

Baseline Assessment

TECHNICAL REPORT

Contents

List of Figures	2
List of Figures	3
Executive Summary.....	4
1. Introduction	6
2. Methodology.....	6
2.1. Sampling frame	6
2.2. Weighting.....	7
2.3. Data collection instruments.....	8
2.4. The final sample	8
2.5. Data challenges	9
2.5.1. Biased sample	9
2.5.2. Problematic variables.....	11
3. Findings	11
3.1. Early Learning Programme Characteristics	11
3.2. Registration Status	13
3.3. Management.....	14
3.4. Enrolment	16
3.5. Access for children with disabilities	17
3.6. Support received.....	18
3.7. Human resources	19
3.8. Education and training.....	22
3.9. Early Learning Lessons	26
3.10. Practitioner support.....	27
3.11. Funding and expenditure	29
3.12. Health and nutrition.....	31
3.13. Parental involvement.....	33
3.14. Early Learning Classrooms	35
3.15. ECD Facilities and infrastructure.....	38
4. Associations with early learning outcomes	42
5. Recommendations	50

List of Figures

Figure 1: Language of learning and teaching.....	13
Figure 2: Average number of children per ELP	16
Figure 3: Functions of all paid staff.....	20
Figure 4: Gross monthly practitioner salary	22
Figure 5: Principal's ECD-specific qualifications.....	23
Figure 6: ECD Practitioner's highest level of education	23
Figure 7: ECD practitioner's ECD-specific qualifications	24
Figure 8: Employment before working at ELP	25
Figure 9: Practitioner perspectives on support and recognition	28
Figure 10: Sources of energy.....	40
Figure 11: Association between registration status and child outcomes.....	43
Figure 12a and b: Practitioners' and principals' levels of education	44
Figure 13: Association between fees charged and child outcomes.....	45
Figure 14: Association between parent's ability to pay fees and child outcomes.....	45
Figure 15: Coefficients for the association between funding and child outcomes	45
Figure 16: Association between parents asking about their child's progress and child outcomes.....	46

List of Tables

Table 1: Sample distribution of Early Learning Programmes.....	9
Table 2: Comparing the Baseline Assessment sample with the 2021 ECD Census masterlist.....	10
Table 3: ELP characteristics.....	11
Table 4: Early Learning Programme operations.....	12
Table 5: Language of learning and teaching	13
Table 6: Registration status of the ELP	14
Table 7: Children's records kept at the ELP	15
Table 8: Safety measures in place.....	15
Table 9: Enrollment in ELPs.....	16
Table 10: Percentage of children in ELPs with possible learning barriers	17
Table 11: Disability access.....	17
Table 12: Support received from government/ non-government institutions.....	18
Table 13: Human resource arrangements	19
Table 14: Impact of COVID on human resources.....	21
Table 15: Principal's characteristics	22
Table 16: Practitioner training and experience	25
Table 17: Practitioner lesson planning.....	27
Table 18: Practitioner on-site support received	28
Table 19: Sources of funding received.....	29
Table 20: Average maximum amount per child per month, by age group.....	30
Table 21: Average maximum fees by quintile category.....	30
Table 22: Early Learning Programme expenditures.....	31
Table 23: Interaction with the local clinic	31
Table 24: Meals provided to children by the Early Learning Programme	32
Table 25: Meals provided at the Early Learning Programme - Menu compliance	33
Table 26: Meal preparation	33
Table 27: Parental involvement	34
Table 28: Parental involvement, by quintile	34
Table 29: Practitioners - class size	35
Table 30: Classroom conditions	36
Table 31: Learning and teaching support materials	36
Table 32: Accessibility of learning and teaching materials	37
Table 33: ECD Infrastructure: Water.....	38
Table 34: Infrastructure: Sanitation.....	39
Table 35: Number of toilets	39
Table 36: Type of structure.....	40
Table 37: Outdoor conditions	41
Table 38: Safety hazards in the facility of the ELP	42

Executive Summary

The Baseline Assessment was conducted along with the Thrive by Five Index to provide a better understanding of the context in which early learning happens in South Africa. The Baseline Assessment was conducted in 545 of the Early Learning Programmes (ELPs) that participated in the Thrive by Five Index and considered the contextual realities of factors such as resourcing, operations, management, financing, human resourcing and infrastructure of ELPs. The data was collected between September and November 2021. This provides policymakers and researchers with a clearer understanding of the ECD context in differently-resourced areas.

The sample was designed to be nationally representative but was drawn before the ECD Census was conducted. The sample ultimately proved to include a somewhat larger percentage of formalised ELPs than the true national percentage with 56.7% being fully registered, 61.2% receiving the Department of Social Development (DSD) subsidy and only 8.9% having fewer than 20 children. 71.3% of the ELPs in the sample were Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres which were either owned by the programme or the person in charge of the programme (about two-thirds), or by the municipality (about a third of the ELPs). The report, therefore, provides the perspectives of the more formalized side of the sector and many of the findings, regardless of how dire they may seem, do still provide the 'best-case scenario'.

Despite 56.7% of the ELPs being registered, many of the registered and unregistered ELPs do not meet all the minimum norms and standards. Some ELPs will require some financial investment to meet the standards around safe infrastructure, however, many of the minimum norms or standards can be met through strengthened management practices. For example, many ELPs still don't have an emergency contact list displayed, something that can easily be developed without much investment required. Some of the minimum standards, however, are dependent on the functionality of the local municipality, such as the Environmental Health Certificate or the correct zoning, and closer collaboration with the local municipality will be needed in resolving these matters.

The average number of children registered in ELPs was 55. However, the average number attending on the day of the visit was only 37, indicating a high rate of absenteeism. Aside from daily absenteeism, the pandemic appears to have significantly reduced the number of children attending ELPs - the average number of children reported having been attending ELPs before the pandemic was 68. Comparing the official capacity of ELPs with the number of children registered to attend the ELP, it is possible to determine that in 21% of ELPs over-crowding may be a problem.

Although only rudimentary measures of access for children with disabilities were included in the questionnaire, ELPs still have many improvements to make. Fieldworkers rated only half of the classrooms they observed as being accessible for children with disabilities or having enough light for children who may have difficulty seeing. Only 13.7% of ELPs had a wheelchair ramp, 16.7% had suitable toilets and just over a quarter (26.9%) did not have anything in place to be more accessible for children with disabilities.

Practitioners and principals were asked about their training and qualifications and it is clear that not much has changed since the 2013 Audit which first highlighted the very low levels of qualification among ECD

practitioners. 41% of ECD practitioners responded that their highest level of education is below Grade 12, and 36% have attained only Grade 12. Only 23% of all teaching staff¹, therefore, have a level of education that is above the completion of secondary school. Of all teaching staff, 27.2% had an Accredited Skills Programme qualification, 52.8% had a National Qualifications Framework (NQF) level 4 or level 5 qualification and only 6.9% had an NQF level 6 or higher qualification. This suggests that 40% of the teaching staff at ELPs do not yet meet the minimum requirement of at least an NQF level 4 qualification. The salary levels of ECD practitioners are also exceptionally low and almost 89.5% of all ECD practitioners responded that they received less than minimum wage (R3500 per month for a 40-hour work week).

In terms of the quality of early learning and teaching, about 60% of practitioners responded that they have an activity or lesson plan that provided activities daily, whereas 20% had plans that only specified the main activities for the week. 19.8% of practitioners responded that they do not make use of an activity or lesson plan at all. Practitioners were most likely to have used practitioner guides in the development of their activity plans, and documents such as the National Curriculum Framework (NCF) and the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) were used less frequently.

The main finding of the report was the dependence of ELPs on the income received from parents both for their financial viability, and the quality of the child outcomes. The amount of the fees charged was the strongest determinant for higher early learning outcomes, followed by parents' ability to pay the fees. On average, ELPs charged monthly fees of R341, and this ranges from R188 in the ELPs in poorer areas to R661 in ELPs in quintile 4 and 5 areas. Despite this heavy dependence on the income from fees, 78.8% of ELPs stated that they do allow children to attend even if parents cannot afford to pay the fees. ELPs were further asked about the costs involved in operating an ELP and on average, 27.6% of income is spent on food, 40.6% is spent on staff salaries, 8.9% is spent on materials, 9.4% is spent on maintenance and 9.1% is spent on administration. A further small percentage is spent on rent and other miscellaneous expenses.

Finally, in terms of nutrition, it is common practice for ELPs to provide meals and often both breakfast and lunch are provided by the programme. Most ELPs also seem to have a separate area where they prepare the food and cooks are also often employed for the preparation of the meals. There also seems to be some interaction between ELPs and community health workers, but strengthening this relationship could assist in providing holistic development opportunities to children.

The report concludes with five key recommendations based on the findings:

1. Provide support to ELPs to meet the minimum norms and standards;
2. Provide instructional support to ELPs to improve learning outcomes;
3. Strengthen human resource development;
4. Improve the level of funding of ELPs, as well as the efficiency of the use of this funding by ELPs; and
5. Improve the accessibility of ELPs for children with disabilities.

¹ Includes all practitioners, as well as principals or managers who may likely be fulfilling a teaching role as well.

1. Introduction

The Thrive by Five Index provides salient information on the developmental outcomes of 4-year-old children in Early Learning Programmes (ELP) in South Africa. It is recognized, however, that these developmental outcomes do not evolve on their own, but are influenced by a combination of contextual factors from both the home environment as well as the ELP. In preparing for taking the responsibility for the Early Childhood Development (ECD) function, the Department of Basic Education (DBE) deemed it necessary to collect detailed information on the conditions in ELPs to better understand the context, as well as to inform the planning and development of appropriately targeted interventions. A Baseline Assessment was therefore conducted along with the Thrive by Five Index data collection to provide additional information on the contexts in which early learning takes place in South Africa.

The Baseline Assessment was done in a sub-sample of the ELPs who were part of the Thrive by Five sample. In total, 545 ELPs from all 9 provinces participated in the Baseline Assessment. The data collected through the Baseline Assessment aims to provide deeper insight into the resourcing, operations, management, financing, human resourcing and infrastructure of ELPs. The intention is that this information will enable researchers and policymakers to better understand the contexts of ELPs nationally, and more specifically to provide insights into the differences that may exist among ELPs from differently resourced areas, or in different geographic locations.

This report provides a descriptive overview of the data collected through the Baseline Assessment. The purpose is to provide a summary of the findings that can be used to inform national planning, and the development of intervention programmes, and to enable policymakers to better understand the national ECD context. The final section also considers the associations between contextual factors and child outcomes to see whether this can inform more targeted policymaking.

2. Methodology

A detailed description of the development of a sampling frame, the sampling methodology and the data collection process for the Thrive by Five Index is available in the Thrive by Five Technical Report. Given that the Baseline Assessment was conducted as part of the Thrive by Five Index, much of the same information holds. The sections below provide a brief description of the methodology as it related to the Baseline Assessment specifically.

2.1. Sampling frame

The sampling frame and sampling methodology used to identify ELPs to participate in the Baseline Assessment is the same as for the Thrive by Five Index. In summary, a multistage cluster sampling strategy was used to identify ELPs to participate in the Thrive by Five Index and to recruit a nationally representative sample of children aged 50-59 months within these ELPs. Given the lack of a national masterlist of ELPs at the time of data collection, the approach to developing a masterlist of ELPs, as well

as the sampling strategy had to be more creative but was agreed upon upfront with all key stakeholders to ensure validity.

1. **Selection of clusters:** In the first stage of developing a sampling frame, the DBE’s masterlist data of primary schools was used to randomly select 48 public and private primary or combined² schools per province (432 schools nationally). The selection was stratified by the school’s Quintile³ Status as a proxy for income and each primary school formed the core of each cluster of ELPs.
2. **Selection of ELPs within clusters:** In stage two of developing the sampling frame, the data collection team sought to find as many ELPs as possible within a 5 km radius of each of the selected schools. This was done using the Vangasali⁴ dataset as a starting point, and then also contacting the primary schools and any known ELPs within each ward to identify additional ELPs. Three ELPs in each of the clusters were randomly selected out of the full list of ELPs identified, resulting in a target sample of roughly 144 ELPs per province, and 1250 nationwide.
3. **Selection of sites for baseline assessment:** Within each cluster, one ELP was randomly selected to participate in the Baseline Assessment. To increase the sample slightly, a second ELP was selected in some clusters so that on average, 1.25 ELPs participated in the Baseline Assessment. This resulted in a final sample of 545 ELPs who participated in the Baseline Assessment.

2.2. Weighting

Sampling weights were constructed for each ELP in the sample to ensure that the sample can provide nationally representative estimates at both a child and ELP level.

The first step in calculating the weights was to calculate the weight associated with every primary school which was selected in the first stage of the sampling methodology. The sample was stratified by province and the Quintile Status of the primary school to ensure a fair distribution of ELPs. A stratification weight was calculated by dividing the total number of primary schools in a Province-Quintile cell (PQ_N) by the number of primary schools selected in that Province-Quintile cell (PQ_n):

$$(1) \quad PQ_w = \frac{PQ_N}{PQ_n}$$

² Combined schools in this case refers to schools that include the primary phase as well as later phases. These are often smaller schools in rural or farm areas.

³ It is recognised that the Quintile system which is used for primary schools can not be directly applied to the ECD sector. However, given the lack of another mechanism with which to stratify ELPs by wealth status, the Quintile system is the most useful system to use. Recent research suggest that the fees that ELPs charge could be a more accurate mechanism to use in future iterations.

⁴ Vangasali is a Government campaign launched in 2020 with the aim of identifying all Early Childhood Development programmes (including ECD centres, playgroups, toy libraries, day mothers) in the country.

The second step was to calculate the relative weight given to the ELP i relative to other sampled ELPs within a cluster based on the size of the ELP. This is given by the total enrolments in that ELP divided by the total number of enrolments summed across all the ELPs sampled in the cluster:

$$(2) \quad C_{rw} = \frac{C_{iN}}{C_{iN} + C_{i+1N} + \dots + C_{zN}}$$

The third step was to make the weights given to the cluster commensurate to the estimated population size of that cluster, which is proxied by Grade 3 enrolments.

$$(3) \quad C_w = C_{rw} * Gr3enr$$

The fourth step took into consideration that not all the ELPs in the full sample participated in the baseline assessment. Within each cluster, either one or two ELPs were sampled and included in the baseline assessment. This entailed calculating the probability of the ELP being included in the baseline assessment sample.

$$(5) \quad BA_w = \frac{BA_N}{BA_n}$$

To construct the ELP weight, the stratification weight is combined with the adjusted cluster weight.

$$(4) \quad TOTWGT_{ELP} = PQ_w * C_w * BA_w$$

2.3. Data collection instruments

The Baseline Assessment entailed the administration of four additional instruments (over and above child outcomes measures) in the sub-sample of ELPs selected from the Thrive by Five sample. These instruments included:

1. A **principal questionnaire** – an interview was conducted with the principal/ manager of the ELP and included questions about the principal’s characteristics, human resources, financial resources, ELP enrolments, infrastructure, nutrition, health & immunization, operations, resourcing and registration.
2. A **practitioner questionnaire** – an interview was conducted with the practitioner who is responsible for the 4-year-old children. The practitioner questionnaire asked questions about the characteristics of the practitioner, her class, her lesson planning, the support she received and her views on the learning through play methodology.
3. An **ELP observation instrument** was administered to capture information on the infrastructure in which the ELP operates.
4. Finally, a **lesson observation** was conducted during a lesson with the 4-year-olds to capture the quality of instruction. The findings from this instrument are in a separate specialized report.

2.4. The final sample

Information was collected on 545 ELPs across the country, however, in the post-survey construction of sampling weights, an additional number of cases were excluded due to the absence of information

required to construct the weights. The weighted analyses are therefore computed on a total of 522 ELPs. Table 1 shows the weighted and unweighted distribution of ELPs by province and quintile.

Table 1: Sample distribution of Early Learning Programmes

	Number	Percentage (Unweighted)	Percentage (Weighted)
Province			
Eastern Cape	53	10.6%	13.1%
Free State	57	11.4%	5.6%
Gauteng	59	11.8%	21.3%
KwaZulu-Natal	51	10.2%	16.5%
Limpopo	54	10.8%	15.1%
Mpumalanga	51	10.2%	8.6%
North West	60	12.0%	2.8%
Northern Cape	56	11.2%	7.1%
Western Cape	59	11.8%	9.8%
Quintile			
1	163	33.0%	25.0%
2	112	22.7%	21.1%
3	112	22.7%	28.4%
4	58	11.7%	12.8%
5	49	9.9%	12.7%

2.5. Data challenges

2.5.1. Biased sample

The stratification by province and quintile ensured that a fair distribution of ELPs according to income distribution was included in the sample. However, the lack of a sampling frame and the need to have constructed one using the available information lead to the possibility that the sample may be biased toward the more established ELPs. This is because the more established ELPs were more likely to be present in the available data, or were more likely to be known to primary schools and were therefore recommended. Smaller, unregistered ELPs, which are not likely to be present in a database, or which may not be known by primary schools were likely to not have been included in the sampling frame.

The ECD Census that was conducted by the DBE concluded only after the Thrive by Five data collection and the data was therefore not available as a Masterlist from which to sample. Ex-post the Census data provides us with an opportunity to evaluate the sample we obtained relative to the national sample. The table below shows the differences in key variables and suggests that the Baseline Assessment sample may be biased toward the more formalized side of the sector.

Table 2 indicates that the provincial distribution of our sample is relatively in line with what is seen in the ECD Census, but that ELPs from North West may have been slightly undersampled, and ELPs from Northern Cape may have been slightly oversampled. Bigger differences are observed in the proportion of registered and unregistered ELPs, where the Census shows that only 25.9% of ELPs in South Africa are

fully registered, but 56.7% of the ELPs in the Baseline Assessment sample are registered. Similarly, the Census data indicates that 32.5% of ELPs receive the ECD subsidy, but 61.2% of the ELPs in the Baseline Assessment sample reported that they receive the ECD subsidy. Finally, it seems as if the Baseline Assessment sample included larger ELPs, with the average number of children enrolled in an ELP being 54.8 in the Baseline Assessment sample, but only 39.1 in the Census data. The undersampling of smaller ELPs is further confirmed with only 8.9% of the ELPs in the Baseline Assessment sample having 20 or fewer children enrolled, but this is the case in 29% of the ELPs in the Census data. This bias toward larger more formalized ELPs is important to take note of, as it means that smaller unregistered ELPs are under-represented in the data and the perspectives shared may not always include those of the informal side of the ECD sector.

Table 2: Comparing the Baseline Assessment sample with the 2021 ECD Census masterlist

	ECD	Baseline Assessment		
	Census	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Lower CI</i>	<i>Upper CI</i>
Province				
Eastern Cape	12.8%	13.1%	10.1%	16.1%
Free State	4.9%	5.6%	3.6%	7.6%
Gauteng	24.5%	21.3%	17.7%	24.9%
KwaZulu-Natal	19.1%	16.5%	13.2%	19.8%
Limpopo	12.7%	15.1%	12.0%	18.2%
Mpumalanga	7.0%	8.6%	6.1%	11.1%
North West	5.9%	2.8%	1.3%	4.3%
Northern Cape	2.2%	7.1%	4.8%	9.4%
Western Cape	11.1%	9.8%	7.2%	12.4%
Partial Care Registration				
Fully registered	25.9%	56.7%	52.4%	61.0%
Conditionally registered	12.9%	9.9%	7.3%	12.5%
In process	16.1%	9.8%	7.2%	12.4%
Not registered	43.1%	17.8%	14.4%	21.2%
Lapsed registration	2.0%	2.9%	1.4%	4.4%
Receive subsidy	32.5%	61.2%	56.9%	65.5%
The maximum amount of fees per child per month	509.5	336.9%	288.4%	385.4%
The average number of children enrolled	39.1	54.8	52.0	57.6
The average number of staff members employed	4.7	5.9	5.6	6.2
The ELP has fewer than 20 children	29%	8.9%	6.4%	11.4%

2.5.2. Problematic variables

Three variables in the data also had some errors in them, and users of the data should therefore take note of the following:

1. The variable “*count_staff_cat_educator*” has more missing values than one would expect, due to an error in the skip logic. The variable is dependent on the number of Grade R children (children born before 2017), but there is a problem with the skip logic and some respondents were not asked the question.
2. There was an error in the calculation of the “*count_managers_all*” variable and the variable contains more missing values than it should. This can be corrected by adding the variables “*count_staff_paid_managers*” and “*count_staff_unpaid_managers*”.
3. The error in the “*count_managers_all*” variable, however, spilt over into the variable “*professional_practitioners*”, since it was used for the skip-logic of the latter variable.

3. Findings

3.1. Early Learning Programme Characteristics

The majority (71.3%) of the ELPs included in the Baseline Assessment were run from an ECD centre, with a smaller percentage operating from someone’s house. These facilities were often owned by the ELP itself (30.8%) or by the person in charge of the programme (34.5%). 11.8% of the ELPs were operating from a community centre, whereas some operated from religious institutions (6.8%). Very few of the ELPs in the sample operated from the premises of a primary school. 73.2% of the ELPs had separate classrooms for children of different age groups, whereas 11.6% did not differentiate between the age groups.

Considering the year in which the ELPs were founded, it is evident that our sample included more established ELPs with two-thirds of the ELPs having been in existence for longer than 10 years. Only a small percentage (18.1%) of the ELPs also provided aftercare for school-aged children in the afternoons. Few ELPs (2.3%) ran a book library from their premises and none of the ELPs in the sample ran a toy library or a mobile programme.

Table 3: ELP characteristics

	Percentage
ELP is on the premises of a primary school:	
No	97.0%
Yes	3.0%
Where is the ELP located?	
It is in someone’s house	14.1%
It is in the garage of someone’s house	4.3%
It is at a church/mosque/place of worship	6.4%
It is at a community hall/centre	1.3%
It is a municipal building	2.4%
It is an ECD Centre	71.3%

Other	0.2%
Who owns the building or structure that the ELP is operating in?	
School	2.4%
The ECD Programme	30.8%
Religious institution (e.g. church, mosque)	6.8%
Community Centre	11.8%
Not-for-profit organisation	1.7%
Municipality	6.5%
Other government institutions (not the municipality)	1.1%
The person in charge of the programme (e.g. principal, matron, playgroup leader)	34.5%
Another private individual	3.6%
Private business	0.5%
Other	0.2%
The ELP offer separate classes for children in the different age groups	
No, children of all ages are learning and playing together	11.6%
Yes, children are grouped by age but are using the same space	15.2%
Yes, children are grouped by age and divided into different rooms	73.2%
In which year was the facility opened?	
Before 1994	19.9%
1994-1999	20.9%
2000-2009	26.4%
2010-2016	26.0%
Past 5 years	6.8%
The ELP offers aftercare to school-going children	
No	81.9%
Yes	18.1%
Does this ELP run a library (for books)?	
No	97.7%
Yes	2.3%

On average, ELPs operate for 8 and a half hours a day, with ELPs in the wealthiest two quintiles operating for an average of 10 hours a day. The ELPs in our sample all operated for 5 days a week, which indicates that no sessional programmes were included in the sample. 70.7% of the ELPs in quintiles 4 and 5 operated throughout school holidays, but a lower percentage (between 32% and 41%) of the ELPs in quintiles 1 to 3 did so. The long hours, as well as the higher likelihood to operate during the school holidays in the wealthiest two quintiles, suggest the important childcare role than ELPs play in allowing families to participate in the labour market. The provision of transport is not common practice among ELPs, with only 11.7% of ELPs providing transport to the children in their care.

Table 4: Early Learning Programme operations

	Quintile Category			
	1	2-3	4-5	All
The average number of hours open	8.09	8.35	9.97	8.69

The average number of days per week open	5.00	5.00	5.00	5.00
Percentage of programmes open during school holidays	32.1%	41.0%	70.7%	46.4%
Programme provides transport	5.5%	13.8%	13.8%	11.7%

Over a third of all ELPs provide their classes in English, and a quarter provides their classes in isiZulu. 58.8% of ELPs reported that all the children in the programme have the same home language as the language of learning and teaching (LoLT). 33% of the ELPs have children with different home languages in their classrooms, but the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) is the same as the home language for more than half of the children. Only 8.2% of ELPs indicated that less than half of the children in their care speak the LoLT at home.

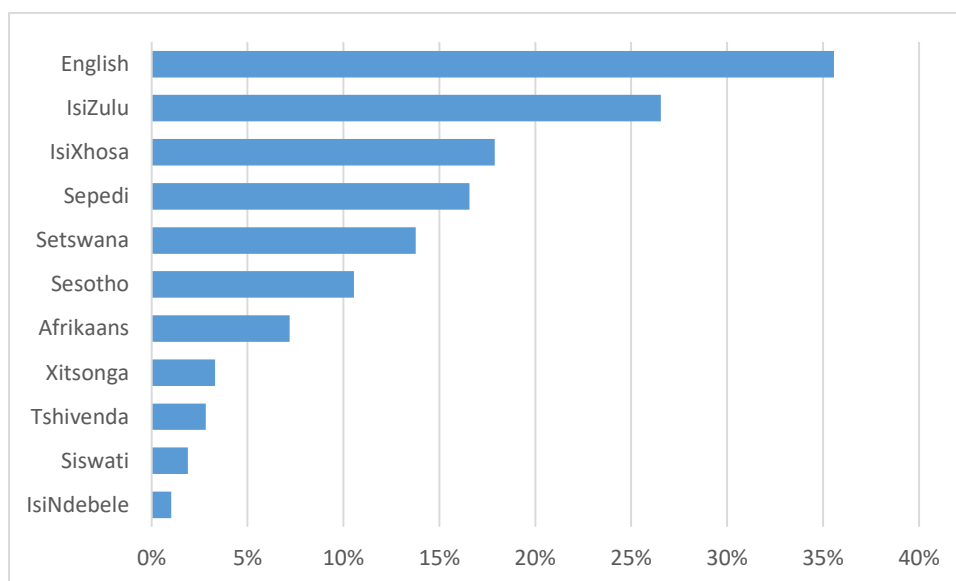


Figure 1: Language of learning and teaching

Table 5: Language of learning and teaching

	Percentage
The proportion of children who speak the LoLT at their home:	
All children speak this language at home	58.8%
More than half of the children speak this language at home	33.0%
Less than half of the children speak this language at home	5.5%
None of the children speaks this language at home	2.7%

3.2. Registration Status

At the time of the data collection of the Baseline Assessment data, the ECD function still resided with the Department of Social Development (DSD), and all ELPs were required to be registered as both a Partial Care Facility and an ECD programme with the DSD. Many barriers to registration hinder ELPs from registering as a Partial Care Facility and only 56.7% of the ELPs that participated in the Baseline

Assessment were registered as such. 9.9% were conditionally registered with the DSD and another 9.8% were in the process of registering with the DSD, whereas 17.8% of ELPs were not registered with the DSD. Provinces deal differently with ECD programme registration, but overall the proportion of ELPs registered with the DSD as an ECD programme follows the same trend as with Partial Care registration.

The majority of ELPs (93.2%) were, however, registered as not-for-profit organizations with the DSD. The difference in the likelihood of an ELP being registered as an NPO versus as a Partial Care facility also highlights that the reason for not being registered is often not due to refusal, but that there is rather a structural hindrance prohibiting registration.

Early learning in South Africa has largely been provided by private providers, civil society organisations or by NPOs. This has led to strong civil society organizations that provide various forms of support to ELPs through ECD forums and various other networks. When ELPs were asked whether they belong to an ECD network, however, only 30.0% of ELPs responded that they are part of a network of ELPs.

Table 6: Registration status of the ELP

Registration as a partial care facility with DSD in 2021:	
Fully registered	56.7%
Conditionally registered	9.9%
In process	9.8%
Not registered	17.8%
Lapsed registration	2.9%
Don't know	2.8%
Registration as an ECD programme with DSD in 2021:	
Fully registered	50.0%
Conditionally registered	7.5%
In process	11.6%
Not registered	23.2%
Lapsed registration	2.2%
Don't know	5.5%
Registered as an NPO in 2021	93.2%
Part of a network	30.0%

3.3. Management

Principals at ELPs play many different roles, one of which is the management of the ELP. To proxy for the quality of management of the ELP, fieldworkers asked principals about the records that they keep and about the safety measures that they have in place.

Attendance registers were the records most likely to be kept by principals, followed by children's Road to Health booklets, their progress records and their home background information. Only 57.6% of principals responded that they keep information about children's grant records. This is an area where the DBE can

provide additional guidance to principals because the ECD subsidy guideline specifies that children who qualify for the Child Support Grant can also qualify for the ECD subsidy. Keeping information on children's grant status can therefore enable greater access to the ECD subsidy.

Table 7: Children's records kept at the ELP

	Mean
Children's home background information	74.5%
Children's grant information	57.6%
Children's Road to Health booklet	83.8%
Attendance records	98.6%
Children's progress records	82.1%

To be able to be registered with the DSD, ELPs are required to have various safety measures in place. Often these safety measures do not require sophisticated resourcing, but rather good management to ensure the correct paperwork is in place. One such requirement is displaying an emergency contact list, where 64.2% of registered ELPs had this in place, but only 43.9% of unregistered ELPs. Nevertheless, we see many registered ELPs who did not have the required safety measures in place to be able to register. For example, only 59.5% of registered ELPs had fire equipment such as a fire extinguisher or a bucket of sand, whereas only 29.4% of unregistered ELPs had such. Another large difference between ELPs who are registered relative to those who are not registered is whether an ELP has an Environmental Health Certificate. This certificate is obtained from the municipality and could be an indication of municipal functionality rather than ELP management quality. Nevertheless, having obtained this certificate plays a significant role in being able to get registered. Overall, however, it seems that both registered and unregistered ELPs will require significant support in upgrading their safety measures to be compliant with the basic requirements for registration.

Table 8: Safety measures in place

	Registered as a Partial Care Facility			
	Registered	Conditional	Not registered	Total
Evacuation plan	35.4%	29.3%	33.1%	34.0%
Adequate first aid kit	71.1%	47.6%	59.6%	64.9%
Appointed first aid officer	41.9%	53.1%	42.9%	43.3%
Fire extinguisher/sand bucket	59.5%	53.1%	29.4%	48.9%
Fire extinguisher up to date	69.1%	69.9%	44.0%	60.8%
Accident/ injury file	44.4%	41.3%	36.7%	41.5%
Displayed emergency contact list	64.2%	32.9%	43.9%	54.3%
Separate area for food preparation	89.5%	85.8%	78.7%	85.5%
Safe and enclosed refuse area	52.0%	37.3%	45.0%	48.2%
Harmful substances locked away	50.1%	54.2%	54.3%	51.9%
None of these	0.2%	0.0%	2.8%	1.1%
Has health certificate	78.7%	67.6%	44.7%	66.2%
Has correct zoning	89.2%	76.2%	73.9%	82.8%

3.4. Enrolment

The data for the Baseline Assessment was collected between the third and fourth waves of the COVID-19 pandemic, which had a significant impact on both the registration of children to attend an ELP and the actual child attendance at ELPs. ELPs indicated that they have on average about 55 children registered to attend and on the day of data collection 37 children on average attended the ELPs. To better understand the impact that the pandemic may have on enrolments, principals were asked how many children usually attend their ELP, and how many children used to attend pre-COVID. On average, 45 children usually attend an ELP, but this is down from an average of 68 children before the pandemic.

On average, the official capacity of ELPs is around 75 children per programme. Comparing the official capacity of ELPs with the number of children registered to attend the ELP, it is possible to determine that in 21% of ELPs over-crowding may be a problem.

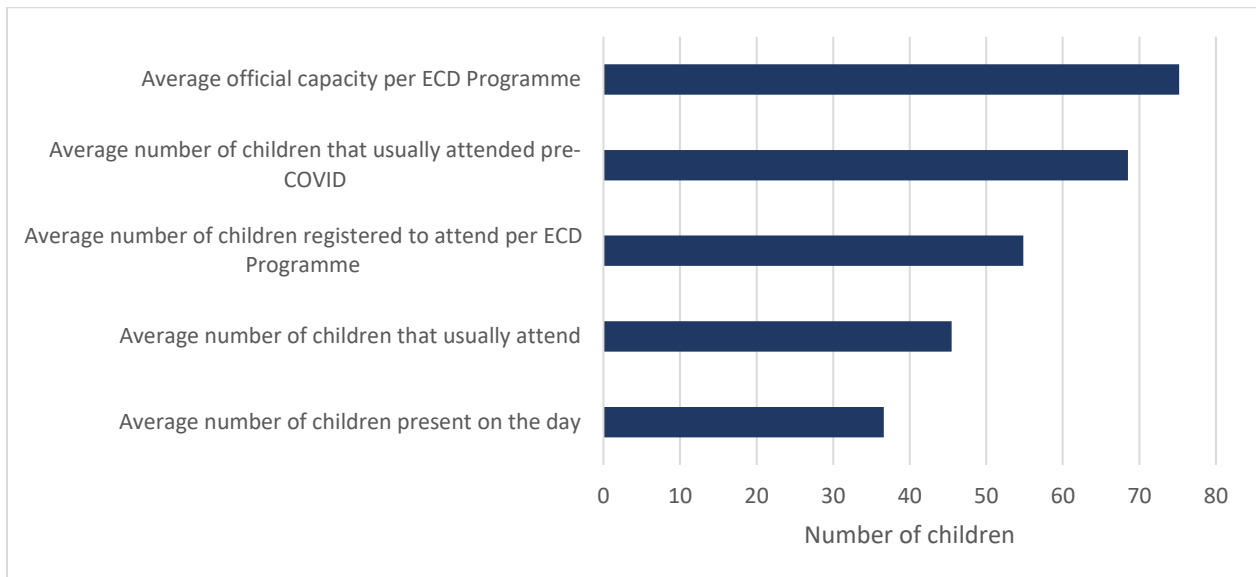


Figure 2: Average number of children per ELP

There is very little difference in the enrolment between girls and boys, indicating equal access by sex. When looking at the proportion of children enrolled by age group, older children are more likely to be enrolled than younger children. 0-2-year-olds only form 16.1% of children enrolled in ELPs, whereas 4 and 5-year-olds form the majority of children enrolled at 31.7% and 26.1% respectively.

Table 9: Enrollment in ELPs

	Percentage
Percentage of ELPs with a registered number of children above capacity	21.0%
Girls enrolled	50.0%
Boys enrolled	49.9%

0-year-olds enrolled	0.9%
1-year-olds enrolled	4.6%
2-year-olds enrolled	10.6%
3 year-olds enrolled	19.2%
4-year-olds enrolled	31.7%
5-year-olds enrolled	26.1%
6-year-olds enrolled	5.6%
African/ black children enrolled	87.9%
Coloured children enrolled	4.7%
Indian children enrolled	0.3%
White children enrolled	2.8%

3.5. Access for children with disabilities

The Baseline Assessment did not entail an accurate capturing of the number of children with disabilities at the ELPs, mostly due to the fieldworker expertise required for such an undertaking. Principals were therefore asked to provide the number of children who have difficulty in seeing, hearing, walking, holding a crayon, communicating or learning. Overall, principals provided very low numbers of children that they deem have difficulty with the skills mentioned above and were most likely to respond that there are children who have learning difficulties.

Table 10: Percentage of children in ELPs with possible learning barriers

	Percentage
Children with difficulty seeing	0.1%
Children with difficulty hearing	0.1%
Children with difficulty walking	0.2%
Children with difficulty holding a crayon	0.6%
Children with difficulty communicating	0.6%
Children with difficulty learning	0.9%

Although only rudimentary measures of access for children with disabilities were included in the questionnaire, it is evident that ELPs still have many improvements to make. Fieldworkers rated only half of the classrooms they observed as being accessible for children with disabilities or having enough light for children who may have difficulty seeing. Only 13.7% of ELPs had a wheelchair ramp, 16.7% had suitable toilets and just over a quarter (26.9%) did not have anything in place to be more accessible for children with disabilities.

Table 11: Disability access

	Percentage
Has a wheelchair ramp	13.7%
Has handrails	3.2%

Has suitable toilets	16.7%
Passages are clear	42.5%
Classrooms are accessible	56.1%
Classrooms have enough light	55.2%
None of these	26.9%

3.6. Support received

Principals were asked how frequently they received support visits from either government departments or a non-government organization (NGO), to determine the overall level of support that ELPs receive, regardless of their registration status. Since the COVID pandemic may have thwarted normal support visits, principals were asked to recall how frequently they received visits in 2019, the year preceding the pandemic. It is encouraging to note the level of support that ELPs received from the DSD, with about 82.5% of ELPs responding that they received at least one visit from the DSD in 2019. It seems as if the support may also not have been once-off support, with 37.9% ELPs responding that they received more than three visits from a DSD official in 2019.

Municipalities also seem to have been providing monitoring or support to ELPs, with two-thirds of ELPs responding that they received at least one visit from someone from the municipality. Support from the DBE and NGOs seems to have been much lower, with 71.5% of ELPs not having received a single visit from someone from the DBE and 70% not having received any supporting visits from an NGO. In light of the function shift to the DBE, it is clear that a concerted effort will need to be made by the DBE to ensure that ELPs receive the same level of ongoing support that they received under the DSD.

Table 12: Support received from government/ non-government institutions

	Percentage
From the DSD:	
Never	17.5%
Once	16.1%
Twice	19.3%
Three times	9.2%
More than three times	37.9%
From the DBE:	
Never	71.5%
Once	15.2%
Twice	5.9%
Three times	1.2%
More than three times	6.2%
From the Municipality:	
Never	31.1%
Once	24.1%
Twice	18.4%
Three times	9.3%

More than three times	17.1%
From an NGO/Training organization:	
Never	70.0%
Once	7.6%
Twice	7.4%
Three times	5.8%
More than three times	9.2%

3.7. Human resources

Principals were asked to provide the total number of staff who are employed at the ELP, disaggregated by gender, the type of employment, their function and whether they receive a salary. This information confirms that the ECD sector is an important job creator for women, with the largest majority (89.1%) of staff employed at ELPs being female. Volunteering is not a common practice in the sector with only 6.1% of staff being employed on a volunteering basis, meaning 93.9% are employed and receiving a salary. Most staff are also employed permanently, with only 8.7% of staff being employed temporarily.

In calculating the percentage of staff who have a certain level of qualifications, the assumption was made that only teaching staff (managers, practitioners and assistant practitioners) are expected to have an NQF-level qualification. The percentage of staff with a qualification is therefore calculated by dividing all staff with the specific qualification by the total number of all teaching staff. Of all teaching staff, 27.6% had an Accredited Skills Programme qualification, 53.3% had an NQF level 4 or level 5 qualification and only 6.5% had an NQF level 6 or higher qualification. This suggests that 40% of the teaching staff at ELPs do not yet meet the minimum requirement of at least an NQF level 4 qualification. A well-targeted programme will therefore need to be developed to ensure the upskilling of teaching staff to meet the minimum standards. Finally, just over three-quarters of all ELPs had at least one person who is trained in first aid.

Table 13: Human resource arrangements

	Percentage
The proportion of ELPs with at least one person trained in first aid	76.40%
Female staff members	89.1%
Male staff members	10.9%
Staff who receive a salary	93.9%
Staff who does not receive a salary (volunteer)	6.1%
Teaching staff with Accredited Skills Programme qualification	27.6%
Teaching staff with NQF Level 4 or 5 qualification	53.3%
Teaching staff with NQF Level 6 - 9 qualification	6.5%
Staff employed permanently	90.7%
Staff employed on a temporary basis	8.7%
Staff employed as a substitute	1.7%

Of all paid staff, 49% are employed as practitioners, 6.3% as assistant practitioners and 15.2% as managers. The rest of the staff employed at ELPs provide support to the functions at the ELP, such as cooking, maintenance or other support services. Often the focus of human resource conversations is around the conditions of service for ECD practitioners, which is rightly so given that they make up over half of all staff members employed at ELPs. However, there is also a large proportion of staff (29.5%) who provide support services and cognizance needs to be made of them in the development of a national human resource development plan.

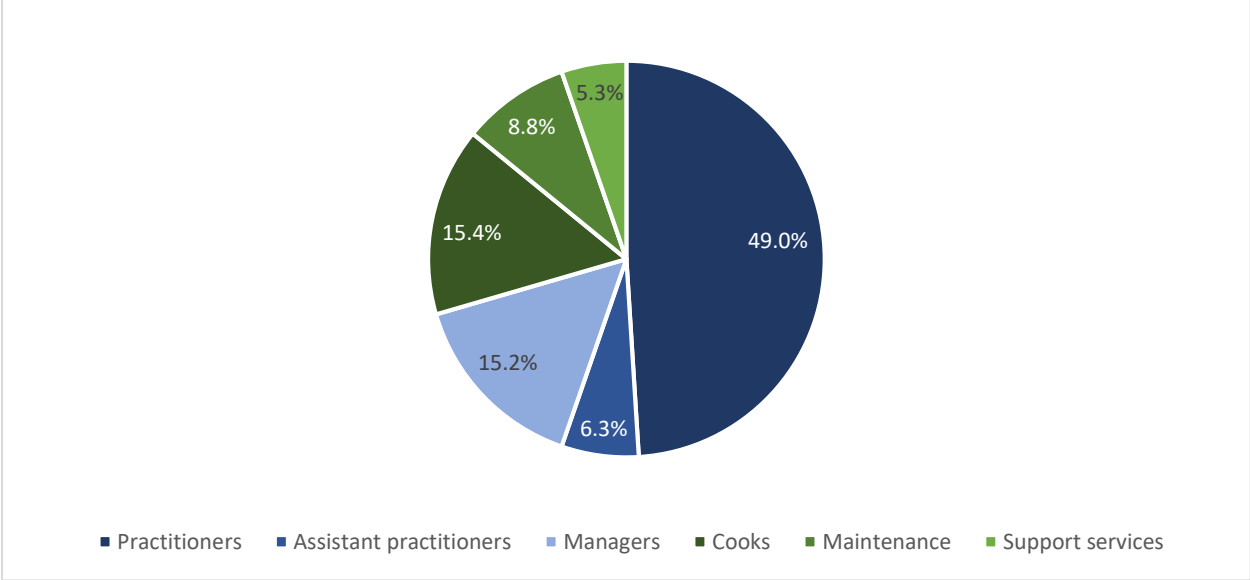


Figure 3: Functions of all paid staff

The COVID pandemic significantly impacted the ECD sector in many different ways. One main concern during the pandemic was the sustainability of the ECD sector since it is largely dependent on suppliers of ECD services enrolling enough children in their programmes to remain financially sustainable through the collection of fees (Wills & Kika-Mistry, 2021). Principals in the ELPs were therefore asked how the COVID pandemic impacted their human resources, specifically to find out the impact of higher financial instability on staff employment and salary payment. By the time of data collection, however, only 10.9% of ELPs indicated that they have fewer staff members employed compared to previous years. However, almost a quarter (24.3%) of ELPs responded that they had to retrench at least one person during the pandemic. Interestingly, 13.7% of ELPs indicated that they have more staff employed at the time of data collection compared to previous years. Two-thirds of ELPs responded that they were able to keep salaries for staff members the same during the pandemic, but 29.4% responded that they have to reduce salaries to be able to continue employing staff members. Only 2.3% responded that they have not been able to pay staff members at all.

Understanding the severe impact of the pandemic on the financial sustainability of ELPs, the DSD established the ECD Employment Stimulus Relief Fund which allowed ELPs to apply for COVID relief funds

to cover the salaries of practitioners. The payment of the relief funds was problematic, with only 44.4%⁵ of the total funds available having been spent by March 2022 (Minister of Social Development, 2022). By the time of data collection, 80.9% of ELPs indicated that they have applied for the relief funds, but only 34.0% indicated that they have received the funds.

Table 14: Impact of COVID on human resources

	Percentage
How many staff have you employed this year compared to previous years?	
I have more staff employed	13.7%
I have about the same number of staff employed	72.3%
I have more than half of the number of staff employed	3.0%
I have less than half of the number of staff employed	10.9%
Have you been able to pay existing staff their normal salaries?	
No, I have not been able to pay them at all	2.3%
No, I had to reduce their salaries	29.4%
Yes, their salaries have remained the same	68.3%
The proportion of ELPs where at least one person was retrenched during Covid	24.3%
The proportion that applied for Covid relief funds	80.9%
The proportion that received Covid relief funds by October 2021	34.0%

The COVID-relief funds are particularly important for ECD practitioners, especially given that just over two-thirds of ECD practitioners responded that they are the main breadwinner in the household. The salary levels of ECD practitioners are, however, exceptionally low and almost 89.5% of all ECD practitioners responded that they received less than minimum wage (R3500 per month for a 40-hour work week). A further level of vulnerability of ECD practitioners is introduced through instability when they get paid. Only 62.8% of practitioners responded that they are generally paid on time.

⁵ In a response to a Parliamentary Question, Minister Zulu indicated that R220,342,978 of the total of R496,000,000 have been spent by 14 March 2022.

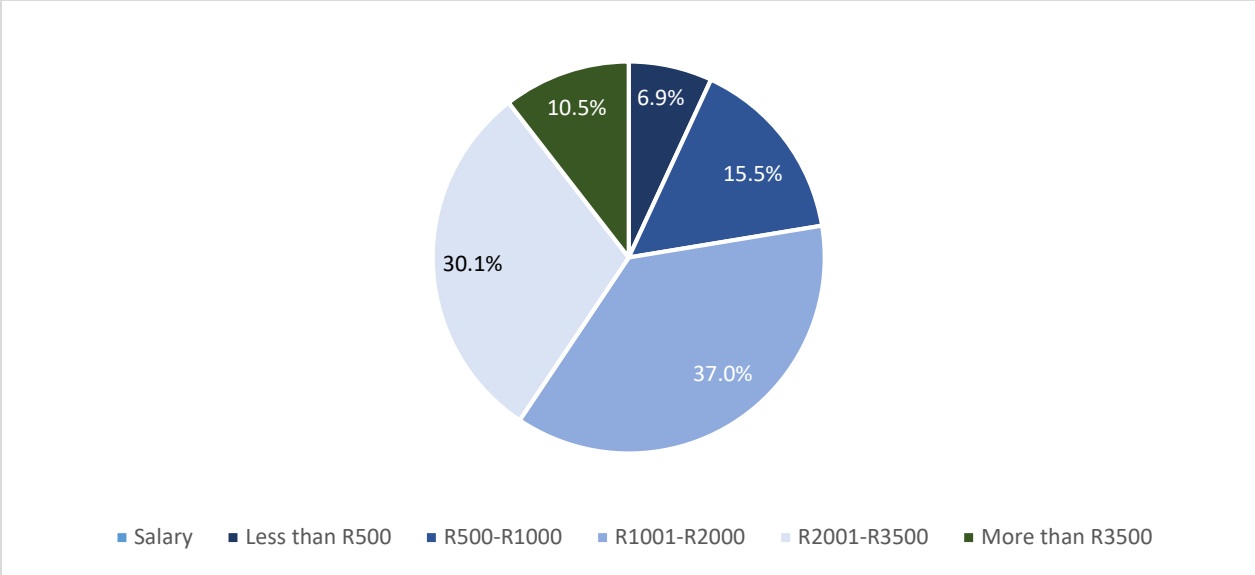


Figure 4: Gross monthly practitioner salary

3.8. Education and training

The 2013 ECD audit already shed light on the very low levels of ECD practitioner qualifications and found that nearly half of the practitioners nationally have not completed Grade 12, and a further third have completed Grade 12, but have no further qualifications (Kotze, 2015). The findings from the baseline assessment confirm that not much has changed since the 2013 audit.

Principals were asked about their levels of qualification and a third responded that their highest level of qualification is below Grade 12 level whereas another 36.3% responded that they have at least Grade 12. This means that just less than a third of all ELP principals have any qualification higher than secondary school completion.

Table 15: Principal's characteristics

	Percentage
Highest qualification completed:	
Below Grade 12/matric	33.9%
Matric/National Senior Certificate	36.3%
Certificate	16.0%
Diploma	9.6%
Undergraduate Degree	2.6%
Postgraduate degree	1.6%

In terms of ECD-specific training, 55% of principals indicated that they have the NQF level 4 qualification, 28% indicated that they have the NQF level 5 qualification and 16% indicated that they have the NQF level 6 qualification. A very small percentage had also acquired an ECD qualification at a graduate or post-graduate level. This is not surprising, since an ECD qualification at a graduate and post-graduate level is

still in the process of being introduced at many tertiary institutions. Similarly, given the financial vulnerability of the ECD sector, there are few financial benefits for principals and practitioners in obtaining a graduate or post-graduate qualification. Only 5% of principals had no ECD-specific qualifications, which is significantly lower than the 46% of principals who had no ECD-specific qualifications in the 2013 Audit.

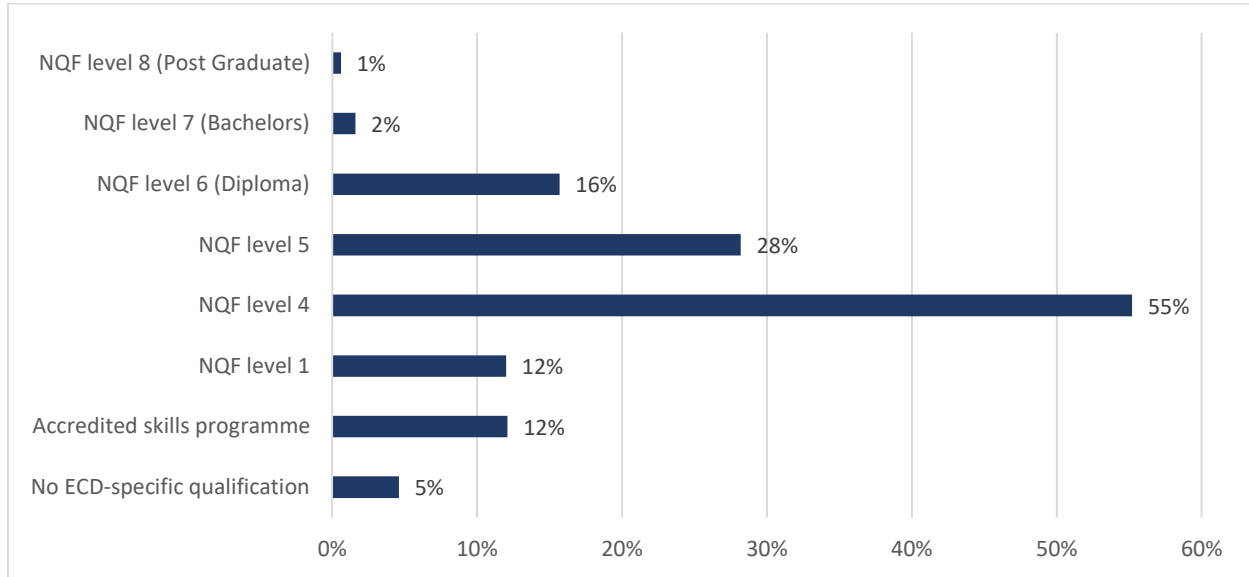


Figure 5: Principal's ECD-specific qualifications

The practitioners who participated in the interview were also asked about their levels of qualification, as well as the training and support that they received. 77% of ECD practitioners responded that their highest level of education is Grade 12 or below Grade 12, of which 41% do not even have a matric. Only 23% of ECD practitioners, therefore, have a level of education that is above the completion of secondary school.

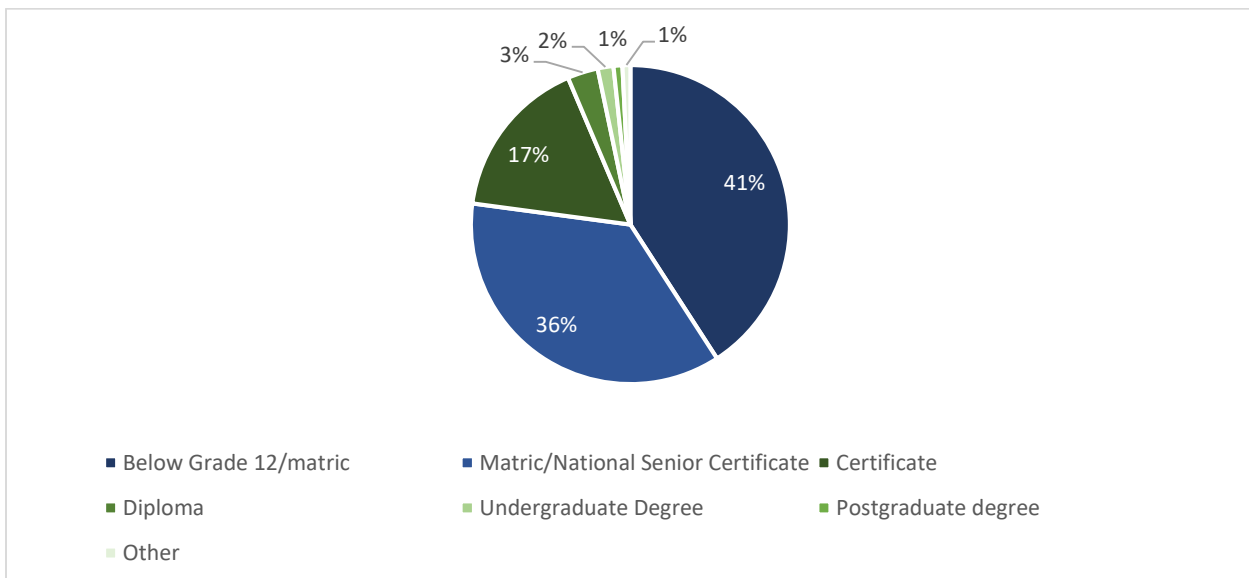


Figure 6: ECD Practitioner's highest level of education

Figure 7 shows ECD practitioners' ECD-specific qualifications, disaggregated by quintile. It is interesting to note that ECD practitioners in the wealthiest two quintiles are more likely to have no ECD-specific qualifications or only the accredited skills programme qualifications, and are less likely than practitioners in the bottom three quintiles to have the NQF level 4 qualification. It is concerning that overall 42.8% of ECD practitioners responded that they do not even have an NQF level 4 qualification, which is currently the minimum requirement for ECD practitioners. Even more concerning is that almost a quarter (22.8%) of ECD practitioners responded that they had no ECD-specific qualifications. This signifies the importance of the DBE in prioritizing the development of a human resources development plan that is developmental and considers the current low levels of ECD-specific training that our ECD practitioners have.

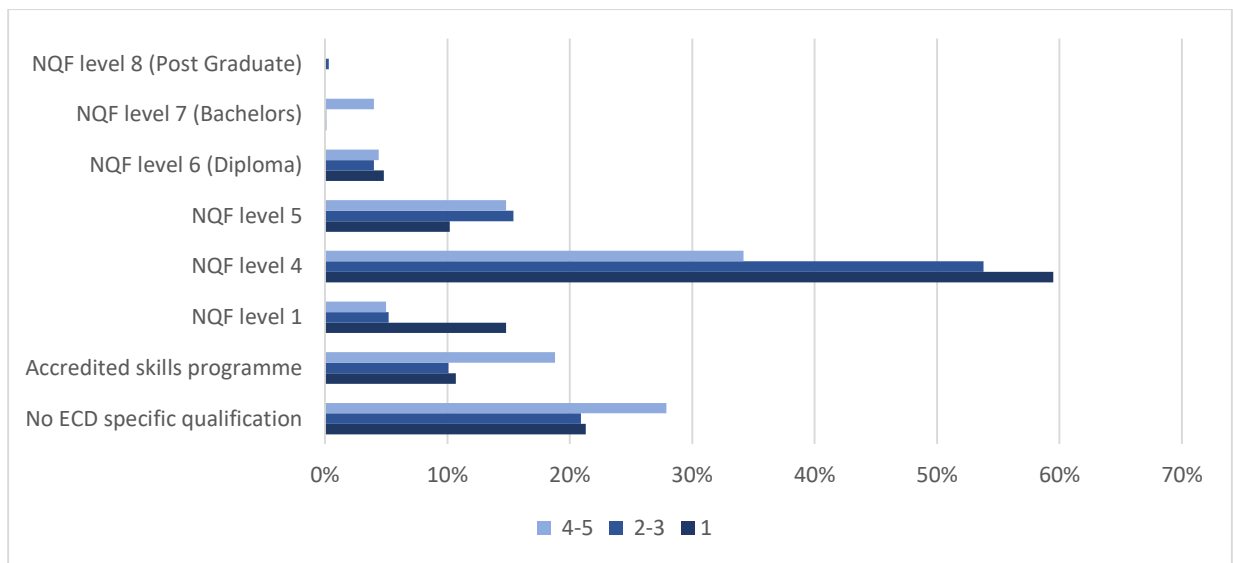


Figure 7: ECD practitioner's ECD-specific qualifications

In terms of experience, 41.8% of the ECD practitioners indicated that they are relatively new and have only worked as an ECD practitioner for five years or less. Only 27.8% had experience as an ECD practitioner for more than 10 years. This is surprising and insightful. Given that the respondents were practitioners teaching the 4-year-olds, one would expect that they would be the practitioners in the ELP with the most experience. If this assumption is true, then it is interesting how young practitioners are in the profession and may indicate how easily ECD practitioners enter and leave the profession. This is further corroborated by the responses to the question of what the practitioners were doing before their employment at the ELP. 38.1% indicated that they were working in another industry/ sector and 25.2% were not employed. Only about 10% were working at another ELP and moved within the sector.

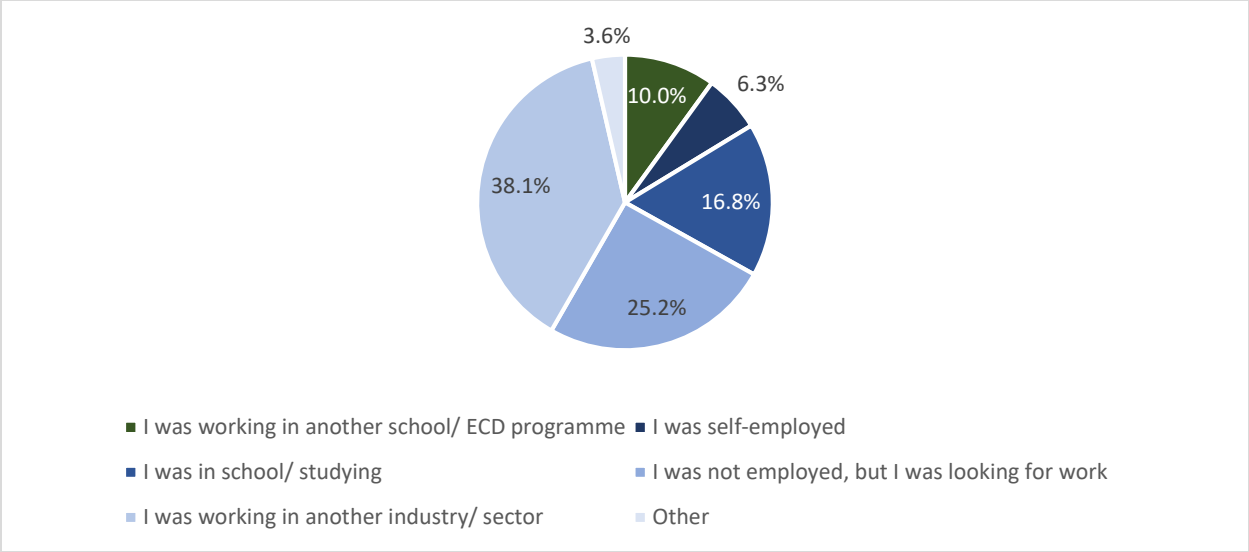


Figure 8: Employment before working at ELP

The National Curriculum Framework for children from birth to four years old is the official curriculum framework from the DBE that practitioners are required to align their lessons. The NCF was introduced in 2015 and the DBE has since been responsible for training all ECD practitioners on the implementation of the NCF. However, only 60.6% of the practitioners responded that they have received any training on the NCF. Of those that have received training on the NCF, the majority (44%) indicated that they received this training through a training organization and 30.3% indicated that they received the training through the DBE. Principals or other practitioners also seemed to have played an important role in training practitioners on the NCF, whereas ECD forums and NGOs played a smaller role in the training on the NCF.

When asked whether they have received training in specific aspects of ECD, 47.8% of practitioners responded that they have been trained in first aid, 44.6% have been trained in quality classroom practices, 37.0% have been trained in positive parenting awareness, 31.7% have been trained in health promotion and 26.1% have been trained in emergent literacy. 28.6%, however, responded that they have not received training in any of the ECD-specific aspects mentioned above. Moreover, only 43.4% of all ECD practitioners have received training in identifying children with special needs. Given the crucial period of child development for which ECD practitioners are responsible, the identification of any learning barriers is key and significant efforts will need to be made to ensure that all ECD practitioners are confident and capable of identifying children with special needs and can refer them to any auxiliary services that may be required.

Table 16: Practitioner training and experience

Years working as an ECD practitioner:	Percentage
<= 5 years	41.8%
6-10 years	30.4%
11-20 years	21.7%
> 20 years	6.1%

Training received on the NCF:	
Have received training in NCF	60.6%
From the principal/ another practitioner	17.8%
From the DBE	30.3%
From an ECD Forum	10.2%
From an NGO	9.6%
From a training organisation	44.0%
Training received on the following:	
Road to Health Booklet	22.6%
Health Promotion	31.7%
Positive Parenting Awareness	37.0%
Quality classroom practice	44.6%
Emergent literacy	26.1%
First Aid	47.8%
None of these	28.6%
Have received training in identifying children with special needs	43.4%
Have done training online before	15.0%
Currently on a DBE learnership	5.5%

3.9. Early Learning Lessons

The quality of early learning and teaching is directly determined by the competency of the ECD practitioners. To better understand the quality of teaching in ELPs, practitioners were asked about their lesson planning. About 60% of practitioners responded that they have an activity or lesson plan that provided activities daily, whereas 20% had plans that only specified the main activities for the week. However, 19.8% of practitioners responded that they do not make use of an activity or lesson plan at all.

Of the practitioners who did have an activity or lesson plan, 40.4% responded that they developed their plans for the 4-year-olds by using a practitioner guide, 27.0% said they used a plan provided by another practitioner and 14.2% used a plan provided by an NGO. Disappointingly, only 40.5% of the practitioner responded that they used the NCF Birth to Four framework. Since this is the suggested national curriculum, one would have hoped for a higher take-up of the document and therefore a higher percentage of practitioners to respond that this is at least one of the documents consulted in developing their lesson plans. Nevertheless, 92.4% of the practitioners believe that their lesson plans are aligned with the NCF.

In terms of lesson planning for the 5-year-old's lessons, even fewer practitioners (30.2%) mentioned using the official government curriculum (CAPS curriculum) as a reference document for the development of their lesson plans. A practitioner guide was again consulted most frequently (44.0%), followed by a plan provided by another practitioner (29.5%), a plan provided by an NGO (16.9%) and the DBE's Grade R toolkit (7.4%). The low use of the DBE's Grade R toolkit can suggest that this resource was only made available to Grade R practitioners in primary schools and that further efforts should be made to ensure

that the toolkit is made available to Grade R classes in ELPs as well. Overall, however, 82.8% of ELPs responded that their lesson plans have been approved by the DBE.

Table 17: Practitioner lesson planning

	Percentage
Do you make use of an activity/lesson plan?	
No	19.8%
Yes, details are provided for the activities each day	60.2%
Yes, details are provided for the main activities in the week	20.0%
Lesson planning for children 4 years and younger:	
A plan provided by an NGO	14.2%
A plan provided by another practitioner	27.0%
A practitioner guide	40.4%
NCF Birth to Four	40.5%
Other sources	8.6%
The lesson plan is aligned with NCF	92.4%
Lesson planning for children 5 years and older:	
A plan provided by an NGO	16.9%
A plan provided by another practitioner	29.5%
A practitioner guide	44.0%
CAPS Curriculum	30.2%
Grade R toolkit/ Pizza Box	7.4%
Other sources	4.5%
The lesson plan has been approved by DBE	82.8%

3.10. Practitioner support

Practitioners need ongoing mentoring and support to enable them to provide quality learning and teaching. Various international studies have shown that on-site support to teachers or practitioners has a significant impact on the quality of teaching that they provide. Practitioners were therefore asked about the extent to which they receive on-site support. 65.6% of practitioners responded that they do receive on-site support, of which 63.7% said that they receive this support either from the principal or another practitioner, 16.3% said they received support from a training organization, 13.7% responded the DBE, 13.3% responded an ECD forum and 8.1% responded an NGO.

With such a high percentage responding that the on-site support they receive is from the principal or other practitioners, it is expected that a higher proportion also mentioned that they receive this support weekly (37.4%) or monthly (24.8%). This means that training and support to principals to facilitate peer-to-peer learning could be very beneficial to improving teaching and learning methods in ELPs.

Table 18: Practitioner on-site support received

	Percentage	Percentage of those who received on-site support
Received on-site support	65.6%	
From the principal/ other practitioners		63.7%
From the DBE		13.7%
From an ECD Forum		13.3%
From an NGO		8.1%
From a training organisation		16.3%
Frequency of on-site support:		
Once a year		13.5%
Once a term		16.0%
Once a month		24.8%
Once a week		37.4%
Other		8.3%

Practitioners were further asked about their perspectives on how supported they feel, how recognized for their work they feel and whether they receive regular mentoring and teaching support. Most practitioners agreed or strongly agreed that they feel supported in their work and that they feel recognised for their work, suggesting that job satisfaction among practitioners is quite high. Similarly, practitioners seem to feel well supported with 84% of practitioners agreeing, or strongly agreeing that they regularly meet with people who provide mentoring and teaching support.

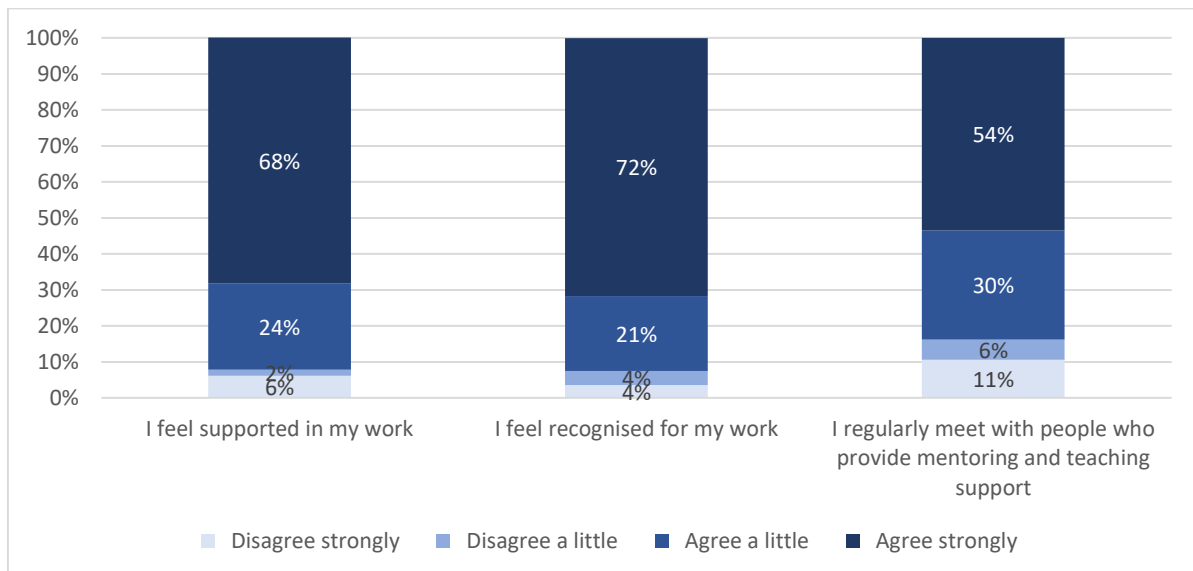


Figure 9: Practitioner perspectives on support and recognition

3.11. Funding and expenditure

The vulnerability of the ECD sector emanates from the strong dependence that the sector has on the fees that they charge for the children registered for their care. 91.8% of ELPs responded that they receive funding from fees that they charge, whereas 92.8% responded that they charge fees. The difference between these percentages could be due to parents not necessarily paying the fees charged. When asked what proportion of parents paid the fees charged the previous month, a very small percentage (1.9%) responded that none of the parents paid. Only 8.4% of ELPs responded that all parents paid, indicating that despite charging fees, the lack of payment by parents is a further risk to the ECD sector's financial sustainability. It also provides insight into the benevolence that exists in the sector and the awareness of the critical role that ELPs play as a child-caring function for many families. This notion is validated by 78.8% of ELPs responding that they allow children to attend, although their parents cannot afford to pay the fees.

Only 58% of ELPs indicated that they receive a subsidy from the DSD. Very few ELPs received any funding from another government department, donations or fundraising. Although there are a few government initiatives that can support the payment of staff, such as the Community Works Programme, the Extended Public Works Programme, the DBE learnership programme or the Youth Employment Service initiative, 95.2% of ELPs said that they are not benefitting from these initiatives. Another way in which some ELPs have been receiving some support is through the provision of resources for the children's meals or snacks. However, only 23.8% of ELPs responded that they receive this type of support.

The percentage of ELPs that reported that they receive funding from the DSD is quite high at 58%, relative to the ECD Census which found that only 33% of all ELPs received the DSD subsidy. Similarly, 94.6% of ELPs responded that they have a bank account in the name of the ELP, whereas only 75% of ELPs in the ECD Census had such. This again highlights how the sample of ELPs included in the Baseline Assessment is more formalized and most likely provides the perspective of more formalized ELPs.

Table 19: Sources of funding received

	Percentage
Sources of funding	
Receive a subsidy from DSD	58.0%
Receive a subsidy from DBE	4.3%
Receive a subsidy from DOH	2.4%
Receive income from donations	8.2%
Receive an income through fundraising	16.3%
Receive income from fees	91.8%
Receive no specific funding for salaries	95.2%
Receive funding for salaries from the CWP	0.5%
Receive funding for salaries from the EPWP	1.1%
Receive funding for salaries from the DBE Learnership programme	0.6%
Receive funding for salaries from the YES Initiative	0.9%

Does any other organisation contribute to the meals or snacks that are provided?	23.8%
Is there a bank account in the name of the ELP?	
No, we don't use a bank account	1.7%
Yes	94.6%
No, the principal uses his/her bank account	3.7%
What proportion of parents paid the fees last month?	
None of the parents	1.9%
Only a few parents	29.2%
About half of the parents	20.1%
Most parents, but not all	40.4%
All parents	8.4%
Do you charge fees?	92.8%
Some children are allowed to attend the ELP without having to pay	78.8%

ELPs were asked what the maximum monthly amount of fees are that they charge for children of different age groups. The fees charged range up to about R3,500.00 per month for children older than 2 years old and slightly higher at R3,800 for children younger than 2 years old. On average, however, the difference between the fees charged by age group is very small, with fees for 0-1-year olds being on average R311.60, for 2-3-year olds R349.80 and 4-6-year olds R341.80. The differences in fees charged differ much more when disaggregated by quintile category. Looking for instance at the fees charged for 4-6-year-olds, the maximum amount ranges between R188.8 per month in quintile 1 and R661.4 for quintiles 4 and 5.

Table 20: Average maximum amount per child per month, by age group

	Minimum value	Mean	Maximum value
Average maximum amount per child per month: 0 – 1-year-olds	1.0	311.6	3 883.0
Average maximum amount per child per month: 2 – 3-year-olds	1.0	349.8	3 500.0
Average maximum amount per child per month: 4 – 6-year-olds	1.0	341.8	3 500.0

Table 21: Average maximum fees by quintile category

	Quintile Category		
	1	2-3	4-5
Average maximum amount per child per month: 0 – 1-year-olds	R188.8	R230.0	R519.6
Average maximum amount per child per month: 2 – 3-year-olds	R168.1	R229.4	R684.2
Average maximum amount per child per month: 4 – 6-year-olds	R193.3	R219.0	R661.4

ELPs were further asked about their expenditures, to get a better understanding of the costs involved in operating an ELP. On average, 27.6% of income is spent on food, 40.6% is spent on staff salaries, 8.9% is

spent on materials, 9.4% is spent on maintenance and 9.1% is spent on administration. A further small percentage is spent on rent and other miscellaneous expenses. The DSD’s subsidy guidelines specify that ELPs should be spending 50% of the subsidy on food, 30% on salaries and 20% on learning materials and other costs. Comparing actual expenditure to the recommended expenditure, it is clear that there is a need to review the recommendations to be more in line with the needs of ELPs.

Table 22: Early Learning Programme expenditures

	Mean	25th percentile	75th percentile
The proportion spent on food	27.6%	16.7%	37.4%
The proportion spent on staff	40.6%	27.5%	52.3%
The proportion spent on rent	2.7%	0.0%	2.1%
The proportion spent on materials	8.9%	1.9%	12.1%
The proportion spent on maintenance	9.4%	4.3%	12.1%
The proportion spent on admin	9.1%	2.3%	12.3%
The proportion spent on other expenses	1.9%	0.0%	1.4%

3.12. Health and nutrition

The interaction between ELPs and the local clinic is very valuable and can ensure that children receive the integrated early learning and health services that they need for optimal development. Enabling health workers to access ELPs and children from ELPs to access clinics easily can promote higher immunization rates, better health and nutrition promotion, the identification and support for children with developmental challenges and mediate the prevalence of stunting among children. The largest majority (91.9%) of ELPs do seem to be within a 30-minute travelling distance from the nearest clinic, with two-thirds being closer than 15 minutes. The main modes of transport that are used by ELPs to access clinics are either public transport or by foot, with only 22.7% of ELPs having a vehicle to access the clinic.

There seems to have been a fair bit of interaction between ELPs and CHWs, with two-thirds of ELPs responding that CHWs came to do immunisations at the ELP in 2019 (the year preceding the pandemic) and 64.1% came to administer deworming medication. An area of collaboration with the Department of Health that can be strengthened is that on developmental screening. Only about a third of ELPs responded that the CHWs assisted with vision, hearing or developmental screening.

Table 23: Interaction with the local clinic

	Percentage
Time to get to the nearest clinic	
<= 5min	32.1%
6-15min	35.0%
16-30min	24.7%
> 30min	8.1%
Mode of transport to get to the nearest clinic	
Own vehicle	22.7%

Friend/family's vehicle	3.1%
Public transport	57.0%
On foot	33.4%
Bicycle	0.2%
Screening that was done by CHW in 2019	
Vision screening	32.9%
Hearing screening	32.3%
Developmental screening	37.1%
Immunisations	68.1%
Deworming	64.1%

ELPs also serve as a very important service delivery node to supplement child nutrition and mediate the prevalence of stunting. It is encouraging to note that it is common practice for ELPs to provide meals and snacks for the children in their care with 94% of ELPs indicating that they provide at least one meal to children, with this meal likely being breakfast or lunch. 85.9% of ELPs responded that they provide breakfast and 85% responded that they provide lunch, further indicating that children are likely to receive both breakfast and lunch at an ELP. Fewer ELPs indicated that they provide a morning snack (43.6%) or an afternoon snack (42.4%), but parents were more likely to send these meals with their children to the ELPs daily. Of the ELPs that indicated that parents send some meals with their children, three-quarters also guide the parents on the food that they should send with their children.

Table 24: Meals provided to children by the Early Learning Programme

	Percentage
The early Learning Programme provides a meal for children	94.0%
The early Learning Programme provides breakfast	85.9%
The early Learning Programme provides a morning snack	43.6%
The early Learning Programme provides lunch	85.0%
The early Learning Programme provides an afternoon snack	42.4%
Parents provide breakfast	0.9%
Parents provide a morning snack	32.0%
Parents provide lunch	2.7%
Parents provide an afternoon snack	31.9%
The programme guides parents on food to be sent ⁶	76.6%

In terms of compliance, the meals menu was on display in 81.8% of the ELPs and 92.7% of the ELPs responded that they believe that their menus complied with the Department of Health guidelines. In 79.4% of the ELPs, the menu corresponded with the food that was served on the day of the visit. Most

⁶ The question on guidance for parents was only asked if parents provided meals.

ELPs served meals that contained carbohydrates and proteins (94.8% and 92.3% respectively) and many also served vegetables (83.6%). Fewer ELPS served fruit (64.0%) or fresh or vitamin-enriched juice (43.8%).

Table 25: Meals provided at the Early Learning Programme - Menu compliance

	Percentage
The menu is on display	81.8%
Menu complies with guidelines (self-reported)	92.7%
Food served on the day is the same as on the menu	79.4%
The meal of the day included: Carbohydrates	94.8%
The meal of the day included: Proteins	92.3%
The meal of the day included: Fruit	64.0%
The meal of the day included: Vegetables	83.6%
The meal of the day included: Fresh/vitamin-enriched juice	43.8%

Cooks were most likely to be employed by the ELP to prepare the meals for the children, but in 13.8% of ELPs, the practitioners themselves were responsible for the preparation of the meals. There were no instances where an EPWP worker was employed to assist with the meals, and in very few instances a volunteer or someone from the community came to assist with meal preparation.

In terms of infrastructure for meal preparations, 85.5% of ELPs did have a separate area for food preparation and 80.8% had a refrigerator. Only 39.5% of ELPs had a food garden though. Supporting ELPs in the establishment and management of food gardens could add many benefits such as the availability of fresh vegetables, learning experiences for the children and cutting expenditure on food.

Table 26: Meal preparation

	Percentage
Who is responsible for preparing the meals?	
A cook employed by the Programme	83.3%
Volunteers / Someone from the community	0.8%
EPWP worker	0.0%
Practitioners	13.8%
Other	2.2%
There is a separate area for food preparation	85.5%
There is a refrigerator	80.8%
There is a food garden	39.5%

3.13. Parental involvement

On their own, ELPs can only affect marginal change in children’s lives and parents’ involvement in the development of their children is critical to ensuring optimal development. Parents and ELPs, therefore, form a team of support around a child and the interaction between parents and the ELP is very important.

Most ELPs (79.1%) indicated that they meet with parents quarterly to discuss their child’s progress, with only 13.2% responding that they meet more regularly.

Table 27: Parental involvement

	Percentage
How often do you meet with parents to discuss their child’s progress?	
Never	0.6%
Weekly	1.7%
Monthly	10.9%
Quarterly	79.1%
Annually	3.7%
Other	4.0%

45.5% of ELPs indicated that some parents have initiated contact to discuss their child’s progress. However, 22.4% indicated that none of the parents have initiated contact to discuss their child’s progress. Parents in quintiles 4 and 5 were more likely than parents in the lower quintiles to show interest in their child’s progress, with 28.4% of ELPs in the top two quintiles responding that most parents have enquired about their child’s progress. Similarly, ELPs in the top two quintiles were also more likely to respond that most parents have asked them about activities that parents can do at home with their children. 37.9% of ELPs in the bottom three quintiles responded that none of the parents have asked them about activities that they can do at home with their children.

Table 28: Parental involvement, by quintile

	Quintile Category			
	1	2-3	4-5	Total
Have any parents or caregivers contacted you to discuss their child’s progress?				
No, no one has asked me this year.	22.5%	25.9%	15.7%	22.4%
Yes, but only one or two have asked me this year.	20.2%	9.1%	19.2%	14.5%
Yes, some parents have asked me this year.	46.7%	50.1%	35.5%	45.5%
Yes, most parents have asked me this year.	9.8%	14.9%	28.4%	17.1%
Other	0.9%	0.0%	1.2%	0.5%
Have any parents or caregivers asked you about activities that they can do at home?				
No, no one has asked me this year.	36.2%	37.9%	26.3%	34.5%
Yes, but only one or two have asked me this year.	11.9%	12.4%	21.9%	14.7%
Yes, some parents have asked me this year.	49.7%	37.7%	25.6%	37.6%
Yes, most parents have asked me this year.	1.9%	11.9%	25.9%	13.0%
Other	0.3%	0.0%	0.2%	0.1%

3.14. Early Learning Classrooms

Quality early learning and teaching happen within the classroom and the classroom conditions need to be conducive to high-quality teaching and learning. One factor contributing to conducive conditions is the number of children a practitioner is responsible for. The practitioners responded that on average they have 23 children enrolled to be in their classroom, but that only 18 children on average are present on a typical day. Practitioners further indicated that before COVID it was much more typical to have about 27.4 children on average in their class⁷⁷.

The regulations specify that the practitioner-child ratio should be 20 children to one practitioner for the 4-year-old age group and 30 children to one practitioner for the 5-year-old age group. In 18.8% of the ELPs, the practitioner we interviewed responded that she has more than 30 children in her class. Dependent on the size of an ELP, they may combine children of different age cohorts in one classroom. Just over three-quarters of the practitioners responded that they are only responsible for one or two cohorts of children, but a quarter responded that they have three or more cohorts combined in their classroom. Combining multiple age cohorts may lead to lower quality instruction since developmentally appropriate tasks differ so significantly for children of different ages.

Table 29: Practitioners - class size

	Percentage
The average number of children enrolled in the practitioner's class/group?	23.0
On a typical weekday, how many children are present in your class?	18.1
On a typical weekday, how many children were present in your class before the...	27.4
Percentage of programmes with classes larger than 30 children	18.8%
The practitioner is responsible for children of 1 or 2 age cohorts	77.0%
The practitioner is responsible for children of multiple age cohorts	23.0%

On average we see that ELPs have about 3 classrooms, with the children per classroom ranging from about 22.9 in the poorest quintile to 17.1 in the wealthiest two quintiles. Table 30 notes large differences among the provinces, with the child-to-class ratio ranging from 33.9 children per classroom in the Eastern Cape to 16 in the Western Cape.

Fieldworkers captured the different learning and teaching support material available (LTSM) at the ELP and again the differences in resources among the provinces are quite stark. In KwaZulu-Natal, classrooms were observed to have on average 9.2 different LTSMs, whereas in the Western Cape classrooms had on average 13 different LTSMs.

⁷⁷ It should be noted that this question was asked of the practitioners who were interviewed. The practitioners interviewed were the practitioners responsible for the 4-year olds and it is likely that the average number of children in the class is for children aged 4-years-old.

Table 30: Classroom conditions

	How many classrooms are there?	Children per classroom	Number of different LTSM	Number of different themed areas
Quintile Category				
1	2.7	22.9	10.5	3.8
2-3	2.8	21.3	10.9	4.1
4-5	3.6	17.1	12.0	4.2
Province				
EC	1.4	33.9	10.0	4.0
FS	3.9	18.9	10.6	5.1
GT	3.6	16.6	12.5	4.3
KZN	2.2	22.7	9.2	3.4
LIM	3.1	18.3	11.3	4.2
MP	3.6	20.6	10.4	3.8
NC	3.4	18.0	10.2	3.9
NW	2.7	17.7	11.2	4.2
WC	3.7	16.0	13.0	4.1
Registered as a Partial Care Facility				
Registered	3.2	20.9	11.6	4.4
Conditional	2.7	25.0	10.6	4.0
Not registered	2.7	18.9	10.3	3.5

Table 31 shows the prevalence of the different LTSMs in ELPs that are registered, conditionally registered⁸ and not registered. Registered ELPs are slightly better resourced than unregistered ELPs and this can be seen in terms of having resources such as clay, sticks, grasses, seeds, stuffed animals, balls, hula-hoops, buckets, sand and spades. The larger difference between registered and unregistered sites comes in with how the resources are grouped in themed areas. Registered ELPs are much more likely to have a larger variety of themed areas than unregistered sites.

Table 31: Learning and teaching support materials

	Registered as a Partial Care Facility			
	Registered	Conditional	Not registered	Total
Themed Areas				
Art (drawing, painting, cutting)	78.1%	72.5%	66.4%	73.7%
Big blocks	73.0%	52.6%	62.1%	67.3%
Fantasy (house, shop, clinic)	54.8%	47.4%	33.9%	47.1%
Educational toys	76.2%	58.0%	52.8%	66.6%

⁸ There are only a few ELPs in our sample that are conditionally registered. The estimates for the conditional registered ELPs should therefore be interpreted with caution.

Maths area	49.0%	39.4%	42.7%	46.0%
Writing area	59.0%	73.0%	49.2%	57.1%
Nature/ science area	26.5%	24.7%	32.0%	28.2%
Water & sand	22.3%	32.8%	14.2%	20.6%
None of these	4.6%	4.7%	14.9%	8.0%
LTSM				
Children's books	74.8%	73.1%	78.3%	75.8%
Puzzles/ games	78.9%	78.1%	75.2%	77.6%
Lego/ wooden blocks	63.6%	66.2%	64.2%	64.0%
Picture cards/ posters	83.9%	84.7%	83.3%	83.8%
Paint/ crayons	83.5%	81.1%	76.4%	80.9%
Pencils/ pens	78.0%	70.6%	71.4%	75.1%
Glue/ paper/ scissors	67.4%	59.5%	63.4%	65.3%
Clay/ playdough	54.8%	54.7%	29.8%	46.4%
Sticks/ grasses/ seeds	33.1%	11.6%	18.8%	26.2%
Dolls/ stuffed animals	62.4%	62.6%	52.6%	59.1%
Dress up clothes	44.2%	47.8%	37.4%	42.3%
Counting materials	57.9%	64.6%	57.1%	58.3%
Balls/ hula hoops	52.6%	42.0%	45.2%	49.1%
Buckets/ spades/ sand	46.1%	20.4%	32.5%	39.0%
Skipping ropes	45.2%	44.8%	38.4%	42.9%
Chairs & desks	88.4%	84.3%	77.1%	84.2%
Carpets to play on	76.4%	60.8%	67.5%	71.9%
Theme tables	36.9%	36.1%	34.4%	36.0%
Musical instruments	28.2%	20.3%	25.7%	26.6%
None of these	0.5%	0.0%	0.1%	0.3%

Vast differences were seen in the resourcing of ELPs based on their quintile status. Wealthier ELPs were more likely to have made the LTSM available to children to access. Wealthier ELPs were also more likely to have at least 10 children's books available and to have books that are age-appropriate for children of different ages. Finally, very few ELPs had no LTSM displayed on their walls, but the posters and charts in poorer ELPs were more likely to be either of poor or average quality than the LTSM displayed on the walls of wealthier ELPs.

Table 32: Accessibility of learning and teaching materials

	Quintile Category			
	1	2-3	4-5	Total
Materials are accessible to children	66.5%	73.7%	76.6%	72.7%
There are at least 10 children's books available	69.5%	79.2%	83.0%	77.6%
There are age-appropriate books for children of different ages	48.0%	62.8%	70.5%	61.1%
Learning and teaching support materials displayed against the walls				
No, there is nothing against the walls	2.6%	2.6%	1.2%	2.3%

There are, but of poor quality and not relevant to the age group	28.8%	25.3%	10.4%	22.4%
There are and it is of average quality and relevant to the age group	50.2%	58.5%	66.8%	58.5%
There are and it is stimulating and appropriate	18.4%	13.6%	21.6%	16.8%

3.15. ECD Facilities and infrastructure

The safety of the facilities in which an ELP operates is especially important because young children do not yet understand risks and dangers. This section will consider the safety of the infrastructure at ELPs and how conducive they are to the learning and teaching of young children.

Having safe and clean water is an important basic requirement for ensuring healthy children who can thrive developmentally. Overall, only 3.4% of ELPs stated that they do not have water at the facility. Quintile 1 ELPs were equally likely to have tap water inside their building or a rainwater tank on-site that they use as their main source of water. Quintile 2 and 3 ELPs were much more likely than their Quintile 1 counterparts to have tap water in the building, but often also relied on tap water outside the building or a rainwater tank as their main source of water. ELPs in the wealthiest two quintiles mostly had tap water in the building, with only a few ELPs using tap water outside of the building or a communal tap for their water supply. Fieldworkers were asked to test whether the water was running or available on the day of the visit and in 89.4% of ELPs this was the case. Fieldworkers also deemed the water to be clean and drinkable in almost all of the ELPs.

ELPs used an array of facilities for handwashing, including buckets, tippy-taps and normal taps. Quintile 4 and 5 ELPs were more likely than ELPs from the bottom three quintiles to use taps, whereas ELPs in the bottom three quintiles were more likely to use buckets. Overall, fieldworkers rated the handwashing facilities to be child-friendly at most of the facilities.

Table 33: ECD Infrastructure: Water

	Quintile Category			
	1	2-3	4-5	Total
The main source of water:				
None	3.7%	2.8%	4.4%	3.4%
Tap water in the building	38.5%	56.0%	85.2%	59.1%
Tap water on-site/ outside the building	6.4%	14.4%	5.5%	10.1%
Public or communal tap off-site	2.7%	3.7%	4.0%	3.5%
Bore-hole water on-site	10.2%	4.7%	0.3%	5.0%
Rainwater tank on-site	37.6%	17.7%	0.0%	18.1%
Other	1.0%	0.7%	0.5%	0.7%
There is running water on the day of the visit	84.9%	91.2%	90.4%	89.4%
The running water is drinkable	99.6%	97.7%	95.6%	97.6%
Handwashing facilities are child friendly	98.8%	90.7%	97.1%	94.3%
Handwashing facility:				

Tap	47.4%	46.2%	65.6%	51.4%
Tippy-tap	29.0%	39.8%	32.2%	35.2%
Bowl/ bucket	53.6%	54.3%	45.7%	52.0%

No large difference exists between ELPs from different income areas in whether there are separate toilets for staff and children, or boys and girls. Overall, around three-quarters of ELPs had separate toilets for the staff and the children, and almost half had separate toilets for the boys and the girls. The type of toilets available in ELPs, however, differed more between ELPs in the different quintiles. Fortunately, only a negligible number of ELPs had no sanitation facilities. As to be expected, ELPs in wealthier areas where the municipal infrastructure is more established, were much more likely to have flush toilets connected to the sewer system. ELPs in the poorer areas, on the other hand, were much more likely to have either a pit latrine with or without ventilation. Overall, 14.7% of ELPs had potties available for children and only very few ELPs had toilets that are suitable for people with disabilities. About 80.3% of ELPs in quintile 1 were deemed to be clean and safe to use for children, whereas this was the case in 89.5% of quintile 2 and 3, and 91.1% of quintile 4 and 5 ELPs.

Table 34: Infrastructure: Sanitation

	Quintile Category			Total
	1	2-3	4-5	
Type of toilets at the Early Learning Programme:				
No toilets	1.8%	2.2%	1.0%	1.8%
Flush connected to sewer-system	31.7%	54.7%	85.3%	56.8%
Flush connected to septic tank	4.9%	3.2%	5.9%	4.3%
Chemical Toilet	2.3%	2.5%	0.0%	1.8%
Pit latrine with ventilation	25.6%	19.8%	1.9%	16.7%
Pit latrine without ventilation	36.7%	23.1%	6.3%	22.2%
Bucket	0.9%	6.4%	2.0%	3.9%
Potties	13.2%	14.1%	17.2%	14.7%
Toilets for people with disabilities	1.9%	0.7%	0.5%	0.9%
There are separate toilets for staff and children	81.9%	76.0%	75.6%	77.4%
There are separate toilets for the boys and girls	45.7%	48.0%	50.9%	48.2%
The toilets are clean and safe to use for children	80.3%	89.5%	91.1%	87.6%
There is toilet paper available	74.9%	82.6%	81.7%	80.5%

The average number of toilets per ELP did not vary much between ELPs from different quintiles. On average there are about 2.8 toilets in total available in an ELP, and this entailed 4 children’s toilets on average and 1.5 adult toilets on average. The child-to-toilet ratio differed more between ELPs for the different quintiles, with the ratio being higher in ELPs in the wealthier quintiles (about 24:1) than in the lower quintiles (about 17.5:1 in quintile 1).

Table 35: Number of toilets

	Quintile Category
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	1	2-3	4-5	Total
The average number of toilets in the ELP	2.9	2.6	3.1	2.8
The average number of children's toilets in the ELP	4.2	4.0	3.6	4.0
The average number of adult toilets in the ELP	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5
The average number of children per toilet	17.5	18.1	24.0	19.4

Electricity from mains is the most common source of power and energy used for heating ELPs and lighting in ELPs. However, gas is much more common as a source of energy for cooking. Figure 10 shows that there is a slight difference in ELPs from different wealth areas, with ELPs in quintile 1 being more likely to not have any source of energy for lighting and heating than ELPs in wealthier quintiles. ELPs in poorer areas are also more likely to make use of alternative sources of energy such as coal, wood and paraffin for heating or providing light for their ELPs.

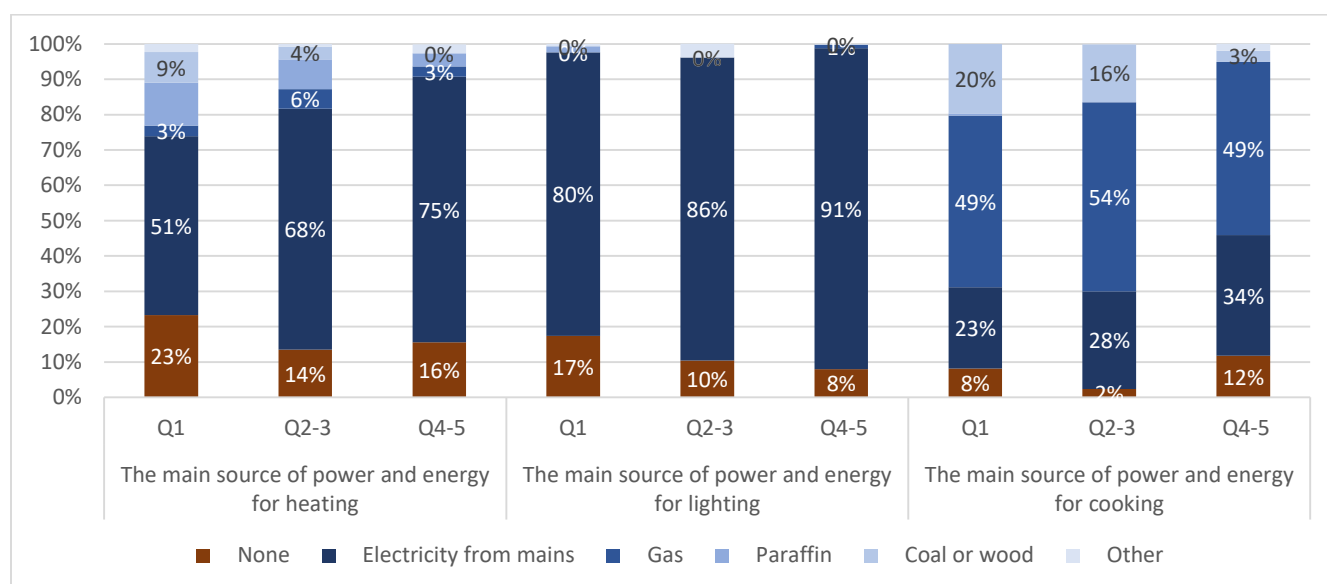


Figure 10: Sources of energy

The majority of the ELPs, regardless of the wealth of the area in which they are situated, were operating from structures built of bricks or blocks with a tile or zinc roof. A few of the ELPs were operating out of a shack and this was more often the case among the ELPs in quintiles 2 to 5. In quintile 1 the prevalence of mud structures was slightly more frequent, with 5% of ELPs operating from mud structures. About a third of ELPs in quintiles 4 and 5 were operating from shared facilities where other activities are also run from the same building (for example a church, a community centre etc).

Table 36: Type of structure

	Quintile Category			
	1	2-3	4-5	Total
In what type of building does the ELP operate?				
Conventional, brick or block with tile or zinc roof	90.0%	81.6%	86.8%	85.0%

Traditional, mortar or mud walls with zinc or thatch roof	5.0%	2.4%	0.3%	2.5%
Modified shipping container	1.5%	2.6%	2.0%	2.2%
Prefab building	0.1%	1.6%	0.3%	0.9%
Informal housing (shack)	3.5%	11.1%	10.1%	8.9%
Other	0.0%	0.6%	0.5%	0.4%
Is the building being used only for this ELP or for other activities?				
Only this ELP	85.2%	81.8%	68.3%	79.2%
Other activities as well	14.8%	18.2%	31.7%	20.8%

Most ELPs had an outdoor play area, but unregistered ELPs were slightly more likely not to have had an outdoor play area. The registered ELPs were also much more likely to have outdoor play equipment such as a jungle gym, swings, a slide and a sand pit. 13.6% of unregistered ELPs did not have any of the above-mentioned equipment. Furthermore, if unregistered sites had outdoor equipment, they were often deemed to be in some working condition, but not in a good condition. As to be expected, differences in the resourcing and condition of outdoor equipment were also observed among ELPs in the different quintiles, with ELPs in wealthier areas being better resourced than ELPs in poorer areas. The same trend is also evident in whether there is a fence around the outdoor play area and whether someone is checking whether people enter or leave the premises.

Table 37: Outdoor conditions

	Quintile Category			Registration Status		Total
	1	2-3	4-5	Not Registered	Conditionally/ Fully Registered	
Is there an outdoor play area?						
No	12.2%	10.7%	14.1%	18.0%	9.4%	12.0%
Yes, on the ELP's premises	87.7%	89.1%	83.2%	80.9%	89.9%	87.2%
Yes, on public land nearby (e.g. park or playground)	0.1%	0.2%	2.7%	1.1%	0.7%	0.8%
Outdoor equipment						
Jungle gym	60.9%	64.0%	70.0%	50.5%	70.4%	64.8%
Swings	69.6%	79.6%	83.8%	64.1%	83.7%	78.2%
Slide	70.0%	63.0%	79.1%	57.8%	73.2%	68.9%
Sand tray/ pit	32.3%	37.6%	44.3%	26.7%	42.4%	38.0%
None	2.7%	10.2%	2.9%	13.6%	3.7%	6.5%
What condition is the outside playground equipment in?						
Bad (Mostly broken and unused)	27.2%	16.6%	8.9%	17.0%	17.4%	17.3%
Okay (some in working condition)	34.0%	40.8%	34.7%	48.3%	33.5%	37.4%
Fine (mostly in working condition)	28.3%	31.1%	34.3%	20.6%	35.1%	31.2%
Very good	10.4%	11.5%	22.2%	14.1%	14.0%	14.0%

There is a fence around the outside play area	43.9%	53.2%	83.7%	74.6%	52.2%	58.5%
There is a fence around the premises	99.6%	97.6%	93.0%	92.0%	98.9%	96.9%
There is a lockable gate to monitor access	89.0%	94.2%	92.2%	84.0%	96.0%	92.4%
Someone is checking who enters/ leaves	54.3%	63.7%	73.8%	55.7%	67.5%	63.9%

In general, registered ELPs were slightly less likely than the unregistered ELPs to have safety hazards visible at the facility. For example, 24.5% of unregistered ELPs had a leaking roof, whereas this was the case in only 10.8% of registered ELPs. Similarly, 20.9% of unregistered ELPs had broken windows, whereas only 10.9% of registered ELPs had broken windows. Overall, 58.7% of ELPs had no visible safety hazards.

Table 38: Safety hazards in the facility of the ELP

	Registered as either PC/ Programme		
	Not Registered	Conditionally/ Fully Registered	Total
Broken/ uneven floors	14.5%	12.5%	13.1%
Broken chairs/ tables	5.6%	5.5%	5.5%
Sharp/ rusting play materials	10.4%	4.4%	6.2%
A leaking roof/ ceiling	24.5%	10.8%	14.9%
Broken windows/ doors	20.9%	10.9%	13.9%
Open pits/ holes	13.3%	9.3%	10.5%
Rocky/ littered playground	11.7%	9.2%	10.0%
Exposed electrical wiring	4.0%	3.8%	3.9%
None of these	54.8%	60.3%	58.7%

4. Associations with early learning outcomes

This section investigates whether there are any significant associations between the contextual factors in ELPs and children’s early learning outcomes as measured by the Early Learning Outcome Measure (ELOM)⁹ that was administered for the development of the Thrive by Five Index. Although the data does not allow us to better understand what causes better quality early learning outcomes, it does help point us in the direction of the factors which are common among higher-performing ELPs. The factors are grouped into five themes, namely resources, principal and practitioner factors, funding, expenditure and parental involvement.

Regression analysis was run (Table 39) to analyse the associations between the themes and child outcomes, and all the models controlled for province and quintile as the stratification variables.

⁹ More information on the ELOM is available in the ELOM technical manual and the Thrive by Five technical report.

Differences among provinces and quintiles will therefore not be discussed.¹⁰ The base model included the stratification variables, as well as child-level variables such as the number of years the child has been in the ELP, whether the child receives the child support grant, child gender and whether the child is considered to be stunted or not (that is, their height for age measure is >2 standard deviations below the WHO reference group median). Regardless of the controls included in the models, being stunted remains consistently negatively associated with learning outcomes, affirming the international literature on the detrimental effect that stunting has on learning outcomes.

The final model was run only on the ELPs in poorer contexts as determined by the ELPs who charge fees below R400. This model was included to see whether the associations found are driven by the ELPs serving the wealthier population, or whether they hold in poorer contexts as well.

The first theme looked at resources to see whether better-resourced ELPs tend to have higher child outcomes. The regression result shows, however, that no statistically significant associations were found in terms of the level of resourcing. To illustrate this, figure 11 shows the average total ELOM score (ranging between 0 – 100) for registered, conditionally registered and non-registered ELPs. With registered ELPs being more formalised and having met certain norms and standards criteria, one would expect that they may have better child outcomes. Figure 11 however, does not show a very clear relationship between an ELPs registration status and early learning outcomes. The same trend exists if one only considers ELPs in poorer areas. This suggests that among ELPs in similar wealth contexts, registered ELPs do not necessarily deliver better child outcomes. The other measures of resources, such as class size, the number of different LTSM resources, the number of different themed areas and the number of different outdoor equipment, also showed no significant association with child outcomes.

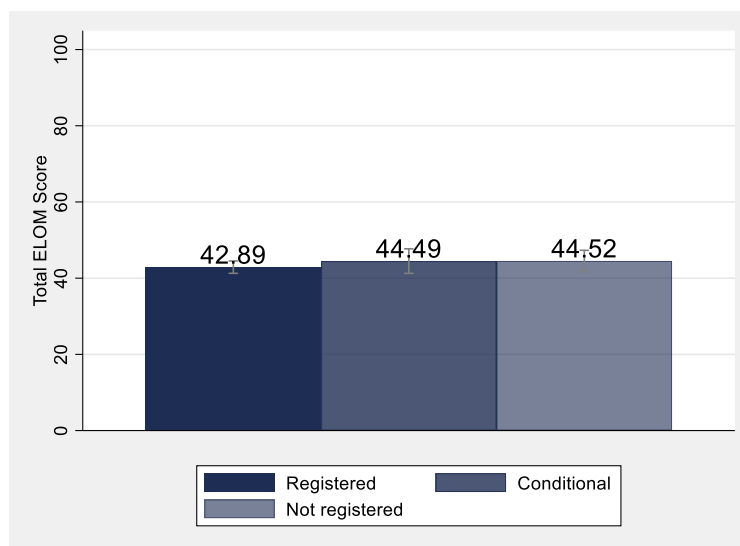


Figure 11: Association between registration status and child outcomes

The second theme considered the association between principals and practitioner factors with child outcomes. Figures 10a and 10b show that relative to practitioners and principals who have education

¹⁰ The regression models were run with standard errors clustered at the ELP level.

levels below the completion of secondary school, those who have completed Grade 12 do see slightly higher child-level outcomes. However, once controlling for various other contextual factors in the regressions, we only see a significantly positive association with child outcome for principals who completed Grade 12, relative to those who did not complete Grade 12. This association also did not hold among the ELPs which charge fees below R400. Practitioner’s years of experience, whether a practitioner uses a lesson plan, whether the practitioner has received training in the NCF, in quality classroom practices or emergent literacy, all did not have any significant association with child outcomes.

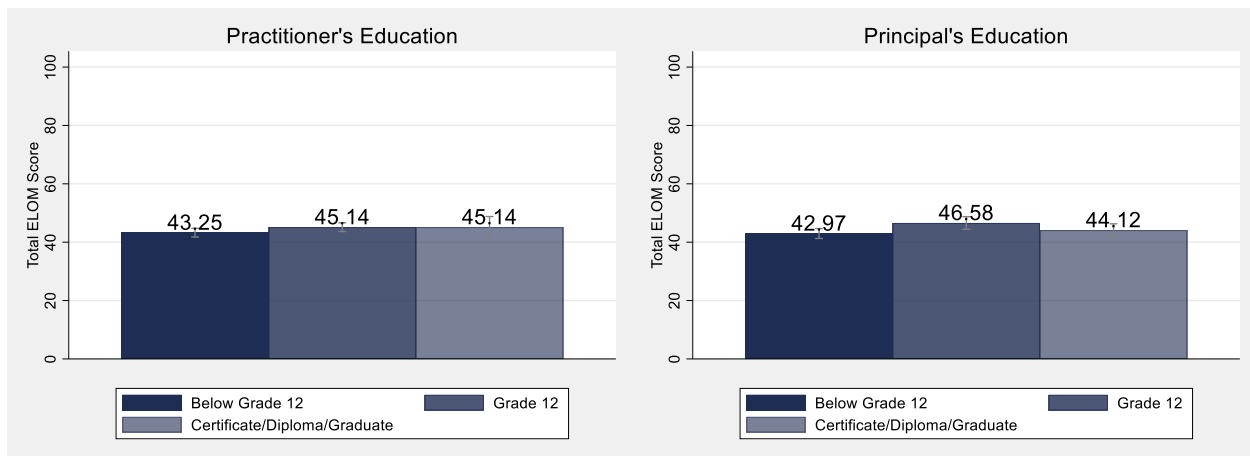


Figure 12a and b: Practitioners’ and principals’ levels of education

Theme three focussed on the funding that ELPs received, most notably from charging fees. A strong positive association is found between the amount of the fees that an ELP charges and child outcomes, and this association is mostly driven by the ELPs who charge fees in the top fees brackets (fees ranging between R400 – R3500 per month). Moreover, parents’ ability to pay the fees also had a strong positive association with child outcomes. Figures 13 and 14 show the average total ELOM score for ELPs who charges fees in the different fee brackets¹¹, as well as the average total ELOM score disaggregated by parents’ ability to pay the fees. In both figures, the positive association is rather clear. Figure 15 shows that this association remains statistically significant even after controlling for all other factors. The strong positive associations found between child outcomes and the amount of the fees charged, as well as the ability of parents to pay indicate the deep dependence of ELPs on receiving an income from fees not only for financial sustainability but also for quality child outcomes. Under this theme, we also controlled for the amount of income the ELP received from the Department of DSD, but this did not seem to play a role in terms of child outcomes at all. These results hold even in the model where we only include ELPs charging fees below R400.

¹¹ The fee brackets were constructed by first ranking the responses on the fees charged from low to high, and then grouping them in five equally sized groups.

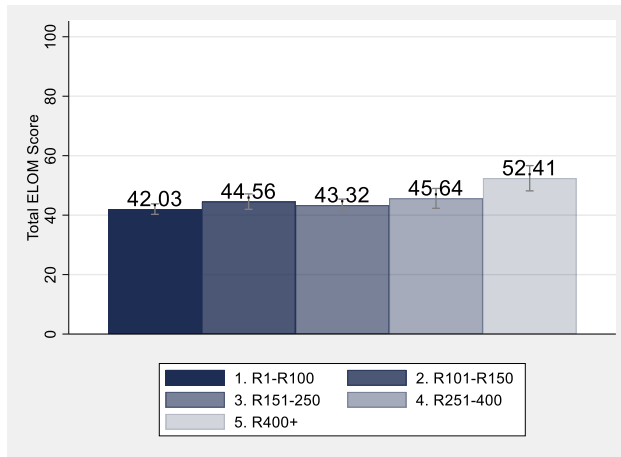


Figure 13: Association between fees charged and child outcomes

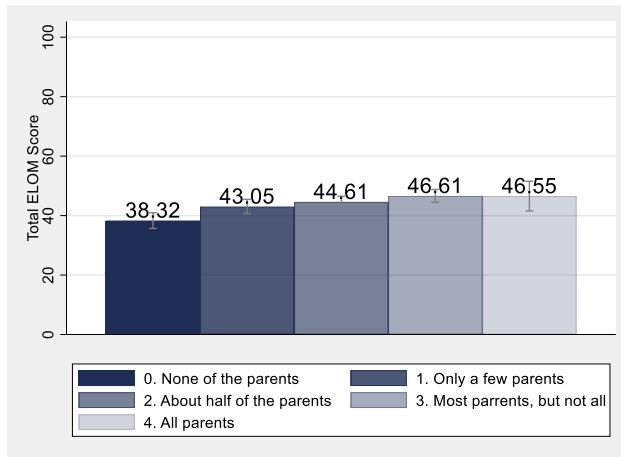


Figure 14: Association between parent's ability to pay fees and child outcomes

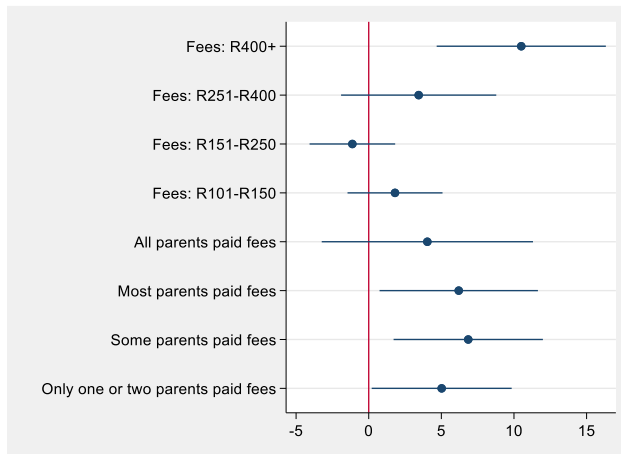


Figure 15: Coefficients for the association between funding and child outcomes

The strong association between the income received from fees and child outcomes could be because of two reasons. Firstly, it could be that the higher income allows ELPs to spend their funding differently and

thereby achieve better child outcomes. Or secondly, it could be a proxy for the households that children come from through their ability to afford higher fees. To try to better understand which of these pathways could be more applicable, two further themes were explored. The first considered how the income was spent, by considering the association that the proportion spent on various expenditures may have with child outcomes. The regression results suggest that the proportion of funding spent on various expenditures does not seem to have made a difference, except for ELPs who spend a larger proportion of their income on admin. This likely does not indicate that admin in itself plays a significant role, but rather indicates that ELPs with a large enough income to be able to afford to spend a larger proportion of their funds on their admin may be the higher performing ELPs.

The second reason could be that higher-income parents can afford to pay higher fees and that this variable captures the home background factors associated with higher-income families. Section 3.13 showed that parents in the higher quintile areas were more likely to have shown a higher involvement with their child’s progress. Similarly, figure 16 shows that ELPs, where the parents were more likely to have asked the ELPs about their child’s progress (a proxy for parents who are more involved) on average, had higher child outcomes. However, once controlling for all other factors, this association becomes insignificant.

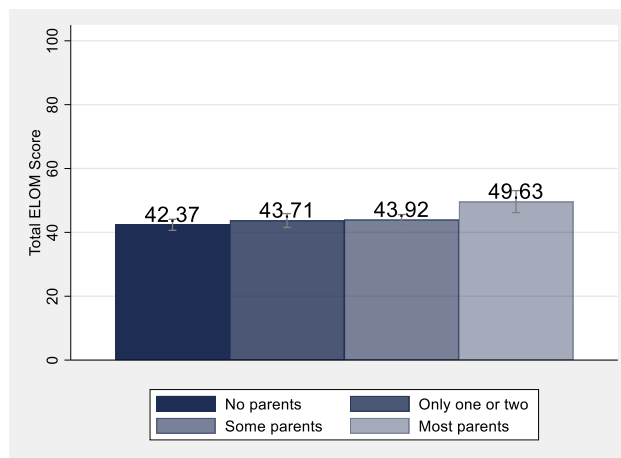


Figure 16: Association between parents asking about their child’s progress and child outcomes

Table 39: Regression models

		Only child-level factors	Including resources	Including principal & practitioner factors	Including funding	Including expenditure	Including parental involvement	Restricting to cheaper ELPs
		(Base)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Child level factors	Female	2.564*** (0.494)	1.624** (0.772)	1.171 (0.736)	1.345 (0.832)	1.275 (0.831)	1.317 (0.831)	1.333 (0.919)
	Receive CSG	-1.993 (1.279)	-3.483** (1.487)	-3.745*** (1.441)	-0.712 (1.637)	-0.773 (1.598)	-0.656 (1.560)	-0.444 (1.567)
	Years in the ELP	0.54 (0.391)	0.394 (0.545)	0.506 (0.570)	0.316 (0.619)	0.185 (0.605)	0.093 (0.599)	0.673 (0.601)

	Stunted/ severely stunted	-3.016** (1.332)	-5.185*** (1.717)	-4.190** (1.779)	-3.713** (1.828)	-3.631** (1.752)	-3.577** (1.750)	-4.327** (1.710)
Stratification	Eastern Cape	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)
	Free State	-6.465*** (1.771)	-3.457 (2.602)	-3.441 (2.611)	-6.378* (3.462)	-6.909* (3.625)	-7.143** (3.594)	-6.788* (3.806)
	Gauteng	-1.185 (1.770)	-1.409 (2.608)	-1.265 (2.808)	-5.980* (3.507)	-6.094* (3.498)	-5.884* (3.546)	-5.964 (3.814)
	KwaZulu-Natal	-4.161*** (1.313)	-1.766 (1.935)	-1.552 (2.644)	-3.49 (3.566)	-4.318 (3.745)	-3.564 (3.797)	-3.332 (4.089)
	Limpopo	1.175 (1.395)	1.849 (2.051)	1.847 (2.096)	-1.614 (3.049)	-2.089 (2.823)	-1.333 (3.003)	-2.479 (3.009)
	Mpumalanga	8.215*** (1.601)	8.537*** (2.252)	8.447*** (2.272)	6.325* (3.324)	5.184 (3.217)	5.513* (3.307)	5.051 (3.292)
	North West	-3.413* (1.909)	-1.151 (2.782)	-1.308 (2.723)	-3.802 (3.292)	-3.7 (3.445)	-4.143 (3.408)	-4.111 (3.438)
	Northern Cape	0.163 (1.489)	1.744 (2.301)	1.009 (2.417)	-2.915 (3.427)	-3.204 (3.600)	-2.597 (3.983)	-2.576 (4.323)
	Western Cape	6.983*** (1.782)	9.515*** (2.665)	8.410*** (2.564)	3.643 (3.425)	3.991 (3.522)	4.339 (3.608)	4.105 (3.796)
	Quintile 1	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)
	Quintile 2	1.107 (0.993)	0.24 (1.406)	0.422 (1.462)	-0.035 (1.596)	-0.261 (1.550)	-0.579 (1.532)	-0.66 (1.494)
	Quintile 3	2.168** (1.102)	1.904 (1.495)	1.728 (1.534)	1.355 (1.569)	1.387 (1.354)	1.169 (1.363)	1.335 (1.337)
	Quintile 4	1.902 (1.458)	-0.277 (1.888)	0.263 (1.943)	-1.768 (2.194)	-1.025 (2.203)	-1.819 (2.293)	0.102 (2.474)
	Quintile 5	4.748*** (1.485)	4.528* (2.349)	4.949* (2.557)	3.266 (2.580)	3.676 (2.405)	2.589 (2.326)	3.938 (2.706)
Resources	Registered with DSD		0.708 (1.407)	-0.272 (1.380)	1.928 (1.598)	2.382 (1.621)	2.684* (1.588)	2.218 (1.755)
	Conditionally registered with DSD		0.018 (2.317)	-0.209 (2.371)	1.021 (2.601)	0.948 (2.435)	0.973 (2.400)	0.92 (2.748)
	Not Registered		0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)
	Number of different LTSM		0.144 (0.182)	0.124 (0.186)	0.099 (0.202)	0.021 (0.195)	0.044 (0.193)	-0.015 (0.223)
	Number of different themed areas		-0.499 (0.372)	-0.466 (0.355)	-0.551 (0.397)	-0.639* (0.368)	-0.593 (0.363)	-0.447 (0.402)

	Number of different outdoor equipment	0.359 (0.743)	0.527 (0.757)	0.124 (0.762)	0.387 (0.756)	0.211 (0.782)	0.442 (0.831)	
	Class size	0.035 (0.061)	0.039 (0.063)	0.004 (0.063)	-0.014 (0.058)	-0.028 (0.058)	0.004 (0.060)	
Principals and practitioner factors	Principal Education: < Grade 12		0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	
	Principal Education: Grade 12		2.178 (1.328)	2.298 (1.469)	2.616* (1.386)	2.298* (1.355)	1.728 (1.335)	
	Principal Education: Certificate/ Diploma/ Degree		1.111 (2.073)	1.324 (2.214)	2.073 (2.281)	1.396 (2.244)	1.229 (2.588)	
	Practitioner Education: < Grade 12		0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	
	Practitioner Education: Grade 12		1.084 (1.268)	1.222 (1.282)	0.732 (1.231)	0.239 (1.205)	0.736 (1.300)	
	Practitioner Education: Certificate/ Diploma/ Degree		0.888 (2.142)	0.439 (2.122)	-0.779 (2.120)	-1.218 (2.073)	-3.575 (2.376)	
	Practitioner years of experience		0.063 (0.102)	0.09 (0.101)	0.028 (0.093)	0.008 (0.093)	-0.013 (0.100)	
	The practitioner uses a lesson plan		0.148 (1.447)	0.307 (1.379)	1.264 (1.392)	1.875 (1.477)	2.177 (1.586)	
	Practitioner received NCF training		-0.103 (1.275)	0.024 (1.369)	0.101 (1.358)	0.184 (1.338)	-1.078 (1.352)	
	Practitioner received training in Quality Classroom Practices		0.238 (1.495)	-0.397 (1.566)	0.709 (1.474)	0.227 (1.492)	0.795 (1.443)	
	Practitioner received training in Emergent Literacy		0.17 (1.722)	0.139 (1.749)	-0.356 (1.666)	-0.56 (1.602)	1.253 (1.595)	
	Funding	Fees: <= R100		0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)	0 (.)
		Fees: R101-R200			1.282 (1.930)	1.196 (1.699)	1.782 (1.662)	1.627 (1.570)
Fees: R201-R400				-1.239 (1.550)	-1.063 (1.531)	-0.899 (1.514)	-0.943 (1.523)	
Fees: R400-R1000				4.559* (2.341)	4.703** (2.390)	3.966 (2.614)	3.188 (2.551)	
Fees: >R1000				9.614***	10.933***	11.064***		

				(2.775)	(2.896)	(2.902)		
	None of the parents paid fees			0	0	0	0	
				(.)	(.)	(.)	(.)	
	Only a few parents paid fees			2.143	5.095**	5.035**	5.256**	
				(2.427)	(2.448)	(2.441)	(2.665)	
	About half of parents paid fees			4.426	7.143***	6.864***	6.570**	
				(2.703)	(2.620)	(2.607)	(2.769)	
	Most parents paid fees			4.093	6.345**	6.094**	6.250**	
				(2.734)	(2.713)	(2.752)	(2.950)	
	All parents paid fees			1.474	4.577	3.962	1.377	
				(3.560)	(3.782)	(3.711)	(3.957)	
	Amount of funding received from DSD			0	0	0	0	
				(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.000)	
Expenditure	Percentage of expenditure on food				0.124	0.139	0.074	
					(0.131)	(0.132)	(0.125)	
	Percentage of expenditure on staff				0.084	0.117	0.027	
					(0.128)	(0.128)	(0.117)	
	Percentage of expenditure on rent				-0.076	-0.068	-0.277	
					(0.182)	(0.179)	(0.273)	
	Percentage of expenditure on LTSM				0.077	0.092	0.014	
				(0.136)	(0.137)	(0.126)		
	Percentage of expenditure on maintenance				0.133	0.175	0.086	
					(0.133)	(0.135)	(0.128)	
	Percentage of expenditure on admin				0.273**	0.292**	0.235*	
					(0.137)	(0.137)	(0.125)	
Parental involvement	No parents contacted ELP					0	0	
						(.)	(.)	
	Only one or two parents contacted ELP					-0.844	0.121	
						(1.923)	(2.077)	
	Some parents contacted ELP					-1.904	-0.275	
					(1.710)	(1.715)		
	Most parents contacted ELP					1.527	2.472	
						(2.064)	(2.077)	
	Constant	42.161***	41.488***	39.972***	36.773***	24.049*	22.752	28.880**
		(2.060)	(3.263)	(3.422)	(4.561)	(13.997)	(14.054)	(13.209)
	N	3993	1782	1715	1461	1429	1422	1275
	R-Squared	0.148	0.177	0.185	0.231	0.258	0.267	0.216

5. Recommendations

The findings in this report provide useful insights into the conditions in ELPs and provide many lessons for the DBE in the development of appropriately targeted intervention programmes. These lessons can be grouped into five themes:

1. **Provide support to ELPs to meet the minimum norms and standards:** Many ELPs do not meet all the minimum norms and standards and a three-pronged approach will be required to enable all ELPs to meet the minimum norms and standards:
 - i) Some of these require some financial investment and a **costed package of support** will need to be developed to provide ELPs with the resources required to meet the standards.
 - ii) However, many of the minimum norms or standards can be met through strengthened management practices. In these cases, the Vangasali registration pack will already provide ELPs with the guidance and templates to meet these standards and the DBE district offices need to ensure that **all unregistered ELPs are provided with these registration packs**.
 - iii) Some of the minimum standards, however, are dependent on the functionality of the local municipality and DBE district offices will need **closer collaboration with the local municipality** in resolving these matters. These include, for instance working closer with the zoning and environmental health offices.
2. **Provide support to ELPs to improve learning outcomes:**
 - i) ELPs responded that they received frequent visits from the DSD before the COVID pandemic hit. In light of the function shift to the DBE, it is clear that a concerted effort will need to be made by the DBE to ensure that ELPs receive the same level of ongoing support that they received under the DSD, but that this **support has a strong focus on classroom practices**.
 - ii) Practitioners were most likely to use practitioner guides in their lesson preparation. Ensuring that all practitioners have **access to high-quality practitioner guides** can therefore improve the quality of care and education practices, and hopefully also early learning outcomes.
 - iii) The low use of the DBE's Grade R toolkit suggests that this resource was only made available to Grade R practitioners in primary schools and that further efforts should be made to **ensure that the Grade R toolkit is made available to Grade R classes in ELPs** as well.
3. **Strengthen human resource development:**
 - 1) Often the focus of human resource conversations is around the conditions of service for ECD practitioners, which is rightly so given that they make up over half of all staff members employed at ELPs. However, there is also a large proportion of staff (29.5%) who provide support services and **cognizance needs to be made of the support staff** in the development of a national human resource development plan.
 - 2) 42.8% of the teaching staff at ELPs do not yet meet the minimum requirement of at least an NQF level 4 qualification, and 22.8% had no ECD-specific qualification. A well-targeted programme will therefore need to be developed to ensure the **upskilling of teaching staff to meet the minimum standards**. This signifies the importance of the DBE in prioritizing the **development of a human resources development plan that is developmental and considers the current low levels of ECD-specific training** that our ECD practitioners have.

- 3) Improving the management of ELPs can also have significant benefits to learning outcomes. This can include **training and supporting principals** in leadership skills, strengthening their governance process and facilitating peer-to-peer learning.
 - 4) ELPs need to be encouraged and guided to take up **the benefits of current government initiatives that can support the payment of staff**, such as the Community Works Programme, the Extended Public Works Programme, the DBE learnership programme or the Youth Employment Service initiative.
- 4. Improve the level and efficiency of funding of ELPs:** The deep dependence of ELPs on the payment of fees for both the financial sustainability of the ELP, as well as the quality of services delivered by the ELP has once again been highlighted in the findings of this report.
- i) The amount of fees charged and parents' ability to pay the fees were the strongest determinants of ELP quality. Supplementing parents' payment of fees through **expanding access to the ECD subsidy** is therefore a key investment that the state can make in children's developmental outcomes.
 - ii) **Review the ECD Subsidy amount:** The majority of ECD practitioners receive salaries which are below minimum wage, and with their current funding models, ELPs are not in a position to pay practitioners at minimum wage. A review of the ECD subsidy amount can assist in understanding what the needs of ELPs are to pay practitioners at least at the minimum wage level while maintaining the prescribed staff: child ratios.
 - iii) **ELP expenditure ratio:** Comparing actual expenditure to the recommended expenditure, it is clear that there is a need to **review the recommended expenditure ratio** to be more in line with the needs of ELPs.
- 5. Improve the accessibility of ELPs for children with disabilities:** In terms of accessibility for children with disabilities, ELPs still have many improvements to make. Practitioners need to **receive training on the identification** and support of children with disabilities, ELPs need guidance on **low-cost solutions in making their facilities accessible** for children with disabilities and **closer collaboration with the local health workers** needs to be fostered to ensure efficient referrals are made of children who are at risk of developmental delays.