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SIYAKHULISA: AN ACCOUNT OF A NINE YEAR INTERNATIONAL PARTNERSHIP JOURNEY TOWARDS QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT PRACTICES IN SOUTH AFRICAN TOWNSHIPS

Abstract:

Investment in Early Childhood Development (ECD) is one of the most effective ways in which to decrease social disparities caused by adverse environments as such environments hamper the development of young children.

In this paper I will present a descriptive study of an early childhood development intervention project, grounded in a community-based research approach that resulted in more conducive ECD teaching and learning environments in township ECD centres in the Gauteng Province (Vaal Triangle) of South Africa. During the implementation of the project, grade R (the year before formal schooling) ECD practitioners from townships in the Vaal Triangle of the Gauteng Province participated actively. The project is a combined effort of a university in South Africa, a non-government organisation in a South African township and an organisation for ECD in the Netherlands.

The ECD practitioners, the researcher as well as students and teachers from the Netherlands planned the intervention programme together. The components of the intervention programme were implemented as intended and what was delivered went according to the way it was planned.

Data was gathered through administering open-ended questionnaires and conducting semi-structured, face-to-face interviews before- and after the intervention programme was implemented. Although the outcomes of this intervention varied, reflection from all the participants, including the researcher, the practitioners, the teachers and students, indicates that this intervention has addressed the learning needs of Grade R ECD practitioners and resulted in a wide range of learning and development opportunities for children in townships in the Vaal Triangle.

Keywords:

Early Childhood Development; Early Childhood Development centers in South African townships; intervention programme; quality teaching and learning; community-based research.

JEL Classification: I20, I23