

Problems and Prospects in Early Childhood Education Provisioning in Turkey and South Africa

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Abstract

The benefits of early childhood development (ECD) programmes are strongly supported by evidence of reduced school dropout and repetition rates. However, the literature on ECD is primarily grounded in research based in the United States (US); in the light of this gap in the literature, this paper provides a comparative overview of ECD policy and practice from outside of the US, namely in South Africa and Turkey. As a theoretical framework the paper has followed the World Bank's Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)-ECD Analytical Framework. Findings indicate that both countries have established an enabling policy environment for ECD but implementation and the setting of and compliance to standards for quality is still emerging, in spite of massive strides made in this field during the past fifteen years.

Keywords

Early childhood development, South Africa, Turkey, Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), policy, enabling environment

Introduction

Research undertaken over more than fifty years overwhelmingly supports the benefits of early childhood development (ECD) programmes for children regardless of race or social class, their families and their communities in both developed and in developing nations (Heckman and Mosso, 2014; Nores and Barnett, 2010; Pianta, 2012; World Bank, 2011). Investment in ECD leads to reduced school dropout and repetition rates, improved school achievement, higher levels of physical health

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and socio-emotional wellbeing, greater productivity in adulthood as well as long-term economic benefits. This makes ECD a highly cost-effective means of strengthening society by ensuring that its individual members realize lifetime success (Gertler et al., 2014; Grantham-McGregor et al., 2007). Clearly it is advisable that all children should be provided the opportunity to participate in ECD programmes from a very young age when brain plasticity and neurogenesis are very high and cognitive and psychosocial skill development is crucial (UNICEF-Connect, 2014). However, across countries, the structure and quality of and access to ECD provision differ greatly. ECD may be focused on one or more of the following: physical health; mental health; nutrition; cognitive development; social and emotional development or language development; it may be provided in formal, informal or non-formal settings; it may be publicly or privately funded; and ECD educators and caregivers may have widely different professional qualifications or even none at all (Nores and Barnett, 2010). Consequently, the effectiveness of ECD differs widely in different contexts. Similarly, terminology in the field varies, although the different terms used in country-specific and international documents have much in common. For example, the term Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) is used by UNESCO (2006) to refer to the care and education/development provided to children in the preschool years. Another feature of the substantial literature on ECD is its primary grounding in research based in the United States (US) (Heckman et al., 2010).

In the light of this, this paper aims at providing a picture of ECD policy and practice from outside of the US, namely in South Africa and Turkey, two countries with similar positions in an international 45-country ranking according to the top elements of ECD environments: Turkey at 35th position and South Africa at 37th position (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012). The choice of the two countries for this study was guided by a collaborative research project on ECD provision initiated by the Emre Turkish Cultural Centre, Embassy of Turkey, South Africa and the University of South Africa. As a theoretical framework this study has broadly followed the World Bank's (2014) Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER)-ECD Analytical Framework, using the broad ECD policy rubric, based on the three ECD policy goals: establishing an enabling environment; implementing widely; and monitoring and assuring quality. These are evaluated according to four levels of development: latent; emerging; established; and advanced. SABER (World Bank, 2015a) was developed as a tool to gather data and conduct assessments in several domains of education systems using evidence-based data. Participation in SABER depends on a country's application to engage in the project. The particular challenge to ECD analysis is its multi-sectoral nature and the need to involve a variety of stakeholders in the coordination and strengthening of the system. In this regard, the SABER-ECD framework analysis (Vegas and Devercelli, 2011) offers a distinct advantage: it is aimed at a holistic multi-sectoral assessment of the policies and programmes that affect young children's development in a particular country. To date, SABER (World Bank, 2015c) has collected and analysed policy data in Turkey in four domains, albeit excluding ECD. South Africa has not yet participated in the SABER project on any level (World Bank, 2015b).

Terminology and child statistics

In South Africa, ECD is an umbrella term to refer to *all* services that promote or support the development of young children aged birth to nine years (Department of Basic Education, 2013). These services range from infrastructural provision, such as water and sanitation, social security, birth registration and health services to safe and affordable daycare, learning opportunities in structured programmes and the preparation for formal schooling. Early Child Care and Education (ECCE) services, a very important aspect of ECD, are defined as services and programmes that provide care and developmentally appropriate educational stimulation for groups of young children in centres and/or in community- or

home-based programmes (Richter, 2012). In 2012 South Africa had an estimated 5.3 million children aged below five years, representing about 10% of the total population. Eighty-five per cent of young South African children were black African; this is highly significant in terms of understanding current and future ECD provision in the country. Black African children were severely educationally disadvantaged during the apartheid era and thus redress in the sector of the ECD population is paramount. The majority (93%) of children had both their biological parents alive; however, only 36% lived with both parents. Of the 19% of children who lived with neither parent, 85% lived in households headed by their grandparents. Approximately 60% of young children received the government child support grant; the implication is that most young children in the country live in poverty (Albino and Berry, 2013). The gross national income (GNI) per capita in 2012 was US\$7 460 (World Bank, 2013).

In Turkey, the term ECD refers to interventions aimed at children between 0 and 72 months (0 to the child's 6th birthday which is usually the age of primary school entry). Early Childhood Education (ECE) programmes is a subset of ECD interventions and are designed to educate children aged between 36 and 72 months (3 to 5 years old) (Gören Niron, 2013; World Bank, 2013). In 2014 the population of children aged five years and above was estimated at 6 206 415 or 8.09% of Turkey's total population (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2014). Among these children, around 536 854 live in rural areas (Turkish Statistical Institute, 2014). Although the population growth rate is falling in Turkey (1.3% with a total fertility rate of 2.08%), it is still higher than any other country belonging to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The majority of women with at least one child between 3 and 5 years old do not participate in the labour market (21.4% are employed), suggesting that they are staying at home with their children (OECD, 2013; Turkish Statistical Institute, 2013). Poverty levels have decreased across the country in recent years and in 2012 the GNI per capita was US\$10 830 (World Bank, 2013).

Enabling environment

According to the SABER-ECD framework, the goal of an enabling environment refers to the existence of an adequate legal and regulatory framework to support early childhood development; the degree of coordination within sectors and across institutions to ensure that services can be delivered effectively; and the availability of adequate fiscal resources for ECD (World Bank, 2014).

Prior to the establishment of a democratic state in 1994, ECD in South Africa was characterized by unequal provision with regard to race, geographical location, gender, special needs and funding. Access to ECD for children of all racial groups was optional and limited; no policies governed ECD provision and the system of ECD services was highly fragmented. Since 1994 ECD provision has been an integral part of social transformation to be achieved through the integrated care of and education for young children (Ebrahim and Ervine, 2012). The current legislative and regulatory framework for ECD has flowed from the ratification of international treaties which endorsed the rights of the child, also to education. In 1995 South Africa ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) (United Nations, 1990) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (1999) in 2000. The Constitution of South Africa, Section 29 (Republic of South Africa, 1996) recognizes the rights of children, also their right to basic education. The Children's Act, No. 38 of 2005 (Republic of South Africa, 2005a) and the Children's Amendment Act, No. 41 of 2007 (Republic of South Africa, 2007) reinforce provisions in the Bill of Rights in the Constitution and provide details of the responsibilities of parents and guardians in realizing rights.

Early childhood development in South Africa is an inter-sectoral responsibility, shared among the Department of Social Development (DSD), the Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Basic Education (DBE), with the Ministry of Women, Children and People with Disabilities playing a monitoring role (Department of Basic Education, 2014). The policy framework for a

national system of ECD rests on a series of White Papers. The Interim Policy for Early Childhood Development (Department of Education, 1996) established the broad framework for ECD. The Department of Social Development's White Paper (1997) addresses the provision of ECD to children from birth to the age of nine. It takes a developmental approach and stresses a family approach to child care and targets caregivers, social services professionals and parents. The Child Care Amendment Act, 1983 (Act 74 of 1983) provides for the regulation of day-care facilities for children and the payment of subsidies to day-care facilities. The Children's Amendment Act, 2007 (Act 41 of 2007) regulates a range of child-care and protection services: partial care (crèches and nursery schools); ECD programmes; prevention and early intervention services for vulnerable children; and protection services for children who have suffered abuse, neglect, abandonment or exploitation. It also includes a system for identification, reporting, referral and support of vulnerable children. The White Paper on Early Childhood Development No. 5 (Department of Education, 2001a) aimed at forging integration between various government departments in the field of ECD over a five-year period from 2005–2010. Its main policy priority was the establishment of a national system of provision for Grade R (i.e. also known as the Reception Year/Grade R, the voluntary year before primary school entry) for children aged 5–6 years by 2010 (a goal not yet reached at time of writing). The National Integrated Plan for ECD (NIPECD) (2005–2010) (Republic of South Africa, 2005b) is the only inter-sectoral policy for ECD and addresses programmes in health, nutrition, water and sanitation, early learning and psychosocial care. The plan aims to provide additional assistance to especially vulnerable children, such as orphans, children with disabilities, children in child-headed households, children affected by HIV and AIDS, and children from poor households and communities. The NIPECD recognizes a variety of sites of care allocating 50% of service delivery at the home level, 30% at community level and 20% in formal settings. The NIPECD has two important sub-components: the Expanded Public Works Programme (EPWP) Social Sector Plan; and the Massification of Early Childhood Development Concept Document. The EPWP aims to train ECD practitioners including parents and caregivers; the Massification of Early Childhood Development Concept Document proposes the use of unemployed youth with a tertiary qualification in social work, health or education to assist in the registration of ECD sites and in the expansion of ECD services with a view to support to families at household level (Republic of South Africa, 2005b). The Department of Health provides for children in the age group birth to nine years by means of various policies and programmes which are not ECD-specific, but address the general health needs of children (Department of Basic Education, 2013).

Financial commitment to ECD is demonstrated by recently increased budgetary provision. Education spending in South Africa is the largest single item in the annual budget: 20% of government expenditure for 2014/2015 was earmarked for education, amounting to R254-billion which represents roughly 6.5% of the country's gross domestic product (Gordhan, 2014).

However, South Africa's total expenditure on pre-primary education in 2006 for children aged 3 to 6 was only 0.4% of the country's total education expenditure (OECD, 2006). Government spending on pre-primary education has increased more than spending on any other area of education; by 2011, spending on ECD was four times what it was in 2006 in real terms. Spending on Grade R was projected at R1 253 million in 2009/2010; this expenditure is linked to teachers' salaries and operational needs with Grade R classes. In 2001 75% of ECD services were based on user fees (Department of Education, 2001b) and all services included in the 2010 ECD public expenditure study were fee-based; the subsidies are allocated to institutions (Department of Social Development, Department of Basic Education/UNICEF, 2011).

Prior to 2000, the primary focus of the Republic of Turkey was on the provision of primary education, although the history of ECD in the country goes back to the 13th century in which centres were established for very basic instruction, mainly of a religious nature and aimed at

5–6-year-olds (Kapıcı and Güler, 1999). ECD was commonly perceived as necessary only for the children of working mothers. However, since 2000 the widespread provision of ECD services, although still optional, has emerged as a national priority (World Bank, 2013). The current legislative and regulatory framework for ECD–ECE provision was given impetus by the ratification of international treaties and protocols. In 1990 Turkey signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and in 2000 the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts. Turkey is also signatory to the European Convention on the Exercise of Children’s Rights, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol (with regard to the girl child), as well as the ILO Conventions against Child Labor (No. 138 and No. 182). The Constitution of Turkey provides for the right to education for all. In 2004 the Constitution of the Republic of Turkey was amended to give supremacy to international conventions concerning basic rights and freedoms, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child, over all national laws. The Basic Law of National Education, No. 1739 (Republic of Turkey, 1973) regulates the Turkish education system, including the ECE sector. The Ministry of National Education (MoNE) is responsible for education at a central level organized by the General Directorate. In 2012, twelve years of compulsory education (in place of 8 years) was introduced: primary school (1st–4th grade); secondary school (5th–8th grade); and high school (9th–12th grade). Preschool education is defined as the level of non-compulsory education for children of ages 36–66 months not eligible for primary education. According to the Basic Law of National Education the aim of preschool education is to ensure the physical, intellectual and sentimental development of the children, learning decent habits, preparation for primary education, and accurate and fine speech of Turkish Language. Objectives are to increase the enrolment rate in preschool education to the level of developed countries and to spread preschool education all over the country by ensuring equality of opportunity (MoNE, 2005). Preschool education distinguishes between non-compulsory education for children (36–66 months) for which the MoNE is not responsible; and compulsory ECE for children (0–36 months) in special education available through public institutions and vocational teaching institutions, as well as through private institutions at a cost as stipulated in the Decree Law on Special Education No. 573, Article 7 (OECD, 2013).

Responsibility for ECD provisioning is split at the national level. Three central government agencies deliver most programmes for young children: MoNE; the Ministry of Family and Social Policies (MoFSP); and the Ministry of Health. The Directorate-General of the Institute for Social Services and Protection of the Child has been assigned as the coordinator body tasked with matters related to children (Republic of Turkey Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2014). The Directorate-General of Basic Education located in the MoNE is responsible for setting policies and standards related to ECD, monitoring the quality of ECD services, and coordinating across various agencies responsible for ECD provision (Gören Niron, 2012; World Bank, 2013). Thus, the MoNE assumes a national coordination role as the main ministry responsible for the regulation of the educational content of ECD services by coordinating educational programmes for the 3–5-year-old age groups through home-based family training programmes and centre-based programmes (private/public), mainly described as preschools and preschool classrooms. All public ECE centres have a mandatory accreditation and registration process overseen by MoNE. However, current standards focus mainly on infrastructure requirements and the parameters for facilities for public and private ECE institutions. It also sets out the tasks and responsibilities of principals, teachers and staff working in these institutions but does not regulate their qualifications (European Encyclopedia of National Education Systems, 2014).

The Law on Social Services and Child Protection authorizes the MoFSP to open day care centres and supervise the foundation of private day care centres and nurseries. These centres are regulated under the Bylaw for Child Clubs of Pre-primary Education and Directive for Private Nurseries and

Day Care Centers. The MoFSP is responsible for coordinating nurseries for the 0–3-year-old age group and day care centres for the 3–5-year-old age groups. Centres subject to the Labour Law oblige the employers to establish preschool education institutions in workplaces having more than 150 female employees (MoNE, Mother Child Education Foundation, UNICEF, 2011). The MoFSP targets the most vulnerable groups by implementing protective services for orphans and children in need and preventive services offered in community venues (Gören Niron, 2012). Finally, the Ministry of Health is responsible for coordinating programmes for the 0–3-year-old age group (World Bank, 2010).

In pre-primary (also primary and secondary) education, the central government allocates public funding from the national budget to public institutions and private institutions for students in special education for operational and personnel costs, such as staff and teaching material (OECD, 2013). Turkey's total expenditure on pre-primary education for children aged 3 to 6 was 0.6% of the country's total education expenditure (OECD, 2006). This is higher than South Africa's expenditure on ECD as percentage of total education expenditure, yet it is considered relatively low in comparison to comparable OECD countries (World Bank, 2013). This situation is ascribed to the skewing of social spending in the public sector toward older citizens. Thus, preschools are compelled to rely heavily on private user fees. The bulk of Turkey's expenditure on ECD provision is linked to teacher remuneration and operational needs associated with kindergarten classes mostly held in primary schools.

Implementing widely

According to the SABER framework (World Bank, 2015a) the goal of implementing widely refers to the extent of and gaps in coverage of ECD services, as well as the spectrum of programmes offered. By definition, a focus on ECD involves interventions in health, nutrition, education and social protection (World Bank, 2015a). A robust ECD policy should include programmes in all essential sectors, inter-sectoral coordination, and high degrees of coverage and should reach the entire population, especially the most disadvantaged young children (World Bank, 2015a).

The ECD sector in South Africa is divided into two phases: prior schooling (birth to 4 years); and the schooling phase (5 to 9 years), also called the Foundation Phase (Gr R and Gr 1–3) (Ebrahim, 2014). The Grade R year, although part of formal schooling is regarded with an informal approach. ECD in South Africa can be characterized by three distinct facility types: public schools; registered community-based ECD facilities; and unregistered community-based ECD facilities. In 2007 roughly half of the registered ECD centres received a government subsidy (UNICEF, 2007). In public schools ECD provisioning is limited to Grade R (for 5-year-olds) provisioning; registered and unregistered community-based facilities generally provide ECD services to children from birth through to, and including Grade R. A small portion of community-based facilities offer only Grade R, and less than one-third offer only pre-Grade R (Atmore, 2012). Due to socio-economic diversity, the ECD sector, especially the birth to 4-year-old phase, offers several models of ECD provision. The two most prevalent are the traditional centre-based ECD model and the 'non-traditional' model, such as playgroups and home-visiting programmes (Atmore, 2012). Historically, the non-profit sector has played and continues to play a major role in the provision of ECD. A significant number of early learning sites and programmes across South Africa were initiated by the non-profit sector in conjunction with communities, although more recently many have closed down or down-scaled mainly due to processes of regulation and standardization (Atmore, 2012).

South Africa has achieved considerable increases in participation rates in ECD since 2000. From approximately 7% of 0–4-year-olds attending education institutions in 2002 to 37% in 2012 with the highest concentration of this age group attending ECD in two of the nine provinces: Free State and Gauteng (47% and 46% respectively); KwaZulu-Natal and Northern Cape had significantly lower attendance (28% and 27% respectively). In 2012, 85% of 5-year-olds attended an

educational institution (Statistics South Africa, 2013). Seventy-eight (78%) of these children was enrolled in Grade R (Richter, 2012).

The ECD sector in Turkey is aimed at coverage of children in the 0–3-year-old age group by the nursery programme under the auspices of MoFSP and for the 3–5-year-old age group preschool education programme under the auspices of MoNE. Both programmes, which have been prepared by the commission established by MoNE in collaboration with MoFSP, have been implemented since 2013. The purpose of the nursery programme implemented in private nurseries and day care centres affiliated to MoFSP is to contribute to the child's health care, nutrition, physical and mental development. The purpose of the preschool education programme is to ensure the active participation of children through game centred activities, and promotion of the dynamic interaction of developmental areas and the diversification and enrichment of the behaviour of children in all developmental areas (Gören Niron, 2012). Although community-based ECD services run by several non-governmental organizations have entered the field, this contribution remains small. The MoNE champions the expansion of community-based provision through the mobilization of local government funding and the piloting of models, like the Women and Children's Centers run by the Foundation for the Support of Women's Work (KEDV) in poor urban localities. As a result of these additional efforts, classroom capacity has been expanded either by reallocating classrooms within primary schools or by building new preschools (MoNE, Mother Child Education Foundation, UNICEF, 2011; World Bank, 2013). According to the Regulation on Pre-school Education Institutions (European Encyclopedia of National Education Systems, 2014) these preschools could be established as independent nurseries or practice classes affiliated to vocational high schools for girls and kindergartens affiliated to other educational institutions. Notwithstanding, the provision of ECD services is mostly reliant on government run public institutions. The private sector provides only around 5% of ECD services. The over-regulation of the private sector provision which stresses infrastructural requirements tends to discourage providers from entering the sector (Neuman, 2012). The MoFSP's community centres reach about 40 000 children from economically disadvantaged households; the centre-based ECD programmes led by the MoNE account for 95% of all ECD enrolment (Gören Niron, 2012).

Turkey has made significant progress in improving the participation rates in ECD in the past 20 years, increasing the number of children enrolled in the ECD services by approximately 800% (Ministry of National Education, Mother Child Education Foundation (MoNE), UNICEF, 2011 ; World Bank, 2013). While only 5.4% of the relevant age group benefited from these services in 2001, as of the 2011 school year, 4.61% of 3-year-olds, 19.23% of 4-year-olds, and 65.69% of 5-year-olds had access to ECD services appropriate to their age groups. However, participation remains low in the under 5-year-old group and inequitably distributed according to socio-economic status and provincial location. According to the World Bank's (2013) report Turkey's provision of ECD has lagged comparator countries such as Mexico and Bulgaria. Turkey's per capita income would suggest an ECD enrolment rate of over 60%, but fewer than 30% of children between the ages of 3 to 5 years of age currently benefit from ECD in Turkey (World Bank, 2013). The most recent initiatives to increase participation in ECD includes the Tenth Development Plan (2014–2018), which is an overall government strategy of which education is part, the Mobile Classroom for children 36–66 months from low-income families and the Summer Preschool for Children 60–66 months. UNICEF has supported the Turkey Country Programme (2006–2007) and the Pre-School Education Project (2010–2013) (OECD, 2013).

Monitoring and assuring quality

The goal of monitoring and assuring quality refers to the development of standards for ECD services, the existence of systems to monitor compliance with those standards and the implementation of systems to monitor ECD outcomes across the population of children. Ensuring the quality of

ECD programmes is essential because evidence has shown that unless they are of high quality, the impact on children will be negligible, or even detrimental.

In South Africa the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) sets the standard on which standards and qualifications agreed to by education and training stakeholders are registered. A draft National Curriculum Framework (NCF) for children from before birth to the age of four which is focused on the care, developmental and learning needs of babies, toddlers and young children was published for public comment in 2012 (Ebrahim and Irvine, 2012) and has since been implemented. The NCF is based on a holistic ECD vision with reference to the first 1000 days which includes interventions before birth and the first two years of life, the third and fourth years of life, and the time before the child enters primary school. Six curriculum areas have been proposed: well-being; identity and belonging; communicating; exploring mathematics; creativity; and knowledge and understanding of the world. The NCF forms part of broader curriculum initiatives, such as the Guidelines for Programme Development for Children Birth to Five (GPD) and National Early Learning Development Standards (NELDS). The curriculum for Grade R has already been fixed in the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for the Foundation Phase (children aged 5–9) and beyond (Ebrahim and Irvine, 2012). Compliance with ECD policy, standards and outcomes across the population of children in South Africa has been monitored by key assessment exercises in the past decade. The Department of Education (2001b) conducted a national audit of ECD provisioning in 2000 to provide accurate information in four broad areas (sites, learners, educators and programmes). Findings indicated historical inequalities in ECD due to the previous policy of apartheid: provincial differences in coverage and quality of ECD; the dominance of English as the language of instruction across sites and provinces, irrespective of children's home language; lack of adequately qualified, accredited and remunerated educators and ECD trainers; and the impact of HIV/Aids on the learners in the sector. In 2009/2010 the report, *Tracking Public Expenditure and Assessing Service Quality in Early Childhood Development in South Africa* (Department of Social Development, Department of Basic Education/UNICEF, 2011) identified infrastructural deficiencies and lack of quality programmes in ECD institutions. In 2012, the ECD Diagnostic Review (Richter, 2012) was carried out to provide up to date data on services, human resources, funding and impact. The findings indicated persistent fragmentation in legislative and policy frameworks, uncoordinated service delivery, limited access to ECD services, variable quality of ECD services and limited inter-sectorial coordination (Meier, 2014; Richter, 2012).

In Turkey ECD learning standards have been established for children aged 36–72 months (3 to 6 years); however there are considerable differences that occur among institutions. The MoNE oversees a mandatory accreditation and registration process for all public ECCE centres; all private ECCE centres have a mandatory accreditation and registration process overseen by the Social Services and Child Protection Agency and are inspected annually by the provincial directors of social services. The MoNE regulates the educational content of private preschools. Mother tongue preschool instruction is not mandated and preschools do not cater for language minority students (Neuman, 2012). However, common and reliable indicators for education outputs have not yet been established. According to the Situation Analysis Report on Quality, ECD settings were not yet found efficient enough to meet the service demand in time and quality (MoNE, Mother Child Education Foundation, UNICEF, 2011).

Systems monitoring of quality in compliance with ECD standards and ECD outcomes across the population of children in Turkey has been carried out through collaboration between the MoNE and international bodies such as OECD and the World Bank (2013). Turkey met only three out of ten indicators benchmarking the quality and access standards of ECE, ranking at the bottom of OECD countries (Aran et al., 2009). Significant gaps in ECD coverage persist based on regional and socio-economic differences. Significant differences in access to ECD services occur between

Table 1. Enabling environment.

Country	Legal framework for early childhood development (ECD)	Inter-sectoral coordination of ECD	Financing of ECD
South Africa	Basic legal framework	Partial	Increased financing; heavy reliance on user fees
Turkey	Established legal framework	Partial	Increased financing; reliance on user fees

children from economically disadvantaged families and children from better-off families (World Bank, 2013). Although the poorest families have, on average, four more children than the richest, the latter group is 60 times more likely than the former to have at least one child enrolled in ECEC institutions (Aran et al., 2009). This linear relationship between ECEC services and income means that the segment of the population with the greatest service needs has the least access (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2000). There is also disparity among different provinces: Amasya, the province with the highest enrolment rate in the 3–6 year age group, exceeded 59%; and Hakkari, the province with the lowest enrolment rate is yet to reach 13% (World Bank, 2013). Improving ECD services is a national priority and forms part of the Strategy Action Plan of the MoNE and the Tenth Developmental Plan of the Ministry of Development (Ministry of Development, Republic of Turkey, 2014). Government-led efforts to promote ECD have expanded significantly in the last five years, largely driven by a greater recognition of the importance of ECD services. This can be seen in successful public awareness campaigns, such as ‘7 Is Too Late’ conducted by the Mother and Child Education Foundation and European Union project campaigns implemented by the MoNE (World Bank, 2013)

Discussion

According to the World Bank’s new tool (SABER-ECD) to inform policy when scaling-up ECD (Vegas and Devercelli, 2011), this comparative overview of ECD in Turkey and South Africa has been structured around the three goals which shape ECD outcomes and which identify the elements of a coherent package that all countries should address to improve ECD outcomes and services.

In terms of the first goal, namely to establish an enabling environment (World Bank, 2013: 48) both countries have made considerable progress. A summary of progress is provided in Table 1.

A legal framework for ECD has been established through the ratification of child right conventions, constitutional rights and ECD policies. However, both countries face the challenge of achieving higher sectoral coordination within a split system of ECD services at the national level. Neither country has a single government agency or committee established as the institutional anchor for ECD policy; components of ECD planning are located within various sector strategies. The need for improved integration of services of health, care and education has been recognized in various policy documents and assessments in both Turkey and South Africa. Similarly, governments in both countries have increased expenditure on ECD over the past decade. Notwithstanding, percentage spending on ECD of the total education expenditure is less than 1% in both countries (OECD, 2006) and ECD educational services rely heavily on user fees which sustain socio-economic and geographical disparities (Economist Intelligence Unit, 2012).

With regard to the second goal, namely to implement ECD widely (World Bank, 2013: 48) the level of achievement in both countries can be described as emerging. A summary of progress in presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Implementing widely.

Country	Scope of programme	Coverage	Equity
South Africa	Partial: differences in scope of programmes for health, nutrition, education and social protection	Expanding: highest in 5-year-old group	Incomplete: Racial, socio-economic status, urban–rural and children with special needs
Turkey	Partial: differences in scope of programmes for health, nutrition, education and social protection	Expanding: highest in 5-year-old group	Incomplete: Socio-economic and provincial inequalities

Table 3. Monitoring and assuring quality.

Country	Data availability	Quality standards	Compliance with standards
South Africa	Partial: strong reliance on external agencies for data tracking	Standards for early childhood development (ECD) services exist in some sectors, no system to monitor compliance, increased information on ECD outcomes at the national level	Compliance partial in some sectors
Turkey	Partial: some reliance on external agencies for data	Standards for ECD services exist for most sectors; centralized system in place to regularly monitor compliance	Compliance in most sectors

Both countries report expanding coverage in ECD but gaps remain. South Africa reports 37% participation in the 1–4-year-old group and 85% in the 5-year-old group mainly due to enrolments in Grade R. In Turkey access is also highest in the 5-year-old group with approximately 66% in ECD classrooms. In South Africa the non-profit sector has historically played a major role in ECD provision and in the training of ECD educators. This situation continues but at a declining rate due to more stringent quality requirements. The history of ECD in Turkey has not followed this trajectory. Although non-profit organizations run some successful community based models, the provision of ECD services is mostly government provided.

Finally, with regard to the third goal, namely to monitoring the provision of ECD and to assure quality, well-defined standards for children's basic education, care, and cognitive and intellectual needs, as well as adequate mechanisms to monitor and enforce these standards (World Bank, 2013: 48), are needed. A summary of progress is presented in Table 3.

In South Africa standards for ECD services are still in the emerging stage. Turkey has centralized accreditation of ECD centres, public and private. The Standards and Accreditations process, at all levels of the education system in Turkey is carried out at Central Government level. In this context, the Central Government represents the MoNE. The representation of the MoNE is executed based on the '1739 Fundamental Law of Education'. Accordingly, under this law, preschool education laws, regulations, rules, guidelines, etc. are evaluated together with the standards specified in documentations and the basis for accreditation of educational inputs. These are at the physical conditions,

children's age group and class size, preschool education and care, staff qualifications, working conditions, vocational training, education-teaching process, configuration, management, which will be implemented education programmes, social inclusion, family involvement, school and environment relationships, monitoring and evaluation, inspection and control are described in the form (MoNE, Mother Child Education Foundation, UNICEF, 2011: 6).

Several evaluation and data gathering projects in South Africa and Turkey are evidenced in a series of reports published by the respective Departments/Ministries in collaboration with international agencies such as the World Bank, UNICEF and OECD. These are extremely valuable in efforts to improve quality and equity in ECD. Finally, the development and expansion of ECD is particularized by the historical, political and social conditions of both countries. In South Africa ECD expansion is part of a rigorous strategy of social transformation aimed at equity which has flowed from the demise of apartheid. In Turkey ECD expansion is part of national development with a view to economic and social prosperity. Turkey looks to integrate in these transformations and structural changes however while upholding its values, visions and expectations. Turkey's main objectives and principals will be maintained, and remain compatible with those of the world. This integration will support and raise Turkey's international position and the welfare of its people. However, this paper argues that a comparative overview according to the SABER-ECD goals contains valuable lessons and identifies potentially useful policy options for both. It is recommended that participation of Turkey and South Africa in the SABER-ECD initiative in future would provide both countries data to fill gaps related to ECD policies and promote choices based on better evidence and analysis. Furthermore, in both country contexts it is recommended that priority is given to training ECD teachers and caregivers according to set norms and standards, educating parents as to the importance of ECD, promoting the development of community ECD centres (which are registered and meet national standards especially in rural areas and with hard to reach segments of the population), strengthening institutional resources and provision of the under-5 age group, and building public awareness of the importance of ECD.

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