



NDA

National
Development
Agency

September 2012

Case Study

Promoting and sharing of development experience and debate on
development policy

Custoda ECD Trust

Established in 1993

This case study reflects on the role and contribution of the Custoda project on training the 80 Early childhood development practitioners to obtain a level 4 ECD qualification in the Northern Cape province .

The paper highlights the implementation by the project and the evaluation conducted by the NDA.

This case study outlines:

- Introduction about the Custoda project
- Background on the ECD sector in SA
- Methodology used by the project
- Achievements of the project

A best practice report will be written to reflect on strengths, challenges and lessons learned by the project.

Introduction

The Custoda ECD Trust is a registered public benefit organization in terms of the income tax act and was established in 1993. It is located in Ulco in the Francis Baard municipality of the Northern Cape province. It provides training, support and advice in the field of early childhood development and community skills development by providing accredited qualifications, skills courses and programmes aimed at enhancing the individuals and organizational capacity. Custoda Trust received funding from the National Development Agency to train 80 ECD practitioners to attain a formal level 4 ECD qualification accredited by the ETDP seta.

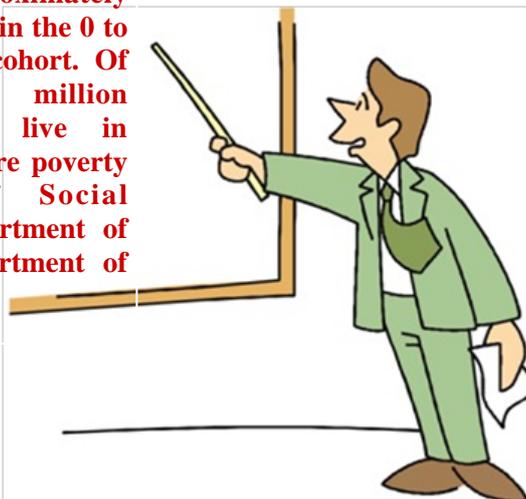
The project has a policy of learning and career– pathing; which means that potential students are encouraged and assisted to advance their qualifications beyond the level 4. In addition to the improved quality of ECD teaching, the project also provides added exit benefits to the participants who graduate with a formal qualification in the education sector.

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There is a serious lack of fully qualified ECD Level 4 practitioners in the Northern Cape province. As a result, most of the ECD centres in the Northern Cape rural areas are day care centres where very little cognitive stimulation takes place.

There are approximately 6.5 million children in the 0 to 6 year old age cohort. Of these, some 3.8 million children (59.2%) live in circumstances of dire poverty (Department of Social Development, Department of Education & Department of Health, 2004).



BACKGROUND ON CHALLENGES FACING THE ECD SECTOR IN SA

It is important to have a picture of the early childhood development (ECD) sector in South Africa, as the issues that emerge from this case study will be better understood with this background in mind.

The majority of young children in South Africa have been negatively impacted by a range of social and economic inequalities. Apartheid and the resultant socio-economic inequalities have created a childhood of adversity for most African children including inadequate access to health care, education, social services and quality nutrition. This has undermined the development of South Africa's youngest children.

Within the South African Constitution, through the Bill of Rights, provision is made for children's socio-economic rights, including the right to basic education, protection from neglect, abuse and exploitation. However, as outlined in a report by the National Children's Rights Committee (NCRC) and NPOs, "South Africa still has a long way to go to effect the quality of life for the majority of her children".

The National Department of Education defines early childhood development (ECD) as "The processes by which children from birth to 9 years of age grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially". The National Department of Basic Education is responsible for the 5 to 9 year old age cohort, and the Department of Social Development is focused on the birth to 4 year old age cohort. The Department of Health covers the birth to 9 year old age cohort (Department of Education, 2001).

Quality teaching and learning is essential for effective early development to take place. Regardless of the situation or the facility in which a child is placed, a quality teacher can provide a learning environment in which a child can develop in a holistic manner.

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In order to produce quality ECD teachers, various training and educational opportunities are made available through short skills programmes, as well as through full ECD qualifications.

In South Africa, qualifications are established by the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). Training in these ECD qualifications is offered by a number of training facilities, including Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, private universities, as well as ECD non-profit organisations (NPOs). To provide a qualification, the service provider/institution must be accredited by the ETDP-SETA (Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority).

The NQF Further Education and Training Certificate: ECD (Level 4) qualification has become the entry-level qualification for ECD practitioners. It serves as the equivalent of a Grade 12, and a Grade 9 certificate is required for entry. This qualification aims to provide ECD practitioners with the necessary skills to facilitate the holistic development of young children (including those children with special needs), and offer quality ECD services in a variety of settings (such as at ECD centres, home-based ECD centres, or within community-based services).

Learnerships were introduced by the Department of Labour after the announcement of the Skills Development Act of 1998, and form the basis of the National Skills Development Strategy (Department of Social Development & UNICEF, 2006). Learnerships involve training in one of the ECD NQF Level qualifications (4 or 5), as well as workplace learning at an ECD facility. Teachers who are trained under the learnership programme do not pay for their training and receive a stipend for the duration of their training.



Methodology used by the project

The methodology of implementation used by Custoda was applied according to the requirements from the ETQA (Education and Training Quality Assurance).

The method of implementation consisted of the following:

- 5 day modules x2 of contact training
- Seven modules for Core and Electives
- 3 modules for fundamentals (namely, mathematical literacy and communication in two South African languages)
- Assessment for progress and implementation after each modular training.
- Capacity building—to harness the advocacy skills of the community leaders which would enable them to effectively mobilize financial and non-financial resources necessary to equip their community in dealing with socio-economic and environmental challenges.
- Portfolios are assessed and moderated to conform to SAQF standards.
- Two site visits for each site, to assess implementation,

Achievements

provide support, and monitor progress.

Based on the close out evaluation report commissioned by the NDA, it is clear that the project has been a success.

All enrolled practitioners have a level 4 ECD qualification— Of the 80 students who enrolled for the course, 70 were able to successfully complete the course, whilst one student passed away during the period of training, this reflects a 100 % pass rate of the enrolled students.

There is an increase in the income of practitioners - The practitioners earned an average of R400 per month before the enrollment. Subsequent to the completion of the course, 72 of the 79 ECD practitioners are now getting a stipend of R1200 per month and the remaining 7 ECD practitioners receive a salary of approximately R 4000 per month.

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Due to the successful implementation of the course by Custoda, an increased number of ECD practitioners have applied for enrolment, 267 students were on the waiting list for enrolment at the time of writing this case study.

Close- Out Evaluation

Closed out evaluation of the project commissioned by the NDA was done through interviews with the project, observations at the project site and the review of all project documentations.

In compiling the paper, the author has used the following documents for guidance:

1. The baseline information and the project proposal summary sheet of Custoda.
2. The interim monitoring report—"Custoda ECD Trust, tranche 5, April 2012" by **Neo Seleke-NDA development manager in Northern Cape.**
3. Project Evaluation report of Custoda. By **Andisa chartered accountants.**
4. Paper: "challenges facing the ECD sector in South Africa" by **Prof Eric Atmore.**
5. A children's Institute—Case study No. 2, University of Cape, December 2006. Town by **Maylene Shung-king.**

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