

# DBE – FinCEED

Mission on ECD\_Final presentation\_11 August 2023

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# Workshop 30th June 2023 - Agenda

- Presentation of the evaluation of QASS, NCF and staff training – Food for thought from FinCeed experts
- Discussion & reflection
- Plans for the way forward – FinCeed & colleagues from South Africa

# Presentation

- Context and the Starting Point of the Mission
- Evaluating the Frame and Spotting the Strengths and Challenges
  - Comments on QASS
  - Comments on NCF
  - Comments on Staff Education and Training
- Food for Thought
- Ten Steps for a Fruitful Process

# Context and the starting point of the mission 1/2

- 48% of children aged 3 – 5 and 21% of children aged 0-2 are accessing an early learning programme (Statistics South Africa, 2021).
- Of the 2.9 million children who do access an early learning programme, only 800 654 children are in registered ECD programmes.
- There are 1,4 million poor children accessing some form of ECD program that do NOT benefit from government subsidies. This causes great challenges for the providers and inequality between providers and children.
- The education system of the staff working in early education seems to be very complex and there are not many practitioners who have a suitable training on early development. → Only 23 % of ECD practitioners have a level of education that is above the completion of secondary level. 41 % of practitioners do not have a matric.
  - Level of education in South-Africa in general has challenges

# Context and the starting point of the mission 2/2

- 89,5 % of all ECD practitioners receive less than minimum wage -> some practitioners do not receive any wages.
  - Many policy issues to be noticed:
    - Income level and distribution in the country
    - Diversity of the education system
    - A big variety of services (public, private, non-profit) and differences in their quality and resources
    - Overall funding, steering and coordination in ECD
- > Lessons from comprehensive quality frameworks and systems developed in countries with a different history and policy in education and child wellbeing cannot be directly applied in South Africa

# Valuable background work over the last years





Evaluating the Frame  
and Spotting the  
Strengths & Challenges

# Political commitment and shared understanding

## STRENGTHS

- “Every Child Is A National Asset”
- Children’s Act 2005, amend. 2022 → general principles (chapter 2) and early childhood development ( chapter 6)
- The National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) aims to ensure every infant and young child has access to essential, quality early childhood development services.
- The vision of the *National Development Plan (NDP) 2030* is to make ECD a top priority among the measures to improve the quality of education and long-term prospects of future generations. The government’s goal is to have universal access to quality ECD for children with a strong nutrition and educational focus. The NDP also emphasizes the need to invest in training ECD practitioners.
- The national administrative responsibility transferred to The Ministry of Education, from April 2022

## CHALLENGES

- There is a gap between reality and the policy goals.
- Currently there is access only for a few children.
- The facilities are in some places very modest.
- Not all ECD programs benefit from government subsidies.
- The forms of ECD defined in legislation are very diverse, which complicates both guidance and implementation.
- Good and ambitious goals for ECD – but is there support for implementation?
- Cooperation between different Ministries does not work in the best possible way



# Definition of ECD

## STRENGTHS

The goals and the definition of ECD are good

Child Act, § 91 / 2:

- Early childhood development services, for the purposes of this Act, means services or support provided to children by a person other than a child's parent, guardian or care-giver with the intention **to promote the child's emotional, cognitive, sensory, spiritual, moral, physical, social and communication development.**"

Child Act, §91 / 3:

- (3) An early childhood development programme is any type of programme, as prescribed, that provides one or more forms of **care, development, early learning opportunities and support to children from birth to school going age.**"

## CHALLENGES

**Definition of ECD programs need focusing:**

- (4) Different types of early childhood development programmes, include but are not limited to programmes provided in:
- Early childhood development centres
- Parent support groups
- Outreach programmes
- Play groups
- Child-minders
- Toy-libraries
- Mobile programs

>>> *One size does not fit all!*

# Paradigm and values guiding ECD

## STRENGTHS

- Paradigms seem to be clear – national and local experts and stakeholders support similar approaches
- Common motivation to develop services for all children
- Clear vision of a holistic approach to early education: wellbeing, health, development, learning

## CHALLENGES

### From our point of view

- The broad definition of ECD programs challenges implementation: centre-based, home-based, toy libraries, playgroups....
- Paradigms guide implementation:
  - School readiness perspective vs the value of ECD itself and the intrinsic value of early childhood
  - Child perspective, child's rights vs learning / developmental goals
  - Goals for the child vs goals for educators
- Vision for a holistic approach needs concretizing


# “It takes the whole village to raise a child”

## STRENGTHS

- Cooperation between different stakeholders
- Well-working and strong NGO's that can contribute in training, and providing support and materials, e.g.
  - Impande
  - Unicef
  - Smart Start
- Commitment of the communities and practitioners in the field to promote the best interest of the children

## CHALLENGES

- The cooperation needs national, provincial and local steering and coordination
- The NGO's could and do provide help in the registration process and help in organising networks and mentoring in the field. This would need commonly agreed training materials approved by the Ministry of Education.
- Too strict quality control can have negative effects on the commitment of practitioners and good work of volunteers in the field.



Comments on ECD  
Quality Assurance and  
Support System

# ECD Quality assurance and improvement research report: revised final draft - 2 July 2020

To track progress towards this the policy commits to developing ***“appropriate monitoring, quality assurance and support systems to secure the provision of quality early childhood development services and outcomes for young children in South Africa”*** (NIECDP, 2015:18).

The Policy requires that, the national quality assurance system must:

Establish processes for continuing quality improvement across all modes of service delivery (centre and non-centre based early childhood development programmes) that involve ECD practitioners and related workers in self-assessment processes together with standardised external quality monitoring and support, and be separated out from administrative functions. The quality management process should be a continuing programme of self-assessment, **in-service support** and incentivized external accreditations. Line departments should develop a standardised **package of resource tools and processes for quality improvement**. (NIECDP, 2015:115)

# ECD Quality Assurance and Support System

## STRENGTHS

- Well described roles and responsibilities concerning design and implementation.
- Non-governmental organisation partners: involvement of the NGO's increases resources and makes implementation more feasible: "Existing networks of NGOs should be leveraged to support the implementation of the quality assurance and support process"
- Well identified domains of quality
- Well utilised previous work and documents
- Detailed description of assessment criteria

## CHALLENGES

- Very ambitious definition of quality, and criteria considering the knowledge and skills of personnel
- Focus of tasks / resources rediscussed to improve the implementation process
- Critical staff issues:
  - Resources of DBE (monitoring, spot checks, data files, approving and issuing ratings)
  - Resources of Local Governments
  - Resources of NGO's
- Delivery approach
  - Resources for site-assessments for registration?
  - Are there enough money for outsourcing
  - Resources for monitoring
  - Resources for site support and mentoring >> funding for NGO's

# Simplifying and motivating

- The QASS-system seems very demanding? What are the incentives to use the QASS?
  - 1) Remunerative incentives
  - 2) Symbolic incentives
- If QASS will be implemented, it should be moderated depending on the different quality/resource level of the settings and the training of staff.
- Is monitoring and measurement of program quality the right tool when the settings are struggling with having trained staff, healthy and safe learning environments, learning materials, hygiene, nutrition?
- An analysis of needed regulation to support unregistered programs >> increase of volume and accessibility
- Implementation: Easily understandable rating. Transparency of the rating system.

# Use of resources -> supporting the programs

- *Quality Assurance assessments could be undertaken by government staff (e.g., social auxiliary workers) who have been appropriately trained. In addition, the NIECDP (2015) provides that ongoing monitoring and supervision should be provided by ECD coordinators/supervisors (with at least ECD NQF 5) directly employed and/or funded by government.*
- *However, there is unlikely to be sufficient human capacity in government alone to support this system. To bridge the capacity gap a partnership model should be considered. NGOs and civil-society partners could be contracted to support assessment, monitoring/supervision and implement quality improvement processes and support interventions.*
- *NGOs can assist the ECD programmes they already support by **preparing them for quality assessment, so they may meet quality standards.***

>> Is it appropriate to commit so many professionals for the implementation of the assessment? Could this staff be trained to **support practitioners, as instructors**, network actors, help with registration, etc. This could be done in partnership with NGO's and other relevant actors.

>> Should QASS be used as a quality assurance and enrichment strategy for ECD programs rather than a compliance system?

>> Much focus should be on the competencies of staff (in-service training, mentoring, networking)



# NGO partners' role

*While the QASS will provide a shared framework for sector quality; it should not prescribe NGO quality enrichment and support practices (6.3.)*

>> This is a crucial issue: A common (shared and collaboratively prepared) framework could be a national guiding element for enrichment of practices – to build a more uniform and equal system, although ways to implement the framework can vary

>> What is common – how can vary.

*Where appropriate, ECD NGOs could be contracted to support assessment and to focus on quality improvement processes according to the specified package of interventions.*

*and*

*Thirdly, NGOs can assist the ECD programmes they already support by preparing them for quality assessment, so they may meet quality standards.*

>> Could the focus be more on the improvement processes. Assessment is demanding and needs much resources. Could resources be used for quality improvement instead?

# Team-structure

Too complex – wasting resources?

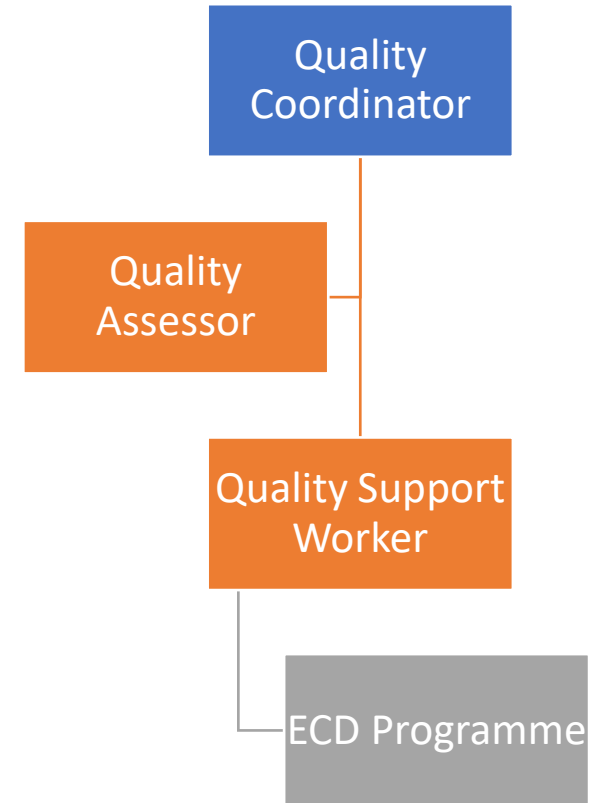
Resource reallocation:

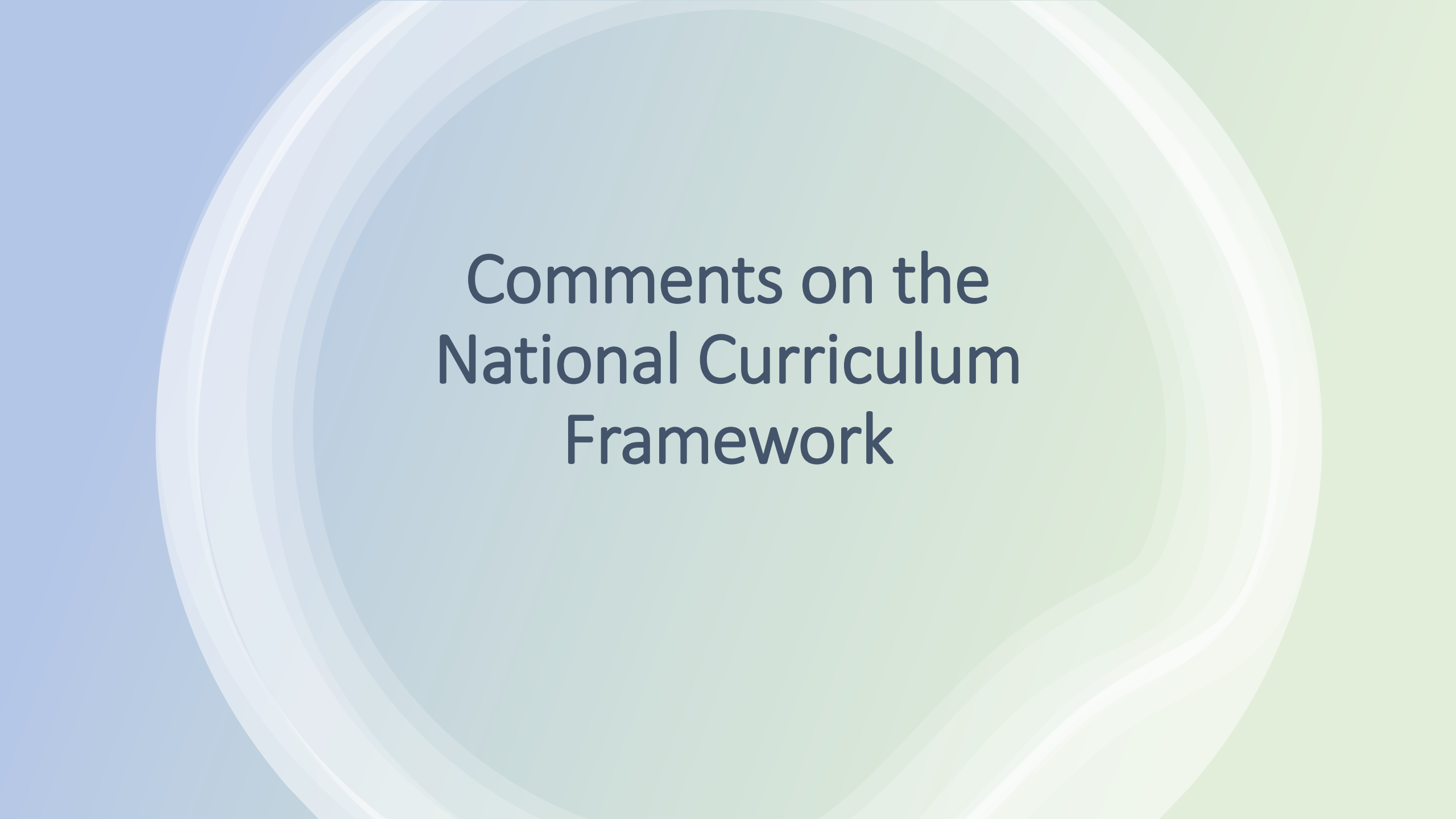
*Most provincial DSD support is towards partial care registration, and provincial education departments have not had adequate human resources for systematic quality improvement support to programmes. Nor is there a system for including self- assessment by the early learning programmes in the development of Programme Improvement Plans (PIPs).*

# Team-structure

Delivery approach (*Table 1: Process Flow Steps*)

- Resources for site-assessments for registration
- Is there enough money for outsourcing (resources for site support and mentoring >> funding for NGO's)
- Resources of DBE (monitoring, spot checks, data files, approving and issuing ratings)
- Resources of local governments





# Comments on the National Curriculum Framework

# National Curriculum Framework

## STRENGTHS

- Core values/principles in NCF are relevant.
- ELDA's seem clear and relevant.
- Many examples of how to develop daily activities in ECD
  - Taking into account the different educational backgrounds of staff, this increases the opportunity to understand the content
- An excellent plan about how to train ECD practitioners on the NCF, and how to strengthen the implementation: 2022/23, 3776 practitioners and 247 supervisors trained through PEDs.

## CHALLENGES

- To write a guiding document for such a wide target group is challenging (ECD providers and staff, parents, and caregivers). Especially, to understand conceptual language may be challenging.
- Same goals for all different ECD forms / programs is a challenge.
  - Reforming goals for different ECD programs would greatly increase the feasibility.

# Clarifying the messages

- Writing the NCF (only) to early childhood education providers and ECD personnel could help the writing of the document and clarify its core message. Another option could be to write separate sections for guardians and for parents in the NCF.
- It could be beneficial to write specific goals for different ECD forms/programs.
- A crucial issue is how to get everyone committed and how to maintain trust in the reform. It's particularly important to ensure that everyone can participate in the process on every level of the system.
- Cooperation between national, provincial, and local levels as well as research is very important to create trust in the process and to commit on common goals.



# Comments on Staff Training

# Initial education of ECD personnel

## STRENGTHS

- The basic competences are required: love and care, communication, patience, enthusiasm, creativity, organisation and planning.
- University level teacher education already in place.
- SAQA Early Childhood Development Practitioner Qualification
  - clear and relevant objectives
  - relevant training contents
  - Kenya's the Nursery Teacher Certificate course seems a potential model

## CHALLENGES

- The number of educated teachers and other personnel is not sufficient.
- Vocational ECD education standards unclear.
- Degrees and skills are important – competency is not enough.
- A variety of personnel with different training and competences, or no training at all.
  - What is the effect on the quality of everyday activities?
  - How can implementation of NCF succeed?
- How to ensure the quality of the different training programs?
- Collaboration and roles between education ministries?



# Continuous professional development of ECD personnel

## STRENGTHS

- “The established HRD Task Team strengthens CPD, however the owners in collaboration RTOs provide some trainings.”
- The collaboration with NGOs is strong.
- For example, Education Africa's training seems very relevant in terms of content and goals.
- Based on the documents, there seem to be many promising plans for CPD development.

## CHALLENGES

- A variety of personnel with different training and competences, or no training at all.
  - What is the effect on the quality of everyday activities?
  - How can implementation of NCF succeed?
- How to ensure the quality of the different trainings?



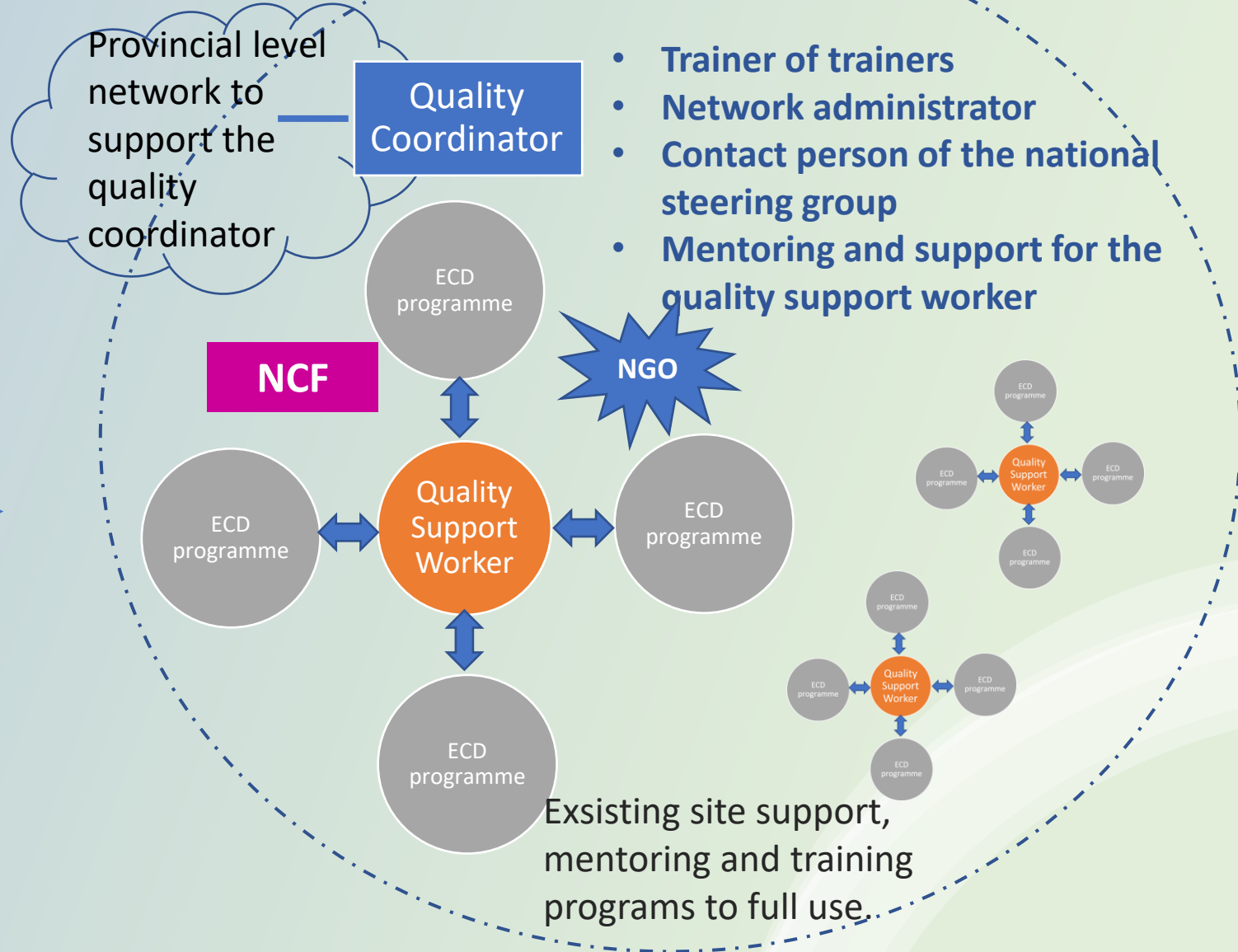
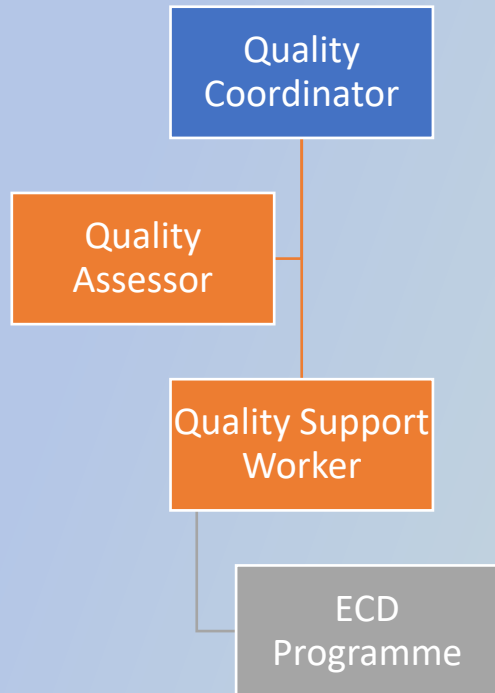
# Food for Thought

# Network of development for ECD

DBE: Quality coordination steering group / substance!

Team structure

Delivery approach (*Table 1: Process Flow Steps*)



# Food for thought 1/5

## Define priority areas

- Big reforms need time and definition of priorities – progress can be made step by step
- Cooperation, dialogue and common targets: use of existing material etc. (NELDS, PIP)
- Access for all: focus first on targeted services?
- Focus scarce resources according to the defined priorities
- Integration and coordination of resources at national level – coordination between ministries is crucial!
- Build clear and annually progressing development, implementation, and evaluation plan and its assessment, including sufficient resources
- Building a holistic approach as stated, needs also developing a system of health and nutrition interventions from pregnancy.
- Use small scale piloting: Lessons could be drawn from the Western Cape, where there is a well evolved use of ECD Service Providers to support registration - benchmarking & reflecting

# Food for thought 2/5

## **Reform and unite the processes of registration and QASS**

- Instead of investing on monitoring and measurement of program quality using QASS, set the focus on building the infrastructure, facilities and supporting the settings having trained staff, healthy and safe learning environments, learning materials, hygiene, and nutrition.
- Rediscuss national and regional steering, roles, and responsibilities
- Use QASS only as a quality assurance and enrichment strategy for ECD programs rather than a compliance system.
- If QASS is adapted, moderate QASS depending on the different quality/resource level of the settings and the training of staff.
- Reconsider the norms and standards and processes for registration. Develop a simpler process for registration which assesses minimum viable standards for operating.
- Provide help for the settings/providers to reach the minimum level to meet the registration standards.

# Food for thought 3/5

## Reflect on the NCF and its implementation and evaluation

- Writing the NCF (only) to early childhood education providers and ECD personnel could help the writing of the document and clarify its core message. Another option could be to write separate sections for guardians and parents in the NCF.
- A clear and annually progressing implementation and evaluation plan for the NCF is needed: annual schedule, goals, methods, necessary concrete material, trainers, evaluation.
- An excellent plan about how to train ECD practitioners on the NCF, and how to strengthen the implementation: 2022/23, 3776 practitioners and 247 supervisors trained through PEDs. **At best, the implementation of the NCF is a process which enriches ECEC staff and the entire community.**
- Implementation of the NCF should be combined with quality development for ECD, as suggested in slide 30 (The network of development for ECD).

# Food for thought 4/5

## **Pay emphasis on the development of initial education and CPD for ECD – and other staff issues**

- Keep developing the unified education system (or a regionally organized education system) for basic training in ECD. The uniformity of the training must be ensured by a common national framework.
- Make a national education plan for CPD until 2030. Plan for the next seven years: goals, concrete actions, versatile methods, necessary and acute ECD themes for which training is needed, financial resources etc.
- Establish regional ECD development centers, where university educated ECD teachers train and consult ECD centre personnel and managers on quality development. Also, offer support and training for personnel in their own workplaces could be offered. Notice: the Team structure!
- Take peer learning tools in use.
- Take care of the remuneration policy - proper wages for all the practitioners and providers
- Career paths
  - to university educated ECD teachers
    - working as Quality Coordinators; trainers of trainers
  - to practitioners improving their professionalism

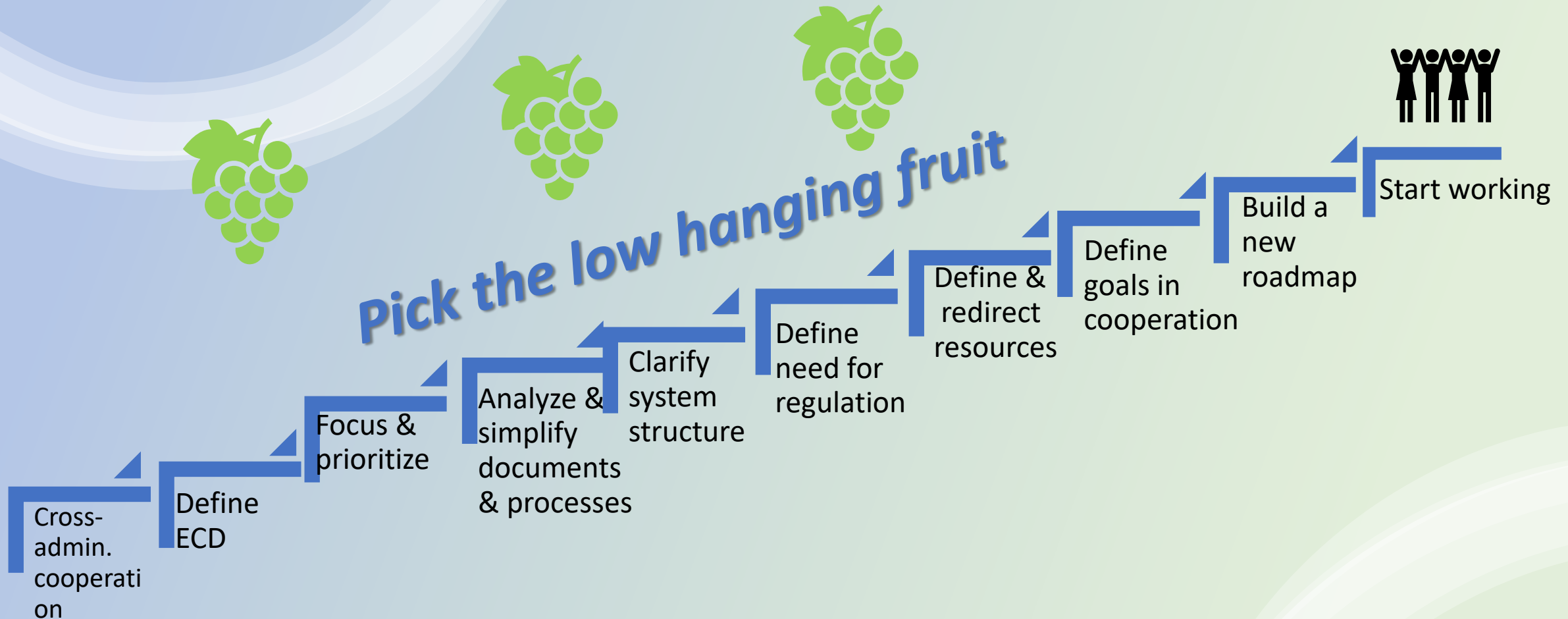
# Food for thought 5/5

## **Pay emphasis on the development of initial education and CPD for ECD – and other staff issues**

- The Finnish Vocational Qualification on Social and Health Care and its structure could be useful to benchmark. The training is a competency-based qualification, strongly based on learning on the job.
- The overall picture of CPD and initial education should be clarified in cooperation with all the ministries responsible for staff training, as well as with the National Institute for Curriculum and Professional Development (NICPD) and the Research and Training Organisations (RTO).



# TEN STEPS FOR A FRUITFUL PROCESS



Work together, promote dialogue, trust, flexibility & wise use of resources

# Useful links:

**Finnish Education Evaluation Centre**

<https://karvi.fi/en/early-childhood-education/>

**Guidelines and recommendations for evaluating the quality of early childhood education and care**

<https://karvi.fi/en/publication/varhaiskasvatuksen-laadun-arvioinnin-perusteet-ja-suositukset-2/>

**Quality indicators for early childhood education and care – summary**

<https://karvi.fi/en/publication/varhaiskasvatuksen-laatuindikaattorit-tiivistelma-3/>

**Children’s participation in planning and evaluating early childhood education and care**

<https://karvi.fi/en/publication/childrens-participation-in-planning-and-evaluating-early-childhood-education-and-care/>

**Requirements\_Vocational Qualification** <https://eperusteet.opintopolku.fi/#/en/kooste/ammattillinen/7854765>

**Statistics on social services** <https://thl.fi/en/web/thlfi-en/statistics-and-data/statistics-by-topic/social-services-children-adolescents-and-families>

**Child Strategy** <https://www.lapsenoikeudet.fi/en/campaign/national-strategy-for-children/>