Zimbabwe’s Early Childhood Development (ECD) Education Programme: A Nutrition Perspective

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1.0 Introduction

- 21st Century Skills Early Learning Frameworks prioritize integration of 21st Century Skills (critical thinking, problem solving, collaboration, communication, creativity, technology literacy, and social and emotional development) in early learning experiences (ZimCurriculum)

- 0-8 years period of rapid growth and development and the stage to harness potential of child

- This information important for educators, nutritionists, policy makers, agriculture experts, health and social service providers, etc
2.0. Background to the Zimbabwean Education System
2.1 Background to the Zimbabwe Education System

- One of Zimbabwe’s greatest assets is the interest of its people in the education of their children.

- Decision on a fit-for-purpose education and training system and the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET).

- One of key CIET recommendations “We recommend a nine-year basic education cycle for all pupils ... to cultivate the habits, attitudes, interests, skills and entrepreneurial opportunities which would (be a good foundation for life and work)”
2.1 Background to the Zimbabwe Education System

- Emphasis on enabling legislation and policies; effective structures; human resources with the necessary competences; school-community partnership and sound implementation practices

- High literacy rate
2.2 Zimbabwe Education System at a Glance

[Diagram of the Zimbabwe Education System showing levels from primary to tertiary, including Infant, Junior, Grade 1-2, ECD A, Grade 3-7, Form 1-4, Upper Secondary, Form 5-6, and Tertiary, Polytechnics, and other colleges.]
3.0 Zimbabwe’s ECD Program
3.1 ZIMBABWE’S ECD PROGRAM

**01**
- Introduced in 2004 and subsequent statutory regulations have been passed to strengthen the ECD Program

**02**
- ECD Education comprises ECD – A & ECD - B, together with Grade 1 & 2, they form the Infant School Module

**03**
- About 52.9% of ECD teachers are qualified teachers. High TPR in rural areas compared to urban

**CHALLENGES**

- Age appropriate facilities in some schools
- Qualified teachers (about 53% qualified)
- Limited fiscal space for teacher recruitment
- Inadequate teaching & learning materials especially in disadvantaged schools

About 99.9% of Primary schools now have ECD programs as ECD has been mandatory for all primary schools through statutory regulations.
4.0 ECD: Current Nutrition Related Programs

The MOPSE has adopted several policies and programs as a way of promoting improved health and nutrition in Zimbabwean schools, with particular prioritization of the Infant Level.
4.1 Healthy Lifestyle through the New Competence-based Curriculum

• New competence-based Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 contains nutrition-related education and health and safety from Infant School to Sixth Form

• These are covered in Learning Areas that include Science and Technology, Agriculture, Physical Education and at the Secondary levels include Food Technology & Design which includes: Nutrition, Meal planning, food preservation

• 13.7 million textbooks including ECDA-Grade 2
4.1. Healthy Lifestyle Competence-based Curriculum

- ECD curriculum emphasizes health, nutrition and psycho-social stimulation as a way of promoting holistic children’s early development

- ECD teachers are mandated to:
  - Monitor growth in learners
  - Work with the parents and health officials on matters relating to early detection of challenges, such as malnutrition, stunting and poor cognitive development.

- Putting in place modalities for comprehensive address of identified challenges ongoing

- Teachers and school heads liaise with parents, guardians and the community to address identified cases related to malnutrition

- At community level, referrals to other government departments like Social Welfare and Health and Child Care also utilized by schools
4.2. School Health Policy

- Health and Nutrition key focus areas: Zim 4.5 million learners
- From successful child vaccination programmes, incorporation of ECD A & B into the formal education system provided an opportunity for early health monitoring, early prevention & swift referrals.
- Through this policy, the MOPSE will be better placed to collaborate with other sectoral Ministries on cross-cutting issues including school feeding, health and hygiene as well as HIV and AIDS
- Sustained training and enhanced role for strategically placed School Health Coordinators and Infant school teachers
4.2. School Health Policy

- Provides a broad frame of reference to guide the implementation of various health-related interventions:
  - Nutrition
  - Water, sanitation and hygiene
  - Needs of learners with disabilities
  - Sexual and reproductive health
  - Care and support provisions
  - Guidance and counseling

Nutrition package consists of:
  - Screening for common communicable and non-communicable diseases, malnutrition and developmental challenges in learners from ECD
  - Growth monitoring and assessments
  - Ensuring that nutrition services are an integral part of school
  - Ensuring that school feeding program uses nutritionist-approved meals for all learners
4.3. Homegrown School Feeding Program

- Strategy boosting learning outcomes, increasing enrolment, retention and completion rates-3rd Commemoration of AU Africa School Feeding Day

- Helps address challenges such as:
  - High dropout rates
  - Stunting
  - Low classroom participation
  - Absenteeism

- Receives support from government, communities, parents and partners

- Now mandatory in all primary schools, with priority for ECD learners (ECD-2016; Entire Primary-2017; Secondary encouraged)
4.3. Homegrown School Feeding Program

- By December 2017 all primary schools had ongoing school feeding programs.

- Responsibilities
  - Government currently provides grain (maize)
  - Parental-school based arrangements responsible for supplements to the program
  - Some schools have introduced school gardens and small livestock projects to enhance meals
  - Parents and community members prepare the meals

- Equity: schools in disadvantaged communities limited capacity to supplement government provision, innovativeness by some: **ESSP 2016-20**
4.4. ZIMSWAP Program

- Zimbabwe Schools Water & Sanitation Program (ZIMSWAP)
  - Public-Private Partnership
  - First piloted in 2014
  - Full operation in 2016
  - Implemented as part of MOPSE’s competence-based curriculum

- ZIMSWAP is multi-pronged project:
  - Gives schools and communities access to clean water
  - Educates children on farming and agriculture
  - Improves the nutrition of school children
  - Links schools to markets to sell produce from ZIMSWAP

- Successes
  - Drilled boreholes and installed solar powered pumps, water tanks and drip irrigation systems at more than 300 schools to date
  - Projects integrated into the school feeding program
5.0 Opportunities moving forward
Opportunities for Improvement

1. Effective implementation of Competence-based Curriculum
   • Effective resourcing, training of personnel and implementation supported by M&E

2. Inter-Ministerial Collaboration
   • Strengthen inter-ministerial collaboration and alignment of programmes e.g. SDG4

3. Strengthening School Community Engagement
   • Effective communication strategy finalization by 31/12/2018
   • Community engagement strategy finalization by 31/12/2018
Opportunities for Improvement

4. Strengthening the School Feeding Program
   - Address nutritional value of meals for school feeding program
   - Cultivate strengthened ownership by communities and parents

5. Infant Education Policy Strengthening
   - Several policies currently covering Infant Education and a comprehensive policy being developed, strengthens nutrition and learning; by 31/03/2019

6. School Health Policy
   - Ensure full implementation of the provisions of the School Health Policy to enhance health and nutrition interventions at school level
6.0 Conclusion

• Nutrition a vital ingredient for growth and education and growth and development inseparable

• Fora like current essential to get desired learning outcomes—skills, knowledge, values, attitudes, competences to prepare our young for life and work and contributing to nations’ socio-economic development

• Required: correct mix of nutrition, health and learning
I THANK YOU