful in taking forward the mandate of the Education and Training White Paper, which articulated a pre-Grade R system, as well as Grade R. However, the downside has been that although Grade R is meant to be part of the Foundation Phase, it is not automatically included in policy and systems. To facilitate a solid transition, the directorate has to ensure that Grade R stays on all departmental agendas and that it is part of the monitoring and evaluation system, the EMIS and systemic evaluation processes.<sup>23</sup>

In the provinces, the ECD directorate was not automatically replicated. ECD is often linked with other sections such as ABET, Special Projects, Psychological Services and Institutional Planning, though some provinces do have their own directorates. The difficulty with this is that the staffing in the provincial units may not have ECD expertise and also that where staffing is stretched, other areas might be prioritised for administrative and support services. During the Conditional Grant period, it was necessary to appoint provincial coordinators to ensure that this project was kept on track. Staffing capacity in the DoE has increased considerably over the last few years to keep pace with both the rollout of Grade R and expanding services for children less than 5 years of age. However, there are many indications that provincial staffing capacity has been overstrained during the rollout period.

Wildeman (2004) explains that provinces unanimously indicated that a lack of personnel hampered

successful implementation of policies as well as readiness to spend in the years of the Conditional Grant where under-spending in several of the provinces was a severe problem. Grant conditions did not provide for necessary personnel. Wildeman and Nomdo (2004) note that the funding and expansion of ECD services is based upon the fiscal space brought about by declining enrolment trends and efficiency gains in the schooling system. WP 5 “indicates that freed-up fiscal space should not be consumed by the traditional schooling sector and more specifically by personnel expenditure” (Wildeman, 2004:12).

More recently, a study of Grade R in four provinces found that:

“The situation across all the provincial departments surveyed is a sense of moderate to severe ‘undercapacitation’ of the offices responsible for the implementation and monitoring of Grade R. In general there seem to be too few posts allocated to these functions, or many of the posts there remain unfilled. Often, the persons responsible have other, unrelated tasks which are perceived to take priority in district or head office affairs. Where there are dedicated officials who have been on the job for some time, they are often stretched beyond their capacity. The experience-base relating to Grade R in government as a whole seems relatively low” (Moll, 2007b: 17-18).

These points were borne out in interviews with key informants working in different provinces, who found that support staff might have to work with as many as 300 schools in some instances. As a result there are some schools that are not visited for the whole year.

There are also concerns that while provincial and district office staff focus on policy implementation,

many do not have the professional capacity to support teachers to implement the curriculum.

### ***Aligning of systems and incentives***

In addition to uneven implementation across the provinces (as can be seen in Table 10 below) the DoE has recognised systemic challenges in regard to Grade R rollout (Department of Education, 2008), including:

- A lack of systems to pay practitioners and upgrade qualifications
- Lack of accurate data (on salaries, qualifications)
- Different levels of funding across the provinces.

A highly publicised example comes from Gauteng Province. In May 2008, Grade R teachers approached the press because their R2,000 salaries (approximately \$240) are often seriously delayed, due to payment system problems. There are wide variations in salaries paid across the provinces, partly but not only due to different qualification levels. In 2008, Free State, Limpopo and North West paid R5,000 a month to qualified teachers; Northern Cape paid R3,000; Mpumalanga paid R2,000 regardless of qualification and in the KwaZulu Natal teachers in primary schools received R1,750.

To address these and other issues, a Grade R implementation plan was approved by HEDCOM on March 17, 2008. Project management support has been put in at national and provincial level, an audit will be conducted of all practitioners to determine levels of qualification as well as salaries received, and most significantly the norms and standards for funding Grade R will be implemented.

The norms and standards for funding of Grade R, first gazetted for public comment in 2005, have been legislated (Republic of South Africa, 2008b) and will

be implemented from January 2009. They provide a legislative springboard for rollout of Grade R. While provisions largely speak to provisioning and funding, the norms and standards also provide for the development by the DoE of minimum inputs in terms of materials, staff qualifications etc. Key provisions include:

- A pro-poor funding formula in which funding over the basic level is available to schools in the two poorest quintiles. This is intended to be used for inputs that compensate more disadvantaged learners through more materials and more favourable learner/educator ratios.
- Provincial MTEF budgets as the primary/exclusive source of funding for public and independent Grade R services in provinces.
- Grade R learners are to be funded at 70% of the per-learner level of Grade 1 learners, but provinces have discretion in the setting of per learner expenditure allocations (down to 50%) as an interim measure to cover more schools in the early years of the rollout period, provided that national standards are met.
- Provision for establishment posts for Grade R: Provinces may decide to convert a portion of the total allocation to a Grade R site(s) into a post or posts. This is determined annually. The only rider is that the allocation should cover both the personnel and non-personnel costs and should not exceed recommended personnel/non-personnel expenditure ratios. The personnel amount will be retained by the PED and practitioners paid by the PED. The other model is for funds for both personnel and non-personnel costs to be transferred to the school fund. This still excludes direct employment of teachers by departments and there is as yet no legislation requiring schools to implement Grade R, as they are required to provide Grades 1 upwards, which is a critical issue for the development of Grade R.
- Community-based sites receiving public funding must be registered as independent schools and

others may apply (according to criteria that have now been developed). In terms of the South African Schools Act, this allows them to be part of the funding formula. Wildeman and Nomdo (2006) query whether the funding formula will leave independent schools vulnerable to the termination of public support.

- The inclusion of Grade R information on the school funding norms and standards resource targeting list, which involves indications of which schools are eligible for Grade R targeting, possess management readiness for implementation of Grade R (financial management, effectiveness of the School Governing Body, quality of teaching and learning), current and projected physical space available for Grade R.
- Each PED must formulate a rollout plan for public school Grade R, using the information on Grade R eligibility, management readiness, physical space, budgets, per learner cost, learner coverage per school, and the pro-poor funding gradient.
- Provision is made for monitoring of the appropriate utilisation of public funds. This will include inputs such as class size, practitioner skills and learner support materials as well as learner performance.

Levels of per-learner funding differ widely across the country. For this reason, the norms and standards provide that the DoE and PEDs collaborate with a view to harmonising these differences. Guidelines for costing a basic minimum package of inputs have been developed by the DoE, as well as a tool for planning the rollout, and a readiness assessment tool.

PEDs are in the process of amending current registration criteria, assessing readiness and determining per learner costs and coverage per school. This has been the basis for PEDs MTEF budgets for Grade R and schools will be provided with letters of allocations for the 2009 school year. The DoE has provided a training manual to the provincial departments to cascade to district level.

## **Accountability mechanisms**

At the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Education in June 2008, the DoE indicated that while additional provision in the MTEF has shown a true commitment to Grade R provision, it is a battle to ensure that provinces direct the money where it is intended. Accountability mechanisms include a statutory requirement for Annual Performance Plans by provincial departments. PEDs set Grade R targets as part of this process and these indicate that PEDs are intent on rolling out Grade R. In addition, the norms and standards provide a lever. However, the need for more rigorous monitoring processes has been identified.

“We need more than money, equipment and people. Money, equipment and people are not our only problems in many cases, it is what is being done with the money, equipment and people that we have. Currently national and the provinces are held accountable for meeting targets in an aggregated way. A weakness in the system is that it is difficult to hold them accountable at classroom, school and district level. If you look at the size of provinces they are bigger than some countries. To disaggregate is important. Statutorily you should be able to point to a district and hold it accountable. This is something that still needs to be put in place.” DoE informant

For the meanwhile, in addition to the norms and standards process, rollout plans, and reporting, there will be additional contact with the provinces by the national government for monitoring purposes.

## **Provisioning**

### **Infrastructure**

The National Pilot Programme evaluation report proposed that Grade R continued in community-based

sites as well as in schools, and recommended that community Grade Rs should be linked to schools as satellites for purposes of financial mechanisms of school sites (as had been piloted in KwaZulu Natal). However, the national government decided to utilise the schooling system, which is widespread in South Africa in rural as well as urban areas. Utilising this for Grade R was intended to capitalise on its accountability mechanisms including:

- Established school governing bodies,
- Sustainable banking accounts and sound financial management, and
- Existing infrastructure to facilitate service expansion for Grade R.

However, school management tends to be patchy among schools. Many are not in the position to manage their own finances and there has been considerable investment in developing systems for the channelling of subsidies in the provinces.

The addition of Grade R classes to existing schools is not a simple matter. Primary school sites are not necessarily ideal in terms of infrastructure for Grade R provisioning. While there were under-utilised classrooms in some places, in a system where infrastructure backlogs are a widespread problem, the preference must be given to compulsory age learners (Grades 1 – 9) in terms of instructional space. Therefore, adding another grade (Grade R) may result in overcrowding or in infrastructural investment. Where classrooms do exist they are not necessarily ideal – for example, they can be far from toilets, which must be shared with the whole school,<sup>24</sup> with no place for hand washing or to sleep if these are needed. The existing infrastructure may be unsuitable for the type of experiential instruction integral to Grade R, which requires more space. In some schools there is no separate outside

play area for young children. Furthermore, in 2006, 26% of primary schools were in overall very poor condition (Department of Education, 2007). All of this constrains the development of Grade R at public schools. Two key informants reflected that because of a backlog in classroom capacity for older levels, there was a break in the phasing-out of community-based provision. In a presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee for Education in May 2003, the DoE indicated that their expansion plans for the next three years included maintaining the use of Grade R classes in community-based sites and also indicated that under-utilised and additional classrooms were being sourced.

The location of school- or community-based Grade R classes shows wide provincial variation. As can be seen in Table 10 on the following page, approximately 42% of coverage in 2004/5 was in community sites (Wildeman & Nomdo, 2004). The tendency has been for children to migrate to school-based sites from community sites, and the 2004 figure shows an increase of 2,629 classes since the Nationwide Audit (Department of Education, 2001a). By 2006, according to the NEIMS assessment, 57% (8,511 of 14,919) of primary schools offered Grade R (Department of Education, 2007).

In 2004/5 most Grade R classes in the Eastern Cape, Gauteng and Limpopo were located at schools but in the Free State, Western Cape and probably North West use of community sites may well have persisted considering relatively low coverage in the schooling system in these provinces. In rural areas distances to primary schools may be extreme and involve river crossings, and community-based sites are often closer and safer. For this reason, the *White Paper 5* guideline of 85% in public schools will be applied with consideration for the context. In some provinces community-

based Grade R classes are being subsumed into the primary system, but in others this is not favoured because of the job losses it will cause in the community sector and the low status of Grade R in many primary schools.

Currently, the DoE has put in an infrastructure request to Treasury for the building of approximately 1,300 disability-friendly, customised Grade R units with their own toilets. These will be placed at schools in Quintiles 1 to 3 in areas where there is a real infrastructure shortage. Building is currently underway in some provinces. In the Western Cape, for example, they have funds for 141 classes to the end of 2009 and need 280 by 2010/11; in other provinces shortages are far higher.

The option of providing transport for children where numbers are low needs to be weighed against the benefits of building classrooms. Transport is provided, especially in rural areas to children for the compulsory schooling phase, which currently begins at Grade 1, and some provinces have extended this to Grade R learners.

### ***Learner support material and equipment***

Grade R classrooms also require materials and furnishing. Provinces have therefore needed to supply these. Some only provide the per capita subsidy but others have supplied materials kits in addition. There is provision in provincial budgets for materials and the DoE has developed a guideline for the basic minimum package. The guideline gives PEDs information on how to determine learner allocations (costs) in relation to the pro-poor gradients, then coverage per school, and lists for equipment. Some equipment is mandatory but the guideline includes other equipment that could add value to the process. Provision is also made for personnel inputs and other operational

costs that could be incurred at school level such as photocopying and cleaning.

### ***Curriculum***

The curriculum for Grade R forms part of the National Curriculum Statement Foundation Phase curriculum (Department of Education, 2002). For Grade R the focus is on three learning programmes, numeracy, literacy and life skills and the intention is that these will be taught in an integrated, play based, child centered manner. There have been a number of challenges in this regard which are discussed below.

### ***Class size***

A practitioner-learner ratio of 1:30 is the recommendation in the minimum basic input guideline, attempting to resolve the issue where the primary school ratio is set at 1:40 and some provinces apply this to Grade R. Subsidy funding can be utilised for an assistant to reduce the ratio. A model for small schools still has to be finalised as in many rural areas and on farms there are far fewer children. In the Western Cape Grade R classes of fewer than 12 children are subsidised and in the Northern Cape the ratio may be as low as 1:7. Free State province has many farm schools on commercial farms and the number of Grade R students is too few to make for viable classes, which is a major challenge to be addressed.

### ***Capacity building strategy***

Given a history in which formal qualifications were not available to most of those working as teachers of young children, finding suitably qualified personnel for an expanding Grade R sector has been a serious challenge. Add to this the problem that an ECD qualification does not at present lead to recognised employment, that there is no formal career path or clear articulation between the different levels of ECD qualification and the Bachelor of Education, and that

**Table 10: Publicly supported Reception Year sites at primary schools and at Community-based sites by province 2004/5**

Province	School-based	Community- based	Total
E Cape	1,357	675	2,032
Free State	78	393	471
Gauteng	469	91	560
KwaZulu-Natal	1,059	814	1,873
Limpopo	2,169	1,008	3,177
Mpumalanga	450	350	800
Northern Cape	149	177	326
North West		775	
Western Cape	541	1,009	1,550
South Africa	6,272	4,517	10,789

Source: Personal communication with provincial education departments, Wildeman & Nomdo (2004:29)

the situation faces demand- as well as supply- side challenges.

#### *Qualifications and training*

There is no comprehensive data source available on training levels in the ECD sector post the Nationwide Audit conducted in 2000 (Department of Education, 2001a), but at that time the vast majority of the 48,561 ECD practitioners working in ECD facilities were considered as under-qualified. Only 12% were recognised as qualified educators by the DoE (a matriculation/ secondary school leaving certificate plus at least a three year diploma). In addition, some PEDs have re-deployed excess primary school teachers to Grade R who need retraining. The DoE has identified the need to audit Grade R teacher qualifications in all sites and the EMIS has been adapted for this purpose.

White Paper Five: Early Childhood Development identified as challenges:

- Inequities in the qualifications of ECD practitioners/ educators

- Absence of an accreditation system for trainers of ECD practitioners/educators (Department of Education, 2001b: 2.2.6).

To address these problems “(the DoE) undertakes to expand, over the medium term, its work on practitioner development and career pathing for Reception Year practitioners and Pre-Reception Year practitioners” (5.3.4).

Historically, a lack of formal training opportunities for ECD practitioners led to the development of training programmes offered by the non-government sector which were neither accredited nor recognised by education departments. With the establishment of the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) and the national qualifications framework (NQF), the possibility of upgrading to a recognised qualification became a reality. The National ECD Pilot Project’s Interim Accreditation Committee became the ECD Standards Generating Body in 1999. By early 2003 qualifications and standards were registered by SAQA at Levels 1 (Basic Certificate in ECD) and 4 (National Certificate

in ECD – secondary school leaving level) and Level 5 (Higher Certificate in ECD and Diploma in ECD). These developments have moved ECD training a long way towards standardisation, allowing NGOs and private training providers to be accredited on the same basis as public providers.

In 2002 accreditation of ECD training providers began, mostly through the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA). The Council for Higher Education accredits some providers. In 2007, 156 training providers were accredited to offer ECD qualifications and standards (SAQA, 2007).

#### *Training opportunities for Grade R practitioners*

As described above, the National ECD Pilot Project contributed to the development of accreditation systems. Government engaged the NGOs to undertake the training. This first large scale, state-funded initiative trained approximately 2,700 practitioners in the core components of what later became a Level 4 certificate. Under the Conditional Grant a further 4,500 Reception Year teachers were trained at Level 4. Some of these included practitioners who had been part of the pilot but were not accredited.

Further training opportunities were offered by the ETDP SETA in the form of learnerships<sup>25</sup> but it is not possible to determine how many of these were for ECD practitioners working in Grade R classes. Statistics given in a recent SAQA report concerning the uptake of ECD qualifications (SAQA, 2007) show that 5,634 learners had successfully completed ECD qualifications by mid-2006 (see Table 11 below). This total includes the SETA learnerships but does not reflect ongoing training by FET (vocational training) colleges, NGOs and private providers that were not part of SETA learnerships. The very large number of quali-

fications at Level 4 suggests that it includes the 4500 trained in 2004 as part of the DoE Conditional Grant.

Currently the ECD component of the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) is government's primary vehicle for improving skills levels in the sector. These workplace opportunities, while largely focused on community ECD provision for 0 – 4 year olds, also make provision for Level 5 training for Grade R educators. The focus on training for the whole ECD sector has had drawbacks: In some provinces Grade R is not receiving learnerships, but more often because Grade R positions, badly as they are paid, offer higher salaries and more security and status than jobs with 0 – 4 year olds, many practitioners working with younger children migrate to Grade R classes once trained (Biersteker, 2008b; SAQA, 2007).

If all of the EPWP plans are implemented this translates into about 66,300 work/training opportunities (plus 3,500 under the 2008 APEX priority programme); many of them targeting existing employees and those working with 0 – 4 year olds. This would significantly upgrade existing provision and provide some of the requirements for Grade R<sup>26</sup> but would not allow for major expansion of the sector as a whole. The strategy of moving the practitioners, who have completed training at one level to the next, while improving their capacity to deliver a quality service, will reduce overall numbers of practitioners reached. In addition, the EPWP targets may be ambitious. Certainly the slow pace at which EPWP training has started in some provinces (e.g. Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal) suggests this (Biersteker, 2008b).

The DoE has not set formal requirements for qualification levels but the expressed position is for Grade R practitioners to progress to a Level 5 diploma (Matric/school leaving certificate plus 3 years) at which point

**Table 11: Qualification statistics by NQF level (April 2005- July 2006)**

Qualification Title	Number Qualified
Basic Certificate: ECD (Level 1)	71
National Certificate: ECD (Level 4)	5,375
Higher Certificate: ECD (Level 5)	161
National Diploma: ECD (Level 5)	27
Total	5,634

Source: SAQA (2007)

they will be eligible for full professional registration with the South African Council for Educators (SACE). Ultimately Level 6 (a Bachelor of Education Degree) is envisaged. The guideline for minimum inputs suggests a minimum of Level 4, though anecdotal evidence suggests there are many Grade R practitioners with less than this. Until the audit of qualifications and salaries is complete, there is no indication of how large the need might be.

Existing evidence (Biersteker, 2008b) implies the need for far higher numbers of opportunities than are currently available. A further challenge will be to increase the provision of ECD opportunities at tertiary levels where they are extremely limited except as a small part of a Bachelor of Education Degree focused on the early years of primary schooling (Foundation Phase). Currently, if ECD teachers want improved qualifications the only feasible route, because it is recognised by the Department of Education for salary purposes, is to study for the Foundation Phase. However, this has resulted in a loss of qualified ECD practitioners to Grades 1 to 3, as they are able to apply for better-paid posts at these levels. (For more detail see Biersteker & Dawes, 2008). This mirrors the loss of trained practitioners working with younger children to Grade R classes.

While a qualifications framework has been established for ECD, further work needs to be done with regard to its articulation with schooling qualifications so that credits can be given towards the B Ed Degree (NQF Level 6) for those who have a Level 5 qualification and for access to tertiary education institutions for those with Level 4. Furthermore, some provincial departments do not accept the Level 4 as a minimum for Grade R teachers even though they have contracted training providers to train Grade R personnel at this level.<sup>27</sup>

#### *Capacity building for PED and District officials, school staff and governing bodies*

While there has been a focus on management training for school governing bodies to handle their Grade R subsidies, and DoE support to PEDs on the requirements of the new system and rollout plans, there is a concern that PED staff themselves need professional training.

“The people that we have in the sector at the moment don’t generally keep up to date with trends in ECD, what works, what doesn’t - both teachers and officials. Officials focus on policy and how it should be implemented without really taking into account contextual factors. So from a capacity point of view you need to deal with the content

knowledge of people who are in the system to support the process. How many officials understand how to deal with multilingualism and inclusion, and curriculum adaptation? This should be a national focus - to move them (officials) to the cutting edge of the sector. Their function isn't teaching children, they are meant to be supporting teachers and they need to know more. There is a lot of work that needs to be done, and it can't be done in a centralised way through issuing a national guideline." (DoE informant)

### ***Quality of programming***

While it has been shown that a great deal of effort and planning is needed to achieve the access targets, far more of a concern to the DoE is providing access to a programme of sufficient quality. To improve quality, DoE plans to develop support materials for practitioners, including posters and booklets with practical ideas. New draft standards for the Grade R programme have been used in identification of model classes. The idea was to counter the largely negative impression of Grade R quality by having classes that are working well as examples. The Minister therefore asked for 100 best practice schools. Each province identified at least 10 and this year (2008/9) there will be 200 spread across the provinces in relation to the distribution of Grade R classes. Most of these are in primary schools because it was there that the greatest problems were to be found (even though there are still challenges in the community schools). Best practice examples will be included in a booklet.

## **Partnerships, civil society and advocacy**

### ***Partnerships***

The major role for civil society stakeholders in the rollout of Grade R has been to provide training services

under tender to the national and provincial department. Initially NGOs undertook the bulk of training, training material development and research support for the scaling-up. Currently, more of the public Further Education and Training Colleges have been drawn in as training providers. Initially, these colleges had not aligned the previous National Educare qualifications to the new ECD qualifications registered with SAQA. They have now been doing so and a developing trend in some provinces is for the NGOs to work in consortia with the FET colleges.

The other role that civil society stakeholders are intended to play through the ECD Stakeholder Forum is as a communication channel from the DoE to service providers on the ground. This will be all the more important for developing services for younger children outside of the schooling system, as once Grade R becomes compulsory it will be subsumed in schooling stakeholder structures.

Private/public partnerships have not been a major feature of the rollout of Grade R, though the successful Takalani Sesame radio and television broadcasts with support materials initiated in 2000, has been a partnership between the DoE, the South African Broadcasting Corporation, Children's Television Workshop and funding from a large financial institution.

### ***Advocacy to support the rollout***

The DoE is working towards an advocacy strategy for Grade R. Currently, DoE representatives make presentations at many public conferences and events organised by civil society to update the sector, in addition to holding regular meetings with PEDs. The vision for the advocacy strategy is that it will be aimed at all stakeholders - officials, principals and parents. Partly this will be to

"... signal to official and principals at schools and the community sites what their responsibilities are at given times in the year - When do learners get registered? When are budgets to be submitted to the PEDs? When should schools get budget letters from PEDs? More than this it is hoped

that this will strengthen accountability, everyone will know the per learner allocation and what it should cover and what a parent can expect from Grade R in terms of what the child should be getting." (DoE informant)

## PROGRAMME ASSESSMENT

In this section, evaluations of progress towards universal Grade R provision at an acceptable level of quality are considered, as well as the probability that Grade R will be sustainable. So far, the National Pilot Project evaluation, discussed in the second section, is the only study to have looked directly at the impact of the Grade R programme on child outcomes and practitioner capacities; though this was a relatively minor part of the evaluation brief. Rather than evaluations of the model, the DoE focus has been ongoing monitoring of how targets are being met. The Education Management Information System (EMIS) has been extended to collect information from community-based ECD sites as well as from schools for 2008. In 2007 the DoE appointed a Task Team to review White Paper 5 to make recommendations to the Minister for further expansion and implementation. From August to November 2008, National Treasury conducted a research project on the state of readiness for achieving universal access to Grade R by 2010 on behalf of the DoE with a goal of identifying the best way to proceed with rollout.

In relation to outcomes, there is provision in the norms and standards for Grade R funding, for tracking learner performance as well as the input side “for instance, that Grade R classes are of an appropriate size, that ECD practitioners possess adequate skills and that learners have access to appropriate learner support materials” (Republic of South Africa, 2008b:250), indicating a move to results-based monitoring.

The second DoE systemic evaluation at the end of the Foundation Phase (Grade 3) in 2007 included some children who had participated in public Grade R in 2004 and this data set will be analysed to see if there are any emerging trends.

In this section, the different assessments are described, the findings noted and the likelihood of sustainability considered.

### Scale reached and service quality

#### *Take up of Grade R*

Table 12 indicates the extent of the rollout for Grade R up to 2007 and what still needs to be achieved if the target for the financial year 2010/11 is to be met. Some critics maintain that universal coverage by January 2011 is an unrealistic target given the average expansion rate since 2004 of about 43,000 children per year, and that the likelihood that the system’s capacity is reaching saturation point is a real threat. This has been borne out in the June 2009 announcement that there will be universal coverage by 2014.

Implementation rates across provinces suggest that some provinces will reach ‘universal access’ by the due dates but that others may find this challenging. The PEDs have, however, indicated to DoE that they are on track, and Table 12 does not account for the number of children in community-based sites. The DoE estimates, based on the 2007 Community Survey, that there are another 200,000 children<sup>28</sup> to be accounted for. Lack of accurate data is a challenge to be addressed by the capturing of all Grade R classes including those in stand-alone centres on the EMIS system.

Variation in coverage across the provinces to a great extent reflects provincial commitment to Grade R. For most services it is rural provinces which have poorest access, but the former homeland provinces of Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal have the highest percentage of rollout in the public school system. This may be attributed to limited community-based provision and/or because the PEDs favour use of the school system.

### **Quality of programming**

“We shouldn’t simply put a bad Grade R onto a primary school system, facing many challenges, because we have the money to roll it out.”

(Education Policy Specialist)

While it has been shown that a great deal of effort and planning is in place to achieve the 2010/11 access targets, far more of a concern expressed by DoE personnel is providing access to a programme of sufficient quality. While it may be difficult to monitor and enforce ratios and provide infrastructure and equipment, curriculum implementation is even more challenging. Key informants for this case study noted a lack of staffing and transport at the district office level, which makes it difficult to provide for the monitoring, capacity building and support needed to bring about quality in a rapidly expanding system.

A further difficulty for pre-primary classes in primary schools, as noted in several countries, is the strong tendency toward formality in the Grade R teaching practice (Biersteker, Ngaruiya, Sebatane, & Gudyanga, 2008). In South Africa, the Reception Year curriculum forms part of the National Curriculum Statement but is intended to be based on active learning experiences. In many primary schools, there is pressure for a formal approach, especially if Heads of Department and Principals (and in some cases District Officials) are not grounded in early childhood care and education methods. A strong focus on literacy and numeracy skills, plus teachers who themselves have not viewed play as educational and often have relatively low qualifications, has put play-based learning under enormous threat.

Two external studies of Grade R have examined inputs for Grade R in relation to what might be needed to achieve access and quality. The first, by Wildeman and Nomdo (2004) for IDASA Budget Information

Services looked at this from a budget perspective. The study examined where South Africa was in relation to universal access and also flagged the issue of whether quality of access would be adequate especially in poorer communities. This study noted PED informants’ concerns about the consequences of low levels of per capita investments in ECD including:

- Infrastructure and transport costs especially for training practitioners and site management committees
- Low remuneration levels for practitioners drawing weak practitioners
- Not enough funding to employ personnel to implement the policy, especially in regards to monitoring and quality assurance
- Concerns that allocations for ECD do not allow for planned extension of the Reception Year
- Lack of funds for learner support material.

Another study on the situation of Grade R policy and implementation in four provinces (Moll, 2007b) was contracted by a donor agency to inform possible priority interventions, and raised some key points of more general interest. Moll suggests that rollout at current rates would take another seven years (until 2014). In discussion with PED officials, the main challenges identified were:

- Difficulty in retaining suitable Grade R teachers – this relates to the broad area of salaries, qualifications and career paths (uneven set of principles according to which Grade R teachers are paid)
- Stretched funding for Grade R because the subsidy is qualified subject to the availability of funding
- Challenges in training Grade R teachers (capacity, cost and funding and concerns in some provinces about the depth)
- Limited provincial staffing capacity.

**Table 12: National enrolment in Grade R 1999-2007**

Province	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	Target	%
E. Cape	20,703	19,555	18,873	23,562	46,371	75,571	105,231	96,364	112,889	149,968	75
Free State	14,649	15,025	16,002	17,220	16,323	16,482	18,449	20,072	22,429	58,550	38
Gauteng	*	21,368	23,920	28,189	31,666	34,690	41,073	47,314	49,931	168,664	30
KZN	36,334	66,031	73,993	72,312	75,996	73,098	79,276	92,948	118,884	214,515	55
Limpopo	38,702	75,219	84,243	90,332	89,790	89,725	98,273	102,969	93,030	132,965	70
Mpumalanga	16,302	10,922	5,803	12,148	13,884	23,695	14,171	25,734	34,962	74,090	47
N. West	3,444	3,193	3,176	3,142	4,325	5,625	9,737	15,311	16,143	81,137	20
N. Cape	4,155	3,972	4,042	3,744	5,500	5,875	6,598	7,259	8,423	19,061	44
WCape	22,003	11,346	11,473	28,077	31,532	31,726	32,389	33,650	30,834	91,580	34
National	156,292	226,631	241,525	278,726	315,387	356,487	405,197	441,621	487,525**	990,530	49

\*not available

\*\* EMIS data exclude stand-alone ECD sites where the DoE estimates another 200 000 Grade R learners are enrolled.

Source: Department of Education. EMIS Education Statistics. Briefing of Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education, 3 June 2008 for 2007<sup>29</sup>

## Monitoring impact

### Systemic evaluation

The DoE Systemic Evaluation provides a national framework for evaluating the education system at key transition stages, including: Grade 3, the end of the Foundation Phase; Grade 6, for the Intermediate Phase; and Grade 9 for the Senior Phase. It enables tracking not only of learner's cognition, but also of progress towards the transformation goals of access, equity and quality.

The first Foundation Phase systemic evaluation involved a survey of a 5% random sample of Grade 3 learners (52000) in 2001. Achievement in literacy and numeracy averaged at 54% and 30% respectively.<sup>30</sup> The second cycle of systemic evaluation of 54,000 Grade 3 learners in 2,400 primary schools took place in 2007. Key findings are an overall percentage score of 36% in literacy and improved 35% in numeracy.<sup>31</sup>

Some of the learners in this 2007 Grade 3 cohort will have attended Grade R classes and the DoE has commissioned an analysis of the results in order to assess what impact preschool has had on children's performance in Grade 3. Given the early stage of the rollout of Grade R in 2004, the levels of poverty and disadvantage of many learners, and the challenges in the primary schooling system; it would be unlikely that there would be striking differences at this stage.

"I am more and more lobbying for Grades 1 - 3 to be part of what we are doing we need a good Foundation Phase system as a whole". (DoE informant)

A finding of the evaluation, which most likely holds for Grade R as well as Grade 3 classes, is that there were pockets of excellence within the system (where learners performed excellently) and they were not only found in the more affluent quintile 4 and 5 schools.

### **Monitoring Grade R outcomes**

The DoE intends, in accordance with the requirements of the Norms and Standards for Grade R funding, to introduce an assessment of Grade R outcomes, probably early in Grade 1. This needs to be carefully managed as school readiness testing was used in the past to bar children from Grade 1, which is counter to education policy.

### **Reviews to support the rollout of access to a quality Grade R service**

As a response to concerns about meeting access and quality targets for Grade R rollout, the DoE commissioned a Departmental Task Team to review White Paper 5 and the rate at which policy commitments were being met, with a view to “addressing bottlenecks and identifying items to be fast tracked to meet outcomes” (member of Task Team). Members of the team included the leaders of each of the ECD advocacy groups (NECDA and SACECD), an ECD activist with grassroots level experience and national education department staff. The Task Team got off to a slow start and stalled after several months at the stage where a draft plan had been presented and consultative groups were planned for teachers, NGOs and PED staff. Delays due to slow procurement processes in the Department and developments such as the Treasury audit are likely reasons for the disbanding of the Task Team.

A recent initiative to examine the implementation of Grade R and to guide and strengthen the rollout process comes from the National Treasury’s Technical Assistance Unit (TAU). This unit provides technical support to programmes, particularly to unblock systems. In the context where a lot of money has been pumped into ECD and special education, the Financial Planning Unit in the DoE felt it was important to as-

sess the capacity to implement and expand Grade R and pre-Grade R. While this started with a narrow look at human capacity, the DoE extended the brief to look at the synergy of plans, policy and programmes.

In July 2008 the Centre for Education Policy Development was commissioned to conduct this diagnostic study to help guide and strengthen the national, provincial and district capacity to achieve the 2010 Grade R expansion targets. The findings will inform the DoE as well as the Cabinet cluster responsible for ECD on the viability of current Grade R expansion plans and the implications for the 2009-10 and 2010-11 national and provincial targets.

The study examines the state of readiness of the DoE, PEDs, districts and schools to provide universal access to quality Grade R (Reception Year age 5-6 years) education from 2010 and will then make suggestions as to how to improve implementation and ensure readiness for 2010. In addition this study is looking at challenges at different levels of the system – national, provincial and local, and at different geographical areas as a response to the unevenness of Grade R provision. A draft report, not in the public domain, was presented towards the end of 2008. Areas were to include funding, policy and strategy, the ECD system, human resources and materials. Role players and stakeholders in all the provinces were interviewed and Grade R classes observed. For example, the author and a colleague were interviewed in their capacity as staff of a training provider for Grade R teachers. Questions focused on materials used, teacher training, readiness of departments in respect to human resources for Grade R, and challenges and risks.

Key issues to be resolved identified by members of the Review of WP5 Task Team interviewed and the TAU initial literature scan are as follows:

### ***Policy and legislative clarifications needed***

- There is ambiguity about whether Grade R is to be universally available or compulsory. This derives, in my view, from the incremental approach to rollout; so that it is likely to become compulsory once it is universally available.<sup>32</sup> The Norms and Standards for Grade R funding refer to it in this way: “(PEDs) must formulate long-range plans for increasing Grade R (funding) in public schools budgets, with a view to making Grade R universal and compulsory in the provinces by 2010 (para 203)”. It is also clear in WP1 and WP5 that Grade R is intended to meet the constitutional obligation for a preschool year of compulsory schooling. Nevertheless, in the interim period there has been confusion about this and a provincial informant explained, “Universal access doesn’t work because parents have to pay and the site can decide how many Grade Rs it will have. If it is compulsory it would have to be free”.
- A more complex issue is whether Grade R is part of the Foundation Phase or not. It is included in the national curriculum yet a separation is made in the funding formulas. Furthermore, Grade R teachers are not state employees, and even with provision in the Norms and Standards for grants to be converted to establishment posts on the request of the school, these teachers are not on the same footing as other educators. Further, there are many reports of 5-year-old children excluded from school feeding schemes, as they are not deemed officially part of the school. If Grade R teachers were an accepted part of the school establishment they would be represented on school structures; this is not the case at present.
- Teacher-child ratios need to be clarified. While a ratio of 1:30 is generally accepted to be the average size, except in areas where there are fewer children or where an assistant is used, this is not indicated in legislation. Ratios for primary schooling specified by the South African Schools Act no 84 of 1996 are 1:40.

- The Norms and Standards for the funding of Grade R allow for subsidy levels to vary during the rollout phase as can the proportion of the subsidy allocated to salaries. As a result, there is considerable provincial variation and this needs to be standardised as soon as possible.

### ***Human resource capacity***

- All informants and studies refer to the shortage of sufficient, appropriately trained provincial and district officials to implement, manage and monitor Grade R rollout. An additional difficulty is that the process for obtaining post approvals is slow and cumbersome. Key informants indicate that the greater problem is that posts are allocated but there is a lack of suitable applicants to fill them.

### ***Teacher qualifications, salary levels and employment***

- There is no national strategy for the training of Grade R teachers, and provinces are dealing with this in very different ways. Nor does policy indicate qualification requirements for Grade R teachers or the relationship between ECD qualifications and formal schooling qualifications. This is clearly as a result of the incremental introduction of the Reception Year and lack of suitably qualified teachers. Draft standards for Grade R indicate NQF Level 4 as a minimum but it is not clear if this includes pre-NQF school leaving equivalent qualifications such as the National Certificate in Educare.
- As mentioned above, variability in Grade R educator salaries across and even within provinces (where they can be topped up by wealthier governing bodies) is a concern.
- Norms and Standards for the employment of educators do not apply to Grade R educators because they are not formally part of the system, largely due to their not having the requisite qualification level.

### ***Variations in provincial budgets and per capita spending***

- There is considerable variation in provincial per capita spending on Grade R and this continues to be

allowed (if necessary) in the interests of expansion of the system. There is a strong argument if not for parity, then for consistent per capita spending (per quintile) based on actual costs.

### ***Funds transfer arrangements***

- In several provinces, schools report not receiving subsidies on time; making it very difficult to survive (especially for poorer schools).

### ***Materials, resources and physical infrastructure***

- The need for a screening process for Grade R resources was identified in both assessments. Training in the use of basic resources was necessary.
- Slow procurement processes (infrastructure, consultancy, materials etc.) were a problem and need improvement.
- A database of provincial physical infrastructure (space, classrooms, outdoor facilities, toilets) is required.
- Monitoring of the safety and appropriateness of school building use for Grade R is necessary.

This case study suggests that funding and capacity considerations were key in the selection of Grade R rather than a more integrated, multi-age model, and of the funding formula and mechanisms used. These considerations have also continued to influence certain inconsistencies or ambiguities in policy; such as the employment of educators, and considerable flexibility allowed in provincial allocations. Wildeman and Nomdo (2006:12) question the wisdom of permitting such flexibility:

“How should we view these attempts to implement the expansion of Grade R at a faster rate, and especially with reduced per learner expenditure rates? ... (T)here are potentially two views. The one takes the sympathetic view that establishing Grade R sites at a faster rate will

force provincial policy-makers to finance it in accordance with the provisions contained in the proposed norms and standards for Grade R funding. The existence of these sites and the fact that there are formal ECD policies that must be implemented strengthen the case for sustained and continued funding for the sector. Once all these sites have been established, one could then seriously examine resource provision and quality Grade R service delivery in line with the provisions of the proposed funding norms and standards. The opposing perspective takes a dimmer view of the proposed faster rate of implementation. One could argue that the supposed link between an adequacy benchmark and quality service provisioning of Grade R would be further called into question. This is so because of the Department of Education's willingness to abandon carefully developed funding norms in the interest of faster rates of establishing Grade R sites. This would heighten suspicion that the proposed funding norms and standards correspond more readily to what national policy-makers consider “reasonable” and “affordable” funding benchmarks within the context of provincial budgets”.

## **Sustainability**

Expansion of ECD in South Africa has been fortunate in that political will has continued to grow rather than decline, as increasing budgets signify. The threats to sustainability and rollout are primarily the lack of human resource capacity to implement, support and monitor a system at the degree of quality that will make a difference. While there are valid concerns about the threat to the community sector and the formalisation of Grade R through its principal placement in public primary schools, this location together with

norms and standards for funding as an amendment to the Norms and Standards for School Funding makes it less vulnerable to political change. So for example, even if there are no obvious impacts of the programme on learner attainment in the Foundation Phase, it is more likely that there will be interventions to improve it than that it would be abandoned. Current plans seek to move towards a national harmonised strategy and to provide more intense systemic support.

A key sustainability issue is to convince the education system

"...to make sure Grade R teachers are treated in same way as other teachers - it is a systemic

problem, relating to qualification levels of people. At the moment given that we are not employing teachers it has become a free for all. Employment of Grade R teachers is on the agenda and we will have to get to grips with what is needed in the way of money. We opted for a cheaper option as we were scaling up - but the matter is being reviewed". (DoE informant)

Initial training, upgrading of qualifications and ongoing professional development are significant challenges for building a Grade R that provides sustainable quality services. Employment of Grade R teachers will provide the incentive to invest in training both on the supply and demand side.

## OVERALL ASSESSMENT AND CONCLUSIONS

In this section, the critical issues and lessons learned for the mass expansion of ECD services and programmes in South Africa are considered. In addition to the way that Grade R rolled out, consideration is given to services for zero to four year olds, which are also set for mass expansion.

### Critical junctures in the scale-up of ECD services in South Africa

There is little doubt that policy and legislation has been and will be very significant in enabling the scaling-up process. Key points in the scale-up of ECD services both for five year olds and younger children have been the adoption of policy and legislation. Key challenges in the process have been in relation to the lack of a mandate to provide a particular service. In order for policy to be adopted there has had to be a great deal of political will, lobbying and championing the ECD cause. The extraordinary opportunities for public investment in new developmental policies at the time of transition to democracy provided the lever for the promotion of ECD. It is perhaps no surprise that it was education policy that drove ECD services, as education organisations had played a key role in the liberation struggle.

#### **ANC Education Policy, 1994**

ECD services had been on South Africa's agenda for a long time, peaking in the late 1980s, driven in large part by NGOs, the National Education Crisis Committee and the ANC underground. While becoming part of the NEPI research process, which informed the education agenda of the government in waiting was significant; the first critical point was acceptance of ECD in the ANC 'Yellow Book' the Policy Framework for Education and Training (ANC, 1994). This, in my

view, was partly a response to the previously identified need to improve school readiness, but also a result of lobbying by champions located at significant positions in the ANC who kept ECD on the agenda, hence creating an enabling environment.

#### **White Paper on Education and Training in 1995**

Despite the downplaying of services for younger children in the NEPI framework report and ANC Yellow Book, the 1995 White Paper on Education and Training provided the integrated definition and servicing perspective of ECD that 10 years later produced the National Integrated ECD Plan for Children 0 - 4 years. It was rooted in a broad view of the rights of the young child. The Education and Training White Paper accorded substantially with the broader recommendations of the World Bank funded South African study. Around this time, selected individuals with a very broad view of ECD advised the Department, including some who initiated the holistic Impilo Project in Gauteng Province. The 1996 Interim Policy for ECD proceeded to spell out a range of building blocks that would be needed for better provisioning, curriculum and teacher qualification system; some aspects of which were developed through the National ECD Pilot Project. At this stage, community-based provision and NGO service providers played a very central role in the initiation of the Grade R programme.

#### **White Paper 5: Early Childhood Development**

WP5 marked a turning point in ECD policy in several ways. It was the largest-ever public commitment to ECD in South Africa. Factors that pushed its success included significant support in the DoE through the energetic director of ECD and the Deputy Director General of Education who was himself an ECD ally. However there had been some hard selling to do in

relation to the affordability of introducing Grade R in a system which had many other demands and which in 2001 was a mere 0.28% of provincial education budgets (Biersteker, 2001). An incremental expansion and lower cost model was therefore introduced for the expansion of Grade R. The argument for ECD at this time took a more human capital investment line rather than a child rights rationale.

WP5 not only prioritised the introduction of Grade R over other ECD services, but also placed it mainly within the public schooling system against the expectations of NGO stakeholders in the sector, provincial departments and the recommendations of the National Pilot Project evaluation. There was also no consideration of the alternative Impilo model piloted in Gauteng which had attracted interest from UNICEF (UNICEF, 2001).

### ***Transition from the National Department-funded pilot and conditional grants to provincial budgeting responsibility***

A challenge in governance arrangements in South Africa is that provincial departments have the responsibility for budgeting and implementation of all key ECD related services – education, health and social development (welfare). A policy initiative from the national level that was not supported by a legislative mandate was therefore vulnerable to provinces prioritising other programmes. After the nationally funded NPP and the Conditional Grant period expired, there was a dip in funding (2003/4). However, ECD continued to garner political will and profile, particularly through its alignment with one of the government's leading short-term measures to address poverty, the Expanded Public Works Programme Social Sector Plan. While this model has not necessarily been well aligned with ECD sector models and needs (Biersteker, 2008b), it has provided for large budget allocations

for capacity building and short term payments with a view towards creating jobs in the sector. Despite the lack of legislative compulsion to do so, most of the provinces committed to scaling-up Grade R services. However, there were huge variations across provinces: variations in Grade R sites developed, teacher salaries and qualifications, and provision of training and equipment. Consequently, quality is quite variable and generally it is poorest in the public primary schools, many of which were unprepared to offer Grade R.

### ***Norms and standards for Grade R funding***

The finalisation of the Norms and Standards in 2008 brings Grade R within the schooling legislation and provides for significantly better financial resourcing on a targeted pro-poor basis as well as for a minimum package of inputs. An important gain has been provision for establishing posts for teachers from the subsidy allocation, if the school so requests. This does not, however, provide for Grade R teachers to be employed on the same basis as other teachers in the schooling system; therefore the dual position introduced with WP5 persists. The Norms and Standards also provide for more accountability in that inputs and outcomes will be monitored. However, the lower cost theme persists, in that in order to meet expansion targets, provinces have discretion to reduce the per learner allocation as an interim measure.

### ***Meeting the Access and Quality Targets***

At the time of writing there was considerable urgency to meet the 2010/11 target – 2011 being the beginning of the school year though still within the 2010/11 financial year. Programme budgets that meet subsidy costs for learners have been hugely increased. Both the DoE and the provinces indicated that they would reach targets, though several researchers and ECD stakeholder groups are less certain. The DoE has publicly indicated concerns with the quality of Grade R provi-

sion, the need for more and better qualified support from provincial and district education officials, and the need for proper qualifications and employment for the teachers. In view of the capacity constraints, one has to ask why there was so much emphasis on 2010/11 and why rollout targets were not revised earlier on to deal with quality concerns and human capacity constraints. Was it that the urgency to make Grade R compulsory is that it is seen as essential leverage for improving quality later on? Or, the need to deliver on the policy mandate for 10 years compulsory education?

## **Overall evaluation of the scaling-up of Grade R**

Despite some uncertainties about actual present coverage, which will be remedied by the inclusion of free standing community sites in the EMIS and their registration as independent schools, there is enormous will and resource provision towards Grade R achieving universal coverage.

The intention is that Grade R becomes universal and compulsory is accessible to all children, while the pro-poor funding formula provides for directing more resources to disadvantaged children, who (as evidence from around the world has shown) benefit most from early education interventions.

It will be no small achievement to bring nearly one million children into the system over the decade since White Paper 5. Detractors will say that many 5-year-olds were already in community-based sites prior to the policy, but the fact is that they have been drawn into the educational system in a way that provides for long-term sustainability. There has been an improvement in the resourcing formula from the low cost model that was possible at the time Grade R was

formally introduced towards 70% of the cost of Grade 1. While Grade R still holds an ambiguous position in relation to schooling, it is probable in time that this will be resolved and that it will be fully absorbed into schooling structures and legislation, including the employment of teachers. This is being championed from within the DoE itself.<sup>33</sup>

While there are many excellent Grade R classes, there are huge challenges with regard to the general quality of what is offered. There are concerns not only over the educational programme but also over the health and safety of some facilities. Overcrowding is a problem in many areas, as is distances from the school in many communities. In some rural areas, numbers of children are too small to make the program viable and transport needs to be provided. Currently this is done in the Western Cape and Gauteng. Underage enrolments continue, though on a smaller scale than in the past.

At present, there is insufficient human resource capacity for the programme; both at the practitioner level and in regards to officials in the district offices and PEDS who should be providing curriculum implementation support. There are also huge capacity requirements for School Governing Bodies to manage the financial arrangements, and for principals and Foundation Phase Department Heads to understand the less formalised pedagogical approach suitable for younger children. A national training strategy is critical to address all of these issues.

Impact has not yet been directly measured but it would be surprising if it is large at this early stage. Quite apart from the challenges in Grade R itself and the Foundation Phase which follows, the compromised nutritional status of nearly a quarter of young children and the lack of early educational opportunities of

the kind necessary for transition to schooling, indicate that Grade R alone, while an important component, will not be a sufficient platform to address compromised early childhood development (e.g. Klop, 2005).

Some of these concerns were better dealt with in the context of community-based ECD provisioning, and the weakening of this sector through drawing Grade R largely into the public schools has been unfortunate. Notwithstanding this, given the challenge of introducing systems, monitoring and evaluation, and the insufficient capacity of the community sector to absorb nearly one million 5-year-olds, it has to be concluded that despite its inadequacies, the primary schooling system is the more realistic and convenient vehicle for Grade R.

### ***Major determinants of successes and failures of scaling up Grade R***

Grade R became possible with the enshrining of children's rights in the South African Constitution, together with a strong civil society and a political lobby spearheaded by champions for ECD. Several of these role-players became staff of the DoE and PEDs and gave impetus to policy formulation and legislation. The inclusion of Grade R in a commitment to 10 years of compulsory education as early as 1995 was a major driver for scale-up. These factors were specific to the South African context of the time.

More general factors favorable to scale-up relate to the relative simplicity of the intervention. These include:

- Targeting a clearly defined age group so there is no complexity in terms of participant selection (though funding formulae positively discriminate for poor children)
- Grade R is a single service rather than a service package

- Only one department is responsible, so while there needed to be alignment across two levels of government, there was no need to draw in stakeholders with very different service mandates
- Location within the established schooling system with some available infrastructure
- An existing curriculum
- A clear policy intention that Grade R was the first year of compulsory schooling
- Public funding provision for the intervention.

Broader developments in Education and Training such as the creation of the South African Qualifications Authority, which provides for the generation, registration and quality assurance of sector-specific qualifications at different levels on a National Qualifications Framework, have created an enabling environment for nationally recognised qualifications, offered by a wide range of accredited training providers benchmarking ECD training. As discussed above, articulation between qualifications offered at NQF Levels 5 and 6 still needs to be secured.

The availability of the experience and expertise of a wide network of specialist ECD NGOs for programme and materials development and training has been another factor enabling scale-up. Many of these organisations operate in rural areas, where formal training institutions have no reach. Similarly, the widespread community-based sector offering ECD services (over 23,000 ECD facilities in 2000) has provided a springboard for Grade R as it scales-up within primary schools, with the majority of teachers drawn from it.

Finally, the passion and enthusiasm of individuals has played an enormous role. This was both within civil society and the national and provincial education departments.

The challenges listed below exist in the South African context but are likely to be relevant for other developing countries. They relate to the resources required for provisioning a quality Grade R, most particularly within the schooling sector.

- With many contesting priorities for fiscal resources, funds for expanding the ECD system were limited. This led to the adoption of the incremental, lower cost model for the introduction of Grade R, which in turn has led to the 'cinderella' status of Grade R teachers and the variable per capita expenditure. In several developing countries, however, the pre-primary year is not publically funded (e.g. Biersteker et al, 2008) and the recent setting of Norms and Standards for PED funding is a powerful driver for rollout.
- The legacy of poor quality schooling in black communities, especially with infrastructure backlogs including access to water, sanitation and electricity, has meant that infrastructure for Grade R has been limited. Similarly, in community sites buildings were not provided by the state and are of extremely variable quality.
- Distances in rural areas where eligible child numbers are low and scattered over wide geographic areas are a challenge, and school transport needs to be provided. In some rural areas, there is concern about young children having to cross rivers or roads on the way to school.
- Capacity constraints are the most serious challenge. This includes the lack of sufficient and qualified ECD teachers as well as ECD specialists to work as education officials in a monitoring and support role and in training institutions for the improvement of quality and qualifications. There is little emphasis on ECD in Higher Education Institutions (partly because ECD was not promoted by the previous government and partly because of a process of rationalisation of colleges offering ECD, during the early years of democracy). This may well be a contributory factor to poor quality servicing. A key

issue is that until ECD is clearly included in formal schooling, training at tertiary level does not carry a subsidy. As a result, Grade R is only a small part of the Foundation Phase training curriculum.

### **What lessons can we learn from Grade R rollout for the expansion of services for 0 - 4 year-olds?**

Scaling-up services for children less than 5 years is a far more complex endeavour than the Grade R process. As for Grade R, political will is extremely favorable and the programme has political oversight by Cabinet's Social Cluster. International obligations such as the Millennium Development Goals, Education for All, and Convention on the Rights of the Child contribute to keeping young children on the agenda. There have been significant increases in budgetary allocations to both DoSD and the DoE for ECD programming for this age group. However, there are significant differences in that some of the disposing factors for Grade R expansion do not exist, while there are similar challenges.

### ***Elements of the National Integrated Plan for ECD***

The vehicle for the proposed expansion is the National Integrated Plan for ECD (0 - 4 years) (Department of Education, Department of Health & Department of Social Development 2005). This involves:

- integrated and inter-sectoral service delivery
- a comprehensive package of services (including birth registration, maternal and child health services, immunisation, nutrition, referrals for social security and social services; early learning stimulation and psychosocial programmes)
- service delivery in a range of sites - to ECD centres, in communities and to homes

- a focus on vulnerable children including orphaned children, children with disabilities and chronic diseases, children affected by HIV and AIDS, children in child-headed households, children from 'dysfunctional' families and children from poor households
- multiple approaches to developing young children, including direct services to them, training caregivers and educating parents, promoting community development and building public awareness.

The NIP, with its implementation guidelines, is the first ECD plan which attempts to operationalise the integrated vision for ECD of the White Paper on Education and Training (Department of Education, 1995). It is an ambitious plan; not least because of its huge target of 2.5 to 3 million poor children, multiple delivery sites and commitment to service integration, which requires the drawing together of different departments and role players. The term "integration" is used to describe both the multi-service package and "...the relationships and links that are being developed between government departments, NGOs and communities in order to provide comprehensive ECD programmes to the children of South Africa." (Department of Education et al. 2005:16). Guidelines for the implementation of the NIP are specific about the need for structures to work together in a way "that facilitates reaching their individual as well as collective departmental mandates and goals" and that inter-sectoral collaboration is required at the for "both planning and implementation at the national, provincial and local levels" (Department of Education et al, 2007:3).

While the national departments meet and Social Development and Education have planned and budgeted together, structures are not operational in many of the provinces. Implementation of the Expanded Public Works ECD Plan has, however, provided the opportunity to draw together provincial Social Development and Education departments. At local

level there is even less integration, though there are pilot programmes developing this approach.

The NIP has a phased approach with an initial focus on increasing centre access and quality. This has started with registered centres (Phase 1) and will extend to non-registered centres in Phase 2. It is being driven through government's leading short term measures to address poverty, the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) (Department of Social Development, Department of Education & Department of Health, 2004) and includes training for practitioners working in centre based ECD facilities and increasing the numbers of subsidised centres and children.

Phase 3 will involve the establishment of the 'mother-child programme', which includes home visits to provide support for parents in vulnerable contexts; deliver early stimulation programmes (the so-called 'starter kit') and, provide a route for referral to appropriate services.

### ***Centre-based (formal) services***

This is the prevalent form of provision that the NIP anticipates will serve up to one-fifth of children. ECD centres serving children under 5-years-old are rarely provided by government and are private or community run. This has resulted in significant volatility in terms of access and quality levels. The role of government is regulation and provincial Social Development departments provide subsidies to qualifying children in non-profit centres. Centres must register with local authorities and the district DoSD office to ensure that they meet minimum standards and come into the monitoring and support system. Registration is necessary before those qualifying for subsidies can apply. Qualification levels are also specified in the registration standards, though there is a large backlog in

trained practitioners at present. Poor infrastructure, which makes it impossible for some centres to meet minimum requirements, and human resource constraints in provincial and district offices have made the registration process very challenging. The lack of reliable data on the extent of numbers of children enrolled, the state of infrastructure, and levels of staff qualification is a further problem. An audit to update the audit of 2000 is in the cards but will be a costly exercise and the Department of Social Development is seeking funding for it.

Table 13 indicates progress with registration and subsidisation since the inception of the EPWP initiative. The target for subsidised children according to APEX priority 11 is to double the number of children receiving DoSD subsidies to 600,000. Subsidy budgets in 2007/8 were approximately R422 million and have doubled to R900 million for 2008/9. At the same time, the subsidy level (which is variable across provinces) has been set at a minimum of R9 per child per day and the number of subsidy days increased. Treasury has been requested to further increase this over the MTEF. There is no doubt that subsidy funding is essential to the sustainability and quality of ECD centre programmes in poor communities, but also that subsidies do not meet the costs of services. This is particularly challenging because the need to pay fees excludes the poorest parents (Biersteker, Streak & Gwele, 2008; Carter, Biersteker & Streak, 2008; Ndingi, Biersteker & Schaffer, 2008).

Education budgets include an allocation for education responsibilities for the National Integrated Plan for ECD. These are largely for the training aspects of the EPWP programme in the provinces. Preliminary estimates for the provinces were R647,865,000. The national department also requested an additional budget allocation of R821, 651, 000 for NIP activities (Department of Education, 2008).

### ***Community and home-based ECD support services***

The NIP indicates that 80% of services for young children will be of this type. So far, however, there has been little focus on community- and home-based support and stimulation models although there are many models piloted by NGOs. Given that the most vulnerable children are unlikely to be found in centres, this is a serious challenge for the NIP. There are significant obstacles in the way of these programmes; in particular norms and standards for funding such programmes need to be established. A promising indication is that final draft regulations for the Children's Act of 2005 (as amended) refer to ECD programmes quite broadly, though there is no clear definition of what these include and regulations mostly refer to centre-based ECD. In 1997 only one province was providing significant support to ECD programmes targeting the home (Biersteker, 2007). Clearly key aspects of the NIP are ahead of the legal and funding frameworks, and the necessary provincial buy-in has not yet been achieved. The DoSD has provided training of trainers for a parent programme in all provinces, but it is not clear how programme rollout will be funded. Another concept being piloted is that of the multi-purpose centre, more specifically using ECD centres as bases for outreach for children who do not attend them and their caregivers.

### ***Scaling up services for 0 - 4 year-olds: what can we learn from the Grade R rollout?***

The brief outline of the primary components of the National Integrated Plan above indicates a progressive plan for holistic support to all vulnerable young children in South Africa, through a comprehensive service package. While research indicates that budgetary provision is insufficient for the NIP (Streak & Norushe, 2008), lack of resources presents less of a challenge than do the legislative and human resource

**Table 13: Numbers of registered, subsidised ECD sites and children supported**

	2004/5	2005/6	2006/7
Registered sites not authorised for subsidies		3,731	4,195
Registered sites with subsidies	4,382	5,054	5,531
Number of children supported	270,096	306,277	314,912
Total amount of subsidies	R271,815,562	R311,490,885	R350,189,490

*Source: Department of Social Development Data (2008)*

capacity gaps and the requirement for service integration.

In considering lessons from the scale-up of Grade R that might be applied to service expansion for younger children, key similarities and differences which make scale-up more challenging are summarised in Table 14 above and discussed below. They include:

- The Children's Act of 2005 (as amended) does not make ECD service provisioning mandatory, though it indicates that children with disabilities and those in poor circumstances should be prioritised. This makes funding vulnerable to changing priorities. The development of norms and standards for funding for Grade R was a significant juncture in the scale-up and lever for improving quality. While the Children's Act does not provide for mandatory funding of ECD, norms and standards for home and community ECD services would be an extremely helpful way of mainstreaming this type of service delivery. Coordination and integration of the services offered by several departments is extremely difficult. Leadership of the Interdepartmental Committee for ECD changed in 2007, with coordination functions moving from DoE to DoSD followed by a period in which development slowed while DoSD geared up its staffing to take on this function. Furthermore, in addition to working with several departments,

all three levels of government (national, provincial and local) are involved in service delivery for children under 5 years old. Therefore, focus on local-level service delivery is complicated by the lack of legislative clarity on the role of local authorities in regard to early childhood services; which local government treats as largely discretionary.

- Difficulties in defining the service target: All children will eventually attend Grade R but the NIP targets 2.5 to 3 million poor children. Some of the vulnerable groups are vaguely defined, and there is a lack of data disaggregated to local level to define target populations more precisely.
- The variation in both services delivered and sites of delivery make implementation very complex. Apart from the fact that it is easier to build on what exists, a reason for the focus on centres so far in the NIP rollout is that it is a relatively simple intervention. Multifaceted interventions require greater human resource capacity than provincial departments may have at present. While Grade R has a set curriculum, delivery models for early stimulation in the home and psychosocial support should vary considerably, according to need, and a service approach addressing this has not yet been determined. A cadre of workers for these programmes will have to be developed. Departmental staff and other role players do not widely understand the concept of integrated ECD, seeing it more as centre-

**Table 14: Grade R scale-up and ECD services for 0 – 4 year olds**

Factor	Grade R	0 - 4
Policy and legislation	Constitutional commitment to a year of compulsory schooling Legislated norms and standards pre-scribe public funding	Services to young children are a priority in the Children's Act but funding of ECD services and programmes not mandatory Local government constitutional responsibility unclear
Institutional arrangements	One department, two levels of government	Three main departments, all three levels of government, NGO and community stakeholders
Funding	Start-up funding from national Department of Education and subsequently through provincial education departments. Funding standards specified by legislation to be implemented from 2009.	Provincial social development, health and education departments fund aspects of the NIP package. At this stage Social Development funds centre subsidies, Education funds training. This is currently receiving a boost through the EPWP and APEX Priority programme, but is vulnerable as it is not legislated.
Target	All 5 year olds (About 1 million)	0 – 4 year olds especially poor and vulnerable (about 2.5 – 3 million).
Type of service	One service, directed at children, established curriculum, to be delivered in public or independent schools	Service package with different elements for different needs – multiple delivery sites, child and caregiver beneficiaries. Delivery strategies for some services yet to be determined.
Infrastructure	Location within schooling system with some available infrastructure	Formal primary health care infrastructure for some services, community ECD sites
Human resources	Insufficient trained staff both to offer the service and to provide departmental support and monitoring	Insufficient trained staff both to offer the service and to provide departmental support and monitoring. New types of ECD worker required for outreach services
Data systems for Monitoring & Evaluation	EMIS data system does not yet include information on community Grade R classes Quality information needed	District health information systems, for ECD sites and other programmes some information but full audit needed including quality
Training	Accredited qualifications available, EPWP funding for training. Accredited public and private training providers	Accredited qualifications available, EPWP funding for training for centre staff. Needs extension for other ECD job categories such as parent educators Accredited public and private training providers

based ECD services. Grade R as an additional year of schooling is a much simpler concept. Advocacy could play a critical role here.

- Grade R scale-up indicated the value of 'building on what you have' including the community-based sector, school infrastructure, governance and the training sector. Health services aside, existing ECD services for children 0 - 4 are provided privately, or by NGOs or CBOs, and are of variable quality in addition to not being part of an existing government system of provision - though DoSD is responsible for regulation and provides some funding. So in addition to state capacity constraints in relation to budgeting, procurement and monitoring and evaluation; delivery agents tend to be fragmented and small-scale. These elements constrain the expansion of services aimed at improving human development indicators amongst children aged 0-4 years.
- Scale-up for 0 - 4 year-olds is considering the use of ECD sites as supports, but should also investigate building upon the existing clinic infrastructure, especially for children under 3 years, the vast majority of whom come into contact with the primary health care system in their early years. Building psychosocial support and stimulation programmes onto this system may be valuable.
- Issues around the need for capacitating management and provision of ongoing departmental monitoring and support for Grade R apply equally for 0 - 4 services although DoSD is the primary department involved.

- The need for better administrative data systems and availability of comprehensive service data at local level applies for both Grade R and 0 - 4 servicing.

- Advocacy has been identified as a need for Grade R and would be extremely helpful in securing community and wider stakeholder participation in 0 - 4 servicing. Guidelines for Implementing the National Integrated Plan (Department of Education et al, 2007) include provision for an advocacy strategy.

Some of the factors and partnerships that facilitated or challenged the development of Grade R also apply to 0 - 4 service expansion. For example:

- There are many innovations and services developed by NGOs and CBOs that could be drawn upon in model development, which would mirror the beginnings of Grade R in the community-based sector. There is also a body of accredited training providers with ECD expertise to draw on for capacitating the sector.
- The work done on ECD qualifications is of enormous value for upgrading the qualifications of practitioners working with children birth to four years in centres. This is also linked to the EPWP for the benefit of the sector. There is a need to expand funding to include training of community and home-based ECD workers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

**T**his final section contains recommendations for the next steps in the scale-up of Grade R and some preliminary recommendations for the scaling of services for children zero to four years.

### Completing and sustaining scale-up of Grade R

Grade R scale-up will be completed when it is universal and compulsory for children in the year before they go to school and the programme and facilities meet standards defined by the DoE. The target date for the former was January 2011 but in President Zuma's State of the Nation Address, June 3, 2009, the date for universal access has been reset to 2014. Access to quality programmes is likely to be a work in progress given the number of constraints for the schooling system in general and Grade R as a new-comer to it in particular. Obstacles to be addressed have been presented in the sections on "Knowledge Transfer, Capacity Building and Implementation" and "Programme Assessment" together with departmental plans for provisioning and harmonising inputs and strengthening systems using the legislated norms and standards as leverage for this.

Key issues which are accounted for in departmental plans include:

- Guidelines for costing a basic minimum package of Grade R inputs
- Planning for upgrading and new infrastructure
- An advocacy/communication package and strategy
- Development of draft standards for quality Grade R programmes

- A strategy to improve data availability to inform planning
- A plan for 0 - 4 year-olds to strengthen the platform for schooling.

Key issues, still to be resolved are:

- a staffing plan for all provinces that includes numbers of teachers required, qualification levels and provision for attrition (through illness, retirement and leaving the profession)
- a comprehensive training strategy and implementation plan for Grade R educators with short, medium and longer-term targets
- resolution of the employment status of Grade R teachers linked to qualification levels and salaries, which will require the inclusion of Grade R teachers in the Norms and Standards for Educators
- promotion of a more integrated approach to vulnerable children in Grade R linking them to health, nutrition, social services and social grants.
- a system for monitoring and evaluation of the quality of inputs
- a system for ensuring that PEDs have sufficient, suitably qualified officials at provincial and district level to provide support to the Grade R curriculum, that address issues of inclusion and multilingualism, and to help draw in parents.
- A process for the integration of Grade R into the formal schooling system.

Grade R is on its way to becoming part of the formal schooling system, and while there are issues to be resolved in fully integrating it into general education and training, as well as great challenges in regard to the quality of education in general, inclusion in schooling means that government will have to continue to make efforts to improve its quality.

## **Expanding services for children 0 - 4 years**

Scale-up for children under 5 years is in the early stages and a number of recommendations can be made in support of the expansion process, drawing on a series of studies undertaken by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2007 and 2008 (HSRC, 2008).

Development of an integrated delivery system for a comprehensive service package for young children will require the following, certain elements of which have already been identified in government's *Guidelines for Implementation of the NIP* (Department of Education et al, 2007):

### ***Institutional arrangements***

- Greater clarification of roles, leadership and coordination, and funding responsibilities of different departments and levels of government, in particular local government.
- Budgetary commitment from each department to support the joint inter-sectoral planning and monitoring process.
- Inter-sectoral collaborative planning and service delivery for ECD. Joint programmes will provide a platform and culture of integrated service delivery.
- Management systems and processes across government and NGO structures to ensure effective and efficient provisioning.

### ***Policy elaboration and development***

- More precise targeting of the different elements of the ECD service package depending on levels of child and caregiver vulnerability.
- Amendment of DoSD funding norms based on a costing of different services.
- Elaboration of norms and standards for home and community-based ECD programmes and their inclusion in the monitoring and evaluation system.

### ***Programme funding***

- Increased departmental budget allocations, primarily within DoSD as the main service provider, but also DoE for capacity building and curriculum and for local authority budgets. Current allocations are inadequate for scaling-up ECD access and quality relative to the target population. There is currently a programme and funding focus on improving access to better quality subsidised ECD centres. Funding for new programme models targeting primary caregivers at a community and household level is also needed. There is also a need to understand more about costing in relation to the quality of services. Given limits on state budgets and relative to access and quality needs, ways of securing private sector inputs for ECD services without eroding state responsibility for provision should be explored.

### ***Human resources***

- An increase in numbers of provincial and district level officials for all departments involved in delivery of services for 0 - 4 year olds.
- A strategy to improve staff qualifications and retention and for development of new types of ECD extension workers and career pathing for all ECD sector workers.
- Capacity development at leadership and management level for ECD service delivery, government officials and training institutions.

### ***Monitoring and evaluation***

- While District Health Information Systems are effective, DoSD as the lead department requires strengthened administrative data systems in relation to ECD programmes and services.
- Integrated and adequately staffed ECD M&E unit to monitor the impact of holistic ECD programmes.
- Regular departmental quality assurance and support.
- A monitoring system is needed to track the inter-sectoral comprehensive programme for children from zero to four, in particular the integration aspects and development of this is being planned.

## **Infrastructure**

- DoSD does not have the same service point coverage as DoH has through clinics and DoE through schools. Piloting use of ECD centres as service convergence points should continue but use of primary health services as a node for expanded holistic ECD services, especially for birth to 3 years, should also be explored.

## **Advocacy and communication strategy**

- Advocacy and communication is essential at a variety of levels aimed at informing parents, provincial and local government officials and others of the importance of ECD and to keep ECD as a cabinet priority. An important aspect of this will be to inculcate a broader understanding of what early childhood development entails as the term ECD tends to be interpreted by many officials, businesses and the general public as services in ECD centres or preschools.

## **ECD programmes**

- Model development should draw on international evidence and local NGO interventions to inform proposed new psychosocial support and early stimulation programmes. It would also be useful to reintroduce tried and tested supports to caregivers, such as the district health visits to new mothers.
- Simple interventions are more likely to be scalable and while 'one size does not fit all' it would make sense to progressively introduce a few initiatives, perhaps in the form of pilots (just as the Reception Year was piloted) and to evaluate their outcomes.

## **Project planning for an incremental approach**

- Given the complexity of the service package for 0 - 4 year olds, the multiple stakeholders involved, and stretched human resource capacity and budget constraints, a great emphasis should be placed on comprehensive project planning especially at provincial, district and local level. There needs to be careful selection of the project elements for scale-

up at any particular time, based on tight targeting of services to particular needs of vulnerable young children and their caregivers. Each element of scale-up - capacity building needs, staffing, infrastructure and monitoring systems - should be realistically assessed and built into the plan.

Resolving these issues will require dedicated championing within government and civil society structures. Fortunately primary health care is mandatory, but unlike Grade R, the service mandate for younger children (in regard to education and social services in particular) is less well-defined and funding is not mandatory. Whilst increasing access remains a great challenge, the greater task is improving and sustaining quality. The current decline of representative civil society structures is therefore a serious concern for the ECD sector that needs to be addressed to ensure that ECD stays on the political agenda in the face of many competing priorities.

In conclusion, while many challenges remain and there is much work to be done, South Africa has in its fifteen years of democracy achieved remarkable progress in scaling up services for its youngest children, notably in the areas of health services, social security and Grade R. Along with a minority of developing countries, it has embarked on a plan for the very youngest children (0 - 4), which encompasses a broad view of what is needed for the fulfilment of their rights and needs. This development has taken place against a backdrop of inherited inequities and poverty, and in a time when HIV and AIDS are placing a severe strain on communities and services. It has moved forward fuelled by a strong rights-based culture, an NGO and CBO community that government could draw on, and support by champions in the political, government and civil society spheres.

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## ENDNOTES

1. Under the apartheid government, ten areas were demarcated as 'homelands' for Africans on the basis of ethnicity. It was in these 'self-governing' areas that Africans were to exercise their political rights. Four of these were declared independent states between 1976 and 1981 (although they were not economically self-sufficient). Census data was not collected for these four areas and is based on projections. Homelands were the most impoverished areas of the country and were reincorporated into South Africa post-democracy. However the legacy is seen in development disparities between provinces up to the present time.
2. There are no reliable population statistics for this time period (for reasons explained in the text), so conversions to percentage statistics are not possible.
3. 'Poor' is defined as the poorest 40% of households (May 1998).
4. Research based on the Income and Expenditure Survey 2005/06, estimates that 65.5% of South Africa's children are poor. Moreover, the poverty headcount is slightly higher amongst children under five (66.1%) (Streak, 2007; Streak, Yu, & Van der Berg, 2008).
5. Mortality data varies according to source with Medical Research Council calculations suggesting that it is much higher at IMR 59 and CMR 106 in 2004(RSA, 2008a).
6. There were no estimates of eligible children in this time period, though the target was 3 million children under the age of 7.
7. The 2009 budget includes provision to extend screening of pregnant mothers coming into the public health system and to phase in an improved drug regimen to prevent mother-to-child HIV transmission. (Budget Speech 2009 by the Minister of Finance, Trevor A Manuel, accessible at <http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2009/0902114561001.htm>).
8. This is a cash grant of R240 monthly in 2009 (reviewed annually) for children under 16 years-old whose primary caregivers qualify on the basis of income. The age of eligibility has been progressively extended but young children up to 6 years were the first beneficiaries. See Biersteker and Streak, 2008 for calculation of eligibility and (Proudlock et al. 2008) for more information on the grant.
9. Children must attend school by the year they turn 7 but may attend in the year they turn 6.
10. Under the apartheid state, the South African population was classified according to race - White, Coloured (persons of mixed origin), Indian or African (which was further categorised by ethnicity). These politically imposed terms were used to mark people socially for a variety of purposes. The term 'black' is used to refer collectively to all population groups other than white.
11. Home-based centres in South Africa are services for more than 6 children, often 50 or more, run on private property because of the lack of free standing facilities. Some of these were developed on an entrepreneurial basis but many are not-for-profit.
12. Regulations governing school admission were amended by the Educational Laws Amendment Act 50 of 2002. In 2000/1 children were only permitted to attend formal schooling in the year they turned 7. This was amended in 2002 to the year they turn six enabling children to access Grade 1 if they turn 6 before 30 June of that year. This in turn permits the admission of children to Grade R if they turn 5 before the end of June. Grade 1 onwards is compulsory.
13. If expenditure on learners in the middle quintile ('quintile 3') is indexed to 100, then learners in the poorest quintile: ('quintile 1') should be funded at a level of 120, learners in 'quintile 2' should be funded at a level of 110, and learners in the least poor quintiles: ('quintile 4") should be funded at a level of 80, while those in 'quintile 5' should be funded at a level of 20. Funding over and above a

basic level, which would be available for schools in the two poorest quintiles, is intended for the purchase of inputs that at least partly compensate learners for their relative disadvantage resulting from the poverty of the community. This means that the additional funding should be used above all for inputs such as media collections and more individualized attention through a reduction of the Learner: Educator ratio (Republic of South Africa, 2008b Para 213).

14. Children at targeted public schools benefit from the School Nutrition Programme but this is not a health intervention – it is a snack aimed at alleviating the effects of hunger on capacity to learn.
15. DET was the education department serving African children within South Africa (not the ‘home-lands’). At this time there were several education departments serving different ‘race’ and ethnic groups.
16. A serious problem prior to the introduction of Grade R – underage enrolments were encouraged by  
Principals of bigger schools getting a higher salary, allowable staff complement and other resources  
Lower cost to parents in fees and access to food at primary schools compared with community ECD sites (Department of Education 2001c).
17. May 1992.
18. While the contribution of advocacy and political clout seems to have been an important factor in the inclusion of an ECD commission, specialist education informants interviewed indicated that the fact that NEPI was a comprehensive study of an education system including basic, tertiary, adult education, teacher education, and that many developed countries had preschool systems, was reason enough for its inclusion.
19. In accordance with the National Education Policy Act, in developing policy the DoE must engage with Teacher Unions. In the case of ECD, govern-  
ment could not only engage with Teacher Unions which was why the CCECD drew in wider stakeholders. Its terms of reference were primarily policy development.
20. South Africa’s governance and budget system is such that once the total revenue has been shared across the three spheres (national, provincial and local) each has discretion over how to divide its slice across the different programmes and services for which it has responsibility. The only exception is when a decision has been taken to use the conditional grant mechanism to fund a programme, service or infrastructure. Then money sourced from the National Revenue Fund is ‘ring-fenced’ for provincial departments to spend on a particular purpose. Treasury does not favour the conditional grant mechanism because experience has shown that it runs the risk of provinces under-spending due to limited implementation capacity. (Streak & Norushe, 2008).
21. Education budgets allocated under Programme 7, ECD, are to provide funding as articulated in norms and standards for funding grade R (i.e. site level). Funding for additional district, provincial and national level staff would fall under the administrative budget and would not be disaggregated to ECD.
22. Address introducing education budget vote to the National Council of Provinces, May 2008.
23. The ECD and Teacher Education Directorates in the national department of education have been in discussion about streamlining and incorporating Grade R into the formal teaching system (SAIDE Grade R Research Terms of Reference document, 2009).
24. A recent School Sanitation Audit of primary schools in Metropolitan Cape Town found about 25% of schools had learner to toilet ratios greater than 40:1. The researchers expressed concern that Grade R learners were being phased-in to schools without addressing these sanitation issues. Minimum standards for ECD centres (Department of

Social Development 2006) stipulate a ratio of 20 children per toilet and there is no reason why this should not be a benchmark for schools. Personal Communication, L. Lake, October 2008.

25. Learnerships are registered with the Department of Labour and are primarily workplace learning programmes, supported by structured institutional learning, which result in a registered qualification. Between 30% and 70% of the required credits are achieved through successful workplace performance. For unemployed or underemployed workers, a monthly stipend is payable for the duration of the learnership.
26. Based on the maximum ratio of 30:1 for Grade R classes some 14 600 teachers, of the 48561 identified in the national audit, would have needed upgrading for Grade R (assuming that the 12% qualified were likely to be Grade R teachers). 18,500 additional teachers would be required for additional classes at public primary schools as provision increases to the 2010 target and an allowance would need to be made for replacing those leaving the sector.
27. In KwaZulu Natal, the eligibility clause relating to School-based level 1 Educator vacancy list for Grade R (Point 5 in HRM Circular No 77), regarding eligibility requirements, reads M+3 / REQV 13, which means that this is the minimum qualification. This indicates that a three year Level 5 diploma is considered to be the minimum and that Level 4 is not recognised. This is even though the DoE national has indicated it is the minimum with a view to upgrading over time. Memorandum on the HRM Circular No 77 of 2008 of the KZN Department of Education submitted to the Minister by New Beginnings Training and Development Organisation in February 2009.
28. According to Naidoo (2007) analysis of the 2007 Community Survey, there were 569970 children aged 5 attending educational institutions in 2007, which gives an additional 82445 children in some form of community-based ECD provision, but not necessarily a registered Grade R class. Some children aged 4 and some aged 6 are also eligible for Grade R, which would increase numbers. In the Western Cape alone there are 20 000 children in this age group in community-based sites registered by DSD.
29. EMIS accessible at <http://www.education.gov.za/emis/emisweb/statistics.htm> ("Statistics at a Glance" Reports, 1999-2006). Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Education, 3 June 2008 at <http://www.pmg.org.za/report/20080603-early-childhood-development-briefing-department-education>.
30. Speech by the Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal, at the Colloquium marking the launch of the Foundation Phase Systemic Evaluation, June 2003 accessible at [www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/](http://www.info.gov.za/speeches/2003/).
31. Address by the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, at the Foundation Phase Conference 30 September 2008.
32. The South African Schools Act would have to be amended to make it compulsory.
33. Currently research is being undertaken to explore the existing Norms and Standards for Educators could be refined to cover Grade R teachers which would facilitate their incorporation into the formal schooling system - personal communication Sheila Drew, South African Institute for Distance Education, February 2009.





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