Abstract

Early Childhood Care and Education offers children an opportunity to develop holistically ensuring that they flourish after their early years. Families have a significant influence on children's development, as does the preschool environment, but preschool experiences are not the primary factor in a child's overall development during the early learning years. Thus, communities, parents, and caregivers need to ensure that children's holistic development is realized. During the early years, community collaborations that benefit children are often encouraged. Children may miss out on learning and developmental chances, and their brain development and capacity to thrive later in life may be jeopardized if such potential for partnership between communities and early childhood centers is not achieved. The research provides evidence that caregivers, parents, and communities are not completely involved in their children's early learning, which jeopardizes the provision of ECCE services. Since the cause of the knowledge gap is unknown, the purpose of this paper is to investigate how early childhood education is conceptualized to empower communities. The cooperation theory, which emphasizes interpersonal contact among various stakeholders with varied roles to achieve a shared goal, was utilized by the article. Ten communities from Chris Hani District Municipality were purposefully chosen to be included in the study using the qualitative research approach. Data collection tools included focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews. The findings revealed that stakeholders are working in silos for the ECCE provisioning as the research participants were not aware of the services rendered by other stakeholders. Practitioners mentioned lack of parental involvement as another factor that is compromising the provision of ECCE. While parents mentioned that they were unaware of their responsibility when it comes to early learning. To empower communities about their involvement in the provision of ECCE, the paper suggests community dialogues with the cooperation of other stakeholders, including government departments. The paper further recommends that parents be engaged in their children’s early learning by providing caring and nurturing environments that support children’s holistic development for them to thrive even beyond their childhood years.

Keywords: community empowerment, ECCE provisioning, professionalisation, stakeholder collaboration, sustainable development