

REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE



MINISTRY OF PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION



**ZIMBABWE EARLY
LEARNING POLICY**

January, 2023

Realising Children's Full Potential and School Readiness

FOREWORD



**His Excellency, The President of the Republic of Zimbabwe,
Dr E. D. Mnangagwa**

Over the years, I have called for relevant, quality and inclusive education in the school curriculum whose hallmarks are competencies desired in life and work. This cannot be achieved without the requisite literacies and numeracies that will drive a comprehensive change in our education system.

As a country, we have managed to overcome some of the multiple challenges that our education sector has been experiencing since independence in 1980. The 1999 Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET) underscored recommendations on the need to strengthen the education foundation by investing more in Early Childhood Development.

In my address at the General Debate of the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, at the United Nations Headquarters, in New York, USA on the 22nd of September 2022, I indicated that,

“the Transforming Education Summit, during this High Level Week, is a timely welcome development which should help revitalise the education sector, more so after COVID 19 induced disruptions.”

I am glad that the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy is a complete blueprint that has become our first indicator to our commitment to both the Transforming Education Summit recommendations and the Tashkent Declaration on the provision of early education globally. The Early Learning Policy contains robust guidelines on the implementation of the Infant School Module in my country.

In fulfilment of my 24 August 2018's Inauguration Speech, on moving swiftly to refurbish the construction of education, my government prioritises the wholesome strengthening of foundational learning by providing rich early learning programmes.

I commend to the nation the adoption and full implementation of the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy which should be a basis for a digital economy in line with the National Development Strategic (NDS1).

A stylized, handwritten signature in black ink, likely belonging to Dr E. D. Mnangagwa. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'E' and 'M'.

The President of the Republic of Zimbabwe, His Excellency, Dr E. D. Mnangagwa

PREFACE

Zimbabwe is a signatory of several global and regional protocols that include but not limited to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4; Target 4.2 which call for governments to ensure that by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality Early Childhood Development, Care and Pre-Primary Education so that they are ready for primary education. In addition, the African Union's Agenda 2063 calls for universal access to quality early childhood, primary and secondary education, ensuring that no child is left behind and that the potential of every child is nurtured.

The Constitution of Zimbabwe, Act 2013 safeguards the right to education for every child. To this end, Government is committed to ensure that every child receives quality competence based education as embraced in the Zimbabwe Curriculum Framework 2015-2022. The Zimbabwe National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1 2021-2025) underscores the importance of education as a vehicle for producing a skilled and capable workforce for socio-economic transformation.

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy was developed through a consultative process involving dialogue with stakeholders at national, sub national and grassroots levels. The policy signifies the Zimbabwe government's commitment to ensure a strong foundation for improved learning outcomes necessary for the country's socio-economic transformation and a globally competitive workforce as enshrined in NDS1. The policy addresses the challenges experienced in the implementation of ECD over the years and provides strategies that are solutions to address these problems. The policy harmonises the various circulars and statutory instruments hitherto issued by the ministry. In addition, the policy incorporates global best practices in the provision of quality inclusive early learning programmes.



Hon. Dr Evelyn Ndlovu.....

Minister for Primary and Secondary Education

PROLOGUE

The Zimbabwe education system provides for 4 years of the Infant School Module that comprise 2 years of Early Childhood Development (ECD) at ECD A & ECD B and 2 years at grades 1 & 2 in primary school. The establishment of the Infant School Module (Early Years' Education) is meant to ensure a strong foundation for school readiness and improved learning outcomes in subsequent education levels.

The purpose of this Early Learning Policy is to ensure coherent and quality Infant School Education that meet the demands of the Zimbabwe Constitution, Act 2013, NDS1 (2021-2025) and the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 to fulfil the country's socio-economic transformation aspirations. The policy pronounces various policy statements and strategies to safeguard the rights of every child 4-7 years old in Zimbabwe to access quality, inclusive and relevant early learning. Similarly, the policy embraces the need for adequate care before pupils are enrolled in ECD A and also delineates the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders with an emphasis on the importance of guaranteeing effective partnership and evidence-based programming.

The policy is anchored on existing legal and policy frameworks. The policy incorporates a Theory of Change based on a situation analysis of early learning in Zimbabwe, global best practices and overwhelming evidence on what works to ensure quality early learning. Recognising that the quality of home care is a determinant of a child's development and learning, this policy advocates measures to promote a structured, school, family and community engagement in the provision of early learning. In addition, policy statements and strategies are provided around nine thematic areas that are pertinent to effective early learning provision. A costed implementation strategy is included, which spells out the priority areas that need to be implemented in the next five years. The effective implementation of this policy will guarantee that every child in the Infant School Module experiences quality, relevant, inclusive and responsive early learning for their best possible start in life.



T. Thabela (Mrs) 
Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education is grateful to the leadership of the Permanent Secretary and Senior MOPSE officials who provided guidance in the development of this policy. Our greatest appreciation goes to UNICEF Zimbabwe for providing financial and technical support towards the development of this important policy.

Lastly, we wish to extend MOPSE's indebtedness to the Chief Director – Primary, Secondary and Non-Formal Education for spearheading the development of the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy (ZELP), members of the National Technical Working Group led by the Director Primary Education, for their tireless effort in working with the consultant to see the finalisation of the policy. In addition, MOPSE appreciates the participation of Provincial Education Directors, District Schools Inspectors, School Heads, Infant Education level teachers, and members of the School Development Committees for contributing immensely to the information that made up the situational analysis.

Special thanks goes to the Ministry of Health and Child Care, the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science, Innovations and Technology Development, the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works, the University of Zimbabwe, Catholic University, and ECOZI for participating significantly in the consultative process. Finally, chiefs, parents and children are highly cherished for their exceptional contribution through participating in interviews and Focused Group Discussions to give invaluable information that has guided the development of this policy.

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ACRONYM AND ABBREVIATIONS

ASSAF	Annual Science, Sports and Arts Festival
BEAM	Basic Education Assistance Module
CBC	Competence Based Curriculum
CASSAF	Cluster Annual Science, Sports and Arts Festival
CESA	Continental Education Strategy for Africa
CIET	Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training
DASSAF	District Annual Science, Sports and Arts Festival
ECCD	Early Childhood Care and Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECOZI	Education Coalition of Zimbabwe
EFA	Education for All
EMIS	Education Management Information System
ERI	Early Reading Initiatives
ESSP	Education Sector Strategic Plan
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GER	Gross Enrolment Rate
GOZ	Government of Zimbabwe
ISM	Infant School Module
MDG	Millennium Development Goals
MICS	Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey
MOFED	Ministry of Finance and Economic Development
MOHTEISTD	Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovations, Science and Technology Development
MOHCC	Ministry of Health and Child Care
MOPSE	Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education
MOPSLSW	Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare
NDS1	National Development Strategy 1
NER	Net Enrolment Rate
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children

PLAP	Performance Lag Address Programme
SPS	Schools Psychological Services
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
TPS	Teacher Professional Standards
TSP	Transition Stabilization Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Education Scientific & Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
ZELA	Zimbabwe Early Learning Assessment
ZELP	Zimbabwe National Early Learning Policy
ZIMASSET	Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation
ZIMSEC	Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council

DEFINITION OF TERMS

Access	Is the availability and provision of early learning services and programmes for children aged 4 - 7 years old.
Child Development	Changes that occur as a child grows and develops in relation to physical, mental, emotional, socio-cultural and learning competences that enable the child to handle ever more complex levels of thinking, moving, feeling and relating to others.
Early Childhood	The period from conception to 8 years of human development. During early childhood, the brain develops almost to its fullest and the child begins to talk, walk, establish moral foundation, gain self-confidence and develop a foundation for later life and learning.
Early Childhood Development	Refer to the programmes for children (0-8 years), their parents and caregivers catering for the development and early learning opportunities of children.
Early Learning	Refers to all education and care services provided to children in the early childhood years from birth to eight.
Early Years Education	All education and care services provided to children in the Infant School Module through a structured, play-based program delivered by qualified teachers and other caregivers in a variety of settings including formal settings (ECD and Grade 1 & 2) and at home.
Equity	Ensuring that all children have a fair and reasonable opportunity to participate fully in early learning opportunities.
Indicator	A measure or benchmark that quantifies and shows the achievement of a result.
Infant School Module	Level of Basic Education system that comprises ECD A to Grades 2; and focuses on education and care services for children 4-7 years old.
Mission Statement	A declaration that sets out what, how, why and for whom the Early Learning policy exists.
Parent involvement	Participation of parents in activities and opportunities at their children's early learning institutions.

Family engagement	An interactive process between early learning professionals and families which involve relationships that are mutual, respectful, and responsive to a family's language, culture and needs to raise up their child.
Model ECD Centre	A centre that meets the holistic needs of a young child through responsive care, developmentally appropriate facilities and adequate responsive caregivers/ teachers.
Policy Statement	A declaration of principles, values or intent that guides decisions and actions, to achieve the early learning policy goals.
Policy Goal	The ultimate end sought by the policy and representing national priority for Early Learning Education programmes.
Policy Objective	A specific statement of intention to achieve early learning policy statements.
Policy Strategy	Broad long-term plan of action to achieve a policy objective.
Principles	Fundamental beliefs or propositions accepted as true, that serve as the foundation for the way in which the Early Learning Policy is operationalised.
Result	The desired condition of children, parents, families or community service system.
Stakeholders	The people who are affected by, or can affect, the service's actions, objectives and policies.
Target	The quantified goal in a specified future time for each indicator.
Unhu/Ubuntu/Vumunhu	The concept and belief in a universal bond of belonging and sharing that connects all humanity.
Vision	Short and long-term desire of what young children in Zimbabwe should become.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy is a broad framework of reference to provide a safeguarding learning coherent programme that will establish a strong foundation for Zimbabwe's education system. The policy provides the overarching goal and pronounces various policy statements and strategies to ensure every child in Zimbabwe accesses equitable, quality, inclusive, affordable and relevant foundational learning.

Besides, the policy embraces the need for adequate care before learners are enrolled in the Infant School Module (ISM) for pupils from ECD A to Grade 2, and ensures quality early learning for optimal development and school readiness. The Policy also delineates the roles and responsibilities of various stakeholders with an emphasis on the importance of guaranteeing partnership and evidence-based programming.

1.2 Background to the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy was developed in response to the recommendations of the 1999 Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training Report, which proposed the introduction of Early Childhood Education into formal schools. The Constitution of Zimbabwe, Amendment (No 20), 2013 proclaims the right of every child to a free and compulsory basic education. In addition the Government of the Republic of Zimbabwe is also a signatory to the global commitments on education including United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), Agenda 2030 and African Union Agenda 2063.

Originally, early learning provision in Zimbabwe was guided by fragmented policy circulars and statutory instruments. These piecemeal legal and regulatory frameworks did not provide a coherent coordination system of early learning. In view of this, Secretary Circular Number 2 of 2014 then institutionalized Early Childhood Education into the formal school as part of the Infant School Module, making primary education a 9 year course.

The Transforming Education Agenda emphasizes on the acceleration of foundational learning, with emphasis on development of literacy and numeracy competencies as a building block for improved performance at higher levels. This is in line with the Government of Zimbabwe's National Development Strategy 1 that focuses on creating a human capital hub that is capable of transforming the countries' economy for national development.

1.3 Importance for Investing in Early Learning

Globally, empirical research evidence shows that, human brain development is most malleable, highly impressionable and develops most rapidly during early childhood years and that, by the

fifth birth day, 90% of the child's brain is developed. The experiences a child is exposed to in early childhood affect brain development and impact on the brain architecture and functioning (The Centre for the Developing Child, 2019); hence influencing future learning abilities, social emotional competencies, behaviour and health (UNESCO, 2015; World Bank, 2015, 2013). Other studies indicate that, the early childhood period provides a critical window of opportunity for language, cognition, vision and social emotional development when the child is able to learn and acquire knowledge, skills and attitudes very quickly with minimal efforts (UNESCO, 2018; Sayre et al., 2015). It is also a period when it is easy to nurture the character of a child by inculcating social norms, values and habits (UNICEF, 2019).

Many studies have also shown that quality early learning programmes set a strong foundation for learning and that; there are significant benefits for children who attend high quality early learning programs (Denboba, 2014). Participation in high quality early learning programmes improve children's school readiness, critical thinking skills and establish healthy behaviours that last a lifetime (UNICEF, 2019; Melnick et al., 2018). Low quality early learning programmes on the other hand, limit or even negatively affect the children's development and learning potential (UNICEF, 2018).

1.4 Rationale for the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy

The overall purpose of developing the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy is to ensure the institutionalization of a quality and comprehensive ISM, which is aligned with the Zimbabwe Constitution, Act 2013, Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 and the country's socio-economic transformation aspirations. In particular, both Vision 2030 and the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) seek to fundamentally transform Zimbabwe into an Upper Middle Income Country by the year 2030. Effective implementation of this policy will ensure all children in Zimbabwe have a firm foundation for literacy, numeracy, social-emotional competencies, Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM). Moreover, the policy paves way for the development of the essential 21st century skills for lifelong learning in pupils who turn out into a skilled and productive workforce. The essence is to cultivate an investigative mind of the young pupil, creative enough to produce and not only to regurgitate knowledge but develop competencies on how to use it.

Appreciating the benefits of a quality early learning programme as espoused in various global researches (UNICEF, 2019, 2016; Melhuish et al., 2016; Janta, et al., 2016; World Bank, 2014; Sylva et al., 2014; Heckman, 2011; Karoly et al., 1998), the policy seeks to address the challenges of low access, inequitable services, insufficient quality and inclusivity in the provision of early learning services. Thus, the policy provides for strategies to enhance universal access to quality, equitable, affordable and inclusive early learning education programme based on global best practices.

2.0 Socioeconomic and Demographic Context

The country's vision envisages an Upper Middle-Income Economy by the year 2030. In this regard, the National Development Strategy 1 (NDS1) has set forth ambitious programmatic interventions to transform the country's economy. Socio-economic transformation is anchored on the availability of an educated and globally competitive skilled populace which calls for an effective and efficient education system. The population increased from 13.06 (2012) to 17.3 million people in 2019 and is projected to rise to 19.5 million by 2025 (World Population Review, 2019). National statistics show that, children 3 to 7 years old constituted 33% of the total school age population and 13% of the total population in 2018 (MOPSE, 2019). Overall, there is 9% disability prevalence among the population which is higher among females (10%) compared to males (8%). Disability prevalence is also indicated in the school population. There is also Provincial disparity, with the highest prevalence in Manicaland and Mashonaland Central Provinces at 13% (Zimbabwe National Statistics Agency, 2017).

2.1 Legal and Policy Context

2.1.1 Legal Context

This policy is anchored on existing legal and policy frameworks and is in conformity with the National Development Agenda and relevant international protocols. These include:

- **Constitution of Zimbabwe:** The Constitution has prioritised children's rights as envisaged in section 19, 27 and 75. Under section 19(2) the State has undertaken to ensure that children enjoy parental care, or appropriate care when removed from the family environment, have shelter and basic nutrition, health care and social services, are protected from maltreatment, neglect or any form of abuse and have access to appropriate education and training. Whereas, section 75 provides for the right to education for everyone, section 27 of the Constitution promotes free and compulsory basic education. The Constitution also provides for the rights of persons with disabilities to be provided with special facilities for their education and to State-funded education and training where necessary (section 83 (e) and (d); the right to language and culture (section 63).
- **Education Act [Chapter 25:04]** - Provides for children's fundamental rights to education (Section 4) and compulsory education (Section 5).
- **National Development Strategy 1 (2021-2025):** - underscores the importance of education as a key poverty reduction strategy as well as a vehicle for producing a skilled and capable workforce for socio-economic transformation. The programme prioritises the provision of affordable, equitable and quality education for all.

- **Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP), 2021-2025:** - under the MoPSE is committed to develop a clearly defined policy and regulatory framework that will guide the operation and implementation of early learning in Zimbabwe and identified early learning as one of the six priority programmes.
- **The Zimbabwe Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022:** - established the three levels of basic education which are; Infant, junior and Secondary. The framework emphasises on the importance of laying a strong foundation at the early years and merged the early childhood education and development with lower primary grades 1 & 2. This integration will not only improve effectiveness and efficiency but also ensures a successful transition of children from home through infant to junior primary education.
- **Zimbabwe Children's Act: Chapter 5:06** - its notable that, the Children's Act does not cover the issue of children's education as stated in both the UNCRC and ACRWC. However, the Act provides for child protection and care. In the review of the ACT, there is need to incorporate matters related to children rights to development and early education.

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy is also anchored on international protocols that Zimbabwe has ratified. These include:

- **Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)** - in particular, the SDG 4 target 4.2 that calls for Governments to ensure that by 2030, all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education. The Education 2030 Agenda (Incheon Declaration, 2016) and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda call for increased access to quality, inclusive and equitable Early Childhood Development and Education (ECD) and propose increased investment in this sub sector respectively. The African Union's Agenda 2063 calls for universal access to quality early childhood, primary and secondary education, ensuring that no child is left behind, and that the potential of every child is nurtured.
- **The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989)** - mandates Governments to take all available measures to make sure children's rights are respected, protected and fulfilled as well as respecting the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children.
- **United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)** - Article 24 mandates Governments to recognize the right of persons with disabilities to education hence governments will ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and life-long learning directed to the full development of human potential and sense of dignity and self-worth.
- **African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)** - provides that every child has the right to an education, to develop his or her personality, talents, mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, preserving and strengthening positive African morals, traditional values and cultures.

2.1.2 Policy Context

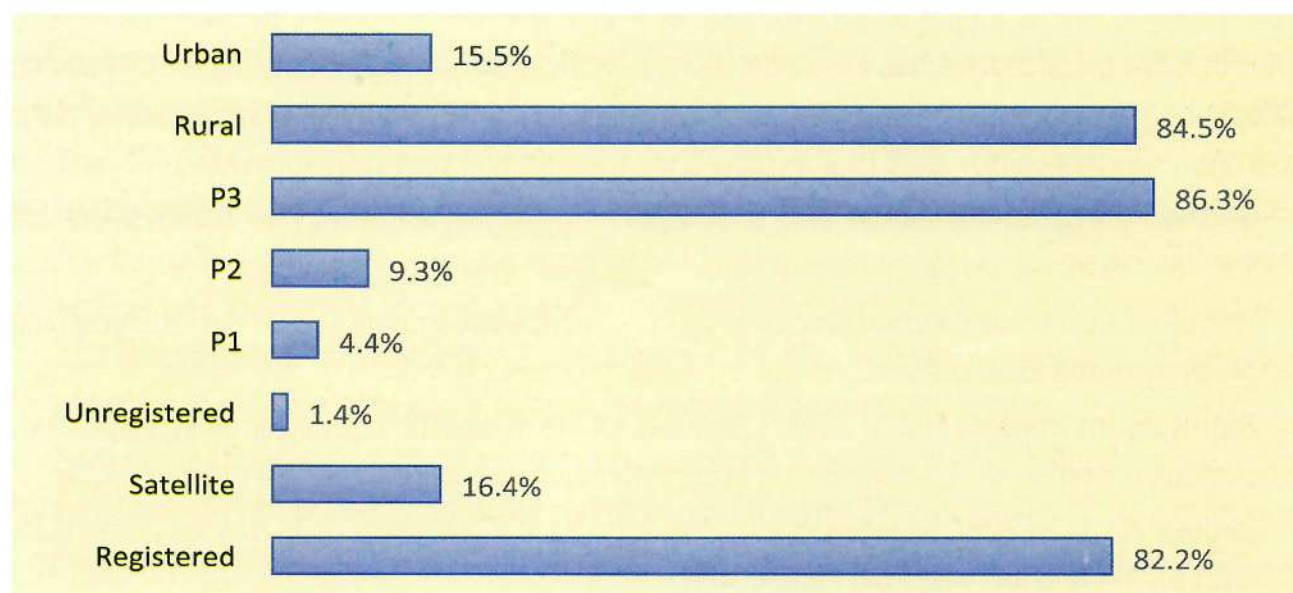
The Republic of Zimbabwe has initiated several policy circulars and statutory instruments since independence that regulate the provision of Early Childhood Development and Education in the country.

- **Secretary's Circular Minute No. 2 of 2014:** - provides a strategy to achieve the full implementation of the Infant School Module.
- **Principal's Director Circular No. 26 of 2011:** - Provides strategies to curb the mushrooming of unregistered ECD centres.
- **Statutory Instrument 106 of 2005:** - provides for the establishment, registration, inspection, curriculum standards for cleanliness, accommodation and learner teacher ratios in ECD.
- **Circular No 14 of 2004:** -directed all primary schools to incorporate ECD classes A and B for children 3-4 and 4-5 years old respectively.
- **Director's Circular No. 12 of 2005:** - reinforced provision of ECD in primary schools in a 5 year phased approach (ECD B, 2005 – 2010; ECD A, 2011 – 2015).
- **Directors' Circular No. 48 of 2007:** - provided guidance in the implementation of ECD in schools and ECD centres.

2.2 Situation of Early Learning Facilities

Early learning services are provided in all primary schools and privately owned ECD Centres, from ECD A to Grade 2. Early learning may also be provided in Community Based ECD centres which are under the authority of the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. The Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education statistics show that, the number of ECD institutions increased by an annual average of 2% from 5,822 in 2014 to 9771 in 2018 (MoPSE, 2019). This translates to a learner classroom ratio of 1:64. Following circular No. 14 of 2004 on integration of ECD into primary, 99.3% of primary schools in Zimbabwe had ECD classes by 2018. On the same note, there were 288 standalone ECD centres, the majority of which were in urban centres. Primary schools in Zimbabwe are categorized according to registration status, the socio-economic status of the community they are located in (P1, P2 and P3), Government or non-Government as well as rural versus urban. Figure 1 shows the percentage of primary schools by category as well as the number of primary schools by registration status across the 10 Provinces.

Figure 1: Percentage of Primary schools by category



Source: EMIS 2018

2.3 Access and Equity in Early Learning Programme

Section 5 of the Education Act mandates the Government of Zimbabwe to ensure that all children access education. Government has made efforts to improve access and equity in education. These efforts have already borne significant fruits as reflected in the increasing enrolments in ECD. Table 1 shows the enrolment trends in ECD level from 2014 to 2021.

Government support to improve access to early learning by vulnerable children and those with disabilities is notable. With regard to access to early learning opportunities by children from vulnerable households, the Government of Zimbabwe in partnership with development partners introduced the Basic Education Assistance Module (BEAM) project in 2000 as a demand led initiative providing financial grants to communities to assist them in keeping vulnerable children in School. BEAM pays for a basic education package that includes levies, school and examination fees.

Table 1: ECD Enrolment Trend by Sex, Zimbabwe 2014-2021

Year	Male	Female	Total	% Change
2014	214300	213526	427,826	14.35
2015	259310	258640	517,950	21.07
2016	290595	289770	580,365	12.05
2017	313300	310681	623,981	7.52
2018	316210	312616	628,826	0.78
2019	328258	323955	652213	3.71
2020	327492	325638	653130	0.14
2021	338610	326522	655132	0.31

Source: MOPSE, 2018

It covers both primary and secondary schools including special schools for children with disabilities. BEAM is managed by the Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare (MoPSLSW) in collaboration with the MoPSE (MoPSE, 2017). Overall 12.1% of orphans and 52.8% of OVC in primary school were supported by the BEAM project. However, stakeholder consultations carried out in 2018 indicated that, learners in ECD A and B were not benefiting from the grant. Nevertheless the BEAM social support has since been extended to cover all pupils from ECD A up to A level.

In spite of the efforts to integrate ECD with Grade 1 and 2, the situation analysis indicated that, access and participation in early learning programmes is constrained by several factors. These include:

- **Parents and guardians' attitude towards early learning** – lack of awareness on the importance of ECD is resulting to low motivation to enrol children in ECD centres.
- **Cost and affordability of early learning** – various levies are being charged at ECD including tuition, feeding programme, infrastructure development and uniforms among others, making ECD unaffordable to many children from low income households who opt to enrol children directly in Grade 1 (Mangwaya et al, 2016; Out of school study, 2015).
- **Shortage of facilities in schools** – with the integration of ECD the formal primary school, ECD classrooms and other facilities have become insufficient to take up the increased ECD learner numbers. Furthermore, Community based ECD centres are not well spread across communities.
- **Distance to the ECD centres and primary schools** – the distance from home to the nearest primary school is long and has deterred eligible children to enrol in ECD centres(out of school study, 2015)
- **Learning environment** – large and overcrowded classes that are not conducive for learning coupled with multi-shift arrangements deterred parents from enrolling their children in the early years' classes.
- **Family structure** – there is reported high rate of migration, child abuse and neglect that predispose young children to the likelihood of being excluded from attending to school. The Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey (MICS), 2015 indicated that 6 out of 10 children received violent discipline at home.

There is need to address these challenges in order to improve access to early learning. Specifically, there is need to increase Net Enrolment Rates from the current 30% to at least 45% in the next five years.

2.4 Quality and Inclusivity in Early Learning Programme

Globally, empirical research evidence indicates that early learning experiences are mostly beneficial to children if they are of high quality (Melhuish et al. 2016; Junta, et al., 2016; UNICEF,

2016; Sylva et al. 2014; Heckman 2011; Karoly et al. 1998). The critical determinants of quality are the availability of a responsive curriculum, adequate, well qualified and skilled teachers, availability of teaching and learning resources and child friendly learning environments. The Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education 2015-2022 has provided a relevant play based and progressive curriculum for early years education with progressive learning outcomes. The situation analysis further showed that, 58% of teachers have had training either at certificate, diploma or degree level. In addition, instructional resources are provided by parents and government. However, the quality of the present early learning programme is affected by: high learner to teacher ratio; teacher placement issues, multi-grade and multi-shift classes, shortage of classrooms including teaching and learning materials, hence making delivery challenging to teachers. It is also notable that, almost half of the teachers are not adequately trained to handle ECD pedagogy and differentiated teaching and learning approaches, coupled with lack of support supervision, resulting in insufficient curriculum delivery. There is also inadequate learning support at home.

There is need to ensure an adequate, well qualified and skilled early learning workforce, to reduce the learner teacher ratio, ensure adequate support supervision and monitoring of learner performance. In addition, there is need to ensure adequate and appropriate instructional and play-based learning materials to improve learning.

MoPSE has made major efforts to ensure inclusivity through policies on family support programmes. There are however several factors that impact on the inclusiveness of the programme. Key among these is the cost of enrolling a child living with disabilities, lack of appropriate teaching and learning resources for differently abled learners, learning environment that does not encourage enrolment of children with disabilities as well as the teachers' inadequate skills in handling children with disabilities. There is therefore need to design more effective strategies that government and stakeholders will undertake to ensure quality, inclusive, affordable and relevant early learning education.

2.5 Health, Nutrition and Care

The MoPSE in collaboration with Ministry of Health and Child Care launched the Zimbabwe School Health Policy in March, 2018 to operationalise comprehensive school health programming from the time children enter school at the Infant level to the completion of secondary education. In spite of the institutionalisation of the School Health Policy, there are pertinent issues that still need to be addressed to improve the health and nutrition status of children at infant school level.

First there is need for compliance to specified standards on the learner toilet ratio at the ECD level. The situation analysis shows higher learner toilet ratio for both girls (25:1) and boys (24:1) compared to the recommended ratios in the Statutory Instrument 106, of 2005 of 20:1.

Secondly, MoPSE 2018 statistics indicated that, 86% of primary schools nationally accessed safe water but with provincial disparities. With respect to health promotion, 57% percent of primary schools had a health trained teacher and 69% had a functioning health club in 2018. Whereas the health teacher is for the whole school, there is need to ensure all teachers in infant school level are trained on basic health issues concerning children. Although, 84% of primary schools had a school feeding programme, there lacked mechanisms to guarantee sustainability of the feeding programme. Equally, personal hygiene knowledge and practices among learners and teachers is low and collaboration between MoPSE and MoHCC still needs continuous strengthening to fully support the School Health Policy.

With respect to nutrition provision, there is need to sensitise school heads, teaches-in-charge, teachers and parents on the provision of nutritious meals to address the issues of unhealthy eating habits. Focus Group interviews reported rising cases of obesity and eating of junk food. There is need for this policy to ensure a cost effective and sustainable feeding programme at the infant level; the implementation of a hygiene promotion programme; growth monitoring/promotion and ensure all teachers in the infant school are trained on health, nutrition and nurturing care principles. Since health, nutrition and care support is cross-cutting, there is need also for this policy to provide strategies to strengthen institutional linkages and collaboration especially with respect to referrals of learners who get sick in school.

2.6 Leadership and Management of Infant Education

Management and coordination of early learning programmes is executed within the MoPSE administrative structures. Several departments come into play to reach the ultimate goal. Provision of health and nutrition is implemented in partnership with the Ministry of Health and Child Care while social protection support is provided through the Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare (MOPSLSW). It is also noted that, pre-service training of teachers is under the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development (MOHTESTD). The current arrangement requires up scaling, especially in terms of supervision and coming up with a systematic way of enforcing compliance with set standards to ensure coherence. Inadequate monitoring and evaluation and use of monitoring data for decision making, coupled with low community awareness on the importance of ECD and the need for investing in ECD affect the delivery of early learning. Whereas, the School Heads and the School Development Committees constitute the local level management structures they are not well enlightened on matters of early learning.

In light of the foregoing, there is need to ensure a coherent coordination and management structure to improve accountability, capture and use data for management decision making and build capacity for supportive supervision at the school level.

2.7 Family and Community Engagement

Family and community engagement refer to the activities that parents conduct at home and in early childhood settings to directly or indirectly support their child's learning. This involvement creates a connection between the home and school. By getting engaged, parents are able to replicate and extend activities that their child experiences in school and at home in order to help the child to acquire the requisite competencies and build confidence in him/her. By knowing what the child is learning, the parent is inspired to think of the activities that coincide with classroom tasks at home. In spite of these facts, an out of school study indicated that, only 4 out of 10 children received parental support at home. Several factors affect family and community support including: the socio-economic condition of the family and parents' negative school experience. Beliefs, norms and values also affect family engagement in the school activities.

3.1 Policy Scope and Target

3.1.1 Scope

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy covers all children in the Infant School Module i.e. ECD A, ECD B, Grade 1 and Grade 2 and their teachers, parents and other caregivers. The policy also applies to all institutions, state and non-state actors as well as other stakeholders providing early learning services in Zimbabwe.

3.1.2 Target Groups

- All children enrolled in ECD A to Grade 2, including the vulnerable, marginalised, those with disabilities, learning difficulties and talented.
- All parents and guardians with children in ECD A to Grade 2.
- Local communities.
- School Heads, Teachers in Charge (TICs) and teachers in public and private schools.
- School Development Committees.
- Other providers of early learning services in ECD institutions.
- Development partners and donors.
- Universities and Colleges.
- Other government ministries including: Ministry of Health and Child Care, Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare, Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technology Development, Ministry of Local Government and Public Works and Ministry of Finance and Economic Development.

3.2 Policy Vision and Mission

3.2.1 Vision

Realising children's full potential and optimal growth and development through the provision of accessible, quality, inclusive, affordable and relevant early learning.

3.2.2 Mission

To promote equitable access to quality, inclusive, affordable and relevant infant education for all children to establish a firm foundation of schooling success, lifelong learning and socio-economic transformation of the country.

3.3 Policy Goal and Objectives

3.3.1 Policy Goal

To ensure all children remain healthy and have access to quality, affordable and inclusive early learning opportunities in environments that are nurturing, responsive, safe, inclusive and culturally appropriate.

3.3.2 Policy Objectives

The specific objectives are to:

1. Guarantee all children are healthy and learn in safe, child friendly environments.
2. Strengthen the governance and coordination of the Infant School Module.
3. Mobilise for increased allocation and prudent management of resources.
4. Enhance the quality of early learning services for improved learning outcomes.
5. Build capacity of the families and local communities to support early learning activities.
6. Promote effective mechanisms for assessing learners' performance progress.
7. Improve monitoring, evaluation and research for evidence-based planning.
8. Strengthen collaboration, partnerships and linkages among stakeholders.
9. Enhanced continuous teaching and learning during emerging situations.

3.4 Pillars for the Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy is anchored on five pillars;

- (1) Legal and Policy Framework
- (2) Research and Innovation
- (3) Human Capital Development
- (4) Infrastructure and Financial Support
- (5) Governance

3.5 Guiding Principles and Values

3.5.1 Guiding Principles

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy is underpinned on principles that are universal in safeguarding inclusive quality early learning. The principles are moored on human rights and child development perspectives to guide in resource allocation; programme implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation to ensure every child (4-7 years old) in Zimbabwe experiences play-based learning through a responsive child centred curriculum guided by the following principles.

- **Respect for Humanity - Unhu/Ubuntu/Vumunhu** – anchored on the belief in a universal bond of sharing that connects all humanity and promotes values such as empathy, honesty, fairness, good neighbourliness and hard work among other virtues.

- **Rights Based Approach** – protecting children’s human rights and the right to quality education as guaranteed under the Constitution of Zimbabwe, the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD). Recognising that, every child has the right to survival, growth, development, protection and participation, and to achieve his or her full potential.
- **Holistic Development of the Child** – recognition that, the needs of children at infancy are diverse and that learning in early childhood takes place holistically. The policy focuses on whole child development including: cognitive, linguistic, socio-emotional, physical well-being, growth, protection, cultural dimensions and learning throughout life.
- **Play Based Learning** – promoting an opportunity to learn through play-based activities supported by responsive caregivers and teachers in recognising that children learn and explore the world around them through play; and the child’s right to play as enshrined in Article 31 of the UNCRC and Zimbabwe Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education.
- **Support of Families** – appreciating families as the first and primary institution for supporting the growth and development of children and constructing the foundation for life-long learning.
- **Equitable and Non-Discriminatory Provisions** – promotes equitable provision focusing on all children, but with special attention for those children and families most at risk for exclusion due to vulnerability and marginalization, to reduce social inequalities and promote inclusion.
- **Appreciating Diversity in Language and Culture** – helping all children develop a positive sense of self and culture based on the reality that Zimbabwe is a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual and multi- cultural society.
- **Inclusivity and Partnerships** – acknowledging the role of different stakeholders and the need for promoting consultations to ensure cohesiveness in the delivery of early learning programmes at all levels.
- **Governance** – the policy recognizes that, programmatic authority for ECD services may cut across different government departments and the need for MoPSE to take the lead in ensuring effective coordination of early learning services across all partners.

3.5.2 Values

This policy is anchored on and promotes the following values:

- Respect and caring
- Social cohesion and sensitivity to diversity
- Cultural competence and indigenous knowledge
- Creativity and Scientific enquiry
- Gender sensitivity
- Tolerance and empathy
- Resiliency
- Balance
- Life-long learning
- Honesty and integrity, and
- Commitment and Team work

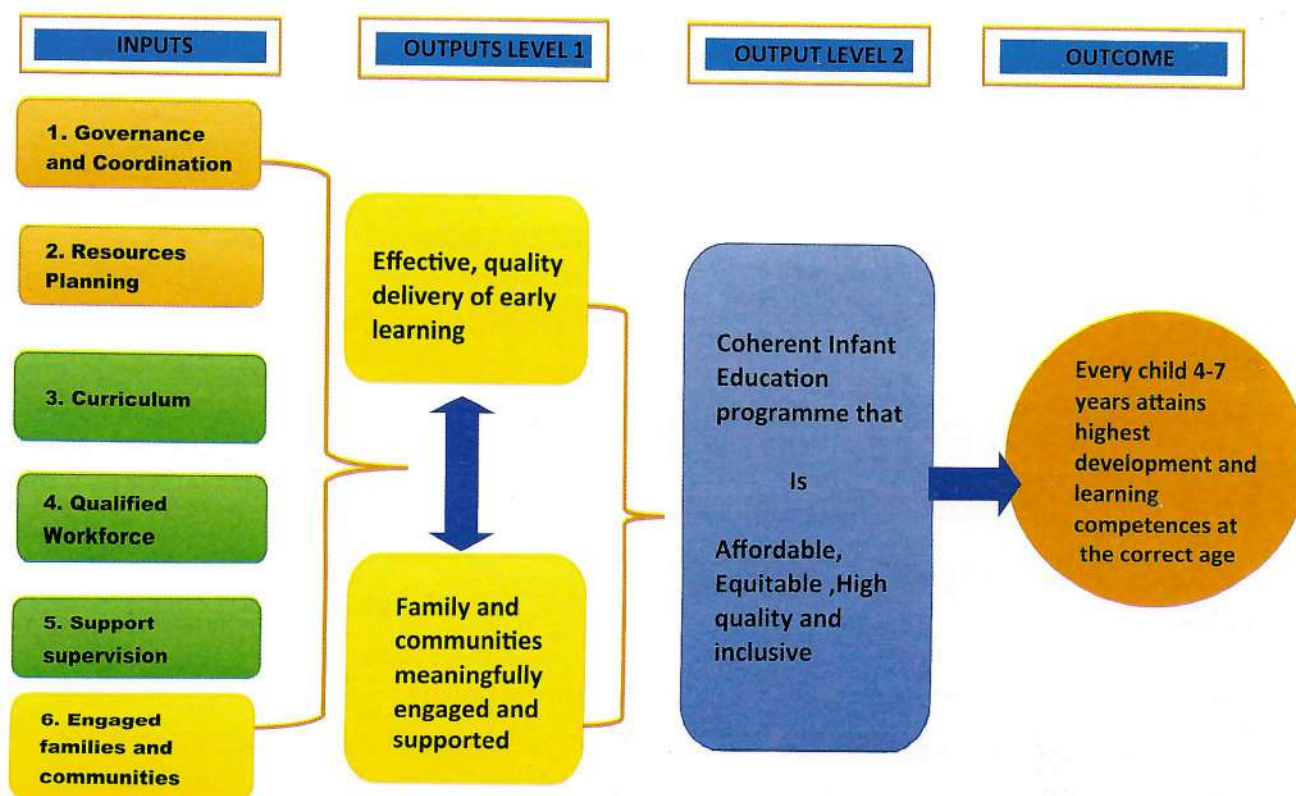
3.6 Re-conceptualising Early Learning in Zimbabwe

The policy recognises that investment in quality early learning is a sure way of enabling equity and inclusiveness in education as well as improving the children's learning trajectory, performance and skills development as envisioned in the NDS1 and Vision 2030. In particular, quality early learning will contribute to reduced dropout and repetitions, improved school readiness and learning outcomes which will in effect improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the education system.

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy is therefore anchored on a Theory of Change to ensure young children in Zimbabwe reach their holistic development and acquire necessary competences. The theory of change proposes improvement in three areas of the current ISM.

1. **System & Institutional Structures** – this involves improving governance, coordination, adequate resource planning to ensure an accountable and coherent learning programme.
2. **Service Delivery Approach** – ensuring a responsive curriculum supported by instructional materials that are available and equitably distributed to all learners, and that there is professionally qualified staff, an effective mechanism of support supervision to the teachers and real time data for decision making.
3. **Family and Community Support** – enlightening families and communities on the importance and need for ECD and early learning; their roles in ensuring a nurturing, caring, learning support as well as identifying and supporting the families that do not afford the costs towards early learning.

Figure 2: Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy Theory of Change Framework



4.1 The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy Components

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy focuses on the following thematic areas:

- i) Programme Governance and Coordination
- ii) Access and Equitable Provision
- iii) Quality and Inclusive Services
- iv) Monitoring Learner's Progress (Assessment)
- v) Health, Nutrition and Care
- vi) Family / Community Support and Engagement
- vii) Financing and Resources Mobilization
- viii) Managing Emerging Situations in Early Learning
- ix) Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

4.2 Programme Governance and Coordination

To ensure an enabling environment, the government will strengthen legal frameworks, programme governance, coordination and institutional accountability for the efficient implementation of a coherent early learning programme.

4.2.1 Policy Statement

To improve legal provision, governance and coordination, the Government in collaboration with stakeholders will:

- a) Ensure the early learning programme is anchored on relevant national legal provisions.
- b) Strengthen early learning programme management, governance and accountability structures to guide implementation at all levels.
- c) Promote partnership and effective collaboration with all stakeholders in early learning programme.
- d) Create awareness and advocate for investment in early learning programmes

4.2.2 Strategies to Achieve Policy on Legal, Governance and Coordination

To achieve the above policy statements, MoPSE will implement the following strategies:

- 1. Align early learning principles in the Education Act and other legal documents /legislation.
- 2. Establish an early learning coordination unit / section, led by an Infant Education Director with an ECD Education Degree and relevant experience.

3. Establish Early Learning Inspectors at District level who will inspect, monitor, supervise and evaluate early learning programmes in the District. The Early Learning Inspector must have a Degree in ECD apart from the other Ministry requirements.
4. Streamline registration processes to align with this policy and enforce registration of all institutions.
5. Strengthen partnerships in the provision of early learning through a public-private partnership framework.
6. Develop early learning policy advocacy & communication strategy incorporating training of leaders on the Science of ECD.
7. Develop operational policy circulars to activate the full implementation of the ISM

4.3 Access and Equity

Government has the responsibility to ensure equitable access to early learning. The overall goal is to guarantee availability of affordable, equitable, quality, affordable and inclusive early learning opportunities for every child (4-7 years old) in Zimbabwe.

4.3.1 Policy Statement for Access and Equity

To improve access and equity in early learning, the Government in collaboration with Local Government Authorities and other stakeholders will ensure universal, free and compulsory early learning programme as envisioned in the Constitution of Zimbabwe (2013) and the Education Act.

4.3.2 Strategies to Achieve Access and Equity

To achieve the above policy statement, MoPSE will implement the following strategies.

1. Implement free and compulsory Infant School Education for all children 4-7 years.
2. Create awareness on the importance of early learning and advocate for increased investment.
3. Initiate innovative interventions to ensure orphans and vulnerable children access early learning.
4. Develop an Emergency Response Strategy to enhance effective teaching and learning interventions in emerging situations such as the COVID-19 and other unpredictable natural disasters
5. Expand early learning facilities and promote community based early learning centres.
6. Ensure all children in early learning centres receive at least one balanced hot meal per day.
7. Ensure implementation of a quality standard improvement programme.
8. Supply adequate, developmentally appropriate and inclusive early learning facilities in all public primary schools.

4.4 Quality and Inclusion in Early Learning programmes

Early learning programmes should be of high quality if the expected development and learning outcomes are to be realised. It is also important that, the programme is able to meet the learning needs of every child including those with special needs. In light of these, the overall goal is to ensure that, every child receives quality and inclusive early learning experiences for optimal development and acquisition of early learning competences.

4.4.1 Policy Statement for Quality and Inclusion

In order to achieve the above goal, the Government in collaboration with stakeholders will:

- a) Ensure the early learning competence based curriculum promotes holistic development of the child, provide developmentally appropriate content and integrate 21st Century skills.
- b) Cultivate an investigative mind in young children, creative enough to produce and not to remember information, but how to use it for the country's economic transformation.
- c) Enforce the use of the commonly spoken language in an area as the medium of instruction in early learning institutions and use of Braille and sign language in institutions handling visually and hearing impaired learners.
- d) Ensure early learning centres have adequate, developmentally appropriate and relevant teaching and learning resources.
- e) Deploy adequate and well qualified workforce with essential skills for delivering a quality early learning programme.
- f) Ensure continued teaching and learning in all Early Learning centres even during emerging situations
- g) Ensure providers embrace diversity and inclusiveness and promote early identification of disabilities.
- h) Support families and local communities to promote learning stimulation at home.

4.4.2 Strategies for Quality and Inclusion

To accomplish quality and inclusivity, MoPSE will adopt the following strategies;

- 1) Ensure all public and private early learning institutions implement a Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) that nurtures whole child development.
- 2) Develop inclusive Early Learning Catch up Programmes and innovative teaching and learning strategies to enhance literacy and numeracy as a way of covering up for lost teaching and learning time during emerging situations.
- 3) Promote timely procurement and distribution of curriculum support materials especially in the hard to reach areas.

- 4) Develop Early Learning Service / functionality & Development Standards (ELDS) and sensitise providers.
- 5) Implement a systematic teacher support supervision and coaching / mentoring system to improve learner centred pedagogy and instructions.
- 6) Recruit adequate and qualified workforce who have essential skills in early learning.
- 7) Lobby for the review of the teachers training curriculum to align with this policy and the CBC.
- 8) Integrate 21st century skills, e-learning, digital and financial literacy in the early learning curriculum.
- 9) Enforce provision of age appropriate and adequate play learning materials and equipment by all providers.
- 10) Strengthen psycho-social support for vulnerable learners, their parents and guardians.
- 11) Strengthen early identification of children with special needs and promote timely assessment and appropriate placement of learners with disabilities.
- 12) Develop mechanism for early learning teachers' accreditation.
- 13) Review learner welfare strategies for full inclusivity in the Infant School Module.
- 14) Construct Model Early Learning centres in each district.
- 15) Ensure the following service standards are entrenched in the early learning programme and practice.
 - Use of commonly spoken language in an area for instructions in infant school
 - All early learning institutions fully embrace diversity and inclusivity in service delivery.
 - Learning and play resources be made adequate, age and developmentally appropriate.
 - Observance of appropriately qualified workforce as per specified teacher-learner ratios.
 - All staff handling learners' food have basic training on food hygiene and valid medical certificates.
 - Communities establish ECD centres within a radius of 2 kilometres apart.
 - Learners be admitted at 4 years old in ECD A.
 - Indoor and outdoor learning and play spaces should be made available, safe and adequate.
 - Kitchen and eating places are safe and hygienic.
 - Adequate and age appropriate toilets and hand washing facilities are made available.
 - Adequate classrooms that meet structural requirements for safety, lighting and ventilation.
 - All Early Learning Centres have School Development Committees.
 - Each Community Based Early Learning Centre be supervised by the Head, Deputy Head and Teacher in Charge of the primary school it is attached to.

4.5 Monitoring of Learners' Progress (Assessment)

The CBC envisages a continuous tracking of learner competences i.e. skills, attitudes, abilities, values and traits to enable the teacher, parent, government and other stakeholders know what the child is able to do with and without assistance, alone or in a group for improved instruction, accountability, planning and decision making. The overall goal is to promote a holistic assessment for early learning.

4.5.1 Policy Statement for Monitoring of Learners Progress

The Government in collaboration with stakeholders will put in place effective and efficient formative and summative assessment mechanisms for early learning.

4.5.2 Strategies for Monitoring of Learners' Performance

To implement the above policy statement, MoPSE will adopt the following strategies:

1. Track learners' performance in compliance with the Ministry's Assessment Framework and Early Learning Development Standards to guide the teachers in the assessment and profiling of learners in the Infant School Module.
2. Build capacity of School Heads, Teachers in-Charge and Teachers as well as School Inspectors, Curriculum and Education Research Officers to effectively apply the assessment framework.
3. Promote teacher -parent dialogue on learner progress profiles.

4.6 Health, Nutrition and Care

The health of learners is a key prerequisite for regular school attendance, retention, completion and subsequent positive learning outcomes. On the same note, Early Learning Programmes have often provided a vehicle for health education and promotion of children. The overall goal is to promote adequate health, nutrition and care provision in early learning centres especially the improvement of sanitary facilities and personal hygiene practices of learners in their formative years.

4.6.1 Policy Statement on Health, Nutrition and Care

In collaboration with stakeholders, Government will ensure a minimum package of school-based health and nutrition services as stipulated in the school health policy is implemented in all early learning centres.

4.6.2 Strategies to Ensure Adequate Health, Nutrition and Care in Early Learning Centres

To implement the above policy statements, MoPSE in collaboration with MoHCC and other stakeholders will:

1. Build capacity of early learning teachers and staff on the school based minimum health and nutrition package.
2. Integrate health, nutrition and care training in early learning teacher training curriculum.
3. Infuse health and nutrition messages in the early learning syllabi.
4. Implement health and hygiene promotion interventions in all early learning centres.
5. Enforce compliance with minimum health and nutrition package by private providers.
6. Promote healthy eating habits in all early learning centres.
7. Monitor health, growth and development of children in all early learning centres.

4.7 Family/Community Support and Engagements

For parents, guardians, families and local communities to effectively participate in early learning programmes, they need to be empowered with knowledge and skills on the importance of early learning; how to ensure a nurturing care and how to support learning at home. There is also need to identify and support vulnerable families. The overall goal is to empower parents, guardians and families with knowledge, skills and substance to enable them to actively participate and promote early learning.

4.7.1 Policy Statement on Family Support and Engagement

To realise the above goal, Government in collaboration with stakeholders will ensure:

- a) Parents, guardians and families are empowered with knowledge and skills to enable them to effectively participate in early learning programmes and support their children's development and learning at school and home.
- b) Ensure a smooth transition of children from home into a strange and new school environment.
- c) Implementation of social protection support programme, inclusive of psycho-social support to enable vulnerable families to provide early learning and care for their young children.

4.7.2 Strategies to Ensure Family Support and Engagement

To implement the above policy statements, MoPSE will:

1. Establish a comprehensive parent and community engagement strategy.

2. Strengthen collaboration with Ministry of Public Service, Labour and Social Welfare for social economic support programmes for the very needy families to enable them enrol their children in school.
3. Collaborate with line ministries and other stakeholders to promote parents and guardians' knowledge and skills on early learning stimulation at home.
4. Collaborate with other departments to eliminate child abuse, gender inequality and socio-cultural practices which negatively impact on early learning.
5. Improve the knowledge, skills and capacity of parents, guardians and community to enable them provide support in delivery of quality early learning at home and school.

4.8 Financing and Resources Mobilisation

The quality and effectiveness of the early learning programme is dependant on adequate financing. The overall, goal is to mobilise adequate financial, human and physical resources for effective and efficient delivery of a quality early learning programme.

4.8.1 Policy Statement for Financing and Resources Mobilisation

The Government in collaboration with partners, private sector and other stakeholders will ensure adequate and sustainable financing of the early learning programme as an investment priority towards improved lifelong learning outcomes and socio economic transformation.

4.8.2 Strategies for Financing and Resources Mobilisation

To achieve the above policy on resources, MoPSE will adopt the following approaches:

1. Determine unit cost for the early learning level.
2. Enhance both recurrent and development budgetary allocation for the early learning programme/ infant education.
3. Initiate an early learning innovative financing model for ECD such as BEAM, subsidies, Trust fund, support grants, capitation grants, equalisation grant.
4. Advocate for increased investment in early learning through national and regional Early Learning Champions.
5. Work closely with Traditional and Community Leadership such as Chiefs, to mobilise resources for Early Learning Programmes.

4.9 Managing Emerging Situations in Early Learning

4.9.1 Policy Statement

Government in collaboration with partners, private sector and other stakeholders will ensure that Early Learning Institutions fully recover from the losses of the multifaceted impacts resulting from emerging situations such as pandemics and cyclones.

4.9.2 Strategies for Ensuring Full Recovery from Emerging Situations

- a) Institute measures to green learning institutions to ensure every pupil is climate ready.
- b) Ensure continued learning in situations of emergence and protracted crisis through alternative learning models.
- c) Embracing artificial intelligence in teaching and learning to ensure the upscaling of 21st century skills.

4.10 Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

The goal is to strengthen programme monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms for effective delivery of the early learning programme; as well as generating evidence based information for policy and decision making.

4.10.1 Policy Statements on Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

Government in collaboration with stakeholders will:

- a) Ensure an efficient monitoring and evaluation system of the early learning programme.
- b) Encourage and support research in early learning to inform policy and practice.

4.10.2 Strategies for Monitoring, Evaluation and Research

To achieve the above policy pronouncements, MoPSE will adopt the following strategies:

1. Enforce compliance with the **Early Learning Service / Functionality Standards Guidelines** by all early learning service providers.
2. Integrate the use of ICT in the M&E process and strengthen data management and visualisation.
3. Strengthen collaboration with research institutions on evidence generation.
4. Establish an early learning research, reporting and sharing platform.
5. Implement a supervision and monitoring system that promotes documentation of best practices.

5.1 Management and Coordination of Early Learning Programmes

This policy will be implemented within the existing MOPSE governance and coordination structures. The coordination structures of steering early learning education exists on National, Provincial, District and learning institutional levels. The main players in coordination include the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, the Provincial and District education offices and the Local Authorities and School Development Committees. There is however need to streamline coordination mechanism to drive effective implementation and provide a forum for stakeholders' continued engagement. To ensure accountable and effective coordination of the early learning programme, the policy recommends the establishment of an early learning programme coordination unit headed by a substantive Director in-charge of the Early Learning Programme (Infant School Module) with qualified technical officers at the Head Office and District levels. At the district, School Inspectors with requisite qualification in early learning should be recruited to provide supportive supervision, mentoring and coaching to early learning teachers in addition to the current provision.

5.2 Roles and Responsibilities of Stakeholders

1) Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE)

- Overall oversight and national coordination of Early Learning and policy implementation.
- Mobilisation of resources from government, development partners and private sector.
- Liaison with other ministries and departments.
- Regular reporting on early learning implementation.
- Coordination of internal and external research work.
- Monitor, supervise and evaluate implementation.
- Review and development of policy, services and early learning standards.
- Registration of schools / ECD centres.
- Compile national statistical reports on early learning.
- Coordinate infrastructure development.
- Coordination of early learning curriculum review and development.
- Evaluation and approval of early learning curriculum support materials.
- Capacity development of the early learning personnel and stakeholders.
- Carry out audit and financial management training of financial managers in schools.
- Legal advice in the policy development.
- Early identification of children with special needs and disabilities.
- Coordination of learner welfare programmes.
- Coordination of the school feeding programmes.
- Guidance and counselling / psychosocial support for learners and parents, communities.

2. **Ministry of Finance and Economic Development (MOFED)**
 - Ensure adequate recurrent and development budgetary allocation for the early learning programme
 - Coordinate donor funding for early learning programmes
- 3) **Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Science and Technological Development (MOHTESTD)**
 - Pre-service Teacher training curriculum
 - Pre-service teacher training programme in liaison with universities and colleges
 - Examination, certification and accreditation of teachers
 - Assessment of teacher trainees
- 4) **The Zimbabwe Public Service Commission**
 - Facilitate employment and deployment of teachers
 - Recruitment, hiring and discipline of teachers and officers
 - Scheme of service for early learning personnel
 - Service regulations
 - Audit staff performance
- 5) **Ministry of Public Service Labour and Social Welfare (MOPSLSW)**
 - Facilitation of the processing of safety nets such as BEAM for indigent early learners.
 - Provision and coordination of grants to enable needy communities to support children in school- Harmonised Cash Transfer
 - Promoting child protection awareness programmes in school communities to enhance access through its case management system
- 6) **Ministry of Health and Child and Care (MOHCC)**
 - Collaborate with MoPSE in school health policy advice implementation
 - School health inspections
 - School based health interventions such as growth monitoring, health education promotion, immunization, micro-nutrient supplementation, hygiene promotion, national advice and referral of children
 - Nurturing care support
- 7) **Ministry of Women Affairs, Community, Small and Medium Enterprises Development (MOWACSMED)**
 - Facilitate parenting programmes
 - Facilitate livelihoods and income generating projects
- 8) **Universities and colleges**
 - Teacher training
 - Research on early learning
 - Training of early learning personnel other than teachers

9) Development Partners

- Technical support
- Financial support for programme implementation
- Strengthen Advocacy for political commitment and increased public funding of early learning
- Support evidence generation for improved service delivery

10) Civil Society Organization / Non-Governmental Organizations

- Support in ensuring access to quality and inclusive early learning services
- Implementation of programme in liaison with MOPSE
- Advocacy and mobilisation for improved early learning programmes

11) School Heads

- Support school-based staff development sessions / workshop
- Oversee implementation of the early learning programme
- Supervise ECD activities
- Mobilise parental and community involvement
- Plan and organize SASSAF activities
- Admission of learners
- *Identify and refer learners with special needs to the district for assessment and placement*
- *Carrying out classroom action research*
- Mobilize the community to send their children to school
- *Monitor and supervise community-based ECD centres*

12) Teachers In-charge of Infant School

- Day to today administration of the infant school education level
- Ensure provision of adequate and relevant early learning instructional materials in liaison with school head and parents
- Provide supportive supervision and mentoring to teachers in the infant school
- Organize educational trips for learners
- Guarantee learners receive developmentally appropriate learning experiences
- Ensure the CBC curriculum is followed in organizing the learning experiences in the infant school

13) Infant School Teachers

- Facilitate learning experiences
- Interpret the CBC and guide the learning activities in the infant school
- Prepare relevant and age appropriate teaching learning materials
- Provide nurturing care to the learners
- Provide guided play activities
- Supervise play learning activities
- Assess learners and share progress with parents
- Organize learning execution tours for learners in liaison with school head, teacher in-charges and parents

14) Chiefs

- Support schools and School Development Committees in mobilizing resources for Early Learning Programmes
- Advocate for innovative early learning funding mechanisms/strategies, in compliance with the Constitution of Zimbabwe and the Education Act

15) School Development Committees/ Associations

- Develop school development plans
- Execute school development activities
- Mobilise parents to pay levies
- Mobilise other resources from private sector

16) Parents/Guardians

- Ensure children attend school
- Support learning at home
- Support feeding programme
- Support school infrastructure development

17) Private Sector

- Support government effort in implementation of quality early learning programme
- Embrace compliance with set standards
- Increase investment in quality early learning provision

5.3 Policy Priorities for Action

The Zimbabwe Early Learning Policy proposes a transformational model as contained in the proposed theory of change. The model provides important actions which are most likely to lead to improved outcomes. While the development of this policy is the first step in the realisation of a quality early learning programme, implementation will be iterative focusing on continued improvement and sustainability. In order to provide a sense of direction and to build momentum for its implementation, a costed implementation strategy (plan) has been developed as a supplement to this policy. The priorities are broken down into short, intermediate and long-term activities. It is anticipated that, progress can be made on the short-term actions within the first two years, although, some will need continuing work over the longer term to ensure they are fully embedded within education service practice.

5.4 Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed after five years of implementation to reflect the dynamic context within which learners grow and learn.

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ANNEX

1. Education Coordination Group, April - December 2019

S/No	Name	Organisation	Designation
1.	Hon. Dr Evelyn Ndlovu (MP)	MOPSE	Minister of Primary and Secondary Education
2..	Mrs. T. Thabela	MOPSE	Secretary for Primary and Secondary Education
3.	Mrs. O. Kaira	MOPSE	Chief Director- Primary, Secondary and Non Formal Education (PSNE)
4.	Mr. C. Masocha	MOPSE	Chief Director- Curriculum Development and Technical Services
5.	Ms. K.R.L. Nyanugo	MOPSE	Chief Director- LWS, SPS & SNE
6..	Mr. L. Tagara	MOPSE	Chief Director- HRD
7.	Ms. B. Wenjere	MOPSE	Director- Finance and Administration
8.	Ms. O. Zava	MOPSE	Acting Director- Primary Education
9	Mr. K. Chidota	MOPSE	Acting Deputy Director Infant Education
10	Dr. Makanda	MOPSE	Director Curriculum Development Unit (CDU)
11.	Mr. G. Parenyi	MOPSE	Acting Director- Legal Services
12	Mr. T. Doba	MOPSE	Director- Secondary Education
13.	Mrs. H. Maisiri	MOPSE	Director- LWS, SPS & SNE
14.	Mr. T. R. Jongwe	World Bank	Education Specialist
15.	Ms. N. Ibrashamian	UNICEF	Chief of Education
16.	Mrs. C. Kondo	UNICEF	Education Manager
17..	Mr. M. Rafamoyo	UNICEF	Education Manager
18.	Mr. D. Muntanga	UNICEF	Education Specialist
19.	Mr. S. Rwezuya	UNICEF	Education Specialist
20.	Ms. C. Medel-Anouevo	UNESCO	Senior Education Specialist
21..	Ms. J. Heiss	UNESCO	Education Specialist
22.	Mr. T. Mukabeta	UNESCO	NPO Education
23.	Mr. L. Halimani	UNESCO	NPO HIV & Health Education
24.	Mr. L. Matsive	ECOZI	National Coordinator
25.	Ms. F. Nkala	CAMFED	National Director
26	Mr. E. Ndanga	MOHTEISTD	Deputy Director
27.	Mrs. R. Musadaidzwa	MOHTEISTD	Senior Human Capital Development and Skills Officer
28	Mr. J. Kapumha	MOHTEISTD	Senior Human Capital Development and Skills Officer

2. ZELP Stakeholders Consultation Process - Field Data Collection

No.	Name	Institution	Designation & Province
1.	S. Mhike	MoPSE	PED Masvingo
2..	C.C. Kateera	MoPSE	PED Harare
3.	P. Chikosha	MoPSE	A/PED Mashonaland Central
4.	J. Guri	MoPSE	A/PED Mashonaland East
5.	G. Mhumha	MoPSE	A/PED Mashonaland West
6..	E. Shumba	MoPSE	PED Manicaland
7.	C. Kanoerera	MoPSE	D/PED Manicaland
8.	J. Mpofu	MoPSE	A/PED Matabeleland North
9.	L. Masukume	MoPSE	A/PED Matabeleland South
10.	Rev. T. Matienga	MoPSE	A/PED Midlands
11.	J. Ndebele	MoPSE	DSI Khami District- Bulawayo
12.	N. Ngulube	MoPSE	DSI Bulawayo Central District
13.	M. Mafukidze	MoPSE	DSI Nothern Central District Harare
14.	G. Mafuriranwa	MoPSE	A/DSI Bindura District Mash Central
15.	Mutenha	MoPSE	A/DSI Mazowe District Mash Central
16.	F. Mudita	MoPSE	DSI Seke District Mashonaland East
17.	S. Katoma	MoPSE	A/DSI Makonde District Mash West
18.	M. Ndoro	MoPSE	DSI Hurungwe District Mash West
19.	S. Sithole	MoPSE	DSI Nyanga District Manicaland
20.	C. Chofamba	MoPSE	DSI Mutare District Manicaland
21.	I. Chigaba	MoPSE	DSI Masvingo District Masvingo
22.	J. Mahofa	MoPSE	A/DSI Bikita District Masvingo
23.	S. Gwaza	MoPSE	A/DSI Umguza District Mat North
24.	G. Moyo	MoPSE	DSI Hwange District Mat North
25.	S.J. Sibanda	MoPSE	A/DSI Gwanda District Mat South
26.	G. Moyo	MoPSE	DSI Mangwe District Mat South
27.	H. Zahile	MoPSE	DSI Gweru District Midlands
28.	T. Mahlokozera	MoPSE	DSI Zvishavane District Midlands

3. ZELP Technical Working Group

No.	Name	Organisation	Designation
1.	O. Zava	MOPSE	Acting Director Primary
2.	I. Ndlovu	MOPSE	Deputy Legal Officer
3.	E. Binza	MOPSE	A/Deputy Director Primary
4.	K. Chidota	MOPSE	A/Deputy Director Education-Infant
5.	M. Danga	MOPSE	ERO Primary Education- Infant
6.	R. Mwasi	MOPSE	ERO Primary Education- Junior
7.	G. Warikandwa	MOPSE	Materials Productions Officer: ECD-CDTS
8.	J. Tanda	MOPSE	A/Deputy Director- SNE
9.	F. Fundira	MOPSE	ERO SPPRS
10.	Dr. Kujeke E.	MOPSE	ERO Non Formal Education
11.	P. Ngomashi	MOPSE	Human Resources Officer-Training
12.	M. Mutandwa	MOPSE	Accountant- FAD
13.	L. Ncube	MOPSE	ERO- Secondary Education
14.	E. Dhlwayo	MOPSE	Principal ICT Officer
14.	B. Tachiona	UNICEF	Education Specialist- ECD
15	Dr. Sam Ngaruiya		Consultant

4. ZELP Validation Team

No.	Name	Organisation	Designation
1	Kaira Olicah	MoPSE	Chief Director PSNE
2	Musoko Thandiwe S.	MoPSE	Director Non Formal
3	Zava Ophilia	MoPSE	A/ Director Primary
4	Ndlovu Irene	MoPSE	Deputy Legal Officer
5	Binza Epiphania	MoPSE	A/Deputy Director Primary
6	Kanoerera Clara	MoPSE	Deputy PED
7	Jongwe Tapfuma	World Bank	Education Specialist
8	Gatsi Roswitta	UZ	Senior Lecturer
9	Ureke Fortunate	MoPSE	TIC
10	Fundira Fundani	MoPSE	Education Research Officer
11	Kuwezha Moses	Morgan ZINTEC	Lecturer
12	Mkwaila Kaenda	MoPSE	Chief Accountant
13	Ndoziya Chipo	MoPSE	School Head
14	Warikandwa Grace	MoPSE	Material Production Officer
15	Tanda Josephine	MoPSE	A/Deputy Director- SNE
16	Mhike Shylatte	MoPSE	PED Masvingo
17	Donga Nomfundo	MoPSE	TIC
18	Chinyama Chomunorwa	Local Gvt	Principal Technician
19	Rupere Tapera	MoPSE	Admin
20	Chidota Kaunda	MoPSE	Education Research Officer
21	Danga Mennard	MoPSE	Education Research Officer
22	Ngaruiya Sam	UNICEF	Consultant
23	Katoma Solomon	MoPSE	A/DSI Makonde
*24	Bhunhu Naison	ZINECDA/ECOZI	National Coordinator
25	Kudyahakudadiwe Matha	MoPSE	SI
26	Nhliziyo Clemence	ECOZI	Programme Officer
27	Deve Sheillah	Education	School Head
28	Saidi Baina	MoPSE	Ex Assistant
29	Maoneke Zivanai	MoPSE	Ex Assistant
30	Dr. Makanda	MoPSE	Director CDU
31	Saungweme Malvern	MoPSE	Deputy Director
32	Guga Rorisang	Higher and Tertiary	Lecturer
33	Nyagato Evah	MoPSE	DSI
34	Chipezeze Maxwell	MoPSE	Head
35	Dambamuromo Jane	MoPSE	ECD Teacher
36	Nkala Thando	MoPSE	TIC
37	Masarira Tendayi	MoPSE	Infant Teacher
38	Mkhwanazi Cynthia S	MoPSE	Head
39	Nhundu Vimbisai	Catholic University	Education Prog Co-ordinator
40	Sisimai Sharon	MOHCC	HFSS Training Officer
41	Mhlanga Sehiso	MoPSE	Deputy Head
42	Nyamaropa James	MoPSE	Education Research Officer
43	Mutandwa Merit	MoPSE	Principal Accountant
44	Mwasi Richard	MoPSE	Education Research Officer
45	Rafomoyo Maxwell	UNICEF	Education Manager
46	Tachivona Bernadette	UNICEF	ECD Officer



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