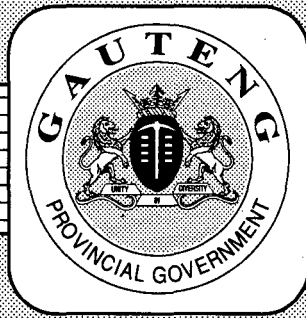


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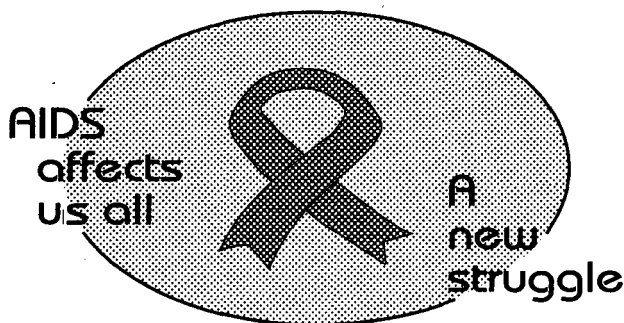
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PRETORIA, 28 SEPTEMBER 2001

No. 187

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GENERAL NOTICE

NOTICE 5807 OF 2001

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

TRANSFORMING ECD IN GAUTENG:

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2001

I, Ignatius Patrick Jacobs hereby enter the policy document Transforming ECD in Gauteng: Early Childhood Development Policy into the Policy Register as authorised in terms of section 3 (2) of the Education Policy Act, Act 12 of 1998 (Notice 1122 of 22 February 1999).

IGNATIUS PATRIC JACOBS

MEC for Education: Gauteng Province

Signed at: Johannesburg.

Date: 18/08/01.

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I, Ignatius Patrick Jacobs, Member of the Executive Council (MEC) for Education in the Gauteng Province, have made policy in respect of Early Childhood Development (ECD) as contemplated in the Education Policy Act and this document sets out the intended policy framework.

SECTION 1

INTENTION OF THE POLICY

In acknowledging the importance of Investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD), the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) has developed policy priorities to serve the interests of those children under compulsory school going age, in two categories;

- the implementation of a Reception Year (Grade R) for those children aged 5 turning 6, thereby realising the educational obligation of providing 10 years of compulsory education and
- the establishment of an ECD Institute to meet the needs of families of children younger than 6 years.

SECTION 2**PURPOSE OF THE POLICY**

The purpose of this policy is to address the policy gap that exists at provincial level, in an attempt to deal with the inequalities that exist in the ECD sector as a result of this policy gap.

SECTION 3**INTRODUCTION**

A very central issue in the task of Government is the formation of a united, democratic South Africa. This implies the unification of all previously separate institutions of Government to serve, on an equitable basis, the whole South African population.

The ECD obligations of all government departments arise from the Rights of Children set out in the Constitution and other International Conventions signed by South Africa.

In terms of Section 29 of the Constitution¹, everyone has the right to basic education. Chapter 2 of the Constitution, the Bill of Rights, states the rights of children to education, language and culture. The rights of children, stated in Section 28, are specifically non-derogable rights. The principles that guide ECD intervention are given on the basis of the Constitution. The importance of education in South Africa's political, social and economic development is therefore one of the most important indicators by which the effectiveness of delivery by the Government is measured.

¹ Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, 1996.

The provision, growth and management of ECD in South Africa face immense challenges. The incomplete legislative framework, the fragmentation and the iniquitous provisioning of the past have posed huge challenges, which require new strategies for provisioning in the sector. At present there is no hegemony in ECD. Several provincial departments and local government are supporting ECD in an uncoordinated way, which has resulted in gaps and an overlapping of functions particularly in the areas of funding and resourcing. All have an important role to play in developing efficient support systems and delivering cost-effective ways of working together in order to achieve the greatest output with extremely limited resources.

SECTION 4**HISTORY AND CURRENT STATUS OF ECD PROVISION**

The New National Department of Education has chosen a broad definition of ECD to reach beyond the previously narrow concepts of pre-primary schools, educare centres and crèches. The Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (1996) defines ECD as "An umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least 9 years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally spiritually, morally and socially"². ECD programmes are directed at this age group and do not necessarily take place in a school, but also in community based-centres and homes (private ECD services).

The inclusion of the phrase "at least nine years" includes learners who may be older but who still find themselves within this development phase.

The ECD sector is faced with a legacy of the majority of Black children not having access to any form of education before formal schooling. The past imbalances in the provisioning of ECD were designed to advantage mostly the White learners as they entered pre-school education at the age of three. The odds were therefore stacked against Black learners from an early age because of the ECD provisioning norms. This is evident at the point of entry into formal education, where the competency levels of learners differ across races. It is for these reasons that there is a high drop out rate and low pass rate in many of the historically disadvantaged schools.

² Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development, Glossary, p1.

Before 1994, only about 10% of the children in South Africa from birth to six years had access to public or private ECD facilities. The major contributors to ECD for many years have been the non-governmental agencies, religious communities and other civil bodies who together with unemployed women in the townships, started quite a number of innovative community based ECD programmes.

For this reason The White Paper on Education and Training (1995) recognised the need for increased intervention in programmes to meet the needs of families and communities that cater for this age group.

The major issues are:

- The type of provisioning models we should use, given the need to expand and cater for all children
- The location of management, co-ordination, implementation and quality monitoring structures, given the need to empower communities and families in this work
- The type of a structure that would facilitate delivery, cutting out, long management channels of Government, and involving the non-governmental sector.

SECTION 5**BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE**

It is universally accepted that children who receive good quality care tend to thrive, whereas children who are given poor quality care may be placed at risk. Quality in the past has been defined and measured in terms of standards set by wealthy industrialised nations.

There is now a growing recognition of the need for comprehensive family policies. Societies need to provide an array of options that allow parents to choose childcare arrangements that are most appropriate given their children's ages, individuals styles, their own economic and social circumstances, and the values and attitudes they hold.

New policy must focus on the nature of care, the quality of care, and the way these two factors together affect children with different characteristics, from different family and cultural backgrounds and with different educational and individual needs. Recently, more attention is being given to the need for a wide variety of strategies that can support families as the primary caregivers of young children rather than resorting in all cases to poor quality "non-parental" care.

The vision for ECD in Gauteng is based on Article 5 of the 1990 Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All, "Learning Begins at Birth". The following extract encapsulates this vision:

"Early childhood Care and education is an integral part of basic education and represents the first essential step in achieving the goals of Education-for-All. Recent world conferences testify to the growing appreciation of the crucial importance of the child's earliest years, and of the need to support families and communities in their role as the child's most influential educator. The learning capacity and value orientations of children are largely determined by the time the child reaches the age of primary schooling. For this reason, any sustained effort in Education for All must set targets and programmes for early childhood and attempt to raise the life skills of families.

Improving children's health and nutrition is necessary, but increasingly, in a situation where fourteen out of fifteen of the world's children survive until the age of one, governments and civil society are turning their attention to the psychosocial and cognitive development of children. Well conceived quality early childhood programmes help meet the diverse needs of young children during the crucial early years of life, enhance their readiness for schooling, have a positive and permanent influence on later schooling achievement. In addition, countries that succeed in mobilising local government, municipalities, communities and voluntary organisations in the care and education of young children have been able to decentralise and innovate in their educational systems, and at the same time, make an important contribution towards population information and family education."

Hence ECD as an area of policy and programmes, involves promoting optimal development

- on an inclusive basis to support the whole development of all children
- by means of a variety of cross-sectoral programmes, interventions and experience (promotive, preventive, curative, rehabilitative)
- directed at the child, the family and other caregivers, as well as the community.

This definition recognises the need for a new, comprehensive policy for young children. There is a need for partnership—

- among all three spheres of government (national, provincial and local government)
- among the different provincial departments
- between government and non-government role players.

The current system of provision is fragmented and inequitable. We need a variety of strategies to assist families to meet basic needs of young children. The popular centre-based model is too expensive to ensure access for all children and does not necessarily match the needs and circumstances of children in Gauteng.

SECTION 6

TRANSFORMATION OF THE OLD

6.1 ECD Legacy

Table outlining present (public pre-primary schools) and previous (Impilo and private ECD services) GDE funding to the ECD sector.

Programme	No. of Learners	Staff	Accommodation	Costs
Public Pre-primary Schools 95 public pre-primary schools accommodating children aged 3 to 6	+ 12 000 per annum	Provided on a 1:25 educator: Learner ratio. All highly qualified C/S educators paid by the State. Some support staff also paid by the State	Well resourced sites the majority of which were built by the State	1996/7 R45 576 000 1997/8 R48 801 000 R1999/2000 R41 238 000
Impilo Pilot project (which included 2 smaller pilot projects, namely The Joubert Park Inner City Project and The Kathorus Project) Private or community services accommodating children aged 3 to 6	+ 40 000 per annum	+ 1 000 unqualified or NGO-trained ECD practitioners. Training offered through the Impilo project	Poorly resourced services in informal settlement structures, backyard rooms and garages in townships	Seed funding of R2 mill from NoE, with matched financing from the GDE for the first year, supplemented by R7 mill from the GDE over the following two years (1998-2000)
Private ECD services subsidised by the GDE: 181 ECD services accommodating children aged 3 to 6	+ 17 000 per annum	A combination of highly trained C/S educators and educare practitioners- no salaries paid by the State	Well resourced, well developed ECD centres	These ECD services received per capita subsidies totaling just over R1 mill per annum from the GDE up until the end of 1997. When these subsidies were suspended, the money was budgeted for in ECD as a top-up for the National pilot project in Gauteng, namely Impilo.

There are at present a variety of ECD programmes and methodologies in Gauteng and in other Provinces, most of which are based on American and European models. Every programme has its inherent strengths and weaknesses but many are not necessarily suitable for every community or area. There has therefore been an urgent need to investigate appropriate models and to make these indigenous for the South African scene.

The advocacy around the South African constitution, the rights of children and human rights has also increased awareness and motivated communities to ensure that their rights are not violated. Hence there is a growing need to care for and educate children.

The GDE inherited from the ex-Transvaal Education Department (TED) a pre-primary sector comprising of 95 public pre-primary schools, with educators and support staff paid by the GDE. From 1997, about R47 million per annum has been spent by the GDE on these public pre-primary schools, which only accommodate about 12 000 of the just under 1 million children under the age of 7 in Gauteng. These schools are further concentrated in the most advantaged geographical areas of the province and hence are inaccessible to the majority of pre-school learners.

Not all of these schools operate in buildings that belong to the GDE. Ten are Hospital Schools belonging to the Department of Health while others operate from premises belonging to the Department of Prisons, Department of Finances, the Department of Welfare, the previous Transvaal Provincial Administration and from privately owned buildings.

The public pre-primary school model is an extremely expensive model and cannot be made accessible to all children in the province. For this reason, the GDE is presently of the view that funding of this model should be reviewed in favour of a model that is more cost-effective, has an intersectoral approach to ECD and will initially target state funding to children in greatest need e.g. poor children in areas identified for rural and urban upliftment, HIV/AIDS infected and affected and children with special learning needs.

A few of the well established private ECD services also previously received a *per capita* subsidy from the GDE however, as part of the transformation of this sector, these subsidies were suspended at the end of 1997. The vast majority of community and informal ECD services situated in the disadvantaged communities have however, never received any financial support at all.

In this regard, certain options are available.

6.2 OPTIONS FOR EXISTING PUBLIC PRE-PRIMARY SCHOOLS

The approach as espoused here implies the elimination of the expensive public pre-primary sector as a prerequisite for the success of the transformation of the entire sector. This Transformation of ECD entails the closure of Public Pre-primary schools. A huge amount of money will obviously be freed to serve a greater community of needy learners at present outside the circle of ECD provision. This does not necessarily imply the loss to ECD of all of these schools involved. The sector will need to be reconstructed.

The GDE will engage with all affected stakeholders regarding the conversion of public pre-primary schools.

Once closure has been effected, the following reconstruction options for the Public Pre-Primary schools are proposed:

6.2.1 Establishment as a public primary school

The District Manager should determine whether there is a need for the building and facilities to be utilised for the purposes of compulsory education. If so, provisioning as a public primary school will be effected.

6.2.2 The transfer to an existing public primary school

The building and facilities could be transferred to an existing public primary school. This could be for the purpose of mainstream compulsory public education or for the fast tracking of out-of-age and out-of-phase learners before they are directed into the mainstream.

6.2.3 Privatisation

If there is no immediate need for a particular building, the District Manager may declare the building temporarily redundant for the District's use, for maximum of 5 years. This will provide an opportunity for reviewing the situation once new policy is in place. If the School Governing Body of the former public pre-primary school wishes to continue using the building for private ECD service, they will be given first option to rent, in order to minimise the disruption created by this transformation process. All rentals will be determined by independent evaluators at market-related prices.

6.2.4 Closure

Should the School Governing Body so request, the public pre-primary school will be closed without activating any of the above options. The facility will then be offered to the District Manager for any other educational use required by the District.

6.3 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

In order to release funds to cater for the pre-school sector of ECD i.e. those children from birth to age 5 in the Province, it is proposed that the GDE rationalise the Public Pre-primary sector. Educators in this sector will be encouraged to seek redeployment into primary schools (or other posts for which they qualify) in order to secure their current ranks and benefits in the Gauteng Department of Education.

SECTION 7

ACCESS AND EXPANSION OF THE ECD SECTOR

According to the National ECD audit of 2000, there are approximately 4000 ECD services in Gauteng, including the public pre-primary schools, and this number is growing annually. Out of the 4000 services, the National Pilot Project (Impilo in Gauteng) reached approximately 1000 sites and as such, 40 000 pre-school children in Gauteng. The budget for this project was only R7,5 million and the amount of support was therefore very limited.

A new model for provisioning should target ALL children in Gauteng with emphasis on the Reception Year (Grade R) learners. The savings from the restructuring of the Pre-primary Schools will obviously go a long way in assisting the Government to deliver on a transformed ECD model.

The GDE will initially target ECD funding and programmes at the Reception or Grade R year and then, in the medium-term, align with the development and implementation of pre-reception year programmes for 4 year olds from poor rural areas, from HIV/AIDS infected and affected families and for children with special learning needs, in line with the Education White Paper 5: Early Childhood Development (2001).

Grade R should be phased in over a period so that by the year 2010, all learners that enter Grade 1 in Gauteng, must have participated in an accredited Reception Year programme.

There are just under 1 million children under the age of seven in Gauteng. Education Management Information Systems records show that in 1999 there were approximately 150 000 Grade 1 pupils accommodated in Public and Independent schools in Gauteng. Using this figure and allowing for an additional number of children who may have fallen out of the loop of educational provision, a generous estimate of the number of Grade R's that would need to be provisioned for in Gauteng is 155 000.

The Education White Paper 5: Early Childhood Development (2001) proposes a phased in, poverty targeted approach for the implementation of Grade R in the Provinces. Using Conditional Grant funding, the GDE will accredit and introduce 368 Grade R classes in the year 2002. The presently recommended educator pupil ratio for the Conditional Grant funding is 1:30-40 and based on this ratio the initial year of "phasing in" will accommodate between 11 000 and 14 720 children in 2002.

In line with the National Department of Education directives, the Reception Year provision in Gauteng will comprise of three types namely,

- the Grade R year in public primary schools;
- Grade R provision by Independent schools and

- Reception Year programmes in identified community based sites where the public primary school option is not available or not within a reasonable distance for the learner.

The following issues are to be considered in the implementation of Grade R in Gauteng:

- The General Education Level within the school system should include a Reception Year and nine school years from Grades 1-9. The Reception Year will be phased in with priority given to under-resourced areas;
- The Reception Year is state-supported but not compulsory in the first phase;
- A variety of institutional forms of Reception Year provision will be supported; a combination of Grade R classes should be offered at Primary schools and community based sites within the system of Reception Year provision.
- No additional buildings or classrooms will initially be erected by the GDE in the implementation of Grade R, however future provisioning will be determined by the availability of funds.
- Initially all Grade R practitioners will be employed by the Governing Bodies of primary schools or the Management Teams of community based sites. A subsidy allocation per site will be provided by the Department of Education to support the most disadvantaged sites to provide a quality educational programme for children in the Reception Year.
- Admission age will be rigorously enforced. Learners will enter the Grade R class in the year that they turn six.
- Support services for the Reception Year should include:
 - a developmentally appropriate curriculum with a special emphasis on mathematical literacy, language and life skills.
 - an appropriate emphasis placed on the importance of both structured and informal curricular activities. The curriculum should guard against an over emphasis on formal education.
 - A linkage between the curriculum for Grade R and Grade one is essential.
- Appropriately trained staff with a minimum of an accredited Level 4 ECD qualification.
- Accreditation of selected community based sites that have been identified to provide a Grade R service.

International experience has shown that a number of developed countries were in the same position in the fifties and early sixties. They resolved to start with a year close to the first compulsory school year then work downwards in age and also to start with subsidies in the sector before they were in a position to take full responsibility for the funding.

SECTION 8

QUALITY AND EQUITY

The above will obviously impose new challenges for the department. The department will ensure redress and equity through initially provisioning the previously disadvantaged communities and ECD services. This implies that the response to equity issues must be dealt with simultaneously with responses to problems of quality delivery and sustainability. There will need to be ongoing monitoring and evaluation of the sites.

Equity will be addressed through redress. The services will be given a per capita subsidy, which will be aimed at improving learning activities and resource materials.

Quality and sustainability will also be addressed through staff development. The practitioners employed in these services will be accredited through SAQA. The Impilo pilot project has already trained approximately 1 000 practitioners at different levels according to NQF standards. Training and accreditation will ensure quality education in the services. The maintenance of quality in ECD will be evaluated by the GDE, together with other Gauteng Government Departments.

SECTION 9

THE ECD PROVINCIAL INSTITUTE

In 1996, the present Government adopted the National Programme of Action for Children, which focuses on the integrated delivery of services to children and families of young children. In line with this focus, the GDE acknowledges that appropriate provision for children younger than 6 years of age, requires a variety of programmes delivered intersectorally by several Government Departments together with Non Governmental Organisations, Community Based Organisations and the families themselves. The National Education White Paper (1995) and the Education White Paper 5: Early Childhood Education (2001) clarifies that ECD requires intersectoral collaboration.

It is the intention of the GDE to prepare a tender for the establishment of a Provincial Institute to operationalise integrated ECD delivery for the age groups 0 - 5 in the province.

The roles of the Provincial ECD Institute will be:

- to link implementation, research and advocacy,
- to manage the implementation of inter-departmental ECD policies,
- fund raising.
- to administer all provincial ECD activities funded by the GDE, other government departments, ECD funders and the Gauteng Programme of Action for Children (GPAC).

The institute will then report through a reference group to all the relevant government structures e.g.: the Transformation Directorate in the Premiers Office, the Gauteng Intergovernmental Forum (GIGF), Gauteng Association of Local Authorities (GALA), Gauteng Programme of Action for Children (GPAC) and all relevant provincial departments. A close relationship between the ECD Institute and each provincial department would be necessary to ensure that ECD policy is aligned with related National and Provincial policy. Once an enabling National and Provincial legal framework is in place, it would be necessary to coordinate the development or regulations for registering, monitoring and funding of ECD services.

The governance structure is a critical component of the organisational make-up of ECD services. An intersectoral committee, led by a team of officials from Government departments, in particular the Departments of Health, Welfare and Education should be established to set up the process of the ECD Institute.

The type of support and commitment that will be expected from the various Government departments are as follows:

- Department of Health - health, nutrition, immunisation programmes
- Department of Welfare - child grant support and income generation projects Local Government - registration, social services, environmental health, sewerage and infrastructure

- Department of Agriculture - food gardens, poverty alleviation for at - risk adults
- Department of Arts, Culture, Sports and Recreation - arts and culture programmes, sports and games
- Department of Labour - training in management, parent committee development, job creation activities
- Department of Education- training, accreditation, curriculum development, monitoring
- Department of Home Affairs to ensure all that learners have birth certificates

ECD should provide a range of services adapted to the needs of children in different age groups, geographical areas and socio-economic situations. The ECD services can be located in schools, community sites, homes, hospitals and many other locations.

SECTION 10

CONCLUSION

In light of the preceding discussion, Gauteng has been afforded a window of opportunity to bring about fundamental and lasting changes that will ultimately benefit all the children of the Province.

Up to now, the projects in ECD that have informed our thinking have been smallscale pilot projects and the challenge will be to take them to scale. From the savings that we will have from redirecting scarce resources enjoyed by only a privileged few, we will be able to make some inroads into the parlous situations of those children and families who live in desperate financial situations.

Change has never been easy, both from the perspective of those who have to bring it about, and from the perspective of those who experience change. However, South Africa is in the midst of such a great paradigm shift, that we can be sure that no matter how painful the change, the GDE will surely put in place something profoundly different to ensure quality opportunities for our children in Gauteng.

The challenge has gone out to all ECD role players and stakeholders in Gauteng to take up the challenge of radically rethinking ECD delivery and to engage in the consultation process to make the ultimate product deliverable and meaningful to all families, but in particular to those families and children who need assistance most.

PLEASE NOTE THAT THE POLICY WILL BE AVAILABLE IN THE ADDITIONAL LANGUAGES WITHIN TWO WEEKS FROM THE DATE OF REGISTRATION.
