

The Establishment and Outcomes of African Early Childhood Development Networks and  
Conferences, 1990-2009.

by

Patrick Makokoro

B.A., Human and Social Studies, University of South Africa, 2015

M.Sc., Development Studies, Women's University of Africa, 2017

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photocopy or other means, without the permission of the author.

We acknowledge with respect the Lekwungen peoples on whose traditional territory the  
university stands and the Songhees, Esquimalt and WSÁNEĆ peoples whose historical  
relationships with the land continue to this day.

## **Supervisory Committee**

Addressing the Needs of Young Children? The Establishment and Outcomes of African Early  
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### **Supervisory Committee**

Dr. Kathy Sanford, **Supervisor**  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Kristin Mimick, **Department Member**  
Department of Curriculum and Instruction

Dr. Alan Pence, **Outside Member**  
Center for Global Studies, University of Victoria

## **Abstract**

The history of early childhood education, care and development (ECD) in sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is an under-documented area of study. Seeking to understand and document this important history has led to this study, focusing on a key period of ECD development: 1990-2009. Within that period two key ECD networks were launched and a series of four African International ECD Conferences took place. This study examined closely both the two networks and the four conferences with a particular interest in the degree to which those initiatives influenced the development of ECD policies in sub Saharan Africa. This research focused on sub Saharan Africa in the regions that two early childhood networks implemented their activities - the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) and the Working Group of Early Childhood Development (WGECD). These included the East, West and Southern African regions. The research was carried out utilising a qualitative research paradigm with document analysis and semi-structured interviews being data collection methods. The study was informed by the social network analysis and Foucauldian theoretical frameworks which assisted in analysing relationships and power between various groups.

The research looked at the period between the years 1990 and 2009, which saw a number of key global and African events take place that shaped the lives of children and influenced ECD policy development. In 1999, the first in a series of four African international ECD conferences was held in Kampala, Uganda followed by conferences in Asmara, Eritrea (2002), Accra, Ghana (2005), and Dakar, Senegal (2009). The research established that by 2009, two early childhood development networks had been established on the continent and the four early childhood development conferences had been held with promises to strengthen early childhood development. Through this research, historical information on the early childhood development network and conferences has been outlined and recorded.

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## List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ACRWC:	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.
ADEA:	Association for the Development of Education in Africa.
AfECN:	African Early Childhood Network.
ARNEC:	Asia Regional Network of Early Childhood.
AfDB:	African Development Bank.
AfECN:	Africa Early Childhood Network.
AKF:	Aga Khan Foundation.
ANC:	African National Congress.
ARC:	Arab Resource Collective.
APRM:	African Peer Review Mechanism.
AU:	African Union.
BvLF:	Bernard van Leer Foundation
CDI:	Community Development Institute.
CGECD:	Consultative Group on Early Childhood Development
CINDE:	Center for International Development and Education.
COMESA:	Common Market for East and Southern Africa.
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child.
DAE:	Donors for African Education.
DICECE:	District Centres for Early Childhood Education.
ECCE:	Early Childhood Care and Education.
ECD:	Early Childhood Development.
ECDNA:	Early Childhood Development Network in Africa.
ECDVU:	Early Childhood Development Virtual University.
ECECD:	Early Childhood Education, Care, and Development.
ECOWAS:	Economic Community of West African States.
EFA:	Education for All.
FAWE:	Forum for African Women Educationalists.
GNCC:	Ghana National Commission on Children.
IDRC:	International Development and Research Center.
IIEP:	International Institute for Educational Planning.
IMR:	infant mortality rates.
KIE:	Kenya Institute of Education.
MDGs:	Millennium Development Goals.
MENA:	Middle East and North Africa Region.
MINEDAF-V:	Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in African Member States.
MoESAC:	Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture.
NACECE:	National Centre for Early Childhood Education.
NECD:	National Early Childhood Development.
NGOs:	Non-Governmental Organisations.
NPO:	non-profit organization.
NPO:	Non-Profit-Organisation.
OAU:	Organisation of African Unity.
PRSPs:	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers.
RECE:	Re-conceptualizing Early Childhood Education.
SA:	South Africa.
SADC:	Southern Africa Development Community.
SSA:	sub Saharan Africa.

TECDEN:	Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network.
UDHR:	Universal Declaration of Children’s Rights.
UNESCO:	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNICEF:	United Nations Children’s Fund
USA:	United States of America.
USAID:	United States Agency for International Development.
WFF:	World Forum Foundation.
WGECD:	Working Group of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa.
WGBLM:	Working Group on Books and Learning Materials.
WGECD:	Working Group on Early Childhood Development.
WGES:	Working Group on Education Statistics.
WGFP:	Working Group on Female Participation.
WGHE:	Working Group on Higher Education.
WHO:	World Health Organization.
ZINECDA:	Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Network.

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I am grateful to the research participants who gave their time and reflections for my research. They assisted in shaping this work which will provide a historical record of the phenomenon investigated.

## **Dedication**

For my mum Catherine and late father Robert who taught me the value of hard work, being diligent and the importance of being a decent human being.

And for Chiedza and Panashe, there is no limit to what your mind sets to achieve.

## **CHAPTER 1: Introduction**

When investigating the early childhood development (ECD) sector in Africa, one notices that there are national and continent-wide ECD networks that exist to bring together people and organizations that provide services for young children. These ECD networks vary from country to country and tend to have annual conferences in their countries or on the African continent wherein they showcase various approaches to early childhood development programs and discuss other topical issues. Globally too, there are ECD networks that organize ECD conferences that are attended by thousands of people who are working with children around the world. It was whilst attending one such global ECD conference that I was drawn to the early childhood sector.

My prior work experience, until April 2009, had been in broad community development initiatives such as: school and community feeding programs, youth advocacy and community development work, community-based support for orphans and vulnerable children's education sponsorship, design and implementation of income generating and savings projects, as well as community organizing in Zimbabwe.

The recognition of this work and my involvement in education and community development initiatives in Zimbabwe led to my invitation by the Community Development Institute (CDI) based in the United States of America (USA) to attend and present at the biennial early childhood development conference held by the World Forum Foundation (WFF) in Belfast, Northern Ireland, April 2009. The hundreds of early childhood professionals in attendance from around the world, the quality of the presentations, and the depth of the early childhood discourse, left an indelible mark on me regarding the foundational importance of early childhood education, care, and development. This invitation and my growing questioning within the broader ECD sector in Africa not only allowed me to develop an in-depth understanding of early childhood development in my native country of

Zimbabwe but opened my scholarly inquiry into the broader African ECD arena and has positioned me as a leader within this sector.

As a leader within the ECD sector in my country and on the African continent, I have been involved in numerous ECD sector-based activities, including founding Nhaka Foundation, a not-for-profit organization (NPO) working in the education sector, founding the Zimbabwe Network of Early Childhood Development Network (ZINECDA) in 2012, and co-founding the African Early Childhood Network (AfECN) based in Nairobi, Kenya in 2015.

At a national level my work in establishing the Zimbabwe ECD network in 2012, led to desk research for information on national ECD networks and the role they played in influencing country level policies. At that time, I could only find information relating to one network, the Tanzania Early Childhood Development Network (TECDEN) that had been established in 2004. There were no other documented examples of national ECD networks that I could identify from other countries—this was not a good sign.

In Zimbabwe, I began cross-country consultations with ECD stakeholders in February 2012 and carried out baseline research on the early childhood sector, collecting data and building rapport for the establishment of a national ECD network. The research activity included mapping of existing organizations at district and provincial level, establishing potential collaborative and cooperation pathways between both the state and non-state actors and identifying what could be the main research agenda for the network.

In 2014, at a continental level, conversations amongst African colleagues attending the World Forum Foundation's (WFF) Early Childhood Conference held in San Juan, Puerto Rico, led to initial steps being taken to form the Africa Network of Early Childhood Network (AfECN). With experience coming from the formation of the Zimbabwe ECD network, I became very excited and closely engaged with this project. The objective for me was very clear, there had to be a system of practitioner support, sharing of information on ECD,

generation of knowledge through research and, support for establishing country ECD networks.

My involvement on the Steering Committee working to establish this Africa ECD network was also influenced by the need to ensure that African ECD practitioners were “networked” and that ECD efforts made at a grassroots level would inform district, provincial and national ECD policy development and implementation endeavours. These would then be anchored at a continental level by an African ECD network that would: provide thought leadership in African ECD; generate knowledge in the sector; raise and channel funding to national ECD networks; as well as become a repository of historical information on ECD that would have been collected at a national level by the country ECD networks.

At that time, in 2012, I could not find any information relating to a repository of information on regional or country ECD networks. There was one regional network that I gathered had been in existence, but I could not find a website, although I knew the work had taken place. I also could not find an individual within my professional network that could assist me in securing such information, if it existed at all. A few years later as I began to work with colleagues to establish the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), I again ran into the same problems, I could not find a repository of information that could aid us in knowing the journey that regional networks had been on before, the struggles they had faced, how they had addressed them and how they had positioned the regional ECD networks for success.

I knew that some networks had existed because there were individuals who had been involved with them whom I knew and had previously had interactions with at ECD meetings on the continent. These individuals would also attend some of the meetings we had in preparation to launch AfECN. Occasionally I would hear them reference from their memory what they used to do in the previous networks. The challenge remained, there was nothing written down that could be accessed to provide a historical insight of what had been done

before. Crucial too, was historical information on the African International ECD conferences that had taken place before and how the ECD networks that had existed before had informed and supported these conferences. Here I was in my early career within the ECD sector in Africa and without access to any historical information that could help inform some of the strategies and programs I was interested in implementing. How much of the past had we lost already? How do we regain the information, and have it stored, I wondered?

I learned that there had been websites that had suddenly disappeared because they had not been maintained or their domain registration fees not paid, which led to them being shut down. With that, came the loss of valuable information that was on these websites. In some meetings I learned that there were some staff members that had been employed by non-profit organizations that were once in charge of ECD networks and ECD conference information. The staff members had this information contained in laptops but had not returned the laptops back to their employers upon termination of their contracts. By that one single action of not returning laptops, hundreds of documents were lost, never to be recovered again. This was and is a sad situation as the information was lost forever.

There I was, a leader in the ECD sector, trying to access the historical information that would have helped me to build networks that would support children on our continent. This information would have assisted in identifying the programs that had been implemented before, the funders that had supported ECD initiatives in Africa and provided contacts of various ECD stakeholders on the continent. In the absence of this information, it was frustrating to try and put together pieces of information to establish the journey of the networks and conferences. I was fortunate that I had some mentors that helped to guide me and point me towards bits and pieces of information as well as individuals that could assist in this journey in 2015.

I had another concern too, the individuals who had also been involved in these conferences and networks were getting fewer and fewer as the years went by, and so there was a real need to have this information collected, collated and preserved for use by a new generation of scholars such as myself and those to come. The lack of this historical information on this sector in the African continent therefore, led me to propose this research so as to fill some gaps that exist in the narration of the evolution of ECD Networks and ECD Conferences in Africa. In designing this research, I was concerned too that African youth are growing into positions of leadership in the fields of academia, development and politics without an informative history that could aid them in crafting early childhood development policies and making policy recommendations for the future of children in Africa. There are country and regional ECD networks that are emerging on the African continent on the basis of “pioneering” certain programs or strategies when they should first be learning from a history of what worked or did not work, allowing them to better allocate time and financial resources.

This history of ECD networks and conferences in the period 1990-2009 was limited and difficult to access. It was therefore critical to study existing documents and have conversations with the remaining doyens of ECD on the African continent and beyond. This research seeks to provide an informative record that will help address current and future challenges in ECD networking and ECD policy formulation within the African and global ECD sector.

### **Research Questions**

Given the context above, especially the absence of a historical record on the establishment of ECD networks and conferences in Africa, my research aimed to address that gap. This research study provides a historical lens and context from which governments,

scholars, current and future leaders in the African early childhood education sector can use a reference point for the establishment of additional African ECD support structures and for early childhood programs on the continent. My research was guided by the following research questions:

- i. What were the main early childhood development networks and conferences established in sub Saharan Africa (SSA) from 1990-2009?
- ii. What were their purposes and goals? and,
- iii. To what extent did these networks and conferences influence early childhood development policy in sub Saharan Africa?

## **Research Scope**

Early Childhood Development (ECD) in Africa represents the basis upon which this particular research study took place. More specifically, the study focused on the period 1990-2009 during which two major African ECD Networks developed, with each having an influence on a set of four African International ECD Conferences that took place between 1999 and 2009. I chose this period of ECD development in Africa for a number of reasons: for its assumed formative influence on the evolution of ECD services in Africa; the lack of actual research and documentation of information related to both the ECD Networks and Conferences themselves; and the need to address omissions in the historical record of ECD in Africa over time.

## **Defining the Scope**

ECD is defined by UNICEF (2001) as a comprehensive approach to policies and programs for children from birth to eight years of age, their parents and caregivers aimed at protecting the child's rights to develop his or her full cognitive, emotional, social and physical potential. Aidoo (2008) further described ECD as an integrated approach aimed at

the holistic development of the child, encompassing health, nutrition, water and sanitation, basic care, stimulation, family and community empowerment so that children are able to develop to their fullest potential.

Another term that frequently appears within the early childhood sector is early childhood care and education (ECCE). This term appears in publications by UNESCO (1990) and other grey literature in the early childhood sector. Penn (2000) defined ECCE as an umbrella term for a variety of interventions with young children and their carers or families including health and nutrition, childcare, education and parental support provided in a setting. UNESCO (2006) defined early childhood care and education as programs supporting children's survival, growth, development and learning including health, nutrition and hygiene as well as cognitive, social, physical and emotional development from birth into primary school in formal, non-formal and informal settings.

In this research, the terms Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) featured prominently in the literature and documentation I reviewed, and I gave recognition to how they appeal to different actors within the sub Saharan Africa (SSA) region. In areas when these terms were used interchangeably within the various literatures, I understood them to be defining the period from birth to age 8. In the context of this research, the terms discuss the whole range of programs for young children in the period between 1990 and 2009 in sub Saharan Africa.

Recognizing these ECD definitions, the African continent could be seen to have been on a path of developing sectoral policies and programs for young children; Aidoo (2008) posited that “nearly all countries in sub Saharan Africa (SSA) have developed and implemented various forms of sectoral ECD activities since at least the 1960s in support of young children and their families” (p. 29). This research study investigated these sectoral activities through a historical lens, unpacking the evolution of ECD networks and ECD

conferences in Africa between 1990 and 2009. Within this twenty-year period, significant milestones impacting the lives of young children were noted especially through the development of ECD policies that were aimed at addressing the gaps in the provisioning of service for young children in Africa.

In March 1990, at the Education for All Conference (EFA) in Jomtien, Thailand, the statement “learning begins at birth” (UNESCO, 1990) was made prominent and, in concert with the approval of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 1989), began a movement towards the broader recognition of the rights of children and their agency in Africa. This recognition of the agency of children called for major stakeholders to address the basic needs and implementation of children’s basic rights. In particular, the CRC through Articles 3, 18 and 29 provides guidance for the education and ECD sector stakeholders on how to achieve not only universal primary education, but also on how to broaden the vision of the agreements adopted at the Jomtien Education for All Conference held in 1990.

In June 1990, at the meeting of the Organisation for African Unity (OAU) – now known as the African Union (AU)—the participating Heads of State and Government adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) (OAU, 1990). This arose from the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and in it incorporating access to basic education as a fundamental right for every child. Kjörholt (2019) argued that the ACRWC was adopted to reflect the social cultural values as well as a key modification that included the responsibilities related to children’s place in the families and communities, and to the values embedded in enculturation and parenting practices in the African continent.

In 1999, the World Bank (WB), in cooperation with the Government of Uganda, took the lead in providing funds to organize an African International Conference on Early Childhood Education, Care and Development. Building on the activities of the Early Childhood Development Network in Africa (ECDNA) and the fledgling Association for the

Development of Education in Africa Working Group on ECD (ADEA-WGECD), the conference was initially intended as the third in a series of African ECD Workshops/Seminars organized by the ECDNA, UNICEF and the University of Victoria, Canada that commenced in 1994.

The inaugural African ECD Conference in Kampala, Uganda, was followed by conferences in Asmara, Eritrea (2002), Accra, Ghana (2005), and Dakar, Senegal (2009). The numbers attending these conferences grew over time, from a little over 200 in Kampala to approximately 600 in Dakar, Senegal. Each of the conferences produced key documents that related to the state of ECD in Africa at that period. Despite their importance, these networks and conferences received relatively little attention by early childhood scholars.

The events I have narrated above provide an indication of how the early childhood development sector on the African continent has been on this path of continuously defining the agenda for young children. I noted as I ‘dug out’ information on conferences and networks that there were key events that had taken place but those had not been made continuously accessible, depriving those who came later of valuable information for continuous development.

The networks, conferences and historical agreements made have all been interlinked and could have provided a foundation from which the development of stronger ECD policies can be built upon. It was important for me to understand how these various events were interconnected or disconnected and their influence on ECD in Africa because they provided the background context from which I began to address my three research questions. The work I carried out in my research tried to also address the ‘disconnections’, in order to learn from and build on the past.

This historical reflection and the associated rights and responsibilities that children have within the African context supported the African Union (AU) in developing and

adopting a strategic framework. This was titled the African Agenda 2063 and influenced, among other key objectives, the way children were viewed by policy makers and practitioners on the continent (African Union, 2015). The African Agenda 2063 strategy is anchored on the need for Africa to prioritize social and economic development, setting forth a program for the well-being of young children on the continent. Within this strategy, African Aspiration number 6 addresses child development, stating specifically that “the aspirations reflect our desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease and want” (African Union Commission [AUC], 2015, p.10).

Along with the rights and responsibilities for young children as recognized in the ACRWC, Agenda 2063 recognizes that ECD is an important investment in driving social and economic development on the continent. The Agenda 2063 strategy document relates well together with other international documents such as the Education for All (EFA) (UNESCO, 2000), Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (UN, 1990), the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) (UN, 2000), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (UN, 2015) in setting the course for improved access and quality early childhood development on the African continent.

The importance of young children and their care has therefore continued to be of importance even post the 2009 period. The African Agenda 2063 can be seen as having been influenced by the historical agreements signed or ratified at UN conferences and AU conventions. 18<sup>th</sup> century Irish statesman and philosopher Burke cited in Gardner (2019) opined that “in history, a great volume is unrolled for our instruction, drawing the materials of future wisdom from the past errors and infirmities of mankind” (p. 10). Planning for ECD

programs on the African continent can therefore be informed by revisiting the history of ECD networks and conferences established and held between 1990 and 2009.

Indeed, ECD was considered of such importance in the early 1990s that two networks with similar goals were established within just one year of each other, the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) in 1993 and the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) in 1994 (UNESCO BREDNA, 2008). These networks began implementing and supporting various ECD initiatives on the continent. This research examined these ECD networks and ECD conferences during this time period, identified their purposes and goals and ways in which they may have influenced ECD policy development and implementation in Africa.

The study focused on the SSA region with particular emphasis to the regions that were covered by the WGECD as well as the ECDNA. The term sub Saharan Africa (SSA) is and has been a common descriptor of the area in Africa that lies south of the Sahara (UN, 2003). This region contrasts with North Africa, whose territories have been part of the League of Arab States within the Arab World and has for some international organizations, like the World Bank, been referred to as part of the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region. However, with greater engagement in economic, political, and social development of countries by the AU through the African Agenda 2063 Continental Strategy (African Union Commission, 2015), the term Africa is increasingly used.

### **Research Purpose**

This research study was premised on two key issues. Firstly, in order to realize the full potential of children within the African context it is important to provide a historical narration of the evolution of early childhood development professional networks and conferences. Our children in Africa will benefit from programs and actions that are developed with their

specific context and needs in mind. Historical information therefore provides a great starting point for designing such programs which ultimately benefit the child. The driving motivation for this research was that the information gleaned from this study could help guide the future implementation of early childhood programs on the African continent and provide useful knowledge to SSA's Ministries of Education, Health, Social Services, Community, Child and Family Development. This information would also be useful to help guide the programs implemented by civil society stakeholders such as national and international non-profit organizations that are working within the education and early childhood development sector.

Secondly, as an ECD practitioner in Africa, I was particularly concerned about the absence of a historical record regarding a formative period wherein ECD networks and key conferences advocated for the design of holistic ECD service provision, policy development and robust ECD policy implementation. If Africa is currently investing in ECD networks and conferences that are meant to inform policy and practice, it is important to establish if any linkages exist between these two and how they can build synergies in advancing the African ECD agenda. The networks and conferences should work towards a single agenda that is aimed at ensuring that the young children in Africa are receiving the best through ECD policy provisions, systems support as well as strengthened communities. A single and widely agreed African ECD agenda helps to direct the financial and material resources provided by funders and partners. This is in the wake of impositions by hegemonic and imperialist forces that prescribe solutions and responses based on their own knowledge base and not enquiring and learning from the African communities and experts.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an introduction to the research study and has situated it in the context of providing a historical narration of the ECD Networks and African International

ECD conferences that existed and were held between 1990 and 2009. This chapter has also outlined the research questions, the rationale for carrying out this type of research and its significance on the early childhood development sector in Africa. The chapter has also placed the researcher within the context of this research, noting some experiences and influences on why this particular study is important. Chapter 2 that follows provides a review and analysis of the literature pertaining to this study.

## CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

### Scope of Review

Boote and Beile (2005) argued that the literature review process helps set the context of the study, defines what is, and what is not a scope of the study and situates the existing literature in a broader scholarly and historical context. Burns and Grove (1997) posited that the main purpose of literature review is to define or develop the research question whilst also identifying the appropriate method for data collection. Strike and Posner (1983) highlighted that the literature review process should clarify or resolve problems within a field; result in a progressive problem shift that provides explanatory and prediction on existing perspectives and satisfies criteria for a good theory. This research is reflective of how these respected scholars opined and influenced how the research questions were addressed within the confines of this research.

My reviewed literature included psychology and sociological studies of childhood; child rights perspectives; Indigenous epistemologies; international and African conventions and agreements related to children; background papers on African early childhood conferences; colonial and post-colonial education and re-conceptualist literatures. I reviewed these areas because I wanted to have a clear understanding of the issues and areas that have influenced child development in Africa. I also wanted to learn why child development in Africa looks the way it does and this in turn assisted me in having an understanding of why ECD networks were established and what influenced policy development in Africa between 1990 and 2009. This review helped me therefore to undertake the research with a relatively 'broad net' of interests and issues to examine through the document and interview analyses work.

In the introductory chapter I narrated how ratification of various conventions and agreements advanced the early childhood agenda on the continent. Following the ratification

of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNHCR) in 1990, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) adopted the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in June 1990 (OAU, 1990). This charter recognized that the child occupied a unique and privileged position in African society and that all children have responsibilities toward their families and society (OAU, 1990). The conventions and agreements are discussed in more detail in this chapter. These and related statements contributed to the formation of professional early childhood networks and the development of early childhood conferences on the African continent that addressed early childhood policies and practices to ensure that the rights and aspirations of African children were being met (Neuman & Devercelli, 2012; Vargas-Baron, 2005; Torkington, 2001).

The role of ECD programs in the lives of African children became more pronounced as calls for more investments into this sector increased on the background of western scholarly research on long term benefits of early childhood development (Heckman, 2011; Putcha, Upadhyay, Neuman, 2016; Young, 2005; Young & Mundial, 1996; Schweinhart, Barnes, Weikart, Barnett, Epstein, 1993; Ramey & Campbell, 1991) and on push for policies and frameworks for early childhood program implementation (Neuman & Devercelli, 2012; Vargas-Baron, 2005). The history of ECD in Africa had largely been ignored with prominent scholars (Pence & Benner, 2015b; Mwamwenda, 2014; Prochner & Kabiru, 2008) noting with grave concern the absence of the comprehensive historical narration of ECD professional networks and conferences in Africa and the limited role of Afro-centric philosophies in child development in Africa (Nsamenang, 2005). The literature review process was part of addressing this gap in historical information and the premise was that the research that followed would add knowledge on information relating to professional early childhood networks and African international early childhood development conferences in the period between 1990 and 2009.

## **Locating the Literature**

I was eager to learn all I could about early childhood development in Africa. Importantly though, I had to look for literature that was related to ECD networks and ECD conferences in Africa. This would help me in addressing my research questions and maintaining my research focus. In order to answer my research questions well, I also had to look beyond this area and understand other aspects that influenced ECD on the continent. The search for literature for this research exposed me to an abundance of academic as well as “grey literature” produced between the period of 1990 and 2009. Farace and Schöpfel (2010) defined grey literature as information produced by government, academics, business and industry in electronic and print formats in instances where publishing is not the primary activity of the producing body. In this research, the review of literature that fell within this category of “grey literature” included technical or research reports, international development organization reports, conference papers, government documents and African theses and dissertations. Through the search for literature on early childhood development in Africa between 1990 and 2009, I noted that scholarly work that focused on Indigenous and postcolonial early childhood studies began to emerge in the 1990s and 2000s from scholars such as Ball and Pence (1996), Cannella and Viruru (2004), Mutua and Swadener (2004) and some seminal work on human development in cultural contexts by Nsamenang (1992).

A body of scholarly work, aptly named re-conceptualist, also emerged during this period and focused on ECD being implemented in less “harmful”, and in more supportive ways for communities. Cannella (1997) looked at how ECD could be deconstructed by evaluating the forms of discourse that had been dominating the field which led to the development of theories on why some forms of ECD practice privileged particular groups of children whilst oppressing others. This was especially important for me to review in the context of how there were different standards and quality of education offered to African

children when compared to the children of European colonizers. Dahlberg, Moss and Pence (1999) undertook a critique of the concept of the concept of quality, arguing that there were other ways of evaluating and understanding pedagogical work in early childhood development outside the discourse of quality. This was important because other ways to me meant including the often-ignored African voice, experience and knowledge base. Within this re-conceptualist body of scholars, Hauser and Jipson (1998) examined the foundations of early childhood development and pedagogical practice within the multiple worlds of childhood which was useful in the context of the real-life realities that children in Africa face.

An online search in the University of Victoria libraries and on ERIC, JSTOR and SUMMONS academic repositories revealed that from the year 2000 going forward there was an emergence of published books, journals and other literature that revisited early childhood development landscape in Africa from the 1990s. Historical and contemporary grey literature that had been written by international development organizations such as UNICEF, UNESCO, The World Bank, Consultative Group on Early Childhood Development (CGECD) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) as well as dissertations/theses by African students emerged through this search process.

Whilst some of the documents from these organizations had noticeable biases, such as a major focus on the impact of their programs in SSA, the same documents such as program reports or annual reports of funders would have a heavy leaning on how the organization was making a difference through early childhood programs in Africa negating and neglecting the relevance of the strengths of what already existed within these communities. Furthermore, some of the programs that were being implemented were not Afro-centric and represented imported models of early childhood development. The overall context of the depth of information was not lost as these reports and program strategies helped to reveal how often African communities are expected to just receive early childhood development program

funding and implement according to the wishes of the funders and not according to the needs and issues that exist on the ground.

Some of the grey literature reviewed also referred to the notion of community capacity building on early childhood development in SSA. This presupposed that African communities did not have a way of raising children and therefore needed capacity building on early childhood matters. The term ‘community capacity building’ itself was one that emerged in the lexicon of international development during the 1990s. Notably, the term ‘community capacity building’ had a consistent trend in the grey literature from international organizations such as the World Bank (Bank, 2000; 1997), World Health Organization (WHO), UNICEF, UNAIDS (UNICEF, 2000; UNAIDS, 2001 & WHO, 2003) and the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) (Baxen, 2003). This wide use of the term has resulted in controversy over its true meaning (Gaye & Diawara, 2015). The notion of community capacity building was subjected to further investigation in this research to consider whether the early childhood networks and conferences supported member countries to enhance capacity for the development of policies and programs.

### **Theoretical Underpinning**

In this study, I drew on theories that supported and informed my research questions. For example, the social network social network theory provided a lens for understanding the relationships that existed between individuals, groups, and organizations within a social network (Daly, 2010; Riketta & Nienber, 2007; Wasserman & Faust, 1994). According to Wasserman and Faust (1994) a social network can be defined as a social structure that is made up of a set of social actors that can include for example individuals or organizations, sets of dyadic ties, and other social interactions between actors. They opined that utilising the social network theoretical framework provided ways in which the structure of social entities

could be analysed. This theory enabled me to examine relationships between western and African scholars, local policy makers and practitioners, and other vested stakeholders who had shared an interest in early childhood development and education in SSA, and who participated in the development of early childhood networks and early childhood conference.

Daly (2010) postulated that social network theory provides a useful frame of reference for researchers when they want to answer questions on how information is shared within organizations, the frequency of sharing and the degree which there might be congruence between formal and informal systems. This theoretical framework assisted in understanding the relationships that existed between individuals working for funding agencies and individuals that were running organizations that were being funded. These relationships, whilst complex, needed to be understood so that they could inform some of the information that was being discovered through the research process. Little (2010) posited that social relationships can be found existing within the context of educational change and that it was important for researchers to move from only looking at small units of change but rather move towards looking at “more sophisticated conception of nested organizational relationships” (p. xi). Social network theory not only allowed me to suspend my assumptions of what would ordinarily be viewed as boundaries within organizational structures in the ECD Networks but instead helped me to look at how the interconnections between relationships, ideas, information, resources and influence flow. Daly (2010) suggested that a network theory approach assists in providing insight into the motives of resisters to change, spheres of social influence and the different social worlds that must be negotiated when change is enacted.

According to Daly (2010) social network theory can be applied to many contexts in order to examine the relationships that exist between individuals, family members, groups, and societies. They further argued that within the context of social networks, there was less importance placed on the individual members than the relational ties within the network itself.

These relationships influenced the attitudes and behaviours of members pushing the networks towards a desired outcome. Through this lens I examined how the ECD networks, built rapport amongst members and how this was used to influence the implementation of ECD programs, the development of policy, as well as member participation in the international early childhood conferences. I also looked at the complex web of relationships between funders and funded institutions, the individuals that represent these organizations and their roles within the ECD networks. Through the document analysis and interviews, I had an insight into how personal and professional relationships and linkages had an impact on funding of the ECD conferences and ECD networks.

Within the context of the social network theory, I had to understand the often-complex interplay between formal structure and the informal patterns (Little, 2010) that exist within and across organizations. Daly (2010) provided a model from which to understand complex relationships within networks. Daly posited that within networks there were central actors who were individuals with the most ties with other actors in an organization, have access to relevant information, knowledge and communication than others within the system and as such would have some form of disproportionate influence over the entire network. There were also other individuals who were connected and highly central within the network and these were called super hubs by Daly because of their central location and thus would be able to provide information providing efficiency and effectiveness to the network.

Within this same model, Daly (2010) posited that peripheral actors were those who were connected to a system or network through limited ties and that by virtue of their positioning within the network their knowledge would not be utilised. Isolated actors or individuals within this network were those that did not collaborate with others and were people who did not provide any resources to the entire network or system. This theoretical positioning then assisted me in identifying the various actors and the roles they played to

influence, or not, the work of the ECD networks. Borgatti and Ofem (2010) opined that the network view “takes into account the web of relationships in which actors are embedded that both constrain and provide opportunities” (p. 18). In utilizing this theoretical approach, I became cognizant of the need to be analytic when it comes to the environment created by the ECD networks and understanding not only the outside entities such as funders and other stakeholders but the relationship that existed between them.

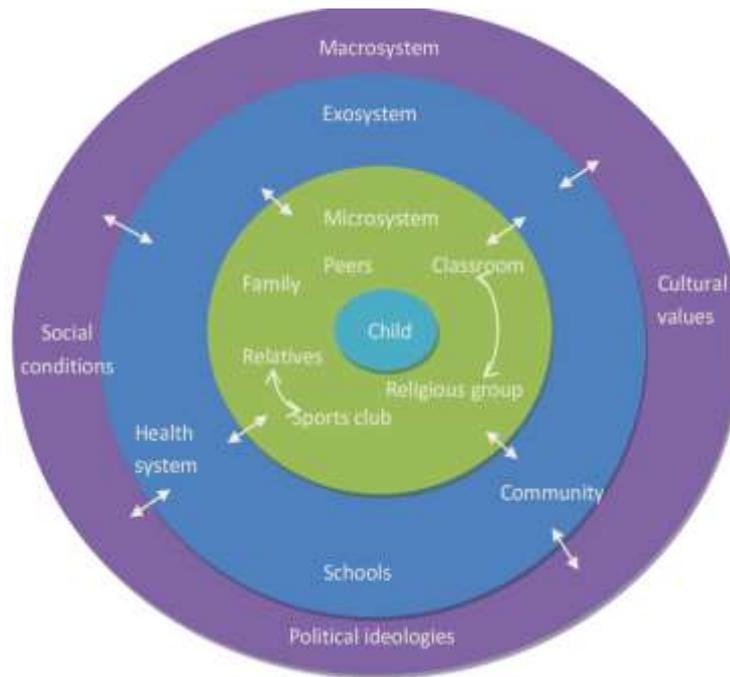
The second theory I drew on was from the work of Foucault (1991) who challenged the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of sovereign acts of domination. This perspective supported the development of an understanding on how early childhood networks and conferences were organized and shaped in SSA and assisted in investigating the existing power relationships at that time. Foucault (1998) further argued that power is found in groups of people through what he termed “episodic or sovereign acts of coercion or domination” (p. 63) and he saw power as dispersed and pervasive. In this instance, the argument proffered by Foucault was that power was found everywhere and came from everywhere and that there is neither a structure nor an agency that represents the centre of power. In looking at how the use of power influenced the programs and actions of the conferences, the ‘power is everywhere theory’ postulated by Foucault (1991) was instrumental and key in that it assisted in identifying how the countries that participated in these ECD networks influenced the conference programs or had a role in conference agenda setting. It was important to see if the countries were involved in developing the conference programs, if there was broad based consultation that would ensure inclusivity and joint decision making. This participation and consultative decision-making process is crucial as opposed to having imposition of conference agenda by funders and western based conference organizers who are typically far removed from the daily realities on the African continent. This theoretical perspective, applied by way of a document analysis of documents as well as

semi-structured interviews, also provided a lens into the reasons on who was being invited to provide keynote speeches or lead other key activities at these conferences. The notion that ‘power is everywhere’ and ‘comes from everywhere’, that is, is neither an agency nor a structure (Foucault, 1998, p. 63), became an important part of understanding the relationships that underpinned the ECD networks and ECD conferences.

In looking at the history of the ECD and the ECD conferences held in Africa, this theoretical lens assisted me in understanding whether there were hegemonic forces that influenced the establishment of the networks, the agenda of the conferences, as well as the hosting of some the networks in particular European countries instead of being hosted on the African continent. Within this frame of reference, it was going to be very important to identify how the networks and conferences metamorphosed through the 1990s referencing the Foucauldian notion of episodic use of power by groups.

### **The Ecology of Human Development**

Another theoretical frame that I used to understand the ECD Networks and ECD conferences was the Bronfenbrenner (1979) ecology of human development model. Bronfenbrenner’s ecological framework has been highly influential in the re-conceptualisation of early childhood (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Woodhead, 2003). The model postulates that the development of a child is meshed in a series of interacting systems and in the model; these are drawn up as concentric circles in the figure below. Closest to the child one finds the micro-system that comprises of the daily settings and relationships at home, school and in the community. The next level circle is the meso-system recognized by Bronfenbrenner as the relationships that exist between the micro-systems such as those between the home and school and between the parents and teachers.



**Figure 1: Bronfenbrenner Ecological Model of Human Development**

The exo-system are the powerful influences that have an indirect bearing on the child such as parental employment options that bring in financial resources supporting the child through access to food, clothes, shelter as well as day care or preschool attendance. The outer circles, the macro-system and the chrono-system show the influence of the values and beliefs around young children and these are ever changing and not static.

This theoretical basis for me had the potential to encompass the significance of multiple settings and influences in the lives of children and how organizations such as ECD Networks and the attendant conferences could enable or disable provision of services for children. The analysis and narration of the history of early childhood development conferences and networks that is carried out in this research points to an intersection of various systems in the lives of children. Governments and early childhood development practitioners through policy planning and formulation initiatives worked to create integrated early childhood service provision. This would lead to ministries such as health, education, social services working directly with parents, community organizations amongst others to provide a continuum of care

and support. These intersecting influences were identified and used as reflection points during this research.

### **Challenges faced by the African child**

My focus in this research was aimed at identifying the ECD networks and conferences and how these influenced policy development processes that would respond to the needs of children in Africa. In order to create early childhood development programs that responded to the needs of young children in Africa it was important to also understand the myriad of challenges and adversities that children face as they grow and become young adults and eventually leaders themselves (Tchombe, 2019). This understanding has to be gained in an African continent that is rich with various cultures, ethnicities and languages as well as a complex heritage. I was keen to also learn how the African continent was able to address the challenges faced by young children through enactment of country level ECD policies.

The African child grows up and has early childhood experiences in a continent that hosts a diversity of cultures, religions, ethnicities and languages. The African child in the 1990s suffered through multiple negative and debilitating factors such as economic decline, malnutrition, inadequate health service provision, malaria, effects of HIV/AIDS, conflict and war, disease and widespread food shortages (Ejuu, 2012; Kingsley, 2010; Pence *et al.*, 2004; Vargas-Baron, 2005; Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1994;).

Tchombe (2019) argued that the greatest challenge faced by children in Africa was the redefinition of the African conception of communal life amidst juggling three distinct heritages named as Indigenous African, Islamic-Arabic, and Western which were a product of what was referred to by Mazrui (1986) as 'Africa's Triple Heritage'. The challenges for children arise as they begin to inherit culture from different traditions and contexts resulting in conflicts on language and education becoming evident. In addition to this, the effects of

colonisation, urbanisation and globalisation through the widespread use of technology were posing challenges to childhood as it was known in African communities.

Scholars Yankah (2012) and Oppong (2015) argued that globalization is nothing more than projecting one local culture to a place of domination on the world stage and thus African children would remain captive to following 'global' standards. This is even though these global standards would apply only to what was coming from outside the continent of Africa (Yankah, 2012) and not recognise what Africa could offer to the world in terms of child development. Nsamenang (2006) posited that it was not practical to work under the assumption that there were "universally applicable milestones of human development, since every culture recognizes and assigns different developmental tasks to their perceived phases of human ontogenesis" (p. 295).

Before 1990, young children, especially from birth to five years of age, were nearly invisible in most African policy documents except in sectoral health and nutrition policies and strategies (Aidoo, 2008). Globally too, the early childhood development advocacy agenda had not advanced outside a few institutions. For example, the Coordinating Group for Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) had been established in 1984 by Robert Myers along with key international development ECD focused colleagues dedicated to young children and was advocating for increased focus on the early years sector (De Los Angeles-Bautista, 2003). De Los Angeles-Bautista (2003) further posited that at that time the only donor that was funding and exclusively dedicated to ECD in Africa was the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) headquartered in the Netherlands. This not only indicates that there was not much investment being made towards the early years sector on the African continent but is also indicative of the lack of priority that was being placed on early childhood development by funders and governments.

Despite these challenges faced by children in Africa, there were also positive factors that emerged such as children were being born healthier, peace became more widespread on the African continent, more children got immunized against major diseases and the secure, loving and close family relationships often ignored by scholars provided a nurturing and stimulating environment for the wellbeing of a child (UNICEF, 2008). In addition, Nsamenang (2010) posited that by virtue of children being exposed to the changing environment, improved health, education and economic opportunities became influential in child development. Sifuna and Sawamura (2010) suggested that the “international impetus given to children and ECCE in 1990, especially by the World Declaration on Education for All stimulated official action in sub Saharan Africa” (p. 35). This was important as it provided a spotlight on deliberate action on funding the development of ECD programs, policies and priority plans for the early years sector on the continent.

As I looked at these, I then began to write down some questions and thoughts relating to the ECD networks and conferences and how they could have influenced the early childhood development sector on the African continent. These would then also become part of my first set of draft questions for my interview participants.

### **A case for investing in the Early Years**

As I worked through my literature for this research, I wanted to also know the factors that influenced the drive for investment in formal ECD programs in Africa. As an ECD practitioner on the continent I have noticed the surge in programs that are designed to increase access to formal ECD programs. The preceding section has highlighted some challenges that were faced by young children in Africa. For this study it was also important to look at some of the arguments that had been proffered in advancing the need for increased support for ECD investments. This is due in part to the need to ensure that children in Africa access quality

early childhood programs in countries where ECD infrastructure, ECD teachers and ECD policies are not in place to support the holistic development of the young child. Economist van der Gaag (2002) argued that “well executed and well-targeted ECD programs are initiators of human development. They simulate improvements in education, health, social capital, and equality that have both immediate and long-term benefits for the children participating in the programs” (p.66). Investments in ECD programs are, in many ways, investments in the future of a nation. There are multiple complexities ingrained in historical processes as well as political dynamics that influence how governments invest in early childhood development. For this research I focused on two key factors that may have influenced the drive to increase investment in ECD programs on the African continent.

1. Brain Development

Early Childhood Development, having been defined earlier as a comprehensive approach to policies and programs for young children (UNICEF, 2001), was recognized as an important foundational element for the growth and development of the child. The early years period, that is from conception up to age 8 was recognized as a fundamentally important period. This period began right from when the child was in the womb to the time that they were born into the world. The health and wellbeing of the child from that early stage in the womb was recognized as largely being dependent on the health and nutrition of the mother during the entire pregnancy.

Floud, Wachter and Gregory (1990) argued that nutrition in-utero had a major effect on adult height. Thus, height, weight and cognitive development of the child would have a connection with the nutritional well-being of the mother. Rutter and Rutter (1993) postulated that by the age of 8, an individual would have attained an approximate 50% of their adult weight whilst the brain would have attained 80% of its adult weight. Therefore, the early years period is critical to the psychological, emotional and cognitive development of the child.

Begley (1996) posited that there were some critical periods in the lives of children that stimulated brain development such as the child learning emotional control between the ages 0-2, developing vision within the 0-2 age spectrum, being able to develop their vocabulary at 0-2 years, developing logic between ages 1-4 and ability to learn second languages between age 0-10. Mustard (2002) argued that the brains of children aged between 2 and 3 were active two and a half times more than adults and that the brains remained more active for the first ten years of life.

The Carnegie Taskforce on Meeting the Needs of Young Children: Starting Points (1994) noted that the developing brain in the young child was sensitive to the environmental influences such as nutrition, intellectual stimulation, stress and ability to form social relationships and these affected the growth rate of brain cells and the length and breadth of the connections between the brain cells. Thus, through presentation of research on children's cognitive growth and development, the case for investments in ECD programs became more compelling in Africa.

## 2. Government Responsibility

Whilst parents and other family members within the community can be seen as the primary caregivers of a child, the State also had a responsibility to play first and foremost as the duty bearer for the rights of the child (Hyde, 2006). The examples of the involvement by the State in implementing ECD programs in South Africa (SA), Zimbabwe and Kenya, cited later in this dissertation, provided an entry point into analysing the case for investing in ECD by African governments.

Firstly, it is important to note that African States ratified and signed the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and also acceded to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) in 1990. Both of these conventions are discussed extensively in subsequent sections. By signing onto them, African States assumed and accepted the

responsibility for promoting and protecting the rights of children to education, health, safety, nutrition, birth registration and protection amongst other.

Secondly, the governments, through the United Nations General Assembly, also would sign up to the global developmental strategies such as the Education for All (EFA) goals, the MDGs and their successor goals, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). These global strategies made reference to the importance of ECD in their various goals. For example, within the Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) goals, the first goal “expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children” emphasized the importance of investment in access to ECD for the poor and marginalized. Likewise, the MDGs also embraced ECD with linkages being found for example in Goal 2 which stated the need for the world to aim for ‘achieving universal primary education’.

As outlined earlier above, Bronfenbrenner (1979) argued that a child develops within an ecological system of relationships, with the family being an immediate integral part of that ecological system. These linkages between the international or global organizations, national governments and the communities are important to understand within the context of an ecological environment that influences child development.

History indeed does provide some perspective into current and future events. For example, after 2009, within the context of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that came into force in 2015, ECD found expression through SDG number 4 which stated a commitment by the world to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”. ECD was explicitly included through target number 4.2 which stated that “by 2030 ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education”. Thus, an important and revealing aspect of this study was how much the past has

a tremendous bearing on events in the future and this provided an additional layer of insight through the literature review process. Therefore, signing onto these global developmental strategies and commitments meant that governments were placing a duty bearer role upon themselves and thus ultimate responsibility for working to ensure that young children have access to early learning opportunities.

### **Early Childhood Development and the African child**

The provisioning of ECD in African countries appeared largely to be driven by the extent to which a government had an understanding of the importance of ECD and also its policies on equal access to education or the lack thereof. In apartheid SA, for example, the provisioning of ECD had been mostly along racial lines and thus served mostly white children in urban areas (Biersteker *et al.*, 2008). The apartheid government by advocating for segregation in SA meant that without State involvement, the poor, marginalized and majority black communities would not have access to ECD services. In 1994, in the newly independent SA, the black majority led government formed by the African National Congress (ANC) led by Nelson Mandela, identified ECD as a key transformative sector in the reconstruction and human resource development of SA and in the promotion of the rights of children (Biersteker *et al.*, 2008). In the context of my research, I identified that SA from 1994 onwards would participate in early childhood development networks and conferences and be part of activities that would influence ECD network establishment and ECD policy development.

The colonial history of both SA and Zimbabwe can show that the provision of quality ECD services was made along racial lines. For example, the journey in neighbouring Zimbabwe was also informed by the desire of the new government, sworn into office in 1980, to address the colonial legacy of unequal access to education. Mangwaya *et al.*, (2016) noted that the Nursery School Regulations of 1973 made provisions for white children to access

nursery school education through the Ministry of Education, suggesting that it was providing a great pedagogic foundation for whites alone. ECD was then introduced after Independence in 1980 through the National Early Childhood Development (NECD) program which was aimed primarily at pre-school children in rural areas who had never had access to these services (Nziramasanga, 1999).

Sibanda (2018) noted that in Zimbabwe, up until 1988 the provision of ECD was through community-based initiatives with support from the government through the Ministry of Community Development and Women. A community development approach underpinned the roll out of the ECD centres. With limited focus on minimum criteria, and lack of capacity at community level to make significant contributions, the standard of facilities and activities varied substantially. The provision of these programs through a community model saw the communities, as posited by Samkange (2016), working together to build, furnish and pay teachers. Sibanda (2018) posited that only after the attainment of independence did ECD in Zimbabwe become universalized.

In 2004, the government adopted recommendations from a national review of the education system and stipulated that ECD be integrated into education structures rather than running parallel to them (Nziramasanga, 1999). The Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture (MoESAC) in 2005 had a mission statement that encompassed this integration which read:

To promote and facilitate the provision of high quality, inclusive and relevant Early Childhood Development (ECD), Primary and Secondary Education, Life-long Learning and Continuing Education, Sport, Arts and Culture.

In line with this mission statement, the Permanent Secretary in the MoESAC issued Circulars 14 of 2004 and 12 of 2005 which formally introduced two ECD classes for 3 to 5-year-old children in primary schools. The introduction of two years of pre-primary school education:

ECD A: aged 4-5 years, and

## ECD B: aged 5-6 years

marked the desire by the government to provide a holistic early childhood programme in Zimbabwe.

In East Africa, the establishment of the National Centre for Early Childhood Education (NACECE) in Kenya, and the decentralization of networks of what was called the District Centres for Early Childhood Education (DICECE) in 1984 and 1985 was seen as key government support for the provision of ECD services (Njoroge, 1994, cited in Biersteker *et al.*, 2008). Other community based ECD initiatives also existed in Kenya. Mwaura and Mohamed (2011) noted that community-based Madrasa ECD programs aimed to ensure access to early childhood services for children from under privileged communities. The Madrasa ECD Programs are community-based, community-driven and led programs that are designed to impact the lives of children who would ordinarily not be able to access education. The goal of the Madrasa ECD program was to ensure that there was a low-cost, community-based approach to ECD that would support Muslim children from low socio-economic households.

Up until 1999, UNICEF did not have early childhood education as a priority area in Africa or globally (De Los Angeles-Bautista, 2003). Schaeffer (1996) posited that in the early 1990s the UNICEF leaders were still to be convinced of the importance of the early childhood development sector. According to De Los Angeles-Bautista (2003), UNICEF's ECD advocates had since 1986, presented position papers, conducted frequent strategic activities, refined conceptual frameworks and programming principles to advocate for prioritization of this sector. Schaeffer (1996) argued at that time for UNICEF to "go beyond general advocacy to assistance with policy formulation. ECD is an area where ill-informed policy decisions can go wrong with long term consequences (e.g., use of national language

rather than mother tongue; development of entry tests for primary schools,) thus the need for informed debate as such policies get developed” (p. 41).

These advocacy positions and activities by UNICEF staff culminated in a decision by UNICEF to make early childhood education a global priority in 1999 and in later having the annual UNICEF 2001 State of the World’s Children Report focus on early childhood care and development (De Los Angeles- Bautista, 2003). This marked the beginning of concerted effort to provide funding, leadership and guidance by UNICEF for global early childhood development programs.

As my research focus was between 1990 and 2009, literature reviewed for this research indicated that SSA as a whole had made some significant strides in recognizing the importance of early childhood development as an important sector by the year 2000. This was evidenced by the African leaders signing various child friendly conventions and charters in the early 1990s that influenced ECD long before some United Nations (UN) bodies had seen ECD as a priority area. The UN’s CRC signed in 1989 and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990) are such conventions and charters that became an entry point for African countries to formalize early childhood development practices on the African continent. ECD policy planning and implementation by the SSA countries, however, was still lagging behind as only a handful of countries on continent had embarked on policy formulation processes by the end of that century (UNESCO, 2000). This was largely due to the absence of ECD policies that had been adopted for implementation.

Myers (1992) posited that three events provided global visibility to the African child: the approval by the United Nations General Assembly of the CRC in 1989, the World Education for All Conference held in Jomtien, Thailand in March 1990, and the World Summit for Children in 1990. Global visibility was important because this helped to shape ECD funding decisions, ECD leadership capacity development activities and influencing of

ECD policy development. Myers argued that these events were critical because they shaped early childhood development globally and became key drivers of the early childhood development sector. Indeed, these events would be critical as they seemed to bring together various global players towards rallying for a common agenda, that of increased investment in integrated early childhood development in Africa (Engle *et al.*, 2007). These players argued for early childhood programs that comprehensively addressed the needs of children which included intellectual development, emotional support, health and nutrition (Young, 2000).

From 1990 going forward, the agency of children in SSA also got recognition and attention not only through various charters and agreements signed internationally, but also from scholars. Scholarly work by James and Prout (1990) and Qvortrup (1994) which was aimed at addressing theories, knowledge and beliefs about young children, was influential in expanding the early childhood development discourse from narrow beliefs (Woodhead, 2006), to more historical and political perspectives on institutions, theories, knowledge and beliefs about young children.

Postmodern theorists, including those in the Re-conceptualizing Early Childhood Education (RECE) global movement (Bloch *et al.*, 2014; Ryan and Grieshaber, 2005; Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999; Cannella, 1997; Kessler and Swadener, 1992), argued against universal assumptions about children and dominant Western theories of child development that often excluded 'other' ways of knowing, being and understanding childhoods. Indeed, much of the work from this growing group of 're-conceptualist' scholars has increasingly focused on the decolonization of the early childhood development field and has begun to emphasize critical childhood studies (Bloch *et al.*, 2014; Ritchie & Skerrett, 2014; Swadener, 2004). ECD in Africa was also a political issue that was linked to resource inequalities and priorities in resource distribution at a national and continental level (Woodhead, 2006; Montgomery, Burr & Woodhead, 2003; Stephens, 1995).

From this historic and contextual background, ECD in SSA became a key rallying point for some events on the continent. Arising out of the review of this literature was a timeline developed by Pence and Nsamenang (2008) that indicated key events that impacted early childhood development in Africa. The timeline on *Appendix 6* which I adapted from this work by Pence and Nsamenang (2008) reflects some of these events held on the continent. I updated this timeline through the information I discovered as part of my literature review work for this research and I included other key events in early childhood development in Africa from 1990 up to the year 2009, the focus period of this research study. As I reviewed literature to update this timeline, I began to better understand events that shaped early childhood development in Africa.

I turn now to the various international conventions and agreements that Africa ratified as a political bloc through the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) to gain an understanding of frameworks that influenced early childhood development policy and practice in Africa. These agreements and conventions marked a point in the history of ECD in Africa where there was now stronger focus on the rights and welfare of young children. I reviewed this literature with the intention of understanding how the ECD networks and ECD conferences used the agreements to inform ECD policy development.

### **Conventions and Agreements**

In the SSA context, the drive for investment in early childhood development programs can be seen to have found expression and influence through international conventions and agreements that became ‘domesticated’ by the continental political body, the OAU which was later renamed the African Union (AU). Ng’asike and Swadener (2019) noted that ECD in Africa was grounded in a number of international agreements and conventions. The conventions and agreements included among others the CRC (UN, 1989), the Universal

Declaration of Children's Rights (UDHR) (1959), the Education for All (EFA) Declaration (UNESCO, 1990), the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000), the UN Special Session for Children and the MDGs (2002).

ECD in Africa can be seen through the lens of these various conventions and agreements that were ratified or signed on the African continent or in other global forums. These conventions were very important as Smith (2018) suggested that conventions were more binding because they had to be ratified formally and required reporting to the UN. Therefore, once signed, a country would then have to put in place measures and frameworks to support the implementation of the conventions or agreements. ECD got such pre-eminence in that during the 2000 EFA conference in Dakar, it was recorded as the first target (UNESCO, 2000). There are many issues that were discussed at this conference including provisioning of primary education. The importance of ECD as shown by its pre-eminent placement as a first target highlighted the growing awareness of the importance of laying a strong foundation for young children. This target, as noted in the World Declaration on Education for All (UNESCO, 1990) focused on "expansion of early childhood care and development activities, including family and community interventions, especially for the poor, disadvantaged and disabled children" (UNESCO, 1990, p. 3).

Pence and Ashton (2016) noted that by the year 2000, not only were there numerous international agreements and conventions in place globally, but that Africa had responded with its own documents such as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (African Union, 1990) and Education for All: A Framework for Action in SSA– Education for African Renaissance in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century (Johannesburg, 1999). This demonstrated the drive and impetus by African leaders in acknowledging the need for the continent to have documents that were developed by Africans for Africa. This set the stage for Africa to have documents that responded to the African context.

As my literature review revealed to me, some of the conventions signed internationally have an African localised counterpart, for example, the CRC (United Nations General Assembly, 1989) has an equivalent with the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (Organization of Africa Unity, 1990). It is quite evident that the African Charter is localised to reflect the African context and tradition albeit more broadly so as to accommodate the various cultures, languages and ethnicities that are found on the continent. There are many similarities that can be seen between these two documents when they are juxtaposed. Following the signing of the CRC in 1989, ECD slowly began to emerge as a priority area for African governments to consider (Vargas-Baron, 2005). I recognized as I reviewed this literature that African leadership was prioritizing the recognition and protection of the rights of the African child using its own knowledge base as a guide.

In the year 2000 in Senegal, UNESCO launched the Education for All (EFA) initiative under the Dakar Framework for Action (UNESCO, 2000). The Framework for Action was developed to address multiple challenges such as the high number of out of school children worldwide and the increasing impact on education from poverty, child labour, violence and conflict, and HIV/AIDS. In order to address these challenges, the Framework for Action outlines a number of goals with relevance to education. The first two of the six goals agreed upon under the Education for All initiative were:

- a) To promote comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children; and
- b) To ensure that by 2015 all children have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality (UNESCO, 2000).

I observed that it was recommended through the Dakar Framework for Action that ECD programs should be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child's needs and encompassing health, nutrition, and hygiene as well as cognitive and psychosocial development (UNESCO,

2000; Olusanya, 2011). Scholars (Pence & Marfo, 2008; Penn, 2006; Young, 2005) would later argue for integrated early childhood development programs that would address various developmental domains of young children. To support this integrated approach, African governments, along with development partner organizations, would then include or frame the holistic provision of early childhood development in policy documents and frameworks that reflected the community, district and national aspirations for the child in line with the ACRWC (Young, 2005).

These frameworks would have the attendant implementation and monitoring mechanisms through the African Peer Review Mechanism (APRM), which is a monitoring instrument, voluntarily acceded to by Member States of the AU, to assess the attainment of set goals for child development as set out in the African Charter itself. This progression in thinking about early childhood led to the AU to develop a strategic framework that irrevocably changed the way children are viewed by policy makers and practitioners on the continent (African Union, 2015). This strategic framework, building on earlier initiatives, has set the African continent on a continuing course of what Fine and Sandstrom (1988) called the growing acceptance of the recognition of children's diverse competencies and rights.

For this research it was important to therefore also identify whether the adoption or ratification of these continental and international conventions and declarations had resulted in greater benefits for young children in Africa or if they also increased the prominence of ECD in national and regional planning processes. I turn to literature on child rights to provide further context on what influenced a rights-based approach to early childhood development in Africa between 1990 and 2009. The literature on child rights assisted in providing me a lens to look at how ECD networks and conferences positioned the provision of quality ECD services on the continent through the development of ECD policies.

## **Child rights**

As an education researcher I wanted to understand what led to countries around the world ratifying the CRC in 1990. I traced the foundation of the child rights movement to the early 1900s when in 1919; the League of Nations created a committee for the protection of children. Five years later, it adopted the Geneva Declaration, which was the first international treaty on children's rights, inspired by the work of Janusz Korczak, who is considered to be the father of children's rights. Veerman (1992) argued that the idea of a convention to enshrine the rights of the child was suggested to the UN Commission on Human Rights by Poland in 1978. This short historical information provided a context in which I could identify the foundations of the child rights movement which decades later would affect and influence how ECD would be implemented in Africa.

Smith (2015) argued that child rights represented a valuable tool from which social justice and empowerment programs for children can be implemented irrespective of their differences based on ethnicity, gender and disabilities. Child rights are key to the implementation of ECD in Africa, particularly in instances where children are living in extreme poverty. Woodhead (2009) posited that the long-lasting effects of child poverty and under-nutrition in early childhood development on cognitive development, learning and life quality are well documented and thus in the context of implementing ECD programs, the rights of children had to be at the forefront as a key consideration when developing poverty alleviation programs. Nobel Laureate and former Chief Economist and Senior Vice President of the World Bank, Joseph E. Stiglitz (2005) observed that:

child poverty is more pervasive than general poverty and has pernicious long-term consequences that perpetuate the poverty cycle. A willing world can end child poverty. What makes the poverty children experience so appalling is that it would cost very little to do something about it when compared to national spending, for example on military and armed conflicts (p. 34).

Therefore, a child rights-based approach would become influential in the implementation of early childhood development programs because children who were living in extreme poverty were at risk of not developing to their full potential (UNICEF, 2016). Early childhood development policy and practice in Africa during the period between 1990 and 2009 cannot be seen in isolation from the child rights convention that was ratified by nearly all the African member states in 1990. Sifuna and Sawamura (2010) conjectured that following ratification of these conventions and subsequent education conferences, African countries began to integrate children's issues more clearly in sectoral policies. Countries such as Namibia, Ghana, Mauritius, Mauritania, Malawi and Uganda began policy formulation initiatives by setting up commissions and ministries that would handle affairs related to children (Garcia *et.al.*, 2008; Vargas-Baron, 2005; Torkington, 2001).

The CRC was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and assent by General Assembly resolution 44/25 of 20 November 1989 and it came into force on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of September 1990 (United Nations General Assembly, 1989). General Comment No.7 mentioned that:

young children are best understood as social actors whose survival, well-being and development are dependent on and built around close relationships normally with a small number of key people, most often parents, members of the extended family and peers, as well as caregivers and other early childhood professionals (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005, General Comment No. 7, para. 8).

The General Comment Number 7 also noted that proper prevention and intervention strategies during early childhood have the potential to impact positively on young children's current well-being and future projects (United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2005, General Comment No. 7, para. 8). Kjølholt (2019) advanced that the rights-based approach that was linked to the CRC, "has become increasingly powerful in global policies aimed at improving young children's lives and wellbeing" (p. 18). The CRC recognized that every child had the right to go to school and learn. That right began in early childhood, and

according to Kjølholt (2019) this led to the SDGs that call on governments to “ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education” (UNICEF, 2016, p. 42). Lansdown (1994) suggested that within the CRC the provision articles referred to the right of children to receive appropriate health care, social security, physical care, education, family life, recreation, play and culture. Lansdown (2001) proffered that the right to an education was one of the most fundamental of all rights because it promoted the achievement of children's full potential.

Melton (2005) highlighted that “no other human-rights treaty directly touches on so many domains of life” (p.648), whilst Cantwell (2011) advanced the notion that the adoption of the CRC, following ten years of discussion and debate, marked a new vision of children and childhood experiences. The CRC changed discourses and cultures across the world to give more prominence to children's issues. This convention would also have a remarkable effect on Africa. Pence and Marfo (2004) noted that African leaders and their governments were enthusiastic supporters of the CRC, leading to children being placed at the forefront of child development issues, policy formulation and early childhood program planning.

Woodhead (2003) argued that framing early childhood policy in terms of child rights departed radically from a conventional and instrumental paradigm, notably through the insistence on every young child's entitlement to quality of life, respect, and well-being. Within the CRC, children gained recognition as individual beings that have competence, agency and rights as citizens separate of their status as members of a family unit (Kjølholt, 2019). The CRC had profound impact on organizations implementing child focused programming. Smith (2015) noted that the convention made an immense contribution and led to increased attention to the rights of children within the UN system, its programs and priorities. Scholars (Cantwell, 2011; Landsdown, 2001; Roche, 1999; Hart, 1992) began to

focus and carry out research work that informed the use of child rights approaches and perspectives to child protection and development programs around the world.

The period immediately following the ratification of the CRC by the UN Member States saw the then OAU adopting the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). The ACRWC was formally adopted on 1 June 1990 (OAU, 1990). The adoption of the ACRWC was a way of “localizing the [CRC] that had been adopted globally a year earlier. This was a significant step by African leaders in taking the lead to formally recognize children and their personhood in African development and welfare” (Hart, 1991).

The ACRWC is explicit in mentioning that “the child occupies a unique and privileged position in African society and that for the full and harmonious development of his personality, the child should grow up in a family environment” (OAU, 1990 Preamble, p.1). This African Charter ‘localized’ the UN’s CRC into the African context and each country was now mandated to domesticate the charter and ensure that the child and their agency were respected. Kjølholt (2019) noted that the ACRWC “was adopted to reflect the socio-cultural values related to children’s place in the families and to the values embedded in enculturation and parenting practices in the African continent” (p. 30).

The recognition of children’s rights through the African Charter put the children’s issues into the formal development agenda of African governments from 1990 going forward. The child however also had a role to play within the family, community and state. The African Charter in Article 31 states that “every child shall have the responsibilities towards his family and society, the State and other legally recognized communities and the international community” (ACRWC, 1990). Article 31 therefore draws a direct connection with the Afro-centric philosophies on child development highlighted earlier especially the notion that children were viewed as part of the household economic activity and thus had a reciprocal responsibility within the family, community and state.

In 1998, the Seventh Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (UNESCO, 1998) expressed a specific political commitment to promoting ECD policies and programs in their countries (Garcia *et al.*, 2008). This set the stage for child development in Africa to be seen as part of a system or continuum of factors that governments had to prioritize in order to promote survival and ensure that children thrive.

With this child rights discourse and the attendant agreements and implementation frameworks, African countries such as Ghana, Namibia and Mauritius began to work to ensure that children and their rights would be protected at a country level and also this facilitated the development of their country level policies on early childhood development (Vargas-Baron, 2005). The recognition of citizen rights and not just welfare or charitable support for children, as Cantwell (2011) argued, provided the push to ensure that children in the countries developing ECD policies as highlighted above would receive integrated early childhood development programs that would encompass a whole range of child developmental requirements.

Myers (1992) argued that the CRC suggested that the right for children to develop to their full potential provided the impetus for formal early childhood programs. Children in Africa were still developing to their full potential, albeit in the eyes of their families and communities. Children would be taught through age appropriate practices, for example, how to milk cows, how to tend to goats, fetch water and bring firewood, participate and contribute in the household economic affairs (Ejuu, 2012; Nsamenang 1992). Percy-Smith and Thomas (2010) highlighted that the participation of children in early childhood development programs was a key rights issue as children were seen as effective members of the communities who made contributions in everyday life settings including making some economic contributions.

In these arguments I then was able to situate the child in Africa and how 'formal' ECD programs have evolved from being part of sectoral plans to integrated and holistic policies

addressing the development of the whole child. Assumptions by western hegemonic powers and colonizers could have been that there were unstructured childhood practices in the context of an African community and that even in that context; the assumption was that children did not have rights (Woodhead, 2003). (Kjøholt, 2019) questioned why the African Charter was not being used as a frame of reference for the implementation of children's rights in African countries. Kjøholt (2019) noted that the "hegemonic position of the CRC was impacted by the fact that a child rights approach related to the implementation of the CRC is often a condition for funding and economic investments from global actors and NGOs" (p. 31).

I made some observations throughout the review of literature that made me wonder if for example, the child rights perspective fundamentally changed the course in supporting African children to develop to their full potential. Who defined, determined and in whose perspective was full potential viewed? In the context of a rights-based perspective, communities had the right to determine if the activities their children were participating in would result in them reaching full potential and not any outside body or convention. Notwithstanding the child rights-based position, early childhood development had been seen as a very important aspect of childhood in African communities as evidenced by traditional mechanisms that were in place to support the socialization and learning of children (Durojaiye, 1993; Prochner & Kabiru, 2008; Zimba, 2002). Informed by the review of this literature on the child rights perspectives, I was keen to interrogate and understand how the early childhood networks and conferences pursued rights-based programming in the context of the ACRWC.

In the next section I reviewed literature on colonialism, post colonialism and ECD in order to better understand and address my research question that was looking at the main purposes and goals of the ECD Networks and ECD conferences. I wanted to have information and knowledge that would help me understand if the networks and conferences had managed

to address some colonial legacy issues when it came to the design and provisioning of ECD services.

### **Colonialism, Post Colonialism and Early Childhood Development in Africa**

Rodney (1982) noted that the shameful and diabolic trade in African captives who became slaves to Europeans either in Europe or newly colonized territories in the Americas preceded the colonial rule of Africa. Sifuna and Otiende (2006) noted that centuries of slave trade by Europeans and Arabs influenced the earliest contact with Western education in both East and West Africa, mainly through the trading stations that had been erected on the West and East African coasts.

Windel (2008) posited that the broad history of British colonial education in Africa could be divided into three phases. Windel argued that the first phase was one dominated by missionary education and a civilizing mission. The second phase, between World War 1 and World War 2, was characterized by what he termed “official programs that sought to adapt education to what was then understood by experts to be traditional cultural practice and the unique African mind” (p. 2). The third phase, according to Windel, occurred after 1921 and this was characterized through concerted efforts by the British colonial administration “to setout policy statements for all of ‘Tropical Africa’ and design programs to implement models of native education by colonial officials in London, influential missionaries and representatives of corporate philanthropic organizations in the United States” (p. 2).

The colonial administration in England noted that the white settlers on the African continent needed a consistent supply of labour and where skilled labour lacked, they would complain. According to Urch (1971), “a commission was led that inquired into the best educational model for the British colonies and it would come back with a decidedly industrial focus” (p. 3). Thus, Africans would find themselves being trained and taught skills that would

address the need of industry. The first school systems that were established in Africa by the colonizing nations were to ostensibly advance industry and the agenda for the spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Sifuna and Otiende (2006) opined that the formal education introduced by the European trading nations were sporadic attempts to convert the natives to Christianity and to produce Africans who could read and write. This was done in order for the natives to fill the vacancies of service that existed in speaking, writing and keeping of accounts at the trading posts.

In this regard, programs would be produced that were designed to feed into the education objectives of the colonizers and with religion being used as an entry point. Programs would then be created to serve the children of the colonial children separate from the indigens. According to Pence (2004), ECD has a long history with replicated early childhood group care and education programs moving across continents as early as the 1820s. Programs such as the Infant Schools reached Africa in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century followed by Froebelian kindergartens, Day Nurseries and related European initiated programs later in that century, with virtually all being developed by and serving the non-African population (Prochner, 2009).

Summers (2008) argued that the goal of the colonial administrations would be to create proto-Europeans who would peacefully co-exist with their tutors whilst inclining them towards the economic practices of modern capitalism. Schech and Alwy (2004) noted that through colonial influence, missionaries, churches and non-governmental organizations were encouraged to perpetuate the Western culture in education. This was done across rural communities irrespective of the cultural context of the people. Education became the channel in which imperialistic forces would perpetuate their Western colonization and Christianization of African people (Cunningham, 2008). Ngugi (1986) said that the perpetuation of imperialism through the classroom undermined the African cultural experiences and reflected

a colonizing of the mind. Ngugi (1986) believed that colonial rule in various African countries influenced struggles over language, education, political and economic rights. Ngugi (1986) argued that Africa along with the global south was held hostage by neo-imperialism under the guise of economic development and that education played a central role in this.

The decolonization of African nations that began after World War 2 led to African countries that were becoming independent from colonial rule, taking control of the education systems to support the Indigenous people through access to education for all programs. Until that point in time, schooling on the African continent was established and controlled by European colonizers. Windel (2008) highlighted that the colonial education systems were designed in a cost-effective manner to the colonial state so as to address welfare concerns as well as forestalling political movements that threatened the colonial order. Scholars (Canella & Viruru, 2004; Loomba, 1998) posited that colonialism reshaped existing structures of human knowledge as no branch of learning was left untouched. European colonizers neglected the fact that – prior to colonization – African communities had their own systems of education, child rearing and child protection.

Sifuna and Otiende (2006) asserted that “the view [was] that the African was a savage, a pagan with no history and culture to perpetuate, that he was primitive, that he knew nothing, and that Africans never taught their young” (p.149). They argued that this kind of mistaken belief “reflected the ignorance of the Europeans about African education systems” (p.150). Mawere (2010) affirmed this by stating that this had a negative impact on Africa’s own socio-economic and political development and that the West considered Africa “as a dark continent, and hence despised its traditions, customs, belief systems, and Indigenous knowledge systems as diabolic, barbaric, and backward”. Therefore, Mawere (2010) noted, “Africa’s valued traditions and knowledge systems had to change to fit in with the western scientism and modernity” (p. 209).

Jegade (1994) argued that the everyday cultural practices that were described as fetishist, primate and crude were the means by which African children learnt. Prochner and Kabiru (2008) argued that the European missionary aimed to convert and civilize young African children through the study of Christian scripture and adoption of a European worldview, for example, by stressing individualist as opposed to collectivist values. Mamdani (1996) noted that “the law, land tenure, education and religion were all skewed in favour of whites and male elites, and the inferiority of blacks was rammed into consciousness” (p. 36). Pence (1998) further argued that the typical models of preschool education in colonial times were characterized by high student to teacher ratios and highly authoritative structures.

Swadener *et al.*, (2008; 2000) posited that ECD was highly segregated during the colonial years and some of those patterns persist and are reflected in more recent neoliberal early childhood policies. For example, in SA, Harris and Phatudi (2018) noted that prior to the country transitioning to a democracy in 1994; the ECD landscape was a reflection of the national policy of segregation that favoured the white race. This led to ECD being limited to serving mostly white children and those children in the urban areas whilst lack of government involvement meant that communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) shouldered the burden of service provision.

Smith (1999) argued that decolonization was a process that critically engaged at all levels, imperialism, colonialism and post coloniality. Smith (1999) further argued that decolonizing research implements Indigenous epistemologies and critical interpretive practices that are shaped by Indigenous research agendas. Colonization, imperialism, and subjugation of the indigenes presented challenges for early childhood development program implementation within the SSA region especially when there was a clash with Indigenous norms, beliefs and values. Additional challenges on the implementation of early childhood development programs in Africa during the 1990s related to situating the value of indigenous

knowledge and belief systems on the background of models of ECD programs imposed and implemented by the western hegemonic colonial influences.

To have greater understanding of this, I turned to literature on Afro centric or Indigenous epistemologies of child development to understand what framed and how they influenced early childhood development policy in Africa between 1990 and 2009. I wanted to know how what was known about raising children in Africa was being used by the proponents of the ECD networks and conferences in Africa.

### **Afro-centric epistemologies**

In order to address my research questions appropriately, I had to know and understand the existing African knowledge base on how children were raised and cared for in traditional settings. This was important for this research because I had to be informed on how the ECD networks and conferences were advancing an ECD agenda premised on what was known about child development in Africa. The period between 1990 and 2009 marked an increase in the signing of conventions and agreements as narrated above. I realized that it could also have been an opportunity for western based organizations and funders to push through their own ECD agenda based on what worked in their own countries and using western based research evidence. This meant that as I reviewed this literature, I wanted to have deeper knowledge and understanding of the Afro-centric epistemologies and I was interested in how they would influence policy formulation process for ECD programs in Africa.

Schafer *et al.*, (2004) argued that the provision of ECD in SSA could be seen through the lens of indigenous knowledge philosophies that existed prior to their transformation by colonization. Adeyemi and Adeyinka (2003) posited that traditional African education was specialized and that educational practices equipped children to fulfil various obligations

within society. Tchombe (2019) argued that African participative pedagogies through engaging children in their daily chores enabled them to learn, construct and develop their competencies, skills and attitudes. Ogbu (1994) premised that children were not instructed but would extract knowledge, skills and intelligence that existed in their culture. This notion was supported by Tchombe (2019) who posited that children in African communities rarely learnt through instruction but would learn through activities that enabled them to initiate, create and discover.

Kaputa (2011) noted that within an African epistemology the community determined what should be taught and assessed based on real life tasks. Along with this form of learning, Nsamenang (2012) argued that peer group relationships and peer culture influenced child development. Nsamenang (2007) posited that developmental learning through participatory models in an eco-cultural context reflected the recognition by African Indigenous cultures of the different phases of children's emerging minds. Manda (2008) argued that African traditional values were grounded in communal philosophies and socialization skills that were instilled in children very early in their development, building on their inner strength to cope with life challenges. The socialization process was a key part of learning for children, with Serpell (1996) noting that African child development emphasized the social values of sharing, reciprocity and respect for elders with a person acting in a system of social relations.

In advancing the rationale for what he termed an Afro-centric epistemological lens in childhood development, Nsamenang (2005) argued that African societies depended on their ability to socialize their children in the art of survival and sustenance through core cultural values. Tchombe (2011) argued that these African values would be taught to children through activities that would be based on the interest of children and these were expressed through the "oral tradition of storytelling, dialogue, narratives and mediated mutual reciprocity" (p. 212). In advancing the notion of mediated mutual reciprocity, Tchombe postulated that elders and

children learned from each other through input and output processes with no-one being superior in the learning process.

In noting the importance of the role played by African families, Weisner (1987) noted that Eurocentric cultures that provided the referential ECD benchmarks privileged adults with childcare whilst African cultures separated childcare skills from the parenthood and situated childcare training as a familial commitment for children to learn as part of their family duties. Therefore, it could be seen that African communities traditionally raised their children through a socialization process that involved the surrounding family and neighbors (Bernard van Leer Foundation, 1994). It was through this environment that a child would be taught all the necessary tasks for not only survival but also trained on the community's norms, beliefs, values and culture. In these communities too, some individual community members had specific roles to play but it was clearly understood that raising children was everyone's job. In-fact, the notion that it takes a village to raise a child can be seen through this active participation by everyone in the community (Swadener, Kabiru, & Njenga, 1997).

Nsamenang (1992) and Durojaiye (1993) noted that the foundation of all aspects of child development in the African context lay in the family even before the child was born. This is in line with the argument proffered by Bronfenbrenner (1979) that a child develops within an ecological system of relationships, with the family being an immediate integral part of that ecological system. Children learned and were taught as they participated in the daily living activities in the home, through ceremonies, direct instructions, observation and apprenticeship (Ejuu, 2012; Kingsley, 2010; Prochner & Kabiru, 2008). In observing the Samburu children in Northern Kenya, Lenaiyasa (1999) and Ng'asike and Swadener (2019) observed that the children had a common play area where they participated in games during the day and also at night when there was moonlight. Through these games the children learnt interaction, sharing and caring for each other.

In another observation of the Gikuyu tribe in Kenya, Kenyatta and Kariuki (1984) cited in Prochner and Kabiru (2008) noted that “anyone observing children at their play will no doubt be impressed by the freedom which characterizes the period of childhood among the Gikuyu” (p. 61). Swadener *et al.*, (1997) further argued that traditionally, African children were educated by their parents, community leaders and their peers. In Samburu and Maasai communities, grandmothers tended to care for older infants and toddlers so that mothers can go to gather firewood or water and participate in market days (Swadener *et al.*, 2000). In this context, the onus to learn was left to the learners, with sanctions for those who did not learn (UNESCO, 1995).

McNaughton (2001) posited that within the African context the belief was that knowledge is co-constructed by the child and others within the family and the school. Other scholars (Dembele 1999; Kilbride & Kilbride 1999; Mwamwenda, 1996; Kenyatta & Kariuki 1984; Ohuche & Otaala 1981) also argued that children received instruction on culture, social responsibility, respect for elders, cooperation, fear of God and ability to relate with other people within the familial system. Prochner and Kabiru (2008) posited that children were taught through lullabies, songs, and games, mainly by their mothers and caregivers such as grandparents, aunts and older siblings assisted in the raising of children. It can be seen therefore that families were the immediate circle of learning, protection and development for the child in an African context.

Children in Africa also always had an economic role as members of the community particularly in carrying out chores at home as well as providing labour in the fields. Eminent scholars from the African continent such as Nsamenang (1992), Ohuche and Otaala (1981), and Zimba (2002) argued that Indigenous knowledge in Africa was used to respond and address the socio-economic contributions of children within the African context.

Tchombe (2011) argued that the involvement of children in the household economic activities might have been misconstrued by people from the western world as child labour. However, in African communities the participation of children in these household economics was seen as training children to become intelligent since economic activities such as selling in markets would develop arithmetic skills more in those children who did participate in these activities than in those who did not Tchombe (2011). There has been a tendency to link the notion of children being involved in the household economic activity to child abuse, but this involvement of children should be seen in the context of tradition and culture. This misconception of abuse has predominately been held by world powers that played a role in the colonization of Africa.

Woodhead (2003) suggested that these cultural assumptions by the West are brought into sharp contrast when compared with ethnographic studies highlighting the circumstances where values for childhood are about early socialization through work and economic contribution rather than realising individual human potential through education. As Montgomery and Burr (2003) argued, competing cultural discourses on the child are highlighted when one juxtaposed the CRC with the ACRWC. Article 31 in the African Charter highlighted that every child has responsibilities towards his family and society.

Furthermore, the Charter noted that children subject to their age and ability, have a duty to work for the cohesion of their families, respect their parents, superiors and elders at all times and assisting them in times of need (OAU,1990). This demonstrated how the Indigenous knowledge and practices even filter through to influence African charters and conventions and how the economic role played by children is observable in the African Charter. By formally recognizing that children do have an economic role to play in the household, this dissuades the notion that children are being abused. This is especially when western countries seem to play a prefect or supervisory role to African countries when it

comes to child rights. The context, Indigenous knowledge and how children were taught within the family context are all important and should be understood by those from the western countries as part of the development and skilling of the child.

Ng'asike and Swadener (2019) argued that the implementation of early childhood programs in Africa should be led by African values and philosophies and that culture should not be treated as tokenistic but be an enriching addition to the learning experience in African early childhood development programs. Swadener and Mutua (2004) argued that it becomes important to utilize a process of decolonization in which research and performance of valuing, reclaiming and foregrounding Indigenous voices and epistemologies is carried out.

As Smith (1999) posited, the unfinished business of decolonization needs to be intensified through actively struggling for the survival of Indigenous languages, knowledges and culture. It is also clear in literature reviewed that whilst African countries gained independence after prolonged liberation wars, the systems of governance were largely those adopted from the colonial era, including the languages of instruction in education for most countries on the continent.

In addition to this, local knowledge had not been the driving force behind implementation of early childhood development programs on the African continent. For example, how was what was traditionally and culturally known about raising children in Africa used to influence implementation of policy and programs? How did Africa utilize this knowledge to implement culturally appropriate and locally sustained early childhood development programs in the face of western philosophies backed by western generated evidence? Ng'asike (2014), in a study of children's play in the Turkana culture, demonstrated that children were capable of carrying out complicated adult roles as long as they were using familiar cultural activities. Thus, it was important for early childhood development to be

implemented in the context of what was known and informed by Indigenous knowledge systems.

In the absence of African generated research and knowledge in the implementation of early childhood development programs, western research epistemologies were thus being seen as the gold standard or best practice for implementation over local Indigenous knowledge (Penn, 2000). The notion, as Chilisa (2005) pointed out; of not using the western research epistemologies to assume universal validity in implementation of knowledge systems is an important departure point from idolizing or seeing anything from the west as a best practice. Teo (2010) termed this implementation of western research philosophies over Indigenous knowledge as epistemological violence. Teo (2010) defined epistemological violence as a situation “when theoretical interpretations regarding empirical results implicitly or explicitly construct the Other as inferior or problematic, despite the fact that alternative interpretations, equally viable based on the data, are available” (p. 298). Oppong (2015) opined that epistemological violence is a result of the utilisation of what is viewed as “global standards” to present perspectives of human development and experiences as universal. The end result of utilising this view of childhood development would as Oppong (2019) argued “lead to situations in which African children, adolescents and adults are presented as weak, inferior and needing interventions to improve when compared to Eurocentric ideals as if those are universal” (p. 294).

Grande (2004), Yellow Bird (2005) and Kincheloe (2007) argued that there is a great need for dialogue between critical theorists, Indigenous scholars and Indigenous peoples. This is especially important if we are to understand the evolution of ECD in Africa. Importantly, it is critical for this to take place in the context of western research epistemologies assuming universal validity and interpretation of knowledge (Nsamenang, 2013; Pence & Nsamenang, 2008; Chilisa, 2005).

In appreciating the value and importance of Indigenous knowledge systems, Coe (2005) argued that the wealth of the traditional knowledge and methodologies needed to be incorporated into early childhood development curricula and practices. This was an important viewpoint in trying to answer my third research question considering that I was looking at how the ECD networks and conferences had influenced ECD policy development in Africa. This prevailing knowledge base was an important consideration when I used the social network theoretical lens to see if the relationships between African based ECD practitioners and Western scholars were grounded on promoting the implementation of culturally relevant, context specific and community appropriate ECD policies. It then was important for me to look at how western philosophies, in particular how results of longitudinal studies of research carried out in the United States of America (USA), influenced the development of policy, program implementation and funding of early childhood development programs in Africa during the period between 1990 and 2009.

### **Western Philosophies**

Ruddle (2001) and Tchombe (2019) argued that the introduction of western based education curricula had a huge impact on the local knowledge which for a long time had been undergirded by traditional community knowledge. This created a mismatch on how children would respond to their developmental needs since there would be differences between their cultural knowledge systems and that of the western knowledge systems or philosophies. Nsamenang (1992), Pence and Marfo (2008) and Penn (2000) argued that western philosophies seemed to have taken the lead over Indigenous knowledge systems. Nsamenang (2005) argued that the problem of policy and practice in Africa became a greater tragedy “when Euro-American ECD programs are applied as the gold standards by which to measure forms of Africa’s ECD, they deny equity to and recognition of the African ways of

provisioning for its young, and thereby deprive the continent a niche in global ECD knowledge” (p. 276). African views on early childhood development which played a critical part in the various African cultures and traditions had largely been ignored as the push for expanded early childhood development programs in SSA (UNESCO, 1995; UNESCO, 2000) was supported through evidence drawn largely from research carried out in Minority (developed) World countries (Pence & Marfo, 2008).

In arguing for increased investments in early childhood development, Myers (1992) published a book titled *The Twelve Who Survive: Strengthening Programmes of Early Childhood Development in the Third World*. This book, which was first published in 1992, highlighted that studies showed that attendance in ECD programs correlated with increased enrolment and retention in primary and secondary schools leading to improved behaviour and better academic performance. Young and Mustard (2008) suggested that ECD programs were essential in Africa for improving the quality and capacity of populations, increasing adult productivity and mitigating the effects of poverty, disease and civil strife.

Young and Mustard (2008) further noted that the benefits of ECD programs had been proven over time and in different countries. In advancing the importance of an investment in the early years sector, Mary Eming Young, then Lead Child Development Specialist at the World Bank, highlighted in a statement delivered at a UNICEF Regional Workshop held in March 2005 in Dakar, Senegal that “children must prosper before economies can grow” (Young, 2005, p.2). Other arguments on the importance of investments in early childhood development were also given based on the modelling that had been done in Minority world countries (Engle *et al.*, 2011; Barnett & Nores, 2010; Neidell & Waldfogel, 2010).

It was important through this literature review for me to also look closely at the western models that were being touted as largely successful evidence for greater investment in ECD. As an ECD practitioner on the African continent, I am disappointed in how on

numerous occasions these models are touted by African ECD practitioners as the number one go to reason for why investment in ECD on the African continent is very important. In meetings that I have attended and participated in I have heard to my great dismay, African ECD ‘experts’ tout the all too famous line which says, ‘an investment in ECD provides  $x$  dollars return on investment’. I have had the opportunity both in public and in private to ask these experts to explain these statements in the context of Africa. Unsurprisingly many of them are unaware of the foundations of these statements that they are making in public.

I have also participated in ECD project monitoring visits in various countries in Africa where after introductions to communities, I sit and listen as the local project leader tells the gathered parents, caregivers and community leaders how investing in ECD is going to bring  $x$  dollars in return. Unwittingly these project leaders fail to recognize that even the quantification of that return is being made in US dollars and not in the local currency of that country. As I seek more understanding after such statements have been made, the project leaders tell me that they put those statements in their proposals upon advice from external consultants and donors. They actually do not know where these models were produced and what they mean to their own local context. I sought literature on these models so that they could also help me understand why African ECD practitioners were finding themselves regurgitating models developed thousands of miles away in regions that have conditions and contexts far different from the ones on the African continent.

The Highscope/Perry Preschool studies (Schweinhart *et.al.*, 1993; Weikart, 1978), the Abecedarian studies (Ramey & Campbell, 1991) and the Chicago pre-school studies (Reynolds, 1999) were seen as evidence that justified increased private and public expenditure on ECD by countries in the west particularly in the USA. As I have narrated above, these studies were now being used as justification for implementation of early childhood development programs in Africa. Communities, governments and education sector

stakeholders are being repeatedly reminded of the dollar returns for their investment in ECD. The models that are touted by these African ECD ‘experts’ and lauded by donors are described briefly below.

1. High Scope/Perry Preschool Program

According to Schweinhart *et al.*, (1993) the High Scope/Perry Preschool program was developed in Ypsilanti, Michigan in 1962 as a two-year early childhood development program. According to Schweinhart (2002) this program was designed to address high rates of failure and grade repetition in the local schools and the program targeted 3 to 4-year-old African-American children who were living in low income families. Qualified teachers who had bachelors’ degrees and certification in education each served 5-6 children. The teachers used a High Scope educational model in two and a half hour classes daily, supporting children in self-initiated activities, providing small group and large group activities which helped children to engage in child development experiences. A cost benefit analysis of this program (Schweinhart *et al.*, 1993) provided estimates indicating that \$7 was being saved for every \$1 that had been invested (cost per year was \$7600 per child in 1992). These savings were being realized from societal savings from lower school dropout rates, teenage pregnancy, unemployment, crime and welfare payments (Hyde, 2006).

2. Carolina Abecedarian Study

This was an experiment in the provision of intensive early learning services for children in low income families from infancy to five years of age (Hyde, 2006). The experiment originally involved 112 children mostly of African-American descent born between 1972 and 1977 selected because their family situation would put the children at risk of delayed intellectual and social development. The subjects were randomly assigned to preschool and school-age treatment conditions in a study design that permits a comparison of outcomes in students with preschool treatment followed by early elementary treatment

(infancy–8 years), preschool treatment only (infancy–5 years), early elementary school treatment only (5 years– 8 years), and untreated controls (Campbell & Ramey, 1995). At between 6 and 12 weeks of age, children were randomly assigned to either a preschool program or a control group. Hyde (2006) reported that the Carolina Abecedarian research study assessed seven categories;

1. Earnings and fringe benefits of participants,
2. Earnings and fringe benefits of future generations,
3. Maternal employment and earnings,
4. Elementary and secondary school education cost-savings,
5. Improved health,
6. High education costs,
7. Welfare use.

According to Masse and Barnett (2002) the cost-benefit analysis report of this research project indicated that the project had an average return of \$4 in benefits for every dollar invested (cost per child per year was \$13600).

### 3. Chicago Child Parent Centers

The Child-Parent Center was opened in May 1967 and in the USA it is recognized as the second oldest federally funded preschool program after the Head Start program (Hyde, 2006). This is a center based early childhood intervention program that provides early education for children ages three to nine from low-income areas. This program was designed to have strong parental support and engagement (Reynolds, 1997). The major thrust of this program was that the foundation for success in school was found in the presence of a stable and enriched learning environment during the early childhood years where parents are active participants in the learning and education of their children. A longitudinal study to investigate

the effects of government funded programs for 1 539 children began there in 1986. Apart from investigating the short- and long-term benefits of early childhood education the study traced the scholastic and social development of participating children and the contributions of family and school practices to the behaviour of children. The cost-benefit analysis carried out indicated that for each dollar invested per child, there was a \$7.10 return to the society. This return was linked to the benefits the public received from an increased tax base because of higher earning potential and cost savings emanating from lower crime rates and school remedial services (Reynolds *et.al.*, 2011).

These research studies profiled above provided evidence of a good return on investment in early childhood development programs by forecasting reduced long-term expenditure on education, social protection and crime in the USA. The economic based models that were now being developed by economists and scholars domiciled in the Minority World (Heckman, 2011; Engle *et al.*, 2007; Van der Gaag & Tan, 1998) backed up these longitudinal studies by making financial rationale that was supportive of the studies. Further studies on the impact of ECD programs on school readiness and performance (Zigler, Gilliam & Jones, 2006; Karoly, Kilburn & Cannon, 2005; Reynolds, Wang & Walberg, 2003) were also carried out in the Minority World countries and provided incremental evidence on the importance of investing in the early years.

Martinez, Naudeau and Pereira (2012) argued that notwithstanding the growing evidence base on the effects of ECD programs in the United States, Latin America and in other parts of the developed world, there was little evidence of the same effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of the early childhood programs in the African context. Hyde (2006) posited that questions remained as to their cost effectiveness and financial sustainability in the African context.

The reports of the longitudinal studies, school readiness and performance along with the convincing financial metrics from the Western based economists became the basis of a push for continent wide implementation of formal early childhood development programs in Africa (Penn *et al.*, 2006). International development organizations then imported this rationale and began to convince governments to receive funding for early childhood policy development based on these western generated models and evidence. These studies and economic rationale are models that remained substantially inapplicable in those African countries that have no social protection programs; where there is political instability; children and communities lived in extreme poverty and there is widespread disease and mismanagement of public funds.

Invariably these financial projections and future returns on investment in early childhood development was being made utilizing data from the western world, far removed from African settings whose economies, societies and ways of life were starkly different. There has however been some gradual change over time. The provision of this financial rationale and economic reasoning from the Minority World did not translate to the same being applicable in African countries. This was a notable concern too for African scholars as Nsamenang (1992) noted that “the anchor-data for developmental literature has overwhelmingly been derived from the Western world to the unfortunate exclusion of the Third World” (p. 3). Pence and Marfo (2008) would support this observation and argued that the research and knowledge repositories that were shaping early childhood development programming content and service delivery mechanisms in SSA were being developed in the Minority World. They argued that “over 90% of the world’s children live outside the Euro-Western Minority World; yet the vast majority of developmental and ECD literature comes from the Minority World, and in particular from the U.S.” (p. 3). Ngwaru (2014) further argued that “the positive effects of ECCE programs on school readiness and performance

have been documented in research studies and synthesis but not in sub Saharan Africa” (p. 62).

In addition to this, the adaptation of curricula from western countries into a purely different context and setting did not augur well with scholars who investigated early childhood development policy and practice in Africa. Prominent scholars who wrote on African early childhood development programs raised objections on the continued use and application of Minority World based early childhood models in the Majority World (Myers, 1992; Molteno, 1996). These observations by these scholars point towards the importance of having African generated early childhood content and knowledge to inform policy and practice within the African context. Penn (1997), when carrying out research on early childhood development institutions in SA, noted that the written curriculum and pedagogy for the black nurseries were mainly provided by NGOs, almost all of it in English whatever the first language of the recipients. Penn posited that “despite the discrepancies in catchment, funding and organization of the black and white centres, the curriculum literature and training materials were all derived from Western sources, mainly adaptations of Montessori and High Scope methods” (p. 107).

In a study carried out in Turkana County in Kenya, Ng’asike and Swadener (2019) also had similar observations. They noted that whilst the current Kenyan constitution had devolved management of early childhood education to counties, the implementation of early childhood education in Turkana County did not reflect the local cultural context. They further noted that model classrooms that were equipped with modern play toys and learning materials supplied by UNICEF were taking the limelight in the implementation of early childhood education in what normally would have been a traditionally nomadic and economically marginalized Turkana state. Ng’asike and Swadener (2019) argued that families were now being reduced to becoming spectators as their children experienced completely new learning

environments that had little or no relationship at all to the harsh realities of the children's own cultural context.

These examples indicate the impact of bringing in western philosophies of early childhood development in contexts that are different. These new classrooms that were being constructed were in contrast to the daily experiences and lives that the Turkana children were used to, and this was not accustomed to their daily routines and lives as a pastoral community. (Ng'asike, 2017) observed that the model classrooms would too often be built in isolated areas that were away from the homes that these pastoralists would occupy and thus forcing the children to walk far away to learn. This would make it difficult for children to have authentic learning experiences in their own language, cultural context and the characteristics of their families. Cunningham (2006) argued that the model classrooms were a mismatch with the herders, cultural context and that the curriculum content broadly reflected the Western ideology even though the teachers, trainers, movers and shakers of the education system were Kenyans. Contextually relevant evidence, based on longitudinal studies done in Africa for African settings is very important as it identifies and respects the Indigenous languages, cultures, traditions and way of life. In light of these Afro-centric and western philosophies, I turned to literature that would help me look at the status early childhood policy development and practice on the African continent.

### **Early Childhood Policy Development**

In order to understand how the ECD networks and conferences had influenced ECD policy development I had to turn to literature on ECD policy development. This also greatly assisted me in responding to my third research question which was aimed at identifying the role of the networks and conferences on ECD policy development on the continent. The

literature reviewed indicated that the road to development of early childhood development policies in Africa had been a slow and arduous one.

Vargas-Barón (2015) noted that by 2014, even before the Sustainable Development Goals were agreed upon, 29 of the 49 sub-Saharan countries had adopted ECD policy instruments while 9 were in various stages of development. Whilst, this indicated progress towards development of these policies, the SSA journey of policy development had started much earlier. In order to identify this journey as well as the influence of early childhood development networks and conferences on these developments, it was important for the researcher to read and analyse literature on governmental policy initiatives on the SSA continent and how various political agendas influenced the actual policy development initiatives.

The journey towards education policy development and implementation in independent SSA had started in the early 1960s. Pan-African pronouncements to improve social development were being made at that time to highlight the importance of African socio-economic development—through educational opportunities across the continent. For example, an African education conference which was held as early as 1961 in Addis Ababa discussed the need “to provide a forum for African states to decide on their priority educational needs” and “to promote economic and social development” (Sifuna, 2006, p. 233). The pairing of education with economic and social development prompted concerted efforts to enhance policy development for secondary and post-secondary education in Africa. Nothing in the literature reviewed indicated that early childhood development was getting major attention during these conferences pre-dating the ones identified through this research.

Cisse (1986) noted that a June/July 1982 Conference of Ministers of Education and those Responsible for Economic Planning in African Member States (MINEDAF-V) in Harare, Zimbabwe, was the fifth regional conference aimed at questions of policy making and

co-operation in the area of education on the African continent. This conference advocated for the development and implementation of broad education sectoral plans. From 1998 going forward, early childhood development began to get attention through advocacy efforts that were being made by regional early childhood development networks and in particular with funding support from the World Bank. Sifuna and Sawamura (2010) noted that the Seventh Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States held in 1998 (UNESCO, 1998) had “expressed specific political commitment to promote ECCE policies” (p. 36). This was a great start in addressing the gaps that had emerged in ECD policy development. Political commitment would provide the much-needed impetus for the provision of political leadership and financial resources for the development of policies.

In this 1998 conference, the recommendations accepted included the key recommendation that African countries formulate clear policies that promote early childhood development. Garcia *et al.*, (2008) argued that the challenge for Africa, however, was the lack of capacity to formulate culturally appropriate and effectively integrated ECCE policies as well as the requisite funding to support the policy formulation process. Funding for policy development and implementation proved to be the challenge for African countries. A study that had been carried out in SSA fifteen years after the 1982 policy conference (Colleta & Reinhold, 1997) had revealed that only 4 countries had budgeted funds for early childhood development policy formulation. The lack of prioritization of funds towards ECD policy development was concerning.

Another study carried out after another 15 years (UNESCO BRENDA, 2012) revealed that by the year 2008, 19 countries in SSA had tabled ECD policies and 20 countries had engaged in preparations for policy formulation. This indicated gradual and, slightly impressive, progress in the design of ECD specific policies in SSA. The importance of having an integrated policy framework was brought to the fore with Bardach (1998), arguing that

without a policy framework that integrated the different sectors such as: nutrition; health; education; and stimulation, care and parental involvement, sectoral approaches would undermine child development. Vargas-Barón and Schipper (2012) and Vargas-Barón (2015) argued that there was an identified trend in low and middle-income countries in creating integrated ECD policies that covered various sectors such as social protection, nutrition, health and agriculture. This was seen as important in order to have policies that addressed all the developmental needs of children.

In addition to this, Black and Dewey (2014) opined that it was equally important to integrate early stimulation and parenting policies into existing health, nutrition and social protection platforms for children. These would have a wider impact on the development of comprehensive ECD policies as this research would show. Neuman and Devercelli (2012) argued that national early childhood development policies maximized scarce financial, human and material resources to support a reduction in duplication of effort. Vargas-Baron (2005) posited that developing national level early childhood development policies or policy frameworks were important tools for creating enabling environments and for adequate government funding of large-scale early childhood development interventions.

Vargas-Baron (2005) argued that a more participatory and integrated approach to ECD policy formulation in Africa emerged after the adoption of the MDGs and the Dakar Framework for Action for Education for All in the year 2000. Neuman and Devercelli (2012) noted that there was increasing priority on development of intersectoral early childhood development policies in SSA in the late 1990s, cautioning however, that whilst it was important to have these documents, they would remain insufficient without implementation and enforcement. Commenting on the SA ECD policy framework in the post-apartheid period, Ebrahim (2010) postulated that the ECD policy is inadequate in addressing sectoral

concerns, roles, responsibilities and philosophical orientations to ECD service delivery without effective implementation.

Literature reviewed indicated that globally, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) provided a compelling rationale for developing policies and frameworks that support children. Commenting on this, Arnold (2004) highlighted that the convention provided a strong platform for public dialogue and policy action on behalf of children. Scholars (Boyden 1990; Burman 1996; Woodhead, 2003) argued that whilst the UN's CRC was an important starting point for policy development, contestation would emerge on how this could be seen as endorsing a distinct western, liberal and individualistic discourse of childhood.

Pence and Ashton (2015) argued that a significant force for early childhood development policy making in SSA came from a less likely, but very large-scale player, the World Bank. This was on the background of growing discourses from the West that shifted from the once dominant narratives of culture, context and community to neoliberal and socio-economic sets of arguments based on cost benefit analyses undertaken in the USA (Pence & Ashton, 2015). Literature reviewed shows that initial multilateral agency funding and budgetary support towards national early childhood development policies and priorities in SSA began to flow through in the mid 1990s with investments by the World Bank (Aidoo, 2008). The World Bank postulated that promoting policy development would be important and become part of broader strategies aimed at reducing poverty and promoting national development (Young & Mustard, 2008; UNESCO, 2000, 2007; van der Gaag & Tan, 1998). Between 2002-2003 the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD), with funding from the World Bank, commissioned support for national ECD policy planning in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal (Aidoo, 2008; Vargas-Baron 2008; Neuman & Devercelli, 2012).

It was also important to review literature on policy processes in some African countries. Ebrahim (2010) noted that the early care and education policy in SA, for example, was inadequate in addressing the gaps between actual and perceived roles, responsibilities and philosophical orientations to service delivery by government departments. However, Harris and Phatudi (2018) noted that the national policies in SA focused on greater collaboration amongst agencies to provide services to children. In order to bridge the gap between different sectors in-country, Harris and Phatudi (2018) noted that the policies had become increasingly inclusive and collaborative addressing issues related to children and their families. In the above cited SA case; although there was progress that had been made to address the disparities that were brought about by apartheid, a lack of material and financial resources hindered policy and program implementation (Harris & Phatudi, 2018).

Neuman (2018) argued that early childhood policy planners should identify the entry points within the existing policies or services for integrating ECD interventions. Aidoo (2006) in a report to the ADEA noted that whilst commitments to early childhood development were being made through declarations and in some cases policies, inadequate government funding proved to be the stumbling block in their implementation. The World Bank and UNICEF played a major role in building the capacity of the staff in their country partners. Aidoo (2006) posited that UNICEF supported and facilitated three regional trainings for national ECD policies in Burkina Faso, Senegal and Mauritania between September 2002 and July 2003 as part of the WGECD project.

From the literature reviewed, it was evident that there was increased urgency towards ECD policy formulation processes by SSA governments. The literature does not indicate however, the source of the exogenous urgency or push and neither is there an indication of internal pressure by citizens through advocacy or other efforts during the period under review in this research. There was no indication in the policy literature reviewed, on whether Afro-

centric philosophies were being infused into these policy documents that were being produced. It is possible that there could have been some exogenous factors that influenced countries to apply for funding to develop these policies with western philosophies of early childhood development being a centre piece. This was also subject to investigation through this research. Why was it that despite the push by the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF, some countries still lagged behind in policy formulation or in some cases policy implementation? Ng'asike and Swadener (2019) posited that the interests of the multilateral and bilateral organizations in early childhood provision in Africa left a lot more questions. A critical question posited was whether the philosophy and vision of early childhood education came from within Africa or outside Africa. Was there some form of resistance by African countries to institutional hegemony, control and direction on the issue of early childhood development policies and frameworks? These were observations noted within the literature reviewed and opened up the researchers' inquisitiveness into the history of the early childhood development networks and conferences.

The literature reviewed revealed that African governments have a mandate and responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare and rights of children. These rights are indicated throughout the different conventions and charters that the African leaders signed at various points during the two-decade period as outlined earlier. This calls for integrated policy frameworks that address the holistic needs of children across the different ministries within a political or governmental system (Vargas-Baron, 2005). It was also clear within the literature reviewed that there was some murkiness around narrations on which philosophies took centre stage during the early childhood policy formulation phases in post independent African countries. Afro-centric perspectives have held their fort in early childhood development in Africa, providing perspectives grounded on the importance of perspectives from the continent.

Nsamenang (1992) and Weisner *et al.*, (1997) noted that African children were significant partners in family life and in the communal affairs of child protection and caregiving. Children would participate in the household economy of the family as well as provide care to their younger siblings when parents were away tending the fields. The literature reviewed for this research revealed that the future of the children in Africa, or indeed any society, was largely dependent on the level of commitment and effort put by its leaders into the care and protection of the young children (Boakye-Boateng, 2009).

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter reviewed the background literature undertaken for this research study. The observation by Boote and Beile (2005) that the literature review should set the context of a study has remained consistent throughout this research process. Indeed, the literature reviewed assisted me to undertake the research with a relatively ‘broad net’ of interests and issues to examine through the document and interview analyses work that followed.

The literature reviewed also revealed that African governments have a mandate and responsibility to protect and safeguard the welfare and rights of children. These rights are indicated throughout the different conventions and charters that the African leaders signed at various points during the two-decade period as outlined earlier. This calls for integrated policy frameworks that address the holistic needs children across the different ministries within a political or governmental system (Vargas-Baron, 2005).

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The literature reviewed for this research revealed that the future of the children in Africa, or indeed any society, was largely dependent on the level of commitment and effort put by its leaders into the care and protection of the young children (Boakye-Boateng, 2009). This chapter concluded by discussing the theoretical underpinnings guiding this research. In Chapter 3, I am presenting the methodology that I employed in conducting this research study.

### **CHAPTER 3: Research Methodology**

According to Denzin and Lincoln (2013), qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. They further argued that qualitative research consists of “a set of interpretive, material practices that makes the world visible” (p. 6). Bell (2005) described qualitative research as an approach that focuses on peoples’ relationships, their perceptions and insights into the world. Merriam (2009) postulated that due to its focus on discovery, insight and understanding, qualitative research offers the most valuable data, making the largest difference to practice and peoples’ lives. Creswell (2009) supported the use of the qualitative research process when a problem or issue needs to be further explored. Creswell (2012) argued that qualitative research is best suited to address a research problem when one does not know the variables involved and there is a need for explanation. Potter, Dale and Caramba (2009) contended that qualitative research approaches with a small holistic focus produce descriptive data surrounding the individuals and the setting in which the research is based.

Given that my epistemological orientation leans towards social constructivist, interpretivist, and subjectivist orientations, the qualitative research paradigm was an appropriate research methodology for this research. As defined by Moser (2005) epistemology is an account of knowledge. Thus, epistemology can be seen as a theory about knowledge and how it is created (Carter & Little, 2007). Crotty (1998) viewed epistemology as something that provides a philosophical grounding that assists in identifying the kind of knowledge and ensuring its adequacy and legitimacy.

Based on this description, my epistemological orientation therefore is of a social constructivist and subjectivist perspective. Social constructivism has its foundations from the work of Schutz (1970) who investigated the social distribution of knowledge in society.

Creswell (2009) defined social constructivism as a process where individuals try to understand the world in which they live and work by developing the meanings of experiences. Within the social constructivist stance, knowledge is socially constructed and thus knowledge is subjective and will have different meanings depending on who is interpreting it with consideration to the social and historical nature from which it is created (Ponterotto, 2006). In this construction, therefore, the interpretation of knowledge is not an exclusive process; it takes place within the environment of mutual cooperation, language, and practice (Schwandt, Lincoln & Guba, 2007). It is important therefore to realize that the interaction of meaning in everyday life gives an ability to create knowledge through these social experiences (Holstein & Gubrium, 2011).

### **Historical Inquiry**

In order to understand the historical journey of early childhood development networks and conferences in Africa, I had to undertake educational research with a historical inquiry approach. I focused on reviewing documents through document analysis and had discussions with key participants through interviews as part of this historical inquiry. I had to continuously challenge my own assumptions about what I thought I knew about the African International ECD conferences and the African ECD networks that had been established in the period between 1990 and 2009.

Edson (1986) postulated that “by raising questions, challenging assumptions, embracing complexity and expanding frames of references” (p. 14), historical inquiry provides researchers an understanding that our knowledge is limited. Therefore, the need to continue reviewing information and asking questions is important in order to understand the journey that the conferences and networks had been on in shaping ECD in Africa.

In his seminal work, historian Carr (1987) argued that historians should not love the past nor seek to free themselves from it but seek to understand it and the impact it has on the present. Edson (1986) stated that as historians “we undertake qualitative inquiry not so much from our recognition that we do not know all the answers to our problems but rather from an appreciation of the fact that we do not know all the questions” (p. 14). Therefore, the historical process for this research assisted in revealing that which was not known and has not been available to scholars in relation to the history on the establishment of the early childhood development networks and the associated historical journey of the African ECD conferences. Tamura (2011) posited that “historical inquiry seeks to provide an understanding of events and the goal is to find the best ways to achieve this understanding” (p. 156). Having noted that my research questions were specifically looking at events that had occurred, indeed I had to also use historical inquiry to understand these events.

Edson (1986) argued that historical inquiry is not just a listing of historical events but also includes their interpretation. During the research process, I also assumed another role other than an educational researcher, that of being an educational historian. Eager to understand the historical journey of the ECD networks and conferences, I had to develop some investigative skills, continually asking questions in order to further inform my historical inquiry. In asking different questions, new avenues for exploration emerged. Through the research methodology and research methods I undertook a qualitative document analysis through an in-depth reading of the documents, summarizing the key points and identifying contextual information that needed further explanation and interpretation. Existing public documents related to the networks and conferences were able to sharpen my sense on what the key issues to pursue were and who the potential semi-structured interview participants would be. Carr (1987) supported the historical inquiry process by stating that “history consists of a corpus of ascertained facts and the facts are available to the historian in documents and

inscriptions.” (p. 9). This perspective guided the document analysis process, and I was continually digging deeper to find the available facts of the early childhood development conferences and networks. Throughout the process of the historical inquiry and especially through the semi-structured interviews, I noticed that “the past which a historian studies is, not a dead past, but a past which in some sense is still living in the present” (Carr, 1987, p. 22). Sifuna and Otiende (2006) argued that there “is a particular conviction that the study of the past has crucial relevance to the task of improving the quality of action in the present” (p. 3). Through this research it became evident to me that how much we know now as posited by Sifuna and Otiende (2006) is informed by the study of the past.

Ritchie (2014) argued that historical inquiry involves collecting “what is not already known about a phenomenon but also collection of information, observations and opinions that are not available anywhere else” (p. 35). Ritchie further contended that semi-structured interviews are appropriate not only for looking at the broad sweep of community’s history but also for examining it at a specific time period.

### **Procedures for Data Collection**

Before embarking on data collection, I had to fulfill various procedures as outlined by the Faculty of Graduate Studies at the University of Victoria. I acquired the Ethics Approval certificate (*Appendix 1*) from the Human Research Ethics Board. The approval process required me to highlight the design of my study and in light of the novel COVID-19 virus; I had to discuss how I intended to interact with research participants whilst maintaining the requisite public health guidelines. Importantly too, I was required to outline the specific standards I would utilise and adhere to in order to receive informed consent and maintain confidentiality. I submitted to the Human Ethics Research Board, Letter of Invitation and Letter of Participation Consent (*Appendix 2*) and an interview script (*Appendix 3*). Following

revisions and the final approval from the Ethics Board, I then received the Ethics Approval Certificate.

Upon receiving the Ethics Approval certificate and approved Letter of Invitation and Participation Consent, I began to contact, through email, the participants that I had shortlisted for the interview. The interviews occurred via ZOOM and were carried out on days that had been mutually agreed with the participants.

For my data collection document analysis and semi-structured interviews provided me sufficient data that informed my research. I analysed over 200 documents, part of which are shown in *Appendix 4*. I carried out semi-structured interviews with seven participants who were involved in key influential and decision-making roles in ECD networks and African International ECD conference between 1990 and 2009. Two of the interview participants requested to respond in writing to questions that were sent to them and they provided their answers in narrative format. The other five semi-structured interviews were audio and video recorded and English was used as the main language. After each interview, I transcribed the recordings for analysis, and this was very helpful because each conversation would still be fresh in my mind and hence made the transcription process enriching. The combination of these methods informed the findings of this research.

### **Document Analysis**

I had to identify and create a repository of documents that would inform my research and assist in answering my research questions. Bowen (2009) defined document analysis as a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents in order to gain meaning, understanding and develop empirical knowledge. Bowen (2009) argued that document analysis provides research data as the information derived from documents can be a valuable addition to the knowledge base. Yin (2011) argued that documents provide a broad coverage

of data, over an extended period of time as well as covering many different settings. Document analysis provided additional information, data and context regarding the establishment, operations and, potentially, the rationale behind the ECD networks established in the 1990s. This method was also used to unpack the historical journey of the ECD conferences held between 1990 and 2009.

The documents that were analysed included: ECD network constitutions, ECD network formation meeting minutes, ECD network reports, conference planning meeting notes, conference reports, conference communiqués, conference presentations by keynote speakers, and minutes of conference planning meetings among other documents listed in *Appendix 4*.

In gathering the documents for the research, I categorized them according to three broad classifications which allowed me to have a focus on what I was analysing and also be in line with my research questions. The classifications I made were ECD Conferences, ECD Networks and Policy. The documents that were related to the ECD Networks were tagged as such and were analysed. The documents that were connected to the ECD Conferences were also tagged as such and analysed. Documents can provide background information and broad coverage of data and are therefore helpful in contextualizing one's research within its subject or field (Bowen, 2009). Finally, the documents that contained information relating to ECD policy development processes or policy documents themselves were categorized under policy documents and analysed. The process of analysing these documents included, skimming, reading, interpreting and through an iterative process the researcher carried out content and thematic analysis (Bowen, 2009).

The initial process of skimming had to do with securing an overview and quick understanding of the documents that had been identified for document analysis. Skimming the documents was not to necessarily grasp specific details but it was done in order to acquire a

general sense of the content, their implications and arguments for the purposes of informing subsequent reading. This was very important and necessary because I was faced with a copious number of documents and needed to further select those that were relevant to the study for more in-depth attention. Skimming depended largely on my ability as a researcher to make inference to quickly anticipate the direction of a text and consider whether it would be effective for use in the research. The list of documents in *Appendix 4* does not include hundreds of documents that were tagged confidential and shared to the researcher by participants for the purposes of document analysis and information for the research.

I identified the documents for the analysis through diverse means, including going back to my own collection of ECD conference reports and paper presentations that I had been keeping in my own office files as an ECD practitioner in Africa. In addition to this, I also reached out to my colleagues who have been working in the education and ECD sector requesting them to share any reports, grey literature or documentation they had on ECD in Africa. I managed to receive a lot of documents via email as well as hard copies and I managed to put these into file boxes, labelling each document according to the categories I mentioned above for easy retrieval. Any document related to the conferences and networks that I would get from my colleagues and contacts in the sector I maintained as they helped me to carry out my research. I also had access to some documents related to ECD in Africa from an online repository created by Nhaka Foundation, an organization I founded to support the implementation of ECD programs in Zimbabwe. I managed to download these documents from the Google drive folder and use them for my document analysis.

A very valuable source of documents for my research was the semi-structured interview participants themselves. One participant in particular shared with me an online Dropbox file which contained hundreds of documents related to two conferences as well as one ECD network. Access to these documents came at a time when I had finished analysing

my own repository of documents. I was very grateful to receive this access to troves of documents that included, minutes of meetings, email correspondences, reports of conferences, and lists of conference participants as well as presentations from conference participants. As I began the process of tagging and identifying the documents, I was pleased to note that some of the documents corroborated information and material I had collected elsewhere. This gave me the confidence I needed and reaffirmed that I was on an important trail.

Bowen (2009) argued that document analysis could be used in combination with other research methods as a way of triangulation. Triangulation is a validity procedure where researchers search for convergence among multiple and different sources of information to form themes or categories in a study (Creswell & Miller, 2000). In order to ensure that an in-depth understanding of the document analysis had been made, triangulation was a crucial aspect of the analysis. The term ‘triangulation’ is a navigation term referring to the practice wherein a location is determined through the use of the angles from two different known points (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). In social science research, triangulation is the use of at least two approaches to researching a question, with Cohen and Manion (2000) defining triangulation as the “attempt to map out, or explain more fully, the richness and complexity of human behaviour by studying it from more than one standpoint” (p. 254). Banister *et al.*, (1994) posited that data triangulation is the collection of accounts from different participants in a prescribed setting, “from different stages in the activities of the setting and, if appropriate, from different sites of the setting” (p.146). The use of data collected from participants that witnessed and participated in different ECD related events in Africa and the analysis of minutes of official proceedings, documents, reports and commentaries of the key ECD events contributed towards this work’s attempts at data completeness through triangulation.

In my using document analysis as a research method, I was aware of the limitations that it posed. Documents selected may have insufficient information and thus some

investigative skills as argued by Bowen (2009) were required in order to identify further information. During this process of document analysis, I noted the gaps in information, listed the key people involved in the networks and conferences and developed an outline for the semi-structured interviews to answer questions that would fill in the gaps identified in the documents. In that way, I managed to address the issue of having insufficient information from the documents.

### **Research Participants**

Creswell (2009) highlighted that the “idea behind qualitative research is to purposefully select participants that will best help the researcher understand the problem and the research question” (p.178). Due to the historical nature of the research and that there were now relatively fewer people left who either participated directly or had strong recollections of the events leading to establishment of the ECD networks and holding of the ECD conferences, purposeful sampling was used to identify the semi-structured interview participants.

Denscombe (2010) described purposeful sampling by saying the sample is ‘hand-picked’ (p. 35) for the research on the basis of relevance to the issue being investigated and the privileged knowledge or experience about the topic. Purposive sampling was favoured as it is time and cost efficient as well as focused in its targeting of prospective participants (Denscombe, 2010). However, purposive sampling relies on the judgment of the researcher when it comes to selecting people and pieces of data that are to be studied and it can be subjective and biased (Lune & Berg, 2017).

Creswell (2014) as well as Lune and Berg (2017), noted that in purposive sampling researcher competency in the field of study is critical as it enables me to identify the characteristics of relevance in the target participants. This notion assisted greatly in the selection of participants based on my knowledge and professional judgment. The participants

I selected met the desired competencies required to add value to the study as they had exposure to the ECD Networks and African International ECD conferences either as founders, principal leaders, funders or key players. These participants were also purposefully selected on the basis of their involvement in the development of ECD strategies, programs, policies on the African continent through their professional related work and thus had a wide experience and capability to provide historical narrations on milestone events such as networks and conferences.

In supporting the sampling method used, purposive sampling was flexible enough to allow for the polling of different types of stakeholders (Creswell, 2014) and in so doing created a diverse pool of informants capable of increasing the chances of fully exploring the history of the ECD Networks and the ECD Conferences. This was important; as Patton (2002) pointed out, any common patterns that emerge from great variation are of particular interest and value in capturing the core experience and central, shared dimensions of a setting or phenomenon. From an initial diverse pool of about 22 initial potential participants, I then began the process of short-listing potential participants. An analysis of documents on the ECD Networks and the African International ECD conferences revealed that there were a number of key people that were involved in either the formation of the networks themselves or in organizing the conferences.

I started off the research by identifying and curating documents that would be essential for this research. As I began to analyse the documents, I simultaneously also developed a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet on which I populated all the potential participants and influencers that were emerging in these documents. I would pay specific attention to those participants whose names kept appearing across the various documents. The participants that made it onto my spreadsheet and had been identified as key actors in conference reports, meeting minutes as well as in ECD network founding documents as part of my document analysis became part

of my shortlist for semi-structured interviews. Those individuals whose names kept reappearing across all categories of the analysis on ECD networks and ECD conferences were then noted down and these were then invited to participate in this research.

An initial six participants appeared on my list and as I undertook the interview process two additional key ECD conference and ECD network actors were identified on the basis of recommendations from the other participants who had argued that my data collection would be incomplete without their perspectives. Patton (2015) argued that the selection of the participants is guided by the purpose of the research and that in the absence of a methodological rule in qualitative research regarding sample size, these key participants were deemed sufficient for the research. In line with my three research questions I also began to tailor semi-structured interview questions to be used to elicit input within the domains of expertise and experience of the key participants while remaining guided by the objectives of the study throughout.

Among those interviewed were individuals involved in establishing the ECD networks or in planning the African ECD conferences such as leading retired African ECD practitioners, those who led development partner organizations such as UNICEF, World Bank, UNESCO BRENDA, Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), RISE Institute, the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) as well as surviving members of the Global Consultative Group on ECD with experience in Africa. Table 1 below identifies my research participants followed by a short profile of each participant and why they were chosen for this particular study.

**Table 1: Research Participants**

<b><u>Participant</u></b>	<b><u>Early Childhood Development Conferences</u></b>	<b><u>Early Childhood Development Networks</u></b>	<b><u>Period</u></b>
Mrs Margaret Kabiru	Yes	Yes	1990-2009
Ms Norma Rudolph	Yes	Yes	1994-2009
Mrs Stella Etse	Yes	Yes	1997-2009
Ms Rokhaya Diawara	Yes	Yes	1997-2009
Dr Pablo Stansbery	Yes	Yes	1999-2009
Dr Emily Vargas-Baron	Yes	Yes	1994-2009
Dr Judith Evans	Yes	Yes	1990-2009
Dr Alan Pence	Yes	Yes	1990-2009

## **1. Mrs Margaret Kabiru**

Mrs Margaret Kabiru is a Kenyan native who obtained her bachelor's degree in education from Makerere University, Uganda and a master's degree in Educational Psychology from the University of Nairobi. Margaret Kabiru was a co-Founder of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) and played a leading role in bringing together African countries to advance the ECD agenda. She had teaching experience in secondary school level and for many years was involved in training, curriculum development, research and evaluation of ECD and primary level programmes. She co-authored books (Prochner & Kabiru, 2008; Hyde & Kabiru, 2006; Njenga & Kabiru, 2001) for ECD teaching and training levels and also served as a consultant in policy and programme development in a number of Eastern and Southern Africa, and Asian countries. Mrs Kabiru was identified to be part of this research because of her extensive involvement in the first ECD Network that was founded on the African continent. Her participation in this study provided previously unheard perspectives on ECD networks and conferences on the African continent.

## **2. Ms Norma Rudolph**

Norma Rudolph is a South African with more than three decades of experience in policy, research and participatory action for young children, their families and communities in her home country and internationally. She is a founder member of ECD Network Africa (ECDNA) and presented at conferences in Uganda, Eritrea, Ghana and Senegal. She is completing an article-based doctoral degree at the University of Jyväskylä, Finland. She combines auto ethnography and policy analysis to challenge dominant discourses and stimulate debate about policy for young children in SA and globally. Her theoretical frameworks, research interests and experience include de-colonial methodologies and

pluriverse politics; Indigenous knowledge systems, Ubuntu philosophy and new materialism; action research; peace building; teacher development; appreciative participatory evaluation; and reconceptualising ECD. She was identified through document analysis during this research and thus provided some valuable insights that have been recorded for posterity.

### **3. Mrs Stella Etse**

Mrs Stella Etse is an Early Childhood Development expert from Ghana. Prior to joining the Working Group for Early Childhood Development, she worked for the Ghana National Commission for Children. She initiated and implemented several education projects in the fields of curricula, educational reforms, school evaluation and textbooks. Mrs Etse served as was a Co-ordinator of one of the ECD networks that was identified during this research. As a former coordinator of this ECD network that was identified during the document analysis process of my research, she provided some unique perspectives of events that occurred in conferences and networks.

### **4. Ms Rokhaya Fall Diawara**

Ms. Rokhaya Fall Diawara is currently Education Programme Specialist and Global ECD Adviser at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris. She has more than 16 years of experience in the field of education and particularly in ECD in different parts of the Africa. She was the Coordinator of the African Working Group on Early Childhood Development for seven years which she joined at a historic time, when UNESCO was Chairing the Board and leading the Education for All agenda. Ms. Diawara was co-editor of several national strategies and policy documents and author of several publications on ECD. She has published The Bouba and Zaza series “Childhood Cultures”, an intergenerational African series of children's books. Ms Rokhaya Diawara was identified as a participant for this research because she was involved

very closely at a leadership level of one of the ECD networks that was identified as part of document analysis of ECD network documents.

## **5. Dr Pablo Stansbery**

Dr Pablo Stansbery has a doctorate in Human Development and Psychology from Harvard University. He did his post-doctoral training at the Child Development Unit within the Boston Children's Hospital. Dr Stansbery worked in Africa between 2006 and 2017 first as the Early Childhood Development Program Director at Save the Children USA before moving to UNICEF where he served as ECD Advisor for East and Southern Africa. During his time with Save the Children USA, he was a co-Coordinator of one of the ECD networks in Africa. Dr Pablo Stansbery was involved at various leadership levels during the subsistence of the Working Group of Early Childhood Development (WGECD). As an ECD expert working in Africa he had access to various stakeholders, documents and conversations on advancing ECD in Africa. At UNICEF he was also providing ECD leadership and guidance to many African countries and this positioning of Dr Stansbery within the, African continent, ECD network and ECD conferences led to him being identified as an interview participant for this research.

## **6. Dr Emily Vargas-Baron**

Dr. Emily Vargas-Barón directs the RISE Institute, a global authority on policy, research and training for early childhood development (ECD) and early childhood intervention (ECI). She has advised over 35 countries on national ECD and ECI policy planning and research. Deeply dedicated to child and family development in Africa, she has contributed to ECD policy and/or programme development in Algeria, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Egypt, Kenya, Lesotho, Malawi, Mauritania, Senegal, SA, Tanzania, Tunisia, and Uganda. Previously, Dr Vargas-Baron was the Deputy Assistant

Administrator for education in USAID, supporting education, early childhood development programmes, telecommunications, and international training in 80 nations. Dr Vargas-Baron was a Steering Committee member for the Working Group on ECD, served as a consultant for the ADEA WGECD and had knowledge and information relating to ECD policy processes in Africa. She also served as a consultant for Save the Children USA when it was heading the WGECD Secretariat and one of her main roles was to organize the regional 2009 ECD Conference. Her participation in this research provided valuable insights in addressing my research questions.

#### **7. Dr Judith Evans**

Dr Judith Evans worked as Director of the Department of Programme Documentation and Communication at the Bernard van Leer Foundation, as the Director of the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development, Programme Officer with the Aga Khan Foundation, and Vice-President of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation. These organizations had a massive bearing on ECD in Africa between 1990 and 2009, the focus period of my research. Dr Judith Evans was the lead author on an early childhood programming manual, *Early Childhood Counts* that provides a framework for the development of early childhood programmes in the Majority World. She was also an editor of the Consultative Group Journal. Along with Dr Alan Pence and Dr Marito Garcia she also wrote edited a book titled *Africa's Future, Africa's Challenge: Early Childhood Care and Development in sub Saharan Africa*, published by the World Bank (2008). For my research Dr Evans was an important participant as she provided some key insights on ECD network formation based on her leadership role at the organizations highlighted above. Her participation provided additional insights as an ECD expert who consulted widely in Africa between 1990 and 2009 and as one of the lead faculty members of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) that was housed at the University of Victoria.

ECDVU itself as my research revealed, would play a pivotal role in shaping ECD policy work in Africa in the mid-2000 time period.

#### **8. Dr Alan Pence**

Dr Alan Pence, a Canadian, was invited by UNICEF in the mid-1990s to support their Majority World efforts to promote regional capacity for ECD. He organized a series of multi-week ECD Institutes which over time focused primarily on Africa. Planning for one such Institute, in cooperation with the World Bank, led to the launch of an African ECD Conference series (1999, 2002, 2005, 2009) and funding (in 2000) to develop the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), an online and face-to-face graduate degree program based out of the University of Victoria. In addition to the professional capacity promotion work of the ECDVU, Dr Pence also worked to promote African Scholarly and Institutional (AS&I) capacity in ECD and child development, hosting SSA-wide and regional workshops in support of African-led research.

As I alluded to above, my research participant pool was very small due to the historical nature of my research which meant that only a few specific people could speak on certain events. Given the small numbers, participants' words could potentially be recognized and therefore I had to work sensitively to include their data in this research. In the section below, I outline the two research methods that I employed in this research study, namely document analysis and semi-structured interviews.

#### **Semi-structured Interviews**

In this research I was interested in hearing the voices of the participants that had a lived experience of the ECD networks and conferences. Whilst document analysis was my primary method for data collection, interviews brought 'life' to my research. I was able to ask questions on events and issues that been summarised in one sentence or a short paragraph in

the documents I had analysed. Carr (1987) argued that the past an educational researcher is examining is not a dead past, but a past which in some sense is still living in the present. I learnt throughout the interview process that history is not dry but that there are stories, tensions and politics that influence actions carried out in the course of implementing programs for the ECD networks and conferences. To assist in unpacking the past, semi-structured interviews were used to have a conversation with the participants. Josselson (2013) posited that the use of interviews allows the researcher to acquire information beyond which they already know. Ritchie (2014) defined semi-structured interviews as a qualitative method of collecting and preserving unrecorded information about the past, creating a primary resource of information. Ritchie further argued that semi-structured interviews are based on personal interviewing that is designed to understand the meanings, interpretations and subjective experiences of research participants.

In supporting the use of semi-structured interviews, Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2010) argued that the semi structured interview is a very unique interview situation because the process of storytelling on which it is based is distinct. They further highlighted that “individuals have unique and important knowledge about the world that is ascertainable and that can be shared through verbal communication” (p. 94). Seidman (2006) argued that the purpose of semi structured interviews “is not to get answers to questions, nor to test hypotheses [...] at the root of interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience and an interest in other individuals’ stories because they are of worth” (p.9).

Semi-structured interviews were pertinent in this research because they helped to ensure that the data collected was comprehensive and were an accurate interpretation since the participants were able to provide further explanations to their answers as well as give me a chance to rephrase, redirect or provide a prompting if required as part of facilitating the conversation. I had some general sets of questions and then there would be some variation

(Lichtman, 2013) in some of the questions depending on the timeline and particular event that each participant had been involved in. Throughout the interview process however, I made sure that there would be flexibility on how I was asking questions making sure that almost similar questions would follow each other so that the participant would use their memory to recall similar events. During the interviews, when I asked one question, the participants would reminisce not only about their involvement but also on the involvement of other actors which would enlighten my knowledge base but also made me appreciate the roles that other people had played in shaping up the ECD networks and conferences.

I developed the interview questions using my main research study questions as the principle guide. I was also using the information that I had gleaned from the documents analysed, to zero in on specific events and time periods that would inform the historical narration of the findings. Through ZOOM, I conducted five semi-structured interviews which were audio and video recorded. Each semi-structured interview lasted 60 minutes and was designed as a conversation with the participants on a set of questions that assisted the researcher by providing additional contextual information on the ECD networks and conferences and the specific role that the participants played in shaping the conferences or networks. Two participants, due to time constraints on their end, as well as inability to access stable internet connections, requested that I send them the questions through email, and they responded to the questions on paper. These participants also responded to follow up questions that arose out of the analysis of their written responses. I was impressed by how all the participants I had identified managed to recall with a certain degree of specificity on the roles they had played in the networks and conferences. Some of the information relating to key moments in history corroborated what I had discovered in the documents I had analysed.

In order to maintain the momentum and ensure that I had in my memory the information that had been shared with me, the transcription process began immediately after

each interview. This also assisted me not to have any backlog of interviews that would need transcription. Lo Iacono, Symonds and Brown (2016) posited that during the process of transcription, the researcher can engage with the data and almost relive those moments of interaction and remember the personality and the emotions of the participants.

As the participants shared their stories with me, I observed the passion that these participants exuded as they recalled certain events as well as their role in those events. Following the process of transcription, I shared the transcribed interviews with the participants to validate the accuracy of the information I collected. This process is known as member checking and was carried out in order to ensure that I had adequately captured the information shared. Creswell and Miller (2000) argued that member checking consists of taking data and interpretations back to the participants in the study so that they can confirm the credibility of the information and narrative account. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), member checking is a crucial technique for establishing credibility. The participants were also keen to receive these transcripts because they also were interested in making sure that they had provided the requisite information concerning the networks and conferences.

The semi-structured interview was conducted using ZOOM. This choice of medium was necessitated by the fact that ZOOM provided an opportunity to record the semi-structured interview as well as a video calling function, which allowed the researcher to also benefit from non-verbal cues that may have presented themselves during the interview. According to Hesse-Biber and Griffin (2012) “tone of voice, and gestures, all provide a certain richness to qualitative data” (p. 56). In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, ZOOM became an invaluable technology to use for this research process because of the physical distancing required in dealing with the pandemic. When using technologies according to Deakin and Wakefield (2013) “the place of the interview becomes much more fluid” (p. 7).

The use of ZOOM therefore provided such an invaluable support to the research since I was able to involve participants wherever they were in the world.

### **Qualitative Data Analysis**

Qualitative research encompasses a variety of data collection and analysis methods geared towards the provision of contextual descriptions and interpretations of social phenomenon (Holloway & Galvin, 2017). Nieuwenhuis (2007) posited that “qualitative data analysis tends to be an ongoing iterative process, implying that data collection, processing, analysis and reporting are intertwined, and not necessarily a successive process” (p. 99).

I had to make sense of the data that I was collecting so that it could be meaningful when I began writing my dissertation. Qualitative data analysis was utilized in this research as a process that involved the reduction and making sense of the data collected. The data that I had collected during this research was vast especially considering the various data sources I have already alluded to. In this research, data was also collected from different participants through interviews, rendering the data both vast and varied. The intention of my data analysis was to enhance the chances of better answering my research questions and therefore the process of data analysis informed the findings of this research.

A concurrent process of analyzing the data occurred when document analysis of the information on networks and conferences was being carried out as highlighted above. The analysis of the data was supported through the in-depth reading of the documents, summarizing key points that emerged, identifying contextual information that needed interpretation and synthesizing my observations with what would have emerged from the interview transcripts.

Whilst Bryman (2012) opined that with semi-structured interviews there is the probability that the participants will deviate from the specified line of questioning,

compromise reliability and objectivity, I had to recognise objectivity and reliability. Carr (1951) argued that “objectivity is about the quality of analysis and must begin with the frank recognition of subjectivity” (p. 24). Once historical variability and values have been clarified, educational researchers can achieve objectivity to the extent that they are able to 'distinguish between the significant and the accidental' among the facts and relate this abstraction to the aim of the investigation (p.160). While it is noted that qualitative data analysis may be influenced by the worldview of the researcher and thus giving it a documented subjective status, Cohen and Manion (2000) noted that participants in a study play an active role in the generation and revelation of key themes.

During this research, my challenge was how to analyze data that was coming from the many documents and the thousands of pages that I was combing through. At the same time, I had to develop a historical outline that would ensure that the events and activities that influenced them were recorded as clearly and narrated as accurately as possible. Pope *et al.*, (2000) noted that there are various approaches that can be utilized to analyze qualitative data which include framework analysis approach wherein a pre-determined framework that is reflective of the aims and objectives is used. While there are multiple ways of analyzing qualitative data, my choice was to use the more exploratory ‘thematic analysis approach’ (Attride-Sterling, 2001). Thematic analysis allowed for new impressions to be acknowledged and to lead the interpretation of data in, often new directions.

## **Organizing the Data**

In order to ensure that I had managed to transcribe the information from the interviews correctly, I would read the transcribed interview whilst playing the audio to make sure that each word had been captured correctly. I would note where the audio was inaudible so that I could get the correct information during the member checking process. Where there were minor changes to be made, I would make them, being careful not to alter the meaning and information that was being shared. Once each transcription had been returned by the participant with either tracked changes or a confirmation of the conversation, I would then print hardcopies of these transcriptions and carry out another read through of the transcript and this time I would make short notes highlighting issues that I was observing, and these would be flagged for my next level of analysis.

I labelled each computer folder containing the audio, video and transcription with the date of interview and the initials of the participant. These files would then be stored in a specific location on my computer for easy retrieval when analyzing the data. I would also store the printed and marked up transcriptions in a filing drawer in my home office.

## **Category Construction**

The first stage of my data analysis was to make myself familiar with the data collected in its entirety (Merriam, 2002). I followed the notion by Bowen (2009) who recommended analysis that “excludes the quantification typical of conventional mass media content analysis but rather entails a first pass document review, in which meaningful and relevant passages of text or data are identified” (p. 32). Corbin and Strauss (2008) argued that the researcher should be able to demonstrate the capacity to identify the crucial information and be able to separate it from that which is not useful. A review of the data from the transcripts and from

the documents helped me carry out this analytical process and with it, develop a historical outline in response to my research questions.

During document analysis, I developed an excel spreadsheet from which I would make notes, referencing the documents I was analysing, the pertinent issues that were coming out of them and the possible follow up questions I would have for my interview participants. For my first level analysis of the interview transcripts, I printed off all my interview transcripts. As I read through them, I began to colour-code some themes that would emerge. I developed a descriptive list that contained the following categories: historical context, leadership, network funders, ECD policy, conference funders, networks and conferences. These became my first cut categories for my analysis which I then used as I delved deeper into the transcripts and documents I had for analysis. This entailed reading the transcripts of my interviews and reading textual content that I would now place into these categories. As this process was taking place, I continued making notes of relevant issues that came to mind and these influenced the interpretation and description of the data being analyzed.

Vaismoradi *et al.*, (2019) posited that description and interpretation are salient features of thematic analysis and this is mainly suitable for work directed towards a more elevated level of description and not just abstract interpretation. At this stage I was now getting into deeper descriptions of the information I was coming across. Miles & Huberman (1994) posited that the process of qualitative content analysis starts early on in data collection and this helps in the iterative nature of the process that requires movement back and forth in the process of concept development and adjustments as well as data collection. Through content analysis, which is the process by which information is organized into categories that are related to the research questions, I was able to sift through the information for analysis. I then carried out a thematic analysis which is a process, according to Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) that addresses pattern recognition within the data, enabling the themes that emerge to

become categories for data analysis. Inductive and deductive reasoning in qualitative research as posited by Bloomberg and Voolpe (2015) supported this part of my data analysis process as I made sense of the data.

As I worked my way through the transcripts during my first level analysis, I would also make notes on the passages of the transcripts themselves and this would allow me to revisit certain sections when I pursued a deeper level analysis. These notes would also be reference points for me when I was cross checking the information from the documents I had reviewed, with what was now coming through the transcripts. As I was working through this process, I was then trying to identify how the different categories were related to my research questions and if there was any causal links between them. This would not only help me to respond to my research questions but also assisted me in identifying if there were possible inferences to be drawn out of the data. This process, according to Miles and Huberman (1998) allowed me to start putting “disparate pieces into a more inclusive and meaningful whole” (p. 58).

Another interesting but challenging task during my data analysis was how to make a distinction between different views amongst my interview participants. This was particularly tricky when discussing particular events and how participants had different versions of what occurred in them. An event would have been experienced by participants at the same time but with differing perspectives as to why certain things had happened the way they did. In these circumstances I would respect and allow each voice to be expressed in these transcripts as part of my discovery of information process. I would write some notes in my computer making reflections around these specific issues noting that Miles and Huberman (1994) had opined that “writing, in short, does not come after analysis; it is analysis, happening as the writer thinks through the meaning of the data in the display. Writing is thinking, not the report of thought” (p. 101). The process of writing these notes on my computer enabled me to think

through what was emerging from the data, drawing on the transcripts, documents reviewed and also on my excel spreadsheet where I had populated information and themes I was drawing from the data. This process assisted me in then creating an outline which informed my writing of the findings.

Yin (2011) argued that a researcher has to think of how they want to present the results of their study. Recognizing this aspect, I had to reflect on how the research findings would be presented in my dissertation and this was a crucial aspect of my category construction. The categories I developed brought more focus to my research and provided a baseline response to my three main research questions. When I had reviewed all my data I then subsequently categorized my data based on the following: historical context of ECD Networks in Africa; historical context of ECD conferences in Africa; leadership of both conferences and networks; funding of ECD conferences and networks; purposes and goals of both networks and conferences and lastly ECD Policy development in Africa. These categories then shaped the way I wrote my research findings.

I considered that from the information that I was getting from the document analysis and also from the interview transcripts, it would be prudent to develop a historical outline of the ECD Networks and African International ECD conferences. This would support the development of a historical narration and story that would respond to my main research questions. This history would allow current and future leaders in ECD on the African continent and beyond to know and follow the sequence of events that led to the creation of ECD Networks as well as the ECD conference series that was identified in this research. As I alluded to earlier, this is information that has not existed previously and thus a narration of this history would be prudent.

## **Ethical Considerations**

Ethics is central to data collection methods in every piece of research (King & Horrocks 2010; Cohen *et al.*, 2007), including in interviews carried out using ZOOM. As highlighted earlier in this dissertation, prior to beginning this research, I prepared and submitted an ethics application outlining this research to the University of Victoria Office of Research Services and Human Research Ethics Board. As I designed my research, I did not anticipate any harm or negative consequences that would befall the participants by virtue of their participation in this study. I worked to address potential harm that I might not have been aware of by having participants review the interview material I intended to use.

It was important to ensure that the participants had informed consent. My intention was to model and maintain ethical integrity from my initial connection with the research participants. Since the research involved semi-structured interviews, informed consent was going to be a key aspect of the research. Informed consent implies that the research participants will give the researcher approval to acquire pertinent information and material for the research (Miller & Bell, 2002). As a researcher, I ensured that the participants had a chance to pre-read the consent form and I requested them to provide their consent prior to the actual interview (*Appendix 2*). Whitley and Kite (2013) suggested that the principle of informed consent requires all participants to receive prior knowledge and understanding of the study before deciding whether to participate.

In this regard, I developed and shared with the research participants a letter of invitation (*Appendix 2*) containing the background and nature of my research, copies of my research ethics approval and requested for their written informed consent to participate in my research. The participants all consented to their participation in this research and indicated on the consent forms whether they approved or disapproved the use of their real identities in my dissertation. The sample size of this research was small due to its historical nature and that

only a few people remained alive and could speak authoritatively about the African ECD networks and African ECD conferences for the period between 1990 and 2008. The participants identified for the research occupied very unique positions within the ECD Networks and or the ECD conferences and as highlighted earlier, were identified by virtue of them being the few that were involved with specific aspects of the networks and conferences.

I therefore decided to use direct quotes that were attributed directly to them throughout the narration of the findings of this research so that their voices are included. As a historical narration of events between 1990 and 2009, this was done so as to bring meaning to the research by allowing the voices of these participants to be shown as well as have a historical record of what they actually said. In some cases, I had to integrate the information I learned from the participants into the body of my research findings to ensure that the story I was developing for the ECD Networks, Conferences and Policy was well informed by their experiences. This was an integral part of this research process, as identified in the introductory section of this dissertation, the need to ensure that there is a documented historical record of views by the remaining key influencers of these ECD conferences and ECD networks. These views and narrations on these two phenomena never existed prior to this research.

I also informed the participants that the interviews will be video and audio recorded and that this recording could be stopped at any time and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. The participants also were provided with an opportunity to choose the day and time of their interview. To meet confidentiality, I saved all the recordings and transcriptions on a password protected computer that only I as the researcher had access to. As narrated earlier, two participants opted to respond to written questions because of access to internet as well as an appropriate time to sit down for an interview. These written responses were received and became part of the documents that were analysed for this research. I also considered the issue of power over. The participants were key leaders in the ECD sector in

Africa and globally and thus I had to consider if their power could be intimidating to me as a researcher. Conversely, I also had to consider whether the participants would be intimidated by a researcher who would be asking specific and direct questions about their involvement. For potential issues in both instances, the participants were told that they could refuse to continue participating in the interviews. I did not face a problem regarding this aspect and managed to conduct all the interviews without any challenge.

### **Chapter Summary**

In chapter 3, I have described how the qualitative research methodology and historical narration approach was used to explore the main research questions for this study. I further described in detail the procedures undertaken in identifying research participants, the procedures taken during the data analysis and writing of findings. Finally I discussed the ethical considerations, describing informed consent and considerations made on potential power issues that could have potentially arisen during the interview process. In the next chapter I share the findings on this research.

## CHAPTER 4: Research Findings

### Context Description

I began this dissertation by providing an outline in Chapter 1 of why the history of African ECD networks and African International ECD conferences is important. This study has looked at SSA and the events that happened within the ECD sector between 1990 and 2009. The study has involved collecting and analyzing documents from the ECD Networks as well as having interviews with key participants who were involved in establishing these networks. The document analysis included a review and analysis of personal email correspondence made between various key participants in the ECD Networks; a review of conference presentations; a review of ECD network reports; ECD network constitutions; ECD network proposals; ECD conference reports, and ECD conference presentation proposals among others.

In carrying out my document analysis, I focused on who produced the documents, why they were produced, who the intended audience of these documents was and what were the main contents of these documents. In doing this kind of analysis I wanted to identify how the conference and network documents represented a repository of the information related to the phenomena I was studying. *Appendix 3* shows some of the documents from the African ECD Networks that were analyzed. The type of documents that have been listed in the appendix are those whose status is listed as public and I have not included those documents that were shared with me by research participants and were considered confidential and privileged material.

In relation to the African International ECD conferences, the study also involved collecting and analyzing documents from the conferences such as conference presentations, conference reports, observer notes from plenary sessions and workshops, minutes of planning meetings and also personal correspondence between various participants. This

information managed to yield rich data that was supported by additional information from semi-structured interviews. Combined, these methods and sources of data form the basis of data for this dissertation. *Appendix 3* shows some of the documents from the ECD conferences that were analyzed. Having set the context and situated the research within the confines of African ECD networks and African International ECD conferences established between 1990 and 2009, the next section outlines the findings.

### **Category Development**

In this research study I explored the history and journey of the major ECD networks and the African international ECD conferences that were held in the SSA region between 1990 and 2009. I was keen to have the voices of the remaining doyens who had been involved in founding and leading these networks recorded. In my introductory chapter, I submitted that the absence of a comprehensive historical record of these networks and conferences was very concerning to me, especially in light of the emerging generation of ECD scholars and practitioners who do not have an awareness of or access to this information. It was unfortunate to also realize that death was robbing the continent of a certain generation of ECD practitioners and academics before their stories have been collected for posterity. The collection of the stories and facts from the interview participants was very important as it assisted in providing a basis from which these findings have been drawn.

Through the stories that were shared and events that were narrated by the participants, I became convinced that the recording of these memories was important. During these interviews, the significance of this research on the history of the African ECD Networks and ECD Conferences really dawned on me. The information that had not been previously available was now coming to the fore, and I was concerned if I was going to be able to adequately capture and represent these voices and stories within the body of my research

findings. I was aware of what had been missing prior to my research and my motivation in implementing this research. I had to present the data in a manner that would be easy for readers to follow.

The findings of this research now shared in this chapter address the concern of having a gap in historical knowledge and information on the networks and the conferences. As a recap, my two research methods, document analysis and semi-structured interviews assisted me in answering my research questions which were as follow:

- 1. What were the main early childhood education, care, and development networks and conferences established in sub Saharan Africa from 1990-2009?**
- 2. What were their purposes and goals? and,**
- 3. To what extent have these network and conferences influenced current early childhood development policy in sub Saharan Africa?**

In the context of responding to my research questions, I then combed the data I had gathered from the document collection and the interviews, identifying some categories through which I could present my findings. The data I collected through the document analysis and the interviews was very informative and responded to the research questions that I had set out. However, with this large data set, I had to work within the scope of my categories in order to ensure that I remained focused on the central aspects of my research. Using the categories that I developed as I outlined in Chapter 3, I began developing a historical narration of the findings. The findings set out below are narrated using three broad categories.

In the first category, I tell the story of the ECD Networks. I outline who was involved in these networks, the value of these networks, the key funders and players as well as their work on ECD policy development. The second category helps me to narrate the story of ECD Conferences starting first with how the conferences were conceived, organized, who the key

players and decision makers were as well as the outcomes of these conferences. I also look at some of the influences from funders and other stakeholders. Through the third category I then tell the story of ECD Policy development and implementation in Africa with particular foci on the role of the ECD networks and ECD conferences. This is in line with responding to my third research question which was looking at the extent to which these networks and conferences had influenced current ECD policy development in Africa.

### **Overview of findings**

After having analysed hundreds of documents and conducted my interviews, I now had a lot of data and knowledge that I did not have prior to doing this research. I had now gathered information that could assist me in responding to the research questions I had set out.

Firstly, through this research I discovered that two major, regional ECD Networks were in operation during the period between 1990 and 2009. The Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) was established in 1993 and the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) was founded in 1994 (UNESCO BRENDA, 2008). As I discovered this information through my document analysis and semi-structured interviews, I had questions as to why two African regional ECD networks would be established around the same time. Along with this I also began to develop hypotheses on why these two networks would operate side by side for a number of years before merging into one.

Secondly, my research revealed that Africa hosted four international ECD conferences in the period between 1999 and 2009 to tackle some of the critical early childhood development challenges that were being faced by children on the continent. I learned that the ‘international’ was primarily referencing international as in *within* Africa and not a global conference. These conferences, associated in some ways with the African ECD networks, were held in: Kampala, Uganda (1999); Asmara, Eritrea (2002); Accra, Ghana (2005); and

Dakar, Senegal (2009). The conferences and networks and their influences on policy development and implementation in the SSA region shall be discussed in greater detail as I outline the results of my research. I start first by sharing the findings in my first category, which were the early childhood development networks.

### **Category 1 - Background to African Early Childhood Development (ECD) Networks**

Having worked with other colleagues on the African continent to establish the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) in 2015, I thought I had an idea of the kind of information that was out there concerning ECD networks. I knew that there had been an ECD network that had existed on the African continent between 2009 and 2011 but did not have much information on it. I would pester some of my senior colleagues on the small team that was working to establish the AfECN, asking them about the previous network, what work it had done, who had led it and what the outcomes of the work were. Sadly, they could only recall scant information as their recollections were faint. One colleague told me about a country network, the Tanzania ECD Network that he had worked for as an Executive Director. This was at a country-level and not a continent-wide network. Whilst his information was important for my learning, as I had also established a country ECD network in Zimbabwe, I concluded that there was not enough information on what other Africa-wide ECD networks had done before. This, coupled with the absence of websites or historical repositories containing ECD network information, did not give me much hope of securing more information that would even help us as we navigated the path towards launching AfECN in 2015.

Four years later, as I carried out this research, I was astounded by the information I was collecting. I had not been aware of this information in 2015, I had not seen some of the

treasure troves of documents that I now had access to through individuals that had safeguarded and maintained records of the previous ECD Networks and conferences.

I was fortunate now as I did my research, that these research participants had granted me access to not only Dropbox files with hundreds of documents but in one case, entire boxes of hardcopy files relating to the ECD networks and ECD conferences I was investigating. This taught me an important lesson regarding the need for documentation and archiving. I learned that it was important to document and maintain records of events or the work that one is involved in so that others can learn from this information. When I was going through the documents contained in the Dropbox file that had been shared with me by one participant, I could not help but to also pause and go into my own filing system in my computer to check whether I had curated my own files in a sequential manner. Here I was, doing research on one aspect but suddenly also finding myself moving into the present, thinking about how my actions and in this case, saving documents and labelling them properly would also be important for future generations of scholars. I paused my research for a few hours as I went into my files, first for the non-profit Nhaka Foundation which I had founded in 2008 and then later the Zimbabwe Network of ECD Actors which I had founded in 2012. I started putting files and documents in order, labelling them thematically and by year. I then finally went to my folders with information on the Africa ECD Network founded in 2015, archiving and saving information using the same process.

Having removed some pangs of guilt associated with my own shabby filing system, I resumed my research. I realized and learned that if I had been more intentional and devoted more time in analyzing the history of previous continental ECD networks, there were certain decisions that may have been made differently within the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) formation. My collection and analysis of historical information was now providing

some perspectives on how things could have been done differently. More-so, I began to appreciate that history can provide lessons on how to do or not to do certain things.

The data collection process of the research revealed that there were organizations that were involved as catalysts in the establishment of ECD networks in Africa. The document analysis had shown that two organizations in particular had influenced the formation of ECD Networks on the African continent. The Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) feature prominently in the work of the two main ECD networks that were identified in Africa. As I dug deeper through analytical work on these two organizations as well as on the two networks, I observed that there was no way I could narrate the story of the African networks without first addressing how ADEA and the CG-ECCD influenced the establishment of ECD networks. This research also revealed that these organizations had a significant impact on the early childhood development sector in the SSA region as they were involved in a range of activities within the education sector broadly and in early childhood development specifically. The histories of these organizations were explored as part of this research. In the following section, I provide a historical narration of their involvement in the formation of the ECD networks and situate them in the context of ECD networks in Africa.

### **Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA)**

As an educational researcher, in order to understand certain facets of information I had to look beyond what was just in front of me and dig deeper so that I could have a more informed and richer narration of events. Going back to the mid 1980s, I established that the ADEA had started off being known as the Donors for African Education (DAE) group in 1988. This group had been established following initiatives by the World Bank which had wanted to establish a coordinating mechanism for development agencies that were supporting education in Africa (ADEA, Unpublished Pamphlet, 2009). The initial mandate of the Donors

for African Education DAE was drawn from the recommendations of a World Bank study that had been carried out in 1988 titled “*Education in sub Saharan Africa-Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization and Expansion*”. Within this World Bank study report, I noted that the World Bank had opined that without education, development would not occur. The key role of education in the development process was the reason why the World Bank was putting so much emphasis on supporting educational expansion and improvement in SSA (World Bank, 1988). The World Bank was therefore motivated by the need to advance education as a conduit for development in Africa but also as a rationale for lending. In launching the report of the study, the president of the World Bank at that time, Barber Conable, noted that the study would guide the lending and technical assistance to the SSA region. In providing a clarion call for donors to come together, the president of the World Bank suggested that the study should provide a common ground for donors to expand their assistance to education in Africa and to increase the effectiveness of international assistance.

With this tone and framework set, the DAE group was then established and managed by the Africa Region Human Development Department of the World Bank. The DAE group then added African ministers of education as a way of expanding the influence of the group and in 1992 an independent secretariat was established in Paris, France. This Secretariat was housed at the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO (ADEA Unpublished Pamphlet, 2009). In 1995, the Donors for African Education (DAE) group changed its name to the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) as a way of reflecting the partnership between ministers of education and the development agencies. In 2008, the Secretariat of ADEA was then moved from Paris to the African Development Bank in Tunisia as a way of deepening the African roots of the organization (ADEA, Unpublished Pamphlet, 2009b).

ADEA then metamorphosed into a network of organizations that brought together African education ministries and their technical and external partners who were engaged in education policy making, promoting dialogue, and being a catalyst for education reform in Africa. Currently, the Association for Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) has now become recognized as a high-level partnership between African Ministries of Education and their external partners which include countries such as the Netherlands and Finland as well as international or regional NGOs or networks. The main focus of these organizations collectively has been to support ADEA and to contribute to the development of education in Africa through knowledge building and sharing and enhanced partnership and collaboration (ADEA website, n.d.).

As part of its journey, the ADEA established and worked through a structure of ten thematic working groups that included inter alia, Working Group on Female Participation (WGFP), Working Group on Books and Learning Materials (WGBLM), Working Group on Education Statistics (WGES), and the Working Group on Higher Education (WGHE). These working groups played a key role in the implementation of the strategy of ADEA and undertook exploratory work designed to examine ways of improving their specific domains. The working groups did this through carrying out research, networking, advocacy and capacity building activities. These groups and their work were important to analyse because in 1994, one ECD network would emerge out of the Working Group on Female Participation (WGFP), as will be revealed later in this chapter on the research findings.

In addition to this structure, ADEA also hosted what were called ADEA Biennales which later becoming Triennales. These were forums for African Ministers of Education and their funding partners held every two years and then every three years, to share knowledge and information on education issues in Africa (WGECD, 2003). The ADEA meetings were utilized as opportunities for making contacts, building networks and sharing knowledge and

experiences. In order to show the meetings that were held and the main themes, the ADEA Biennales held between 1993 and 2008 can be found as *Appendix 5*.

It is through this historical journey of the involvement of the World Bank that I began to learn about the journey of the ECD networks. Right from the beginning of my first level document analysis I could see that the World Bank had a major influence on the education sector in Africa. The World Bank had been keen on supporting countries in SSA to develop strong education systems that would help to grow economies and alleviate poverty. The World Bank (1988) had argued that “greater investment in education can, at this time in Africa's history, be expected to yield broad economic benefits. These benefits include higher incomes and lower fertility” (p. 6). This statement provided me an insight into part of the rationale that the World Bank was using in its decisions to invest and fund education in Africa. I could also not ignore the financial opportunities for the World Bank that would emerge out of this interest. I noted how the World Bank president had opined that the study, carried out in 1987, would be used to inform the Bank’s lending to African countries. I wondered, too, how much of this influence by the Bank extended to other multi-lateral institutions as well as other, global networks such as the one I discuss next.

### **The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD)**

As I indicated in Chapter 3, I worked through troves of documents, tagging and filing appropriately those that had anything to do with ECD networks in Africa between 1990 and 2009. I had the sole aim of understanding the history of ECD networks in Africa. What I had not prepared myself for was that when analysing one particular aspect, I would be taken down a “rabbit hole” that would lead me to discover information that I never knew was connected. In many instances I would have what I would call my ‘aha moment’ where information I had from prior knowledge would make sense in the context of a document I was reading.

One such case was my discovery of the extent of involvement in African ECD networks of another organization that I had known. I came across the Consultative Group for Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) during my review of the documents related to the background on African ECD networks. I began to analyse documents and information that had been developed by the CG-ECCD and my interest was aroused as I noted that this group had been involved in the establishment of an African ECD network. I saw that the CG-ECCD had been involved in creating an African regional ECD network in 1993. Whilst this might have been an obvious starting point for my research, I was curious to know how and why this organization had gotten to support the establishment of the network in Africa. I had to carry out further research to understand how the CG-ECCD itself had been founded, what was its mission and what were the objectives. The answers to these queries would help provide a clearer understanding of their interest and involvement in ECD in Africa.

In order to have a better understanding of its history and involvement, I then identified Dr Judith Evans as an interview participant, whose involvement I will discuss later. She had served as the Executive Director at the CG-ECCD in 1993, a period when the first of the two ECD networks began to emerge. First, however, I had to situate the history of the Consultative Group for Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) before identifying the individuals and their roles in the network formation. Myers and Evans (2009) opined that the decision to form a “Consultative Group” had been taken at an October 1984 meeting attended by participants from ten institutions. These institutions were the Ford Foundation, BvLF, International Development and Research Center (IDRC), United States Agency for International Development (USAID), UNICEF, UNESCO, The Carnegie Corporation, the World Bank, the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the WHO.

I was not surprised to see the World Bank listed as one of the institutions at these meetings because the various documents I had read prior to this one all showed that the World Bank was involved in various education sector-related activities. This involvement in Africa was primarily anchored on the report the World Bank had published in 1988 that opined that without education, development in Africa would not occur. My curiosity was now heightened because I was now concerned that the Bank itself might have been advancing an agenda or using its hegemonic power to influence how civic society and governments implemented education related programs. This concern is unpacked further in my discussion of these findings in Chapter 5.

Myers and Evans (2009) posited that when the CG-ECCD was formed,

funding for Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) within the international community was sparse. Among those present at the October 1984 meeting only the Bernard van Leer Foundation was heavily vested in early childhood development in Africa (p. 9).

This indicated to me that the investments and support to the ECD sector in Africa had not yet grown before 1990, when the African continent ratified the CRC as well as the Africa Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). These two, as outlined in Chapter 2, would lead to an acceleration of funding and programming in ECD in Africa from 1990 going forward.

In further unpacking the background of the CG-ECCD I noted that in its formation the group had developed for itself various focus areas. I identified through documents analyzed that the CG-ECCD intended to facilitate global communication and dissemination of information about programmes and activities on early childhood care and development. The CG-ECCD also aimed to work on strengthening the knowledge base available for policy formulation, planning and implementation of early childhood activities. With these focus areas in place; I learned that during its formative years (1984-1988) the CG-ECCD received administrative and technical support from the High/Scope organization. Earlier on, in Chapter

2, I narrated that the High/Scope organization itself as early as 1978 (Weikart, 1978) had published the results of their longitudinal studies that had indicated a return on investment whose amounts varied over time. These studies, as I narrated in Chapter 2, were now being used as models for investing in ECD around the world and in Africa. It was interesting for me to observe that High/Scope had also at one time hosted the Consultative Group for Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) which in turn had an impact and influence on one of the African ECD Networks. I wondered then if this was the connection and channel from which Africa had received the reports of these longitudinal studies and had started using these rationale and financial modeling that were not specific to the African context.

As I analysed the documents, I noted the possibility of neo-colonial and neo-imperialistic agendas existing primarily through the manifestation of these ECD investment models and their adoption in countries with different realities. The positioning and location of the CG-ECCD was also interesting because it also gave me an insight into the social networks, professional relationships and interactions that influenced the development of ECD networks in Africa. The proximity of these global networks to powerful organizations such as the World Bank, UNESCO and UNICEF was of interest to me because the ideological base might have been easily influenced. For example, I noted above how the ADEA had been headquartered at the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO in Paris and not in any African country. What was worrying with this arrangement was that the ADEA had been created to support education within the African context. I wondered if there had been no other African institution that would have been ready to host ADEA as opposed to being headquartered in Europe.

Myers and Evans (2009) commented that the coordinating unit of the Consultative Group for Early Childhood Care and Development(CG-ECCD) was physically located within

the UNICEF offices in New York City, USA and that a symbiotic relationship developed between these two organizations because UNICEF:

had no early childhood development program officer at that time and that UNICEF was not, as an organization, receptive to ECCD, as its emphasis was on child survival (p.11).

As I discovered the journey of this organization, I noted that the CG-ECCD at that time had two staff members in its Coordinating Unit and these were Dr Robert Myers and an administrative assistant until December 1987 when this team was joined by Dr Cassie Landers who became a third full time staff member. In 1992, Dr Judith Evans began work with the CG-ECCD Secretariat on a contract basis and in 1993 became the Director of the CG-ECCD. This was a significant name for my research because as the Director of the CG-ECCD and through her professional network, Dr Judith Evans managed to influence the establishment of an ECD Network in Africa. Dr Judith Evans was an interview participant for this research and provided further insight into the role of the CG-ECCD which is outlined later in this chapter.

In 1992, Robert Myers then launched the book titled *The Twelve Who Survive, Strengthening Programmes of Early Childhood Development in the Third World*. Through this publication he gave compelling arguments about the need to have ECD programs that go beyond child survival and focus on enhancing growth and development for children to realize their full potential. This publication, as outlined in Chapter 1, influenced the implementation and provision of ECD services for children in Africa as conversations on the creation of an African ECD Network emerged at the CG-ECCD. Myers and Evans (2009) suggested that the CG-ECCD Secretariat was directly involved in the creation of a working group on ECCD (funded by World Bank, UNICEF and the AKF) to support efforts to create an East African network. They noted that there were several steps in the process of creating the ECDNA. These steps included the ECD Network launch and subsequent development of a proposal for support of the network. Myers and Evans (2009) noted that the proposal was shared with

stakeholders at a meeting held in Uganda between August 18-22, 1995. The Uganda meeting resulted in a revision of the proposal, which was then presented at the Development for African Education (DAE which is now ADEA) meeting. While the proposal was partially accepted by the DAE, the working group on ECCD would become a sub-group within the Forum for African Women Educationists (FAWE) and later becoming a Working Group (Myers & Evans, 2009).

I must admit that whilst my mind during the inception phase of my research had been focused on just identifying the networks that had been established in Africa between 1990 and 2009, I was surprised by how the document analysis led me on another path altogether that provided even greater context and learning. In this case I was now learning about other organizations and individuals who in one way or the other had influenced what I was researching on. As I worked my way through the documents, I was analysing them by looking at who produced them, why they were produced, who the intended audience was, and what impact they had on my research. I observed and learned that history is not linear but that there are many routes that at times are circuitous and unexpected but ultimately influence a phenomenon that is being studied. This was true with the ECD networks as I learned that what I thought was the starting point for the ECD Networks was in fact part of a journey that had begun many years before.

This historical narration of these two organizations, the ADEA and the CG-ECCD provides an entry point into the narration of the history of the two early childhood development networks identified during this research. These networks were both established in the early 1990s, well within my focal period of 1990 and 2009 a key focus period of my research. In Chapter 1, I noted why this period was important to this research. I highlighted that the CRC had been the most quickly ratified convention at the UN in 1990. I also indicated that in the same year, the Organization for African Unity (OAU) also ratified the African

Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACRWC) setting a course for child protection and provision of education through a rights-based approach and later through Education for All as discussed in Chapter 2.

In summary, within the above section I have situated the two organizations that played significant midwifery roles in the birthing of the two ECD Networks in Africa. I also have alluded to the fact that beneath the veneer of institutions and organizations are individuals who make decisions, design systems and processes that facilitate implementation of organizational objectives. In this section above, I have also introduced some individuals in the case of the CG-ECCD, who would become instrumental in the processes of establishing these networks. I now discuss the findings on the first Category, ECD Networks, in detail below.

### **Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA)**

Having gathered information on the organizations that had influenced the establishment of the ECD Networks, I then started analyzing the documents I had tagged for the networks. The first network identified through this analysis was the ECDNA. I established that a UNICEF meeting, led by UNICEF staffers Aklilu Habte and Fay Chung, was held from the 6<sup>th</sup> to the 14<sup>th</sup> of May 1994 at the Hotel Calamar in Mauritius and it set the stage for the formation of the ECDNA through the Calamar Declaration (Dr. Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal E-mail to Dr. Vargas-Baron, March 2010). I was intrigued by the fact that Aklilu Habte was now at UNICEF, having previously directed the development of the World Bank's 1988 study titled "*Education in sub Saharan Africa Policies for Adjustment, Revitalization and Expansion*" that has been discussed in the introductory section of this Chapter. This was one person who had played an influential leadership role in the production of the report that had inspired the formation of the DAE group. In reviewing the documents on the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) I noted that Aklilu Habte was now working with UNICEF to influence the establishment of ECD networks albeit now employed

by another different organization. Utilising my theoretical framework on social networks, I observed the relationships that existed between individuals, groups and organizations (Riketta & Nienber, 2007). These relationships, as I would continually observe through the different documents, would influence the development of the ECD networks either through funding, strategy or ideology. This reaffirmed what I noted in the previous section, that beneath the veil of organizations are people who work to influence certain decisions or implement strategies. It was important for me to identify these individuals by name and have an understanding of their role in the dynamics regarding ECD network formation. These individuals had to be identified because they formed a part of this history that I was collecting and having names would assist in recognizing the roles they played.

The meeting that was held at the Hotel Calamar in Mauritius in 1994, had been part of a series of training sessions held by UNICEF to implement the Education For All (EFA), Jomtien Conference recommendations. This meeting was held under the theme “Parenting, Young Child Development and Quality Learning” and it discussed the need to have an early childhood network that would bring together stakeholders within the early childhood sector to advance issues such as access to early childhood development and sharing of research information (ECDNA, Unpublished Funding Proposal, 1997). In confirming the purpose of the meeting and cementing how the idea of the ECDNA came about, I identified communication from a participant at the meeting who noted that:

we set a special focus on ECD at this meeting and came up with the Calamar Declaration that was named after the hotel where the workshop took place. The Early Childhood Network for Africa was then set up with a dozen countries supporting the Declaration (Dr. Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal E-mail Communication to Dr Alan Pence, November 21, 2013).

In this communication, Dr Cyril Dalais also noted that the UNICEF Regional Office for East and Southern Africa was a major supporter and played an important role in coordinating the work in the region. Furthermore, a team from the Kenya Institute of

Education (KIE), led by Margaret Kabiru, that had earlier developed what was called the Coffee Plantation ECD project with funding from the BvLF, was instrumental in the hosting of the ECDNA at the Kenya Institute of Education (Dr. Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal E-mail Communication to Dr Alan Pence, November 21, 2013).

At this stage I recognized that two major funders, the World Bank and the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF), had been influential in supporting community based or national ECD programs. This was a significant observation in that, compared to the major investment in ECD by countries in the global north; Africa had by the mid-90's still not had major funding support. The African countries themselves were not funding ECD from their own budgets and only the BvLF had played a significant role in the ECD sector first in Kenya in the 1970s. I have already noted in Chapter 2, how the BvLF had been instrumental in supporting the National and District ECD Centres in Kenya.

I have alluded to the notion that behind organizations, there are individuals who play a critical part in moving forward strategies and executing plans. This was also the case with the ECDNA and became apparent as I familiarised myself with the activities and roles of different individuals whose names consistently cropped up during my analysis. In looking at the ECDNA, the documents I analysed indicated that Professor Barnabas Otaala, who was an academic from Uganda, played a significant leadership role within the ECDNA. He initially worked with the ECDNA in Kenya and continued doing so as he moved from Kenya to Botswana and eventually to the University of Namibia where he would play a leading role in what was known as ECD Summer Institutes, discussed below, that were led by Dr Alan Pence from the University of Victoria, Canada. The connections and professional relationships between Dr Cyril Dalais, Dr Alan Pence and Dr Barnabas Otaala, as well as Pence's relationship with Dr Marito Garica from the World Bank, would also become beneficial in the

establishment and running of the ECD conferences that I identified during this research and I will discuss in my second category of ECD conferences.

At the Hotel Calamar meeting in Mauritius in 1994, a small group of donors composed of the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF), the Aga Khan Foundation (AKF) and the Coordinating Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) provided some seed funding to support the development of a funding proposal that would be considered by the DAE group (ECDNA, Unpublished Pamphlet, 1995). Those representing the interim group of donors within the DAE included Dr Kathy Bartlett (AKF), Dr Cyril Dalais (UNICEF), Dr Judith Evans (CG-ECCD) and Dr Nat Colleta (World Bank). Two proposals were subsequently developed, with a first draft circulating in 1995 and a revised version circulating in 1997. The proposals were developed and presented by Margaret Kabiru and Barnabas Otaala. Earlier I indicated how these two individuals had been leading and steering forward the work of the ECDNA as the Executive Secretary and Chair respectively.

As I reviewed the documents, I noted that included in the 1995 funding proposal was a recommendation that the ECDNA would be recognized as a Working Group within the Donors for African Education (DAE) group (Evans, Ilfeld & Hansen, 1998). It was at this stage that I noted some possible conflict and overlap. The DAE had also supported the development of what was called a “Working Group on Early Childhood Development” whose operations mirrored those of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA). The question that arose immediately for me was, why would these two ECD networks operate at the same time? Why were the same funders, supporting two different initiatives? I would later discover some of the issues that were occurring at that time. Firstly, I had to establish the role of the Coordinating Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) in the formation of ECDNA.

## **Forming the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA)**

As I looked at the documents, I observed that The Calamar Declaration (UNESCO BRENDA, 2008), set out the role and function of the ECDNA as an institution to provide support in capacity building of members on early childhood development issues on the African continent. The establishment of the ECDNA was seen as a response to many challenges that were being faced by children in the 1990s. The most pressing problems and challenges at that time, as identified by the network founders, were the following:

1. The lack of a clearly defined vision, policy and strategy for ECD in Africa.
2. The lack of integrated holistic ECD programs and systems for execution of effective programs.
3. The lack of an overall effective ECD networking system in Africa.
4. The marginalization of girls, children with special needs, children in conflict/war situation and children in especially difficult circumstances.
5. The need to prepare children for school and schools for children.
6. The lack of adequate resource and effective utilization of the available resources.
7. The need for systematized and comprehensive parent/community awareness, education and support programs (ECDNA, Unpublished Pamphlet, 1995).

As I was analysing the documents, I was developing questions for my interview participants. The first step in addressing these questions was to identify the participants who could speak about the establishment of the networks authoritatively. I was interested in hearing the stories that led to the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) being formed. Providing an insight into the formation of the ECDNA, Judith Evans recalled:

In the early years of the CG-ECCD we had invited people from various regions to begin to explore the development of regional networks. We initially engaged with Barnabas Otaala, Margaret Kabiru and Anne Njenga who were not motivated or engaged in networking and outreach at the time. Later on, I also became aware of Dr Cyril Dalais' work in building an ECD network, so at the CG-ECCD we worked to support his work rather than to have a separate agenda (Dr. Judith Evans, Former Director of the CG-ECCD, Semi-Structured Interview, and July 2020).

This was one story that was coming from the former director of the Consultative Group for Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD). In making this narration she was indicating that the CG-ECCD had then tried to identify leaders in Africa who could head up this work. However, from her account it seems that the leaders identified were not willing to support that idea. This narration differed however, from the one that I was getting from one of the interview participants, whom had been identified in numerous documents I had analysed as a co-founder of the ECDNA. In responding to questions on what led to the establishment of the network Margaret Kabiru noted that:

Interest in ECD networking could be traced back to 1979 during an international conference held at the Kenya Institute of Education to celebrate the International Year of the Child. The sponsors were UNICEF, UNESCO and the BvLF, both Barnabas Otaala and Cyril Dalais were there (Mrs Margaret Kabiru, Co-Founder ECDNA, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

I recognised in this short response that the participant wanted to identify the ECDNA with these three co-founders who were African. Along with this, I noted that the role of the CG-ECCD was also not acknowledged. I wondered if I had gone too far down in history for

the participant to remember other key players during the network formation process. I also did not want to discount the possibilities of an existence of conflict or actions of resistance by the Africans that had been approached by the CG-ECCD.

I did not want to leave anything to chance; as such, the short narration by the co-founder Margaret Kabiru led me to explore some documents on the Kenyan ECD journey which I have narrated in Chapter 2 because I realized that the networks were part of a broader history and journey of ECD related events on the continent. This history of the involvement of the BvLF in the Coffee Plantation project as well as in the establishment of the district and national early childhood development centers in Kenya has been narrated in Chapter 2.

With that historical information on the Kenyan ECD journey, I then continued to seek an understanding of the foundations of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA). Documents that I analyzed indicated that many meetings were held as the ECDNA was being established and I recognized that there was a lot of interest coming from donors, who wanted to be a part of the network formation process. On one hand I thought that this interest by donors was sparked by the ECDNA being a network that was being established by Africans and thus required their support. On the other hand, I also recognized from my own development experience and work with donors that it is not unusual for funders to “follow each other” when it came to funding particular projects that they are interested in.

A subsequent follow-up of the Hotel Calamar meeting was held from the 2<sup>nd</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October 1994 in Geneva, Switzerland by the DAE’s Working Group on Female Participation. In this meeting, participants further expressed support for the establishment of an early childhood network. In this meeting it was recommended that the network should be open to all African countries and should complement the work that was being done by the African ministers of education and the efforts in ECD programming that were being made by non-governmental organizations (ECDNA, Unpublished Funding Proposal, 1997).

The ECDNA was then formalized in December 1994 with the support of nine countries from the Eastern and Southern African region who had gathered in Mauritius to address integrated programming in ECD utilising the EFA goals, such as: expanding early childhood care and education; provision of free and compulsory primary education for all; and promoting learning and life skills for young people and adults as a guiding strategy. The nine founding member countries of the ECDNA were Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, SA, Mauritius, Ethiopia, Lesotho and Malawi. I observed that these countries were mostly in East and Southern Africa with no representation from West Africa.

The continent-wide problems and challenges that the ECDNA identified above were seen as being answered through an effective ECD network that could facilitate the “sharing of experiences and expertise needed in capacity building, resource mobilization, policy and legal framework provision” (ECDNA, Unpublished Informational Pamphlet, 1995). The establishment of the ECDNA was premised on the strategy that aimed to also fulfil the ECD networking and partnership gap that existed in the Africa region. The network had a strategic focus of building partnerships amongst ECD actors on the continent, creating awareness amongst policy makers and donors as well as mobilising resources for effective implementation of ECD interventions on the continent (ECDNA, Unpublished Funding Proposal, 1997). One of the interview participants, Norma Rudolph, who was a founder member of the ECDNA, reflected:

I first met Cyril Dalais when I was responsible for Primary School and Early Childhood Education in the Gauteng Department of Education. As I remember, the first meeting I attended was in Cape Town in December 1997. Barnabas Ootala chaired the meeting to discuss the *Africa Regional ECD initiative*. In my archive, I have an original document that sets out the objectives of the initiative discussed in that meeting. The network provided an opportunity for dialogue with different early childhood actors from several African countries. Later, the network decided to conduct four case studies in South Africa, Namibia, Swaziland and Uganda to address early childhood in the context of the AIDS pandemic. As far as I know, the only case that was completed, was the South African action research study undertaken by Linda Biersteker and I, *Protecting the rights of orphans and vulnerable children aged 0-8: South*

*African Case Study*, published in 2005 and available on line (Ms Norma Rudolph, Co-Founder ECDNA, Semi-Structured Interview, May 2020).

I established through various documents and communications that the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) existed for five years from 1994 to 1999 when it was then disbanded after:

a study that had been carried by a consultant (Kate Torkington) and the Netherlands government (Dr. Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal E-mail Communication to Dr Alan Pence, November 21, 2013).

During the five-year existence of the ECDNA, the network championed a number of activities that included translation of various manuals and the organization of ECD Summer Institutes in Africa (later termed ECD Seminars). These ECD materials were distributed to countries implementing national ECD programs as well as at the ECD Seminars as materials for the leaders being trained. A co-founder of the ECDNA Cyril Dalais noted that at a UNICEF-sponsored meeting held at the Innocenti Centre in Italy in 1996, a total of US\$80,000 for the ECDNA had been obtained through pledges. These funds would then enable the ECDNA to implement its program of action for the following two years, up to 1998. The program of action included supporting partnership-building activities on the continent, creating awareness amongst ECD policy makers and development workers, and for mobilising more resources for ECD programs in Africa (Dr. Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal E-mail Communication to Dr Alan Pence, November 21, 2013).

The pamphlet shown in Figure 2 below shows some of the ways the ECDNA worked on creating awareness amongst ECD policy makers and other stakeholders. As I reviewed this pamphlet, I mused over how the use of the internet had made communications and sharing information much easier. This pamphlet would have had to be handed out physically either at conferences, meetings or might even be mailed. This would have been a long and costly process when compared to the prevalent and widespread use of online newsletters and social

media platforms. The pamphlet provides an insight into some of the materials that were produced by the ECDNA.



**Figure 2: Front and Back of Pamphlet advertising ECDNA in 1995**

### **Purposes and Goals of Early Childhood Development Network for Africa**

My second research question was focused on unpacking the specific roles of these ECD Networks. Through document analysis and interviews I had to work to identify the main purpose for the establishment of the ECDNA. A document I reviewed noted that the main purpose of the ECDNA was to:

strengthen partnerships with stakeholders and allies with similar concerns in the promotion of ECD in Africa and in this process to gain awareness and clear conceptualisation of ECD issues and to secure resources for more improved and coordinated programming and implementation (ECDNA, Unpublished Funding Proposal, 1997).

With this as the main purpose of ECDNA, the interim secretariat of the network went on to establish some specific goals for the network which included:

1. Building awareness of ECD through collaboration across sectors.
2. Creating an environment where donors and African governments and organizations operated on an equal footing and partnership to address ECD issues

3. Helping key African ECD practitioners and activists to jointly influence regional ECD policy, planning and resource allocation, encourage regional ECD program learning and documentation of experiences and facilitate Africa's participation in international ECD dialogue (ECDNA, Unpublished Draft Constitution, April 1998).

I identified through the document analysis that these were the goals that the ECDNA set out to achieve. Having noted earlier above that there could have been some reluctance by the ECDNA founders to work with the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD). I wondered if this was because of the desire by the founders to remain independent from the influence of funders. I noted that one of the goals of the network was to create an equal footing between donors, governments and organizations within the ECD sector. This could possibly explain why the founders of the network had not shown willingness to partner with the CG-ECCD. I will revisit these aspects in the next chapter where I discuss the findings of this research. To support implementation of ECDNA goals, I asked one of the ECDNA founders, Margaret Kabiru, during an interview for this research, which partners had come on board to support the ECDNA implement its goals. She recalled that:

[The] UNICEF regional offices in West and East/Southern Africa, the Bernard van Leer Foundation, UNESCO, the Aga Khan Foundation and later the World Bank along with government ministries and ECD experts showed interest in having stronger partnerships and joint efforts in addressing ECD needs and reaching all African countries through the ECDNA (Mrs Margaret Kabiru, Co-Founder ECDNA, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

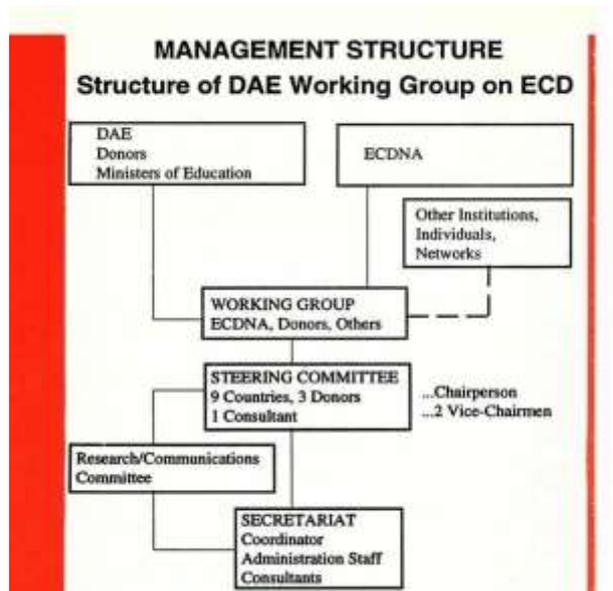
Whilst this response indicated to me that there was broad support from development partners and funders at that time, their expression of interest did not represent to me a strong commitment towards the agenda of the ECDNA. There was no clarity even in follow-up questions I made to interview participants on whether these funders would commit any additional funding support outside the US\$80,000 that had been mobilized by UNICEF as

indicated earlier above. In further discussions, I learned through the interviews that the network carried out a series of events, including contributing to the organization of ECD Seminars and workshops in Southern and Western Africa, translation of booklets, monitoring and evaluation exercises and leading ECD consultations in several of its member countries.

### **Operating Structure of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA)**

It was important for me to have an understanding of the leadership and governance structure of the ECDNA because this would provide an insight into the priorities of the network. As I noted in the opening section of this first category on ECD Networks, behind the veneer of organizational structures there are individuals who are responsible for strategy development and implementation of programs. I wanted to learn what the organizational governance framework for the ECDNA was like and how this framework influenced the strategic direction of the network.

I discovered that in the formative years of this ECD Network, Barnabas Otaala who was then with the University of Namibia chaired the Network with an interim Secretariat established at the Kenya Institute of Education under Margaret Kabiru. These were the two leaders providing leadership and coordination of the ECDNA. As I analysed the troves of documents that had been shared with me by interview participants, I came across some documents that also provided additional information. In terms of funding for the network, I learned that the ECDNA operated with the funding support from several multilateral, bi-lateral and national agencies (Dr. Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal E-mail Communication to Dr Alan Pence, November 21, 2013). I identified an ECDNA pamphlet (shown below) that depicted an organogram showing the envisaged governance structure and relationships between various stakeholders involved in the network.



**Figure 3: ECDNA Management Structure Displayed on ECDNA Pamphlet (1995)**

### **Explanation of Early Childhood Development Network for Africa Organogram**

In analysing this organogram by working through the documents that were available to me, I observed that in the formative years the founders of the ECDNA envisaged a situation where the ECDNA network would work in parallel to the Donors for Africa (DAE) group. Together with the DAE group there would be a Working Group that would bring together the DAE other donors and stakeholders working within the ECD sector in Africa. This Working Group would then have a Steering Committee that would have sub-committees as well as a Secretariat that would be responsible for the day to day activities of the organization (ECDNA, Unpublished Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Cape Town, 1997). The roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders that had been identified within this organogram would later be clearly outlined in a draft constitution that was developed by the ECDNA Secretariat in Nairobi in 1998 as part of recommendations to strengthen the governance structure of the ECDNA (ECDNA, Unpublished Draft Constitution, April 1998).

Whilst the above narration showed an envisaged structure during the forming stage of the network, I wanted to dig deeper and know how this organogram appeared in reality. I traced documents during my analysis and learned that an ECDNA executive committee meeting, held in conjunction with an ECD Workshop in Cape Town in December 1997, discussed the administrative arrangements of the ECDNA Secretariat. According to a report that was authored by the ECDNA, this meeting had been sponsored by the ECDNA, World Bank, ADEA and UNICEF. In addressing administrative arrangements, the meeting participants were told that the Kenya Institute of Education (KIE) had formally agreed to host the ECDNA/ECD Working Group Secretariat for a period of two years beginning October 1997 (ECDNA, Unpublished Workshop Report, 1997).

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) had been signed between the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) and the Kenya Institute for Education (KIE) which specified that the host organization [KIE] would subsidize the office rentals that were to be paid by the ECDNA. Within this arrangement, the Director of the KIE would be a signatory to the ECDNA account to increase transparency and for the accountability of funds. In addition to this, KIE had requested to also be part of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) Executive Committee, a request that was acceded to by the meeting participants. In this December 2007 meeting, the ECDNA Secretariat that was headed by Margaret Kabiru was then tasked to develop a Draft Constitution that would be tabled by the end of January 1998 (ECDNA, Unpublished ECDNA Executive Committee Meeting Minutes, Cape Town, 1-3 December 1997). This would enable the Secretariat to then investigate the possibilities of registering the network in Kenya meaning that the ECDNA would now have an established base in Kenya up to the time that this network might be merged into another network.

Another discussion at this meeting was that the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) Secretariat was requested to begin planning for the 1998 ECD Seminar. To do this the Secretariat had to request the UNICEF Regional office to facilitate the possibility of having the Institute hosted in West Africa with a major focus on Francophone countries. This was important because earlier above I noted how the ECDNA had not had representation from West African countries when it was established. An ECD Seminar in West Africa would assist in addressing this anomaly. Having noticed this discussion on the ECD Seminars, my review of the documents led me down a path of reviewing and understanding the relationship between the ECDNA and the ECD Seminars and how these ultimately led to the ECD conference series.

### **Early Childhood Development Network for Africa and ECD Seminars (termed Summer Institutes at UVic, Canada)**

I was surprised as I traced the history of the ECDNA and discovered its links to the University of Victoria in Canada. This was because I had not expected to find a connection between an African ECD network and an institution of learning that was thousands of miles away. According to Garcia and Pence (2010) and Pence and Benner( 2015), UNICEF had during the 1993 and 1994 period approached the School of Child Care at the University of Victoria in Canada to establish a set of trainings or seminars that would support leadership capacity development for their government and non-governmental partners. On the origins and history of the ECD Seminars, the Coordinator of these institutes, Dr Alan Pence reflected:

The origins of the ECD Summer Institutes started in the 1980s when I began to host an ECE/ECD summer institute primarily focused on Canadians and Canadian ECE. In addition, in 1994 there was an International Child and Youth Care conference that was held at the University of Victoria and I reached out to people like Robert Myers, Cyril Dalais and Barnabas Otaala to present at the Conference and attend a Summer Institute. I remember Cyril helped me to identify who else would be good to invite to a future international Summer Institute [held in 1995]. Cyril, who was with UNICEF at that time, liked how the approach the Summer Institutes used and in 1995he,

invited me to take that model of the Summer Institutes internationally—his priorities were Africa and South East Asia and the Pacific. We were supposed to have an [ECDNA sponsored] institute [ECD Seminar] in Namibia in 1996 but that failed to get funding and so the Namibian ECD Seminar shifted over to 1997 and became the first one in Africa. At that stage the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) was involved in anything that Cyril was doing in Africa—he always was coordinating and working in conjunction with the ECDNA (Dr Alan Pence, ECD Summer Institutes Coordinator, Personal Communication).

These ECD Seminars were intended, according to Garcia and Pence (2010) “to help individuals trained in other disciplines to better understand ECD principles and potential” (p. 126). The ECD Seminars would last for two to three weeks with the lead trainers being drawn from regional and international ECD experts focused on Africa. I explored the role of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) and learned that during the period between 1999-2004, the ECDVU would be established and based at the University of Victoria, Canada. The ECDVU contributed to the development of an informal network that included those who had participated in the African-based ECD Seminars. This regrouping of alumni occurred over the period between 1996-1999. The ECDVU subsequently brought together those African-based participants who had registered for the Masters’ degree, ECDVU courses based at the School of Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria. I discovered as I analysed the Africa ECD conference documents that this grouping of African ECDVU participants would work together to support a conference held in Eritrea. These details shall be discussed in my second category on ECD Conferences.

The ECDNA, supported by international donors, was instrumental in planning an Africa-wide ECD Seminar in Namibia in 1997. The Namibian ECD Institute had 26 participants from: The Gambia, Malawi, Mauritius, Lesotho, Botswana, Somalia, Namibia and SA (ECDNA, 1998, Namibia ECD Seminar Welcome Remarks by Professor Barnabas Otaala, Namibia). The picture below shows ECD Summer Institute participants and their instructors in 1997 in Namibia.



**Figure 4: ECD Seminar Participants – Windhoek, Namibia (1997).**

As I was now on the trail of identifying the linkages between the ECD Seminars and the ECD Networks, I wanted to also know how the networks supported training in Francophone Africa especially having observed earlier that countries on the Western side of the African continent had not been included. In the preceding section I referenced how the Cape Town ECDNA meeting had recommended that an ECD Seminar be held in West Africa for the benefit of Francophone Africa. As a result of this lobbying, the second ECD Seminar was then held in Banjul, The Gambia in 1998 (Garcia & Pence, 2010). The reports I analysed on this ECD Seminar indicated that there were 31 participants from 12 countries, namely Mali, Congo Brazzaville, Senegal, Ghana, The Gambia, Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon, Niger, Mauritania, Guinea Conakry, Chad and Cote D'Ivoire.

As I read through these ECD seminar reports, I remembered that when my colleagues and I set out to establish the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) in 2015 we made efforts to reach ECD stakeholders from Francophone Africa, but language barriers would at times stifle the engagement. Eventually, among other organizations we began to work with, were ECD colleagues from Senegal through an organization called *Réseau National des Acteurs pour le Développement de la Petite Enfance au Sénégal* (RENADPE) or in English, the National Network of Actors for ECD in Senegal. Francophone Africa had largely been

missing in leadership capacity development initiatives and I was pleased to see that the ECDNA had taken the ECD Seminars into Francophone Africa. This was the inclusivity I aimed to see within the early childhood development sector in Africa and not having countries being left out because of language barriers or other factors.

The main objective of The Gambian ECD Institute was to bring together academics and ECD program implementers from both Anglophone and Francophone West Africa in order to develop a program of training Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD) trainers and program officers in focusing on addressing the needs of young children, families and communities in rural areas (ECDNA, Unpublished Report, 1998). I have observed that ECD interventions at times tend to reach easier to access communities mostly in the cities before making it out to remote areas. By deliberately developing the capacity of those trainers and program officers working in the rural areas, children would have access to quality early childhood development services.

I also have noticed from my development work experience that sometimes it is easier for funders to prefer to work in certain regions perceived to be easier to access as opposed to dealing with additional costs that come with logistics such as purchasing four wheel drive vehicles or translation of documents among other things. As I made my entry into the early childhood development sector on the African continent, I was always curious as to why Francophone Africa would lag behind when it came to participation in ECD meetings and activities on the continent. Even as I began to look at the work that was being carried out through the ECDNA and the ECD Seminar, I wanted to know why West Africa became the next stop for the training. Alan Pence recalled how the ECD Seminar ended up in The Gambia, by saying that:

The ECDNA was always involved in decisions on where to host the next Seminar. Cyril Dalais was key but Barnabas Otaala too, and he [Barnabas] helped me coordinate the ECD Seminar in Namibia. At that time Barnabas Otaala was at the University of Namibia and at that point a faculty member

and later becoming Dean. At this Seminar, a participant from The Gambia stepped forward and said he would help host [a second one] in Banjul. So that moved into place, working with the participant and UNICEF, we went to West Africa. This Seminar was designed to include more Francophone countries, so there was translation to be provided. UNICEF did not have the money, the members didn't have money either, but the World Bank became interested and provided translation costs so that it could be simultaneously translated which had not been the case in Windhoek (Dr Alan Pence, ECD Summer Institutes Coordinator, Personal Communication).

In line with my analytic inquiry, I circled with red ink the statement “there was translation to be provided”. I wondered if this was one reason why ECD leadership development was not occurring in that region, because of the high costs associated with translating documents as well as hiring simultaneous translators for conversations. I parked these thoughts in a corner because I wanted to explore further how the ECD Conferences had addressed this and if there had been intentionality and inclusivity in ensuring that all the regions of the continent would be involved in ECD conferences.

With this short narration from Alan Pence, I also noted in various reports that The Gambia ECD Seminar had provided participants with an opportunity to discuss ECD Policy development in their region. The initial focus had been aimed at providing the participants with knowledge on international perspectives on ECD policy development, principles involved in developing ECD policy, the process of policy development as well as rationale for having ECD policies. ECD policies were identified as necessary at the Banjul Institute because they were viewed as guidelines for the development of ECD programs that could be used for resource mobilization and allocation in Africa. The ECD policies were also seen as assisting in specifying the roles of government, communities, parents and individuals in the development of the young child. The Gambia ECD Seminar made emphasis on a whole child concept, noting that ECD policies and programs had to move away from sectoral based approaches and move towards integrated approaches if they were to ensure holistic development of children (ECDNA, Unpublished Report, 1998).

Having understood the ECD policy development conversations in The Gambia, I was satisfied that the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) had also addressed and influenced ECD policy development. This was in line with responding to my third research question, focused on how the conferences and networks had influenced ECD policy development. The work that had been done through the training and academic discourse on ECD policy development was important because it would give the ECD leaders being trained with the skills and knowledge they needed to influence policy formulation in their own countries. In my third category of ECD policies, I will revisit and share findings on how some graduates of these programs influenced ECD policy in their countries.

I circle back to the introductory section of this category wherein I mentioned that I was surprised to see that the University of Victoria had played a part in ECD Networking in Africa. At this stage of my analysis I was also happy to note the impact and confluence of relationships between three partners, the University of Victoria through the ECD Summer Institutes/Seminars, the ECDNA and UNICEF. These three players, represented by Alan Pence at the University of Victoria, Barnabas Otaala assuming a lead for the ECDNA and Cyril Dalais with UNICEF and ECDNA (with later Seminar and Conference support from Marito Garcia at the World Bank) supported each other and worked in complementarity in delivering ECD capacity building training that benefitted ECD practitioners on the African continent. I again noted that three (then four) individuals working at these different institutions had played key roles in the delivery of these ECD Seminars in Africa. In chapter 2, I mentioned how the term ‘capacity building’ is a lexicon that may lose its meaning simply by its overuse without any action. It was important to see that these three players had worked together to bring about the true meaning of this lexicon through active engagement and implementation of training activities designed to up-skill a cadre of ECD professionals in Africa.

## **Achievements of Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA)**

In exploring the work carried out by the ECDNA, I learned through written reports, minutes of meetings and communications that by 1999, the ECDNA had made some notable progress in meeting its foundational goals and purpose. In addition to supporting the ECD Seminars, the ECDNA worked on several publications, translation of major papers for use in local languages, and coordinated local training programs for trainers in several countries in SSA. The ECDNA had been represented at several regional meetings and promoted ECD as an important component for the Education for All (EFA) agenda. The founders and supporters of the network were also clearly happy with the progress that the ECDNA had made. Part of the achievements for them was gaining recognition from other developmental partners who would come in to provide additional support to the mission and vision of the network. For example, a co-founder of the ECDNA noted that at an ADEA caucus of Ministers meeting the ECDNA:

caught the interest of several Governments - Ghana, Namibia, Kenya, Mauritius, the Netherlands and Finland. UNICEF, UNESCO and several international non-governmental organizations supported the ECDNA financially and with materials. This support extended over a couple of years and set in place an interactive/participatory training program for trainers in Africa whilst the University of Victoria was incubating the ECD Virtual University with a round of regional Seminars in Namibia and The Gambia (Dr. Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal E-mail Communication to Dr Alan Pence, November 21, 2013).

This communication indicated to me that the co-founders of the ECDNA were now proud of the recognition that the network was getting from the various ECD stakeholders. I also managed to interview Margaret Kabiru, the only one living of the three, key co-founders of the ECDNA, who detailed the journey of the network. In recalling the achievements that were made by the ECDNA, she commented that:

The ECDNA achieved a lot through various activities. ECDNA championed the training of ECD leaders, lobbied for increased government involvement in ECD and for the mainstreaming ECD in government ministries such as education, health and social services. In addition, ECDNA contributed through

human capacity development, sharing of ECD information and by promoting the role of local communities and parents as key partners in ECD (Mrs Margaret Kabiru, Co-Founder ECDNA, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

Through this narration I could pick a hint of pride and sense of accomplishment from this co-founder. I understood from this comment that there was satisfaction in that the ECDNA had met the goals that the founders had set out to achieve.

As I worked through the large body of data that I had collected, I was getting interested in knowing why *two* networks co-existed. If these achievements were being identified, why didn't the ECDNA get more funding to scale up the work it was doing? The co-founders had noted, as I have outlined above, that the ECDNA was getting interest from a lot of stakeholders particularly funding organizations. Why did they not continue to support the network? Going into the year 1999, I noted through documents I was analysing that conversations were now aimed at bringing together the ECDNA and the WGECCD which had been established by the Association for the Development for Education in Africa (ADEA) group.

Earlier on, when I introduced the ADEA group, I highlighted that the work of this group was mostly carried out at a working group level. These working groups were semi-autonomous; I learned that the second network, the WGECD, had been borne out of ADEA's Working Group on Female Participation as a sub-group. This was important an important discovery because it would help to develop an understanding as to why two ECD networks would exist side by side at the same time period.

### **Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD)**

I mentioned earlier that when some colleagues and I were working to establish an African ECD network between 2014 and 2015, we did not have access to sufficient information on the ECD networks that had existed before. This knowledge would have

assisted us in knowing how the ECD networks had been structured, how meetings had been organized and which stakeholders had been invited to meetings leading to the establishment of these networks.

Some colleagues that I was working with on the founding Steering Committee of the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) had some connections with some of the people that had worked with the WGECD. There were bits of information on how the network had been established that had come through from them but not enough to provide me a wholesome picture on the state of ECD networking at a continental level between 1990 and 2009. I also understood that during this 2014 and 2015 period there were negotiations and conversations that were taking place as the WGECD network itself was transforming into another organization. No sufficient information really existed within the public domain too, in part due to the absence of a website or online repository of information. I start now by tracing the story of the WGECD and I will end this category on networks by providing findings on the merging of the WGECD with the ECDNA.

In October 1993, the group known as the Donors for African Education group (DAE) which later changed its name to become the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), described in the opening section of this chapter, met to discuss support being given to education in Africa. This meeting in Angers, France was then followed by an invitation from the Secretariat of the DAE to set up the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) within the DAE's Women/ Girls Group that had been established in 1992. This Women's/Girls Group would later become known as the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) which had been founded by five women ministers of education. Their aim had been to promote girls' and women's education in SSA in line with the Education for All goals (UNESCO, 2000). These women were Simone de Comarmond of Seychelles, Fay Chung of Zimbabwe, Paulette Missambo of Gabon, Alice Tiendrebéogo of

Burkina Faso and Vida Yeboa of Ghana. This then led to the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) being established as a special interest group within the Female Participation of the DAE group. This is significant to note because the origins of the WGECD were previously not recorded. The WGECD itself did not start off just as a fully-fledged working group, as the records I analysed showed, this network had started off as a subgroup within the Women's/Girls working group.

The DAE established the WGECD to promote policy development and implementation of continent-wide early childhood development specific activities (UNESCO BRENDA, 2008). In the formative years (1993-1997), the working group had operational support from 11 countries in SSA that had developed an agenda for ECD as part of their Education for All implementation strategy. The Donors for African Education (DAE) would later be renamed in 1996 to become known as the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). ADEA had become itself a strong partnership between African ministers of education and their international partners which provided a platform for exchange and dialogue on issues that affected the development of education in Africa. Much of ADEA's work was carried out through a number of working groups formed around these issues affecting education in Africa. Some of these working groups were highlighted in the opening section of this chapter.

My analysis of documents on the journey of the WGECD indicated that the network became fully active in 1996 following UNESCO's Education for All (EFA) mid-term evaluation meeting that had been held in Amman, Jordan. At this meeting the CG-ECCD led by Judith Evans had introduced a slogan and campaign titled "eight is too late" that would later influence the implementation of ECD policies and programs. In the same year, another meeting was held at the UNICEF "Innocenti Centre" in Florence, Italy. This meeting was attended by the ADEA Secretariat, representatives of African countries and ECD donors

funding work in Africa. The ADEA Secretariat, led by Richard Sack who was then Executive Secretary of ADEA, requested that UNICEF coordinate the group and that the Working Group on ECD should be formally established as a stand-alone working group and not to be part of the Working Group on Female Participation.

Up to this point in time, UNICEF, which had been leading the administrative functions of the Working Group, proposed that a WGECD Secretariat be established and be tasked with developing a work-plan. UNICEF prepared a budget and a work-plan that was approved by most donors present. The question that would emerge from the analysis of this stage of the WGECD was why would the ADEA want UNICEF to lead the WGECD and not themselves? I also was now cross-referencing the information I was analysing with what I had seen with the ECDNA. Interestingly, the same donors kept emerging. The ECDNA was getting support from UNICEF and now I noted that the WGECD was also getting support meaning that both networks were being funded during the same time. I asked a co-founder of the ECDNA why this was the case and she said that:

I do not have the answer to that question. Since basically the funding partners were basically the same, they may have the answer. It could have been a north-south issue (Margaret Kabiru, Co-Founder ECDNA, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

This response made me ponder again. A north-south issue? Why would the UN agency, UNICEF, based in New York, see it fit to support two African ECD networks at the same time? One network was being led by an all African leadership team, whilst the other as I will show below, was being supported by a European team. I was interested in knowing the answers to these questions. Unfortunately, none of the interview participants were direct in their responses when it came to responses on this issue. All but two would provide a rationale as to why this was the case with Margaret Kabiru saying:

It didn't make sense why two networks would operate side by side at the same time as if they were competing. Considering that one network was composed

mostly of Africans, there could have been an issue of competing interests, the funding dynamics and interests are always complex (Margaret Kabiru, Co-Founder ECDNA, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

In providing some responses to these questions, Dr Emily Vargas-Baron commented:

The overall dependence on packages has become particularly pronounced with the creation of global goods as a concept, these are packages. Rather than have people adopt the global good, I am more convinced that the way forward is a more nuanced approach of some aspects of packaging. There has been a huge push-back in Africa, the Middle East, in South East Asia and the Pacific Islands; they have been smart about it. They just smile and go about making adjustments (Dr Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the RISE Institute, Semi-Structured Interview, August 2020).

The emergence of this kind of nuanced push back or resistance on packages by countries in Africa, as in the above view from the interview participant, reflects Foucault (1991) who believed that with the use of power also came the possibilities of action and resistance. Even with the foregoing, ECD conference documents analysed showed that some of the funders such as UNICEF, Aga Khan Foundation and the World Bank would fund their country-based staff to showcase the ECD work they were doing in the different African countries. Their funding would therefore be in the form of funding travel and accommodation for their staff to come and participate.

Whilst it is possible that funders would look at it from a value for money proposition, it is also important to see it from the perspective of hegemony and exercise of power because the agenda being advanced was that of those organizations. These organizations were using their financial power to influence how a conference program would look like since they would fly in participants who would speak into the issues, they were funding.

As I thought through these issues, I then had to look at the structure of the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) so that I understood the administrative, operational and governance arrangements. I learned that in the late 1997, at an ADEA meeting held in Benin, a formal request by UNICEF to handover the administrative functions of the

WGECD Network to other members or partners interested in the early childhood development sector within Africa was adopted. A number of countries expressed their interest in hosting and promoting the WGECD. Namibia, Ghana, Finland and the Netherlands all expressed interest in hosting and promoting the work of the Working Group. The bid to host the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) made by the Netherlands through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs succeeded and Jeanette Vogelaar became the Working Group leader. What was lacking with the bids from two African countries [Namibia and Ghana] to the extent that a decision was made to accept a bid from a European country?

At this stage I was concerned. My concern was why would an African WGECD be hosted by the Dutch government and not an African country or institution? In July 1998, following this successful bid, the Basic Education Section of the Education and Developing Countries Division of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs then assumed leadership of the WGECD from UNICEF. The Basic Education Section then appointed a consultant, Kate Torkington, a British based ECD expert, to identify and map the principal players within the ECD sector in SSA and to provide recommendations on how the WGECD could implement its work over the course of the next three years. The Netherlands, through the work carried out by the consultant, proposed an updated WGECD agenda that would be implemented first through an ECD policy review process in three countries (Torkington, 1999).

Who was influencing the decisions of those who were promoting the networks? In addition to this, I could not understand why the ADEA group would accept the administrative leadership from a European country and not choose to build the capacity of an African country or African based institution if need be? My years of experience in the development sector taught me that if individuals, communities or institutions lack capacity or have some gaps that need to be addressed, it is incumbent upon the funding organization or partners to come up with a capacity building plan. This will entail a training and mentoring process that

will support the individual or organization to attain the requisite skills so that they are able to take ownership and leadership of a particular project. In the first chapter I narrated how Gaye and Diawara (2015) opined on the overuse of the term ‘capacity building’. I also noted in Chapter 1 that this term appears in grey literature and other publications by international development partners. Why was it not being put into practice? With this knowledge from my own experience, I then wondered why the bid to host this African network was won by a European country as opposed to one in Africa. If it had been a capacity issue, why was a plan or strategy not devised in order to support either of the two countries in addressing the capacity deficiencies that may have existed?

I noted that by March 1999, the WGECD had been reconstituted with a Secretariat working under the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The new administrative lead of the network held a meeting in The Hague in March 1999. In this meeting it was recommended that supporting the development of national ECD policies should be the major focus of the network (Torkington, 1999). A two-year action plan was drawn up and the core of this work-plan was premised on undertaking “country case studies on policy development in Africa” (p. 1). This ECD policy development thrust would in turn make an indelible mark on the discourse on policy formulation. I would discover that the WGECD would, between the years 2000 and 2004, be actively involved in ECD policy projects in six countries in Africa. This I shall discuss more in my third category on ECD policy development in Africa. I turn now to respond to my second research question which was seeking to understand the purposes and goals of the ECD networks.

### **Purposes and Goals of Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD)**

A central aspect of this research was to find out the purposes and goals of the ECD networks. This was important because I wanted to know how the ECD networks had strategized to address the pressing issues of their time, what set them apart from other

networks and really have knowledge on how future networks on the continent could plan and execute their missions. Working through the documents and interview information, I learned that the WGECD was founded based on the realization that the early years were crucial to child development (UNESCO BREDIA, 2008) and thus it was crucial to have a network that would ratchet support for the ECD sector in Africa.

According to UNESCO BREDIA (2008), the WGECD was formed to pursue an agenda of promoting holistic development of young children in the SSA region and to provide a forum in which different actors within the region and internationally would provide a coherent and coordinated response to challenges facing early childhood development in Africa. The WGECD had an overall goal to “ensure that the African child survives and thrives and has a good start in life” (UNESCO BREDIA, 2008, p. 7). The objectives of the WGECD were to:

1. Mobilize continuous political and public support at regional and national levels
2. Enhance partnerships and network building
3. Facilitate research, capacity building and exchange
4. Stimulate national ECD policy review, development, implementation and monitoring.

As I noted earlier above, the WGECD anchored its African program strategy around ECD policy development. I noted that in the period 1998-2003, the WGECD focused on national ECD policy development as an important strategy to advance the ECD agenda in Africa. In 1999, the WGECD embarked on a pilot project in a limited number of Francophone countries to support national development of policies and, based on these experiences, embarked on a second policies studies project. It is through these policy projects that the WGECD became convinced that if ECD was to take off in Africa, then it would be important for countries to integrate ECD policy planning processes into national development processes. The integrations would be in such national policies such as Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers

(PRSPs) that African countries would produce in order to kick start their economies (WGECD Unpublished Strategic Plan, 2006-2007).

The overall goal for the WGECD network was to ensure that the African child would survive, thrive and have a good start to life (WGECD Unpublished Strategic Plan, 2006-2007). This was coming at a time where there were high infant mortality rates (IMR) of more than 100 deaths per 1000 live births in countries such as Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Chad, Mali, Malawi and Mozambique (UNICEF, 2005). During this period, between 2005 and 2007, I was working in Zimbabwe for Mercy Corps as an Assistant Project Manager. Mercy Corps is an international development non-profit which is headquartered in Portland, Oregon, USA. The project I was responsible for provided educational resources for orphaned, vulnerable and children living in poverty through payment of school levies, provision of learning materials as well as construction of new classroom blocks so that children could have safe and habitable classrooms in school. I was also responsible for a feeding program that was providing food packs to malnourished children, the bulk of whom were orphans. As I was analysing the documents trying to identify the purposes and goals of the WGECD, I understood, based on my prior working experience, the difficulties that young children were facing during this period.

In my own country, Zimbabwe, the economy was not performing well at that time. There was rampant corruption, spiralling hyper-inflation and a political environment that was far from stable. Young children from poor communities in my own country were suffering, not having a guaranteed meal and at times not accessing school because their guardians could not pay the required tuition fees. In other parts of Africa, too, children were suffering from the effects of civil wars, limited access to early stimulation programmes and children were generally living in very difficult circumstances because of poor resource distribution and governance. The Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) had to

develop initiatives that would ensure that children were getting improved access to quality basic services that included integrated early childhood development programs at a national level (WGECD Unpublished Strategic Plan, 2006-2007).

### **Formalizing the Working Group for Early Child Development (WGECD)**

In my prior work supporting the establishment of country ECD networks in Africa in 2017, I had observed the contestations and struggles that come with formalizing the networks, creating accountability and governance systems. As I facilitated ECD network formation meetings in various African countries, I would notice how individuals would fight intensely for leadership positions. I recognized that some of the fights were not inherently for the benefit of the organization we were setting up, but I could tell that these were self-actualization related moves. In other circumstances, as I facilitated conversations on developing strategic plans and costing them, I would note that certain budget lines were being developed to benefit certain individuals through payment of consulting fees or even salaries. With these observations, I would then steer the discussions to focus on the best interests of the children and not what one could benefit from. This then led me to advocate for the identification of individuals who were qualified to lead the networks and who would have the interests of children at heart.

In some instances, I would hear government officials arguing against the establishment of a country ECD network because they felt that the civil society had no role in holding government to account when it came to oversight on ECD investment, ECD policy development or advocating for higher salaries for para-professional and trained ECD teachers. I observed in these countries that they were under quasi-dictatorial regimes that stifled freedom of speech and accountability. These were struggles that I was facing as I travelled supporting ECD sector colleagues to establish early childhood development country networks.

As I engaged myself deeper in analysis of the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) I wanted to also know how these struggles manifested within a continental ECD network. I then started to analyze minutes of meetings and meeting reports relating to the transitory period from UNICEF to the hosting of the WGECD by the Netherlands government. My aim was to identify the process of network formalization and development of an organizational governance framework. This was important because it would give me an insight into who was responsible for strategy implementation and also to see if there were any other interests based on who was sitting on the Board and the reasons behind such. This would inform this research on whether the Network was truly African, or it was advancing agendas derived from the Western countries and in this case, the Dutch government and its allies. In addition to this, it would also be informative to me as it provided an insight into how the WGECD had navigated the politics normally associated with setting up these structures in ECD networks.

I learned that in December 2003, the WGECD had held a consultative meeting in Mauritius where it was decided that a Steering Committee should be established. The rationale for this move was that the work of the WGECD had grown. It was recognized that the WGECD needed guidance and direction from major players within the ECD sector on the continent and beyond. The meeting participants recognized the need to strengthen the administrative and management capacity of the WGECD to meet the growing scope of organizational activities. The proposed Steering Committee would provide this leadership as well as transforming the network into an “Africa Forum” promoting ECD (WGECD, 2003, p.4). Having identified and co-opted leading ECD experts into the Steering Committee, the WGECD organized a launch of this new structure.

The WGECD Steering Committee was now comprised of members representing regional and international partners such as the World Bank, UNICEF East and West Africa

regional offices, UNESCO Regional Office for Africa, Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), Coordinating Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) as well as representatives from the governments of Ghana, Senegal and Malawi. This structure to me now represented an improvement in the governance of the WGECD because there was now a transparent structure that one could point to as opposed to just knowing that the Dutch government, through its Ministry of Foreign Affairs, had been providing support.

The meeting for the launch of the Steering Committee of the WGECD in Mauritius in December 2003 was also used as a platform to plan for the 3<sup>rd</sup> African International ECD Conference. This event also coincided with some of the members of the University of Victoria's ECDVU cohort, which was discussing, among other things, how they would also participate in the ECD conference that was tentatively scheduled for 2004. The participation of the ECDVU cohort, as the meeting minutes would show, would be through conference program development, as conference resource persons and also through presenting conference papers. The main outcome of the Steering Committee launch meeting was to provide the WGECD with a mandate to "provide guidance and direction and legitimacy to the activities of the WGECD" (WGECD, 2003, p. 8).

### **Working Group on Early Childhood Development and ECD Conferences**

As I analysed the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) Steering Committee launch documents, I noted that the network was now progressively getting involved with the ECD conferences. I observed that there was very minor conference participation by the network in 1999 and a limited amount in 2002. Conference participation by the WGECD became significant in 2005, ultimately leading to major involvement in 2009. This was very important to note because I could see that there was a symbiotic relationship between the ECD networks and the conferences. My experience of organizing network meetings and country conferences has taught me that the organizing of ECD conferences can

be extremely challenging if there is no organizational and administrative structure to support the planning activities.

It was at this Steering Committee launch meeting where it was agreed that the 3<sup>rd</sup> African International ECD Conference would be held from the 30<sup>th</sup> of May to 3 June 2005. I analysed minutes of meetings held by the Steering Committee of the WGECD and documents analyzed revealed that there were a number of factors that had led to those dates being agreed upon by the meeting participants. What emerged as the biggest influence on dates was firstly that the main sponsor of the conference, The World Bank, had its financial year ending on June 30 and therefore these dates would provide sufficient time for the final year-end financial reports to be compiled. Secondly, these dates would ensure that the ECD conference deliberations would be fed into the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) consultative process that was underway at that time. Thirdly, there would be sufficient time to distil and package the ECD conference outcomes in time for the ADEA Biennale in 2005 (see *Appendix 5*).

Along with agreements on the dates of this upcoming conference, the December 2003 Steering Committee meeting also decided upon the venue for the conference. Ghana and Senegal had offered to host the conference, with both countries presenting competitive bids to host the conference. However, through consultations with the UNICEF headquarters and the World Bank, Ghana emerged as the selected host. As part of its reorganization during the 2003-2004 period, the WGECD Steering Committee then recruited a full time Coordinator who would work to implement the decisions of the Steering Committee and lead the in-country conference planning process. There were also two international planners and a separate committee to support conference planning. In an interview the former WGECD Coordinator who served from 2004 to 2008, Stella Etse, reminisced:

I had been working for the Ghana National Commission on Children before I joined the ADEA WGECD in 2004. At that time ADEA was searching for

somebody in Africa to coordinate this Working Group. They had advertised and a number of people including myself applied for the position and eventually I was the person they wanted to coordinate in Africa. So, I left the Ghana National Commission on Children to work at the ADEA WGECD (Stella Etse, Former WGECD Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

At this point in time, the WGECD Secretariat was still being administered by the Basic Education Section of the Education and Developing Countries Division of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The host institution was UNICEF at their Dakar Regional Office. In commenting on this, Stella Etse noted that:

The Netherlands was the main administrative partner for ECD in Africa at that time and they had the option that the Coordinator could be located in Senegal, at the UNICEF Regional Office. So, I had to relocate from Ghana and move to Senegal so that I could work from the UNICEF Regional Office with Dr Evelyn Pressoir who was the Regional Coordinator for ECD at UNICEF. I was now working directly from the ECD Unit in Dakar and under her technical supervision. But in terms of sponsorship, it was still the government of Netherlands and I was working there with Jeanette Vogelaar who was then based in Mozambique (Stella Etse, Former WGECD Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

With this statement I noted that with the coming in of the new Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) Coordinator, there was now a shift in how the network was being administered. Earlier on I described how UNICEF had relinquished its administrative role, triggering the process that saw the Dutch government come in. I noted through this statement that UNICEF had found its way back into the affairs of the ECD network. These were not the only changes I noticed. In 2006, a decision was made by the WGECD Steering Committee for the graduation of the WGECD from ADEA so that it could become a stand-alone organization. This meant that the WGECD was now being officially weaned off from being a working group of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Thus, the WGECD could now be a legal persona in its own right. The Steering Committee meeting documents I analysed provided a rationale that I summarised as following:

Firstly, in making this decision to wean off the network, ADEA argued that the working group structures were not created to be permanent structures. Secondly, ADEA submitted that the WGECD had worked hard to become a stand-alone organization. This had been evidenced by the governance structures such as the Steering Committee that had been established. Thirdly, ADEA argued that the mandate of the WGECD had extended beyond the ADEA 'constituency' with responsibility now being shared with other multiple ministries and sectors and not only the ministries of education. These were reasons that I gathered from my analysis of the minutes and reports of meetings that had been held to discuss these changes.

I noted also that at this point in time the ADEA was still housed at the Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO based in France and did not have an African base. It was not until 2008 that the ADEA Secretariat would be hosted within the offices of the African Development Bank (AfDB) in Tunisia, finding itself a home in Africa. This request in 2006, by the WGECD Steering Committee, led to the selection of an institutional base being made. In my analysis I noted that the request to graduate the WGECD was being made at a time when the "parent" organization ADEA had not had a base on the African continent. I wondered about the rationale behind the continued hosting of an African focused education and ECD institution in France and not at a base on the African continent.

As I continued this line of questioning my attention was drawn to documents and information relating to the operations of the WGECD. I wanted to know who was behind the decision-making processes and what their interests were. I was curious to learn how the network operating structure was set up. Was this another form of neo-colonialism by having an African institution being hosted in Europe? For what reason? I also wanted to know whether the decisions being made were representative of the needs of the African continent or the host administrative partner country, the Netherlands. By extension too, why would the

ADEA be hosted in France and not in Africa? I hoped that my analysis of the operating structure would assist me in answering these questions.

### **Operating Structure of the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD)**

In November 2007, the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) held its annual general meeting in Mombasa, Kenya and the participants agreed to develop a new structure for the WGECD that would be representative of the different sub-regions on the African continent. A number of turning point decisions were made at this annual general meeting and these ultimately changed the way the WGECD was governed and how it operated. To start off, the meeting participants decided and agreed upon having a structure that would ensure that both Anglophone and Francophone countries would participate in the Network activities. This was a very important move because Francophone countries in Africa have mainly been left out in education and early childhood programs. Making a specific commitment of their inclusion was a very progressive outcome of this meeting. In addition to this, the participants agreed that the Chair of the WGECD would be UNESCO BREDIA, located in Dakar, Senegal (ADEA, 2007). This was an important transitional step because this would see an institution that was based in Africa coordinate and lead the ECD work as opposed to the previous structure where the Basic Education Section in the Netherlands Foreign Affairs ministry had been taking the leadership of the ECD network.

The meeting also discussed the membership of the WGECD and agreed to include SSA ministers championing ECD in their countries, international development partners working on ECD in Africa, national ECD Country Focal Persons and ECD experts of Africa and working in Africa (ADEA, 2007). I recognized that including African ECD experts and country focal persons was an important addition to the membership of the network because their being included deliberately meant that the network now had representation from African

ECD practitioners. The inclusion of African ECD practitioners would assist in ensuring that the programs and actions of the network are inspired and informed by them. Having coordination and leadership provided through an African based institution such as UNESCO BREDA, based in Senegal, was also a shift from having a country in Europe providing the leadership of an African network.

In my review of the ECD network documents and in interviews I held, I noted that the recommendations that came out of this meeting needed an administrative partner that would oversee implementation. The ECD network was growing, its scope of work had expanded, and the Network had also started to involve itself in the organizing of ECD conferences. This work needed to be coordinated and there had to be central leadership that would oversee the implementation of the network activities. In 2008, the WGECD then put out a call for proposals, inviting organizations interested to be administrators of the network to apply to host the network. Commenting on this process of finding an African based administrative partner for the Working Group of Early Childhood Development, the WGECD Coordinator at that time, Stella Etse updated the National ECD Focal Persons through an email to them saying:

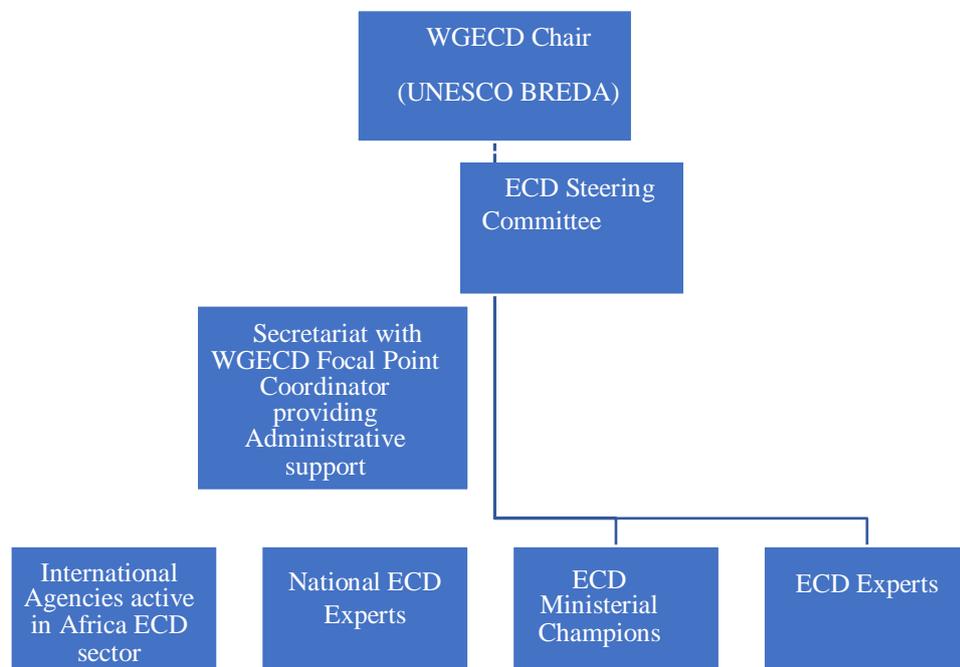
We would like to update you on the search for a host institution for the ADEA WGECD. We are pleased to inform you that following an evaluation of proposals received to host the WGECD, Save the Children USA was selected as host institution for the ADEA WGECD and UNESCO BREDA was selected as Chair and Leader of the WGECD to provide the WGECD with the necessary political leverage. An MOU between ADEA, UNESCO BREDA and Save the Children USA has been signed this week to that effect. The Secretariat of the WGECD will be hosted by Save the Children US's regional office in Nairobi (WGECD Coordinator, E-mail Correspondence to National ECD Focal Points, May 9, 2008).

This update was very significant in that it provided a formal notification of the transfer of administrative leadership of the network from the Dutch government to an organization that was based and working in Africa. The entry of the new host organization saw the relocation of

the WGECD Coordinator from Dakar, Senegal. Commenting on how this relocation affected her, Stella Etse narrated:

I had started working with the WGECD in Dakar, at the UNICEF Regional Office and for family reasons they allowed me to move back to Ghana because my family was there. It was very kind and considerate for them to allow me to move back to Ghana and work from there. I had spent one year in Dakar and then spent three years working from Ghana. I had come here to organize the conference too, and I stayed home afterwards (Mrs. Stella Etse, Former WGECD Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, August 2020).

I realized through this statement that there were not only changes happening at the organizational level but at the personal level too as staff had had to leave home countries. The new host of the WGECD Secretariat had to work under a structure embodied within the terms of a MOU that outlined some roles and responsibilities. In trying to understand the new operational structure I sketched out a diagram that would depict the new structure that had been agreed at the Mombasa meeting in 2007:



**Figure 5: The new operational structure post-Mombasa Meeting**

The Steering Committee of the WGECD in 2009 was composed of representatives of major players within the international ECD sector including: UNESCO, Consultative Group on ECCD, UNICEF, World Bank, ECDVU, Governments of Finland and the Netherlands (See *Appendix 7*).

### **Save the Children and the Working Group for Early Childhood Development**

In commenting and corroborating on the entry and role of Save the Children USA, I identified Dr Pablo Stansbery, the former Regional Director for Education at Save the Children USA, as a key participant for this research. He was the person in charge of overseeing their organizations' role as the host organization for the WGECD Secretariat during this transition. During the interview, he narrated the process that was undertaken by the Steering Committee to identify a Secretariat for the WGECD. He mentioned that:

The ADEA Steering Committee at that time put out a call for proposals that was responded to by a number of different players. The Steering Committee produced terms of reference, rated them and Save the Children USA won and was awarded the Secretariat position (Dr Pablo Stansbery, Regional Director for Education-Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020).

This was important for me to learn because it helped me corroborate the information that I had also received from another interview participant on how the Save the Children USA had been selected. I noted the transparent process and managed to also confirm these accounts by referring back to the reports of the outcomes of these processes. In Chapter 3, I highlighted that triangulation was a key element of my research and I gained more confidence in the information I was getting because different data sources were confirming these accounts.

The WGECD Secretariat was now led by Save the Children USA at a time when the network itself was floundering and a number of Steering Committee members, according to Pablo Stansbery:

were sharing with me that they were frustrated, that there had been no communication, no newsletter and that they would send emails to the WGECD

Coordinator and would not hear back (Dr Pablo Stansbery, Regional Director for Education-Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020).

The story here as I would gather through these interviews was that the WGECD Coordinator was reportedly now not being as communicative and that some members of the Steering Committee were not happy with the way the WGECD was being coordinated. In my interviews, I managed to talk to four different participants who had been members of that Secretariat. Two participants shared the same thoughts regarding the non-performance of the WGECD Coordinator, noting that this was what led to the Coordinator then leaving her job.

Of the other two participants, one noted that they were aware that there had been some issues going on but not to the level that they would warrant the Coordinator leaving the post. The other participant was oblivious of the challenges that were being mentioned highlighting that the WGECD Coordinator had been working hard given the circumstances at that time, including the fact that the Coordinator was asked to move from one country to the other and was trying to implement decisions of a newly established Steering Committee that was finding its feet.

The story continued, I learned through the interviews, that these reported internal frustrations led to the new Secretariat developing a new WGECD work-plan in which individual team members were requested to identify specific activities that they would support. Apparently at this stage the Coordinator of the WGECD did not identify any specific activity from the newly developed work-plan, opting instead to just “coordinate” the work of the network. There was disagreement with this option. I gathered that this then led to the WGECD Coordinator eventually leaving the network to pursue other opportunities. In recalling and narrating the events leading to this Pablo Stansbery narrated that:

I asked the then WGECD Coordinator to identify one or two items out of the ten activities that were on the work-plan and she said no, I coordinate. And then she just dropped off. I tried so hard to keep her on board. When we became the Secretariat, we were responsible to the Chair and not to the Coordinator, I was trying to keep her onboard full time and have her keep her

salary but after she left, I heard she found something to do very quickly so it might have been something she had been planning and had been in the conversations (Dr Pablo Stansbery, Regional Director for Education-Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020).

This was one version of why the Coordinator had left the network. I then circled back and analysed my interview transcripts again to identify the reasons that I had been given by the former Coordinator. In commenting on the reasons why she had left the WGECD, Stella Etse shared that;

I was implementing the policy decisions of the working group as coordinator. During the transition from Netherlands to Save the Children, there were several meetings, but I cannot tell you, the very important ones. The Netherlands was backing out of the WGECD and Save the Children was pushing for it. I can't give you all the details of that. And so, one of the reasons I left the ADEA was commitments because I started working with the ADEA working group in Dakar, at UNICEF regional office and for family reasons they allowed me to move to Ghana because my family was here. I started coordinating from Ghana and then I worked at the UNICEF Accra office to coordinate the conference and to coordinate the agenda of the working group. After the conference they gave me permission to stay in Ghana to work close to my family. Then Save the Children came, they wanted to relocate their secretariat to Kenya because I believe they had other interests in Kenya, so they wanted the Secretariat to be there. I couldn't relocate, they actually insisted that I move to Kenya, and at that time I had re-established my roots in Ghana. I had to resign. Unless, but I had to, it was a very serious decision, it was not easy because I loved what I was doing. I had thought about it a lot, but I felt I cannot relocate. It was a really tough time for me to love something that you are doing, yet you want to let family come first. But it was okay, I think I spent the best I could at that time. I left just before the conference (Stella Etse, Former WGECD Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

I noted the differences in perspectives on the reasons why the Coordinator had left. In keeping with my research approach, I wanted to triangulate this information. I had interviewed another leader, Rokhaya Fall Diawara, who had worked under the auspices of UNESCO. She had worked with Pablo Stansbery as co-Chair of the WGECD. When asked on the reasons why the Coordinator had left, she narrated that:

Stella was somebody who worked strongly in organizing and advancing the work of the WGECD. When I joined the network as a Co-Chair the WGECD was a big and strong network. Stella did a lot of things at that time but what

was missing was an institutional structure and the political dimension. She did her part; she was more on the UNICEF side because it was also being driven by UNICEF. I cannot say honestly why she left but I understand that there is a time that I think the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) was changing the way of funding (Rokhaya Fall Diawara, UNESCO Education Programme Specialist and Global ECD Adviser, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

This was another different perspective. The reason I had pursued understanding why and how the coordinator had left was because I had learned that this is the period that all the prior documentation on the WGECD had apparently disappeared. I discovered through interviews that during this period of transition certain laptops that contained much of the historical information were lost. This is why my research was important, to create a historical record of these ECD networks and conferences. I had to circle back and find all the historical information on these ECD networks so that there could be a record. My research questions were therefore very essential, focusing on what were the ECD networks, what were their main goals, purposes and how did they influence ECD policy development. In circumstances like these, where information contained in laptops would be lost just like that, I had to have this history recorded.

I was grateful to have received from two interview participants' troves of documents that I could analyse and glean information on the Working Group of Early Childhood Development (WGECD) and the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA). I learned that one of the major tasks for the Secretariat was to "reignite work with Country Focal Points" who were responsible for developing and mobilizing the ECD agenda at a country level. To facilitate this process the WGECD Secretariat hired Bonita Birungi to be the Focal Point Resource Person to support the Country ECD Focal Points with Dr Eveline Pressoir formerly UNICEF West and Central Africa Regional Advisor serving as a mentor. I was pleased to see this direction that was being taken by the new WGECD Secretariat because empowering the country ECD experts and ensuring that they were taking the lead in

advancing the early childhood development agenda in their own countries was very important. I have already expressed how it was interesting that the WGECD to have been led by the Dutch government ahead of African countries or institutions. It was admirable that the new WGECD Secretariat was making an emphasis now of having ECD focal persons lead the work at a country level. Through this Focal Point Person, the WGECD organized a meeting from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2008 in Dakar, Senegal. The meeting was attended by national ECD Focal persons from 18 countries and the objectives of the meeting included discussions on the upcoming ECD conference that had been slated for Dakar the following year, impact of climate change on the status of young children in Africa and the strengthening of regional ECD networks through relationships with national networks and focal points.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, in a presentation at this meeting, Alan Pence, who was leading work with the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) and representing the WGECD Steering Committee, gave an update to the ECD Country Focal Points on the Fourth African International ECD conference preparations. Pence noted that the Fourth African International ECD Conference had initially been planned for SA, with the initial contact and correspondence having been made with the South African government. However, a lack of timely response by the South African government had led to another choice being made. At this stage, it was noted that the three earlier conferences had been held in English-speaking countries and thus it was deemed appropriate that the next conference would be hosted in a French-speaking country.

Having noted the advances and commitment to ECD made by the Senegalese government as well as the earlier motivation and submission of a bid to host the third conference, which was won by Ghana, the odds would favour Senegal as the host of the Fourth ECD conference. The ECD Country Focal Points present provided some input into potential themes for the upcoming conference. In order to advance the ECD agenda in their

countries, the Country Focal Persons made commitments to engage with members of their national ECD networks or the members of their multi-sectoral coordination committees where either of these existed, as well as consult the WGECD for information and provide relevant country information updates.

### **Achievements of Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD)**

It was important to identify whether the WGECD had succeeded in meeting its aims and objectives as set out earlier above. I managed to get information on this from both my document analysis and through interviews. On the question of the WGECD achievements and in providing an insight into her time with the ECD Network, Rokhaya Fall Diawara narrated:

Firstly, I can categorize the WGECD achievements into three broad components. The first would be at institutional level, the second would be at technical level and the last would financial management. At the institutional, when I joined was to put in place a partner tracking process. As UNESCO, the most important things for us at the beginning were to see how we can achieve results for ECD by giving more responsibility to governments. This was so that the countries would not see ECD as a responsibility of their bilateral and multi-lateral partners amongst others, but that they could take the lead. Therefore, from that perspective we gave them more responsibilities by putting in place institutional arrangements where, for example, we began to bring in ministers to sit in the WGECD Steering Committee. These would champion ECD in their different regions. We had at that time somebody representing the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC), one representing the East African Community, one for West and Central Africa as well as the Arab region if you prefer. All of these regions would be represented by one or two ministers who sat on the steering committee or board. So, we worked to strengthen the leadership of countries on the WGECD Steering Committee by ensuring that we not only had ministers of education, but we included ministers of health, ministers responsible for child protection.

The second important part was to move the WGECD from being a coordinating agency but to a co-coordinating agency which would have multiple agencies so that it would not just be a UNESCO achievement. In this sense, working with Save the Children USA was part of that strategy of ensuring that there were many more organizations within the WGECD working to provide leadership and coordination. And finally, in terms of the financial component, we worked to bring in financial resources but also technical resources to support the WGECD. We were also starting to push countries to be more invested in ECD by making active contributions, for example, most ministers would cover their own costs of travel and engagement with the WGECD, this was also a major achievement (Rokhaya Fall Diawara,

Within the context of this response, I went back to another central question I had developed as I analyzed the documents. What was the measure of success being used, especially when for four years two ECD Networks in Africa would operate side by side? Who was funding these networks and for what benefit? I unpack these questions in Chapter 5 where I discuss the findings but first, I had to understand how and why these ECD networks were merged.

### **Merging of ECDNA and WGECD**

I had to understand the context in which these two ECD networks had been operating *vis-a-vis* their structure and leadership. Earlier on I narrated how the founders of the ECDNA had consistently said that the network was independent of any funding from the major group of funders that I had identified in this research, such as the World Bank. In projecting themselves this way, they had wanted to ensure that there would be no organization that would lay claim to the work that the ECDNA was doing. I learned, and have shown earlier above, how the ECDNA Secretariat had worked hard for it to become a recognized network and gain official recognition from the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). My data from this research indicated that the leaders of the ECDNA had envisaged a situation where the network itself would be linked to ADEA as an independent organization and not as one of the working groups. I also revealed earlier how the ECDNA had worked with various ECD experts on various projects, including working with UNESCO to update the directory of NGOs in Africa and working on the translation of the “Toward a Fair Start for Children” by Robert Myers into Kiswahili (Evans, 1998). This work had been carried out as part of the programming by the ECD Network and I viewed this work as part of the journey of

gaining credibility and recognition by stakeholders in the early childhood development sector in Africa.

I understood and recognized this work to gain official recognition from major stakeholders within the Education and ECD sector to be difficult, messy and at times frustrating. When I founded the Zimbabwe Network for Development Actors (ZINECDA) in 2012, there was a lot of skepticism from funding agencies, national ECD stakeholders as well as the Ministry of Education and other government departments I was approaching for partnerships and support. However, going into the second and third year as the organization ramped up its services and programs, more funders began to make inquiries regarding how they could partner with the network. The Ministry of Education in Zimbabwe also became interested in the work being done and began to see the network as an ally and advocate for the young children in the ECD sector as opposed to being viewed as an adversary. This had not been the case in the formative years, wherein the network was seen as competition or in some quarters as unnecessarily ruffling some feathers and making people uncomfortable because of our thrust of demanding accountability. In some instances, I would be told by colleagues in the education sector that my demand for education spending accountability was making the powers that be uncomfortable. Similarly, it was through these experiences that I recognized the challenges that the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) may have faced at that time because this is a road that I had also travelled before.

### **Enter the Netherlands government**

I continued to seek out more information that could help frame the processes and steps that were being taken to facilitate the merging of these two networks. This process was fraught with challenges, miscommunications and differences in strategy. As I narrated earlier above, the ECDNA in 1997 was also getting a new partner. In December 1997, the ECDNA

hosted a meeting in Cape Town on Policy and Programming on ECD in Africa. At this meeting Professor Barnabas Otaala advised that:

ECDNA had just acquired a new status as an ADEA Working Group, to consider alternative ECD policies and programmes in Africa (quoted. in Kabiru, Njenga and Mutua, 1998).

Everything now made sense to me concerning how these organizations had been joined together. The coming in of the Dutch government saw the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) being incorporated into the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) working group model. In this case the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) was being merged with the ECDNA. As this was happening, ADEA itself was now putting out a call for bids for organizations or development partners that would then come and host what would be called the ADEA Working Group for ECD. When the bid from the Netherlands became successful, the first step by the Dutch government was to carry out an ECD sector analysis so that they would have more information. This is when the consultant I mentioned earlier (Kate Torkington) had been brought in to carry out research on the state of ECD in Africa. A report was then produced for the Dutch government by the consultant. During my research I had reached out to colleagues within the ECD sector in Africa and beyond to try and access this report. Eventually, when I thought I was close to locating it, I was told that the report was actually never made public and had remained the property of the Dutch government.

In the meantime, I had managed to analyse the minutes of a meeting held in The Hague to discuss the way forward for the WGECD. I have shared earlier above how the ECD policy studies became the first starting point for the merged organization with a consultant being hired again to lead the ECD Policy case study project. I shall discuss this in my third category on ECD policies. Reflecting on the early history of the ECDNA in which she participated, Norma Rudolph said:

I understood that the work was put on a more stable footing when the Netherlands government took over the Secretariat with the encouragement of the ECDNA membership. I think that Jeanette Vogelaar played an exceptionally good role in building the network and the location within ADEA was helpful. I travelled to The Hague with Cyril Dalais to attend a meeting with the Government of Netherlands about their role as the Secretariat of the network. Kate Torkington was also there as I remember (Norma Rudolph, ECDNA member, Semi-Structured Interview, May 2020).

With this information, I think I had now come full circle. I now understood how the two networks had been merged. The Netherlands government, through their winning bid to host the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD), stepped forward to take the leadership. The Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) as it was known then had now been merged into the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD).

### **Demise of the WGECD**

Through the interviews and document analysis I learned that during the course of its history, the WGECD had provided leadership within the ECD sector in Africa as indicated by the various projects it embarked on. The WGECD policy studies project no doubt provided an impetus for African countries to develop their ECD policies and frameworks for implementation. Being an ECD practitioner on the continent, and especially being a co-founder of the current Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN), I always wondered what happened to the WGECD. Pablo Stansbery, in commenting on the transition of the WGECD into an inter-country-quality node, noted that the network did not die but that:

After supporting 17 countries to develop ECD policies, the ADEA WGECD was transformed into an Inter-Country-Quality-node (ICQN) aiming to move from a partner driving process to governments driving ECD agenda in Africa. This was on the backdrop of building upon the tremendous efforts of the predecessors; the main result was to draw government commitments, incredible scholarship, powerful networks, generous resources, exemplary programs and pioneering leadership to influence the African ECD development agenda (Pablo Stansbery, Regional Director for Education-Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020).

In my questioning there were always different answers given to me by various people who were involved in the network. This research provided me an opportunity to ask those that were involved at a leadership level directly their thoughts on what led to the WGECD being phased out. Corroborating this account, another interview participant, Rokhaya Diawara narrated by saying that:

The WGECD was transformed to become an Inter Country Quality Node (ICQN) based in Mauritius. The budget was now coming from the host country and some projects were funded by some partners. The closure of the WGECD was done with a clear handover plan. A five-year action plan, a technical and financial report, a staffing plan, and the necessary institutional arrangements were all prepared. A workshop to present all these documents was organized in Mauritius. An official handover ceremony was organized on the side lines of the Africa regional consultation on the preparation of post-2015. Thirteen African ministers participated in this ceremony. The closure of the ADEA WGECD was an amicable process. The process was not even considered as a dissolution but more of a transformative process. It was an objective and not a sanction and therefore the creation of the ICQN was the result of more than 7 years of effort. We were all proud of seeing the countries taking the leadership as a confirmation of understanding the challenges and readiness to face them (Rokhaya Fall Diawara, UNESCO Education Programme Specialist and Global ECD Adviser, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

This had been the journey that had been travelled by the ECD Networks. I was pleased to walk through the journey of these networks. I learned about their main purposes and goals as well as the impact that they had made in addressing various challenges within the African ECD sector. In Chapter 5, I will discuss these findings on the ECD Networks focusing on some of the questions I continually developed and how this research addressed my research questions. In order to get to that stage however, I share the findings for my second category which is on ECD Conferences.

## Category 2 – Early Childhood Development Conferences

### A back-story

In developing this category, I reflected on a personal back-story that I had. In 2008, I started working in Zimbabwe as a Director for an organization called The Goromonzi Project. This organization was providing educational assistance, food support and access to health care for orphans and vulnerable children. I enjoyed my work as a community development practitioner, interacting with parents and guardians of young children. Part of my job involved interacting with community elders wherein I would provide updates on our work and receive feedback from them on community development issues. I was also listening to concerns from community elders on how they felt the traditional ways of childcare were being eroded by modern approaches. For example, they felt that there was now a loss of some of the important cultural aspects such as the notion that a child was raised by the community and not just the biological parents. In this respect, they mentioned that there was a shift towards individualism as opposed to communities working together to ensure that orphans were looked after. They told me that they used to be very proud of what was called the '*zunde raMambo*' or Chief's land concept. This basically was a community initiative where the local chief would allocate a piece of land at each farming season wherein the community would provide seeds, labour for ploughing, weeding and harvesting the crops. After harvest, the food would be distributed to the orphans within that village and also to the very poor as identified by that community. This was a way of the community raising their children.

The community elders lamented that many of the young and able-bodied members of the village were quickly leaving the villages and heading to the cities, leaving this community concept without the required labour because the older people remaining in the villages could not till the land. The community elders were grateful for the food supplies that my organization was bringing in to support the orphans but lamented how in prior years the

community had designed programs for self-sufficiency and care for the vulnerable in their communities. These were interesting conversations that would lead me to think about how I could design some projects within these communities to support access to holistic Indigenous early childhood development programs built upon the bedrock of community knowledge and sustainability. I was thinking about how kids could access food, healthcare and playful learning opportunities, all being provided at the early childhood centres with the community elders and members playing an integral part in these programs.

In April 2009, I was then invited to attend and participate at an early childhood development conference and celebration of the *World Forum Foundation 10th Anniversary Conference on Early Care and Education*. I travelled to Belfast, Northern Ireland and I was one of over 600 other individuals who had flown in from 70 countries. At the beginning of the conference, delegates had been invited to visit some ECD programs in Belfast. I enjoyed experiencing first-hand some ECD systems that were providing not only learning through play opportunities for children but also meals and other supports for families. It was at this ECD conference and through these field visits that I learned more about the importance of ECD. On my plane ride back home, I knew that I was now on another path and that early childhood development would be at the centre of what I was going to be embarking upon.

### **ECD Conferences in Africa**

As I began this research, I wondered if the ECD conferences in Africa had made an impact on the delegates attending in the same way the 2009 World Forum Foundation Conference had on me. I developed this second category as a response to one of my research questions which was aimed at identifying the main conferences that had been held in Africa between 1990 and 2009. I also wanted to determine the significance of the conferences to the networks and how they addressed the needs of young children in Africa.

I have already noted how, through this research, I have learned that history does not progress on a linear path but instead takes some twists and turns that provide greater information and context when viewed in hindsight. As I began to explore the history of the ECD conferences, I noted that what had been a starting point for my research was in fact a midway point and that events prior to 1990 had informed activities that I was now researching. For example, in Chapter 2, I noted how some countries such as Kenya in East Africa had already begun investing in strategies and policies for ECD dating back to the early 1980s through the decentralization of networks known as District Centres for Early Childhood Education. In Southern Africa, Zimbabwe had from the 1980s, also begun piloting ECD programs for young children through a community based early childhood development model that was being championed by the then Ministry of Women and Community Development (Nziramasanga, 1999).

Thus, through reviewing literature on the history of education in Africa, I learned that the importance of early childhood development was on the radar of some African education ministers even before the emphasis on ECD at the World Conference on Education for All (EFA) held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990. In addition to this, the World Summit for Children held at the UN in 1990 also called for the expansion of ECD activities, in concert with a reduction of child malnutrition and deaths. Thus, follow up meetings such as the Conference of Ministers of Education of African States in 1998 (MINEDAF VII), the Education For All Dakar Conference held in the year 2000 and the World Children's Summit held in 2002 also echoed the importance of early childhood development. In chapter 2I made reference to these meetings, the conventions and agreements that were signed and aimed at improving the lives of children in Africa and around the world.

The 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers of Education of African States (MINEDAF VII) meeting that was held in Durban, SA, in April 1998 helped pave the way for a series of

African International ECD conferences. During this meeting, the Education Ministers acceded to a key conference recommendation and they agreed that “clear policies be formulated to promote early childhood education and development” (UNESCO, 1998). I gathered, through reports, minutes of meetings, conference documents and interviews for this research, that subsequent to the 1998 Ministers of Education meeting, parallel and complementary plans had evolved for the 1<sup>st</sup> African International ECD conference in Kampala, Uganda, 1999. The inaugural Conference in Uganda was followed by conferences in Asmara, Eritrea (2002), Accra, Ghana (2005), and Dakar, Senegal (2009). These conferences were in part connected to the ECD networks that I identified in the first category. For example, the Uganda and Eritrea conferences had planning and organizing support from the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa. In 2005, the Steering Committee of the Working Group for Early Childhood Development played a key role in organizing the Ghana conference and following that, was also involved in the Senegal conference held in 2009.

As I analyzed documents such as meeting notes, planning reports and concept notes, for the conferences, I also came across reports that provided an insight into decisions that had been made concerning the frequency of ECD Conferences. The ECD influencers on the continent in 1999, including the World Bank in particular, had determined that it would be most appropriate logistically and from experiences learnt in organizing conferences, that biennial and triennial conferences would work better than attempting annual ones. They recognized that annual conferences were too challenging to organize in the time available (Pence, 2005).

I identified some important documents such as plenary session reports and conference communiqués that were produced at these conferences. These documents assisted me in analysing how the conferences influenced ECD policy development in Africa. The documents provided clarity and assisted in providing responses to my third research question which was

looking at the extent to which the ECD networks and conferences had influenced current ECD policy development in Africa. For example, the 2002 Asmara Conference produced a Declaration on ECD that was endorsed by the conference participants. This Declaration called for, among other things, the strengthening and utilization of existing networking on ECD and the establishment of ECD networking at country and sub-regional levels. It also called for African countries to focus on the development of ECD policies that would provide frameworks for governments and civic society organizations to implement ECD programs (Asmara Declaration on ECD, 2002).

A few years later, the Accra Conference in 2005 sponsored by various development partners included a special one-day concurrent session with government representatives from 39 African countries that led to the endorsement by those governments of a multipoint Accra Communiqué supporting ECD in Africa. An important aspect in the Communiqués was a call for African countries to give priority to ECD in major development policies, frameworks and strategies (Accra Communiqué, 2005).

In 2009, the Dakar Conference closed with a Dakar communiqué adopted by the participants calling on African presidents and all ECD stakeholders on the continent to accelerate development and implementation of holistic, integrated ECD policies and to expand investment in high-quality ECD services. The call to action in this communiqué encouraged all Africa countries without comprehensive and inter-sectoral ECD Policies or Policy Frameworks and Strategic Plans for integrated ECD services to develop and adopt them (Dakar Communiqué: A Call to Action, 2009). I reckoned that ECD policies must have been important at that time for them to be mentioned in each of the above 3 conference communiqués.

As I analysed the conference communiqués I noted that African International ECD conferences provided a strong basis from which ECD leadership capacity, ECD policies and

cross-sharing of research, knowledge and practices had been promoted. Importantly, I recognized that the conferences had also been a platform where countries shared not only their successes and innovations but discussed challenges and created professional relationships between ECD delegates. The professional relationships would then be cultivated to become networks that potentially assisted with identifying solutions. In the first category, I have also shown how relationships between university professors and a UNICEF staffer had made an impact through leadership capacity development seminars and as I will discuss in this category, these relationships transcended through to conferences as well. As I analysed the documents, I was also looking out for names of people and the professional relationships that existed between them. I had learned that behind institutions' names there were key individuals who would plan and/or implement strategies and thus I always wanted to observe and know each key person involved with the conferences and what their roles were in relation to the ECD networks. This would assist me in placing names, locations and timelines for this research. During my first level analysis of the documents I had tagged for conferences, I noted that the African International ECD conferences provided an opportunity for countries to openly discuss their national ECD program ambitions, provide updates on ECD policy formulation and implementation strategies.

Through my analysis of all the documents I had gathered for both the ECD networks and ECD conferences that had been established and organized between 1990 and 2008; I then selected these four conferences as key to my research. I had learned during my literature review and subsequent analysis of interview transcripts and documents, which the four conferences stood out as having been significant and important events in the history of ECD in Africa. Firstly, because they were associated in some ways with the ECD networks because of how they had been planned and organized. Secondly, I identified that these conferences had played a major role in the promotion of ECD policy formulation in Africa. This I noted

through the continued appearance of ECD policy as a theme that cut across all these four conferences as well as the ECD networks themselves. As I observed this ECD policy theme, I looked at my research questions and noted that my third research question wanted me to look at how the networks and conferences influenced ECD policy development in SSA. This particular question then influenced the selection of these conferences. In the following sections, each of the four conferences identified during this research are narrated sequentially.

### **1<sup>st</sup> African International ECD Conference- Kampala, Uganda, September 6-10, 1999**

In the first category, I narrated how professional and social network relationships positively contributed to the ECD sector in Africa from 1994. This was especially in the context of how three individuals (Drs. Alan Pence, Barnabas Otaala and Cyril Dalais) had worked together to eventually have the ECD Summer Institutes that were being held at the University of Victoria in Canada be transformed into ECD Seminars in Africa to support UNICEF and ECDNA's leadership objectives. Those African ECD Seminars in turn transitioned and led to the first of the African International ECD Conferences. Through the analysis of the conference documents I now managed to connect the dots between the University of Victoria (and its Summer Institutes), ECD Seminars, ECD networks and the ECD conferences.

Earlier on I mentioned that I was surprised to find the University of Victoria appearing in the documents and interview data I was analysing because I was amazed that an institution that was thousands of miles away from the African continent would, through its academic offerings, have a great impact on the ECD sector in Africa. I learned that the idea of having an African International ECD Conference followed the successful completion of the ECD Seminars that the ECDNA had hosted between 1997 and 1998. The African based ECD Seminars had been held first in Windhoek, Namibia in 1997 and then the second one held in December 1998, in Banjul, Gambia.

I wanted to know the significance of these relationships, and I was keen to know about how the University of Victoria had become involved in the ECD work happening in Africa. I was motivated by the desire to understand the influence that western based academic institutions can have on events in the global south and whether there are forms of hegemonic impositions of models, research and strategies in such development work. Reflecting on the involvement of the University of Victoria, Pence narrated:

The African Conferences grew out of ECD Seminars held in Africa (which in turn were based on ECE Summer Institutes that I had been putting on at UVic since the late 1980s). Cyril Dalais came out to one UVic Summer Institute in particular; I think it was in 1994. That was his first exposure to these two- and three-week summer institutes on early childhood which were attended by key leaders and individuals in Canada (but in 1995, with Cyril's advice, we also had international guests coming in from Africa, Asia, and Latin America). Cyril felt that the approach taken with the Summer Institutes was one that UNICEF should employ in its international work. The first institute held in Africa, which I then began to call ECD Seminars instead, was originally set for Namibia in 1996, but had to be postponed to 1997. This first African ECD Seminar was in collaboration and cooperation with the University of Namibia. Barnabas Otaala was at that point on faculty there and he later became the Dean of Education at UNam (Alan Pence, ECD Summer Institutes Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

I also learned that Dalais' interests in the UVic Summer Institutes was heightened by Pence's many years of work with Indigenous communities in Canada, wherein issues of cultural and academic dominance had led to innovative approaches to cross-cultural, post-secondary education, in part addressed through what Pence termed a 'Generative Curriculum' approach, co-developed with Indigenous communities, and carried into the 1994 ECD Summer Institute. Through these Institutes, the University of Victoria was invited by UNICEF (Dalais) to develop similar seminars in Africa.

Another player that had maintained a presence so far in my research unsurprisingly reappeared in the conference documentation and interview data I was analysing. The World Bank in this case was now involved with the ECD conferences providing funding to showcase some of the ECD work that was being funded by the Bank through loans. I noted that Pence *et*

*al.*, (2008) had highlighted that World Bank representatives, Drs. Marito Garcia and Susan Opper, had met with the organizers of the ECD Seminars to propose another seminar to be held in Uganda. The World Bank had wanted to use the ECD Seminars to advance its ECD work in Africa, particularly a US\$40 million project in Uganda (Shaeffer, 2003).

Why would the bank want to use an ECD Seminar to advance its work? To answer this question, I began to look into the role of the Bank and why it continued to appear in the documents I was analyzing on the first conference in Uganda. I learned that the World Bank had funded a Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (NECD) project in Uganda. The World Bank had initially intended to have a two-week Seminar in Uganda so that they could advance and showcase this project. Their plan had been that the first week would focus on sharing innovative ECD practices from the African continent and the second week would be devoted to Ugandan ECD projects funded by The World Bank (IECD, 2002). The conversation and planning for this ECD Seminar then evolved into the 1<sup>st</sup> African International ECD Conference, held in Kampala, Uganda which would become the first in a series of four African International ECD conferences held between 1999 and 2009 (Dr. Alan Pence, Personal E-mails Communications to Researcher, August 2020).

I learned that following these conversations between Alan Pence from the University of Victoria and Drs Marito Garcia and Susan Opper from the World Bank, the conference planning began. In 1999 the World Bank, in cooperation with the Government of Uganda, then took the lead in providing funds to organize an African International Conference on Early Childhood Development. Building on the activities of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) which would later be merged into the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD), the conference was initially intended as the third in a series of African ECD Seminars organized by the ECDNA, UNICEF and the University of Victoria.

Earlier in the first category, I noted that the documents I had analyzed indicated that at this point in the history of conferences and networks, donors had become frustrated by the inability of the ECDNA leadership to create a viable ECD network and had begun discussing the need to focus on creating country networks that would then lead to a continental network being established (Shaeffer, 2003). I interviewed Alan Pence in order to get his reflections on the meetings with the World Bank and the planning process for the conference so that I could have information from someone who had actively participated in these conversations.

Reflecting on his role in the 1<sup>st</sup> African International ECD Conference, Alan Pence commented:

At the conclusion of the Banjul ECD Seminar in the Gambia, the idea came forward to hold the next one in Kampala. The World Bank, through its staff, Dr. Marito Garcia and Dr. Susan Opper, suggested that they had a project in Uganda and that it was their intention to also showcase what the World Bank was doing. So, as the person who took responsibility for the seminars, I then met with these World Bank representatives in Kampala and as I thought about the amount of work involved in developing these multi-country seminars, it struck me that it would make sense to go ahead and have a larger event (Alan Pence, ECD Summer Institutes Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

In this recollection above, I noted that the World Bank had initially intended to use one week of the proposed two-week ECD Seminar as one of the ways of advancing and advertising their work. I was mindful of the fact that these projects were also being implemented on the basis of loans that had been given to these countries. I wondered if the countries where these projects had been implemented were also equally enthusiastic about this ‘showcasing’ by the World Bank. As I analysed some conference preparatory documents such as meeting reports, I noted that the conference organizers had initially planned to have a small conference that would attract around 100 participants but due to the increased interest, the numbers of expected conferences participants soon doubled to its full capacity (the conference venue could only accommodate slightly more than 200). The conference then ended up with

over 200-plus participants from 21 African countries (and approximately eight countries outside Africa). The conference was held under the theme ‘Showcasing Early Childhood Care and Development Innovation and Application in Africa’ with a broad range of presentations being made. Picture 4 below shows a group photo of the conference participants in Uganda in 1999.



**Figure 6: African ECD Conference Group Photo, Kampala, Uganda (1999)**

As I worked through documents dating back to 1990, I realized that this conference in Kampala was an important step forward for the evolution of ECD in Africa. This was due to both its highlighting African innovations in ECD and as a launch pad for conferences to follow. Outside the ECD Seminars that had been held through a partnership between University of Victoria and the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) I had not come across any ECD specific conference of this magnitude that had been held during this time period.

Having identified this as the first major ECD conference in Africa, I wanted to learn more about its focus and why the World Bank had wanted to use this gathering as a way of showcasing the Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (NECD) Project in Uganda. I

learned that, in line with the conference theme (Showcasing Early Childhood Care and Development Innovation and Application in Africa), key presentations at the conference focused on how African ECD programs could be put at the forefront of thinking about ECD in Africa and beyond. The World Bank sponsored Nutrition and Early Childhood Development project in Uganda was one such endeavour that was highlighting an example of the ECD programs that were being implemented, and there were many others. In order to make those programs more visible and accessible, the Conference produced a published volume that included 33 papers from the Conference. In noting the influence and participation by the World Bank, Alan Pence noted that:

I appreciated the World Bank's offer to cover the simultaneous translation costs for the ECD Seminar held in The Gambia, and when they suggested an additional Seminar be held in East Africa, in Uganda, that worked well for continuing that Seminars' initiative. While in Uganda, late in 1998, I proposed we expand the 'Seminar' to become a 'Conference', as a venue was available that could hold ~ 200. Through the seminars, and individuals I consulted with, we were aware of many worthy ECD initiatives across Africa that could be showcased at such an event. My primary contact at the World Bank was Marito Garcia and he was supportive, although other ECD donors active in Africa would need to be contacted to cover the fuller costs. The development of the 2002 Conference in Eritrea was quite different than in Uganda. Eritrea also had a World Bank loan for ECD development and through participating in the Kampala conference they had keen ideas as to how their own Conference could be structured and what would be addressed and accomplished through hosting it (Alan Pence, ECD Summer Institutes Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

I analyzed some of the presentations that were made at this conference and what stood out for me was the intentionality by conference participants in sharing their innovative ECD programs implemented in their countries. Africa had stories to tell, and these stories were now having an outlet and an audience. The programs being showcased ranged from training of ECD paraprofessional teachers; mainstreaming nutrition and health; ECD and HIV/AIDS; community based early childhood development programs and community-based feeding programs targeting children attending ECD. These presentations were being made by African ECD experts and program officers representing various organizations working in different

parts of Africa. I observed that African ECD experts were taking the lead and showcasing the programs that they were implementing in Africa.

I have attended numerous education conferences in Africa where the key speakers are ‘experts’ from abroad who use the conference platform to provide direction on how programs in African settings should be implemented. Many times, conference organizers invited middle aged professors or development practitioners of Euro-North American descent, who often at times had no prior experience of working in Africa. I have no inhibitions on collaborations between Euro-North American individuals and African academics or development practitioners. I do have great concern when there is an over dependence on the knowledge and experiences on child development that these Euro-North American colleagues bring to Africa.

In my view, Africa does have a vast and varied knowledge repository that should be tapped continuously. These reservoirs of knowledge should always guide the ECD work that is done on the continent and importantly also provide lessons for Euro-North American systems. To me this was important in light of the struggle against dominant narratives from western countries that viewed African child development as unstructured and barbaric (Tchombe, 2016). As I made these observations, I was then interested in knowing how the first ECD conference had been structured. This was because I wanted to know if the African participants had been given the opportunity to share their knowledge through the plenary sessions and workshops. This would demonstrate that there was a level of consciousness and deliberateness in providing a platform for African ECD sector leaders to participate and share the knowledge and experiences from their communities.

### **Conference Structure**

It was important for me to understand how the conferences were structured and as part of documenting the historical journey of these conferences; I was also interested in knowing who was presenting at this and other subsequent conferences. The Kampala conference had 13

sessions that were held over four and a half days with approximately 35 presenters or speakers. In an interview with Alan Pence, the lead conference organizer, I learned that there was a period of only 9 months from the conception to the delivery of this ECD Conference. This short time in planning and delivery of a conference would, according to the lead conference organizer:

provide a set of lessons that would assist other ECD conferences going forward (Dr Alan Pence, Personal E-mail Communications with Researcher, August 2020).

Documents that I reviewed indicated that the conference also intended to promote communications and visibility amongst ECD players within Africa and globally. As part of the conference program materials, the organizers requested all presenters and participants to provide biographical statements as well as their passport sized photos which were then used in the production of the conference handouts and materials distributed at the ECD conference. I observed that the Conference Organizers planned an activity for each afternoon. These activities included poster presentations and site visits to early childhood development centres. In order to “showcase” African innovations in ECD, the Conference Organizers set aside one room which was used as a “display” room for posters, pamphlets and other related materials. There was also a time set aside for the presentation of discussions and presentations on these materials. This was an important aspect of providing an opportunity for participants from African countries to learn from one another other and be able to develop their own professional relationships for knowledge exchange and continued learning outside the conference environment. Earlier on I suggested that I get concerned when African conference organizers invite experts from Euro-North American communities and have them present keynote expert presentations. These invitations may sometimes happen without the conference organizers having searched from within their own countries or the African continent for such expertise.

In 2002, I was working for a non-profit organization that was involved in provision of protective services for young children through counselling, access to school programs, reading and writing programs as well as education training for caregivers. Part of our annual planning required us to convene a national conference that would bring together civil society and government ministries to discuss innovations, challenges and contextual issues affecting child development in Zimbabwe. I was then invited by my work supervisor to be part of the planning committee for this national conference. As we narrowed down our conference program, we got to the stage where we had to identify and nominate potential speakers for the different sessions. My heart skipped a beat as the chair of the organizing committee nonchalantly suggested that we identify some white people that could come and provide a keynote and also feature in the panels because this would show that we had organized a serious and important conference. My mouth dropped open in amazement by this statement. Here was a leader encouraging a meeting to target a specific race as lead presenters at this national conference, in the process negating the expertise of Africans. I do not hold anything against any race or nationality presenting or not presenting in conferences, but I had issues with this deliberate targeting because it would portray some kind of image. I was worried that the image portrayed was that of the Indigenous people not having sufficient knowledge about child development in Africa. I also was concerned by the notion it would appear that the organization, conference and Indigenous people would want another race/culture to validate what we knew already about child development in the African context. I would later learn that this particular older gentleman was from a generation that had grown up and was raised during the period where Western colonial administrations had been in charge. These white-led administrations would point out the inferiority of the Indigenous people and as this was done over long periods of time, the sense of self-worth and dignity by the indigens was lost. As I got invitations to attend conferences on education and early childhood development around

the world, I started to analyse conference programs with a different lens. I would want to know how the local people were participating in conferences and whether their voices and experiences were being projected or being stifled. Granted, sometimes I could not tell just by looking at the names on a conference program to make that determination but would use my actual physical attendance in these conferences to learn and observe on these aspects.

In my experience I have also observed that conferences can be enabling in a lot of different ways. Too many conferences tend to be organized in the form of a simplistic knowledge transfer mechanism rather than promoting knowledge interaction and knowledge generation between local experts and guest participants from other continents. I viewed this non participatory framework as a particularly colonial conception of learning and ways to maintain power. It is with this background that I was also analysing this ECD conference in Uganda and the subsequent ECD conferences. How much of the African voice was being given space and why? Was there a good balance between local and international voices?

I started this level of analysis by looking at this conference in Uganda. I learned from both the documents I analysed and from interviews that the lead conference planner (Alan Pence) had set in place the basic keynote speaker philosophy of the ECD conferences which would ensure that there would be keynote presenters who were African focused and themselves African. In his planning and invitation of keynote speakers, consideration was given to the African experts who were knowledgeable on the conference themes. To address knowledge interaction and generation an Africa International ECD conference planning document recommended that the African ECD conferences had to be designed differently and that they should not be a top down structure but rather there had to be ways of empowering African leaders to talk about ECD programs with other African stakeholders (Pence, 2008).

Guided by this rationale, I then saw that the first African ECD conference in the series had certain characteristics that would become dominant in future ECD conferences. These

characteristics included, for example, African leaders being identified as keynote presenters at the ECD conferences in contrast to bringing in ECD “experts” from western countries to speak or provide a lecture. In my review of these conference processes, I was inspired by the recognition that Africans had significant repositories of knowledge that could be shared within an African platform. Importantly for me, African ECD experts were not being relegated to workshops or breakaway rooms but rather were being given a preeminent place on the conference program. In the case of this ECD conference in Uganda, African ECD experts were providing keynote presentations.

Whilst the timing to organize this ECD conference in Uganda had been short, it could be that the conference occurred successfully because it had a centralized planning structure with only a few individuals contracted to organize the conference. I wondered if this way of organizing conferences would be a key feature of the subsequent ECD conferences and I made side notes to remind myself to revisit this particular aspect. Following this first conference, participants from Senegal drafted a proposal to host the second conference in October 2000. As was the case with this first conference, discussions ensued between the World Bank and Senegal with regards to funds to organize and host the conference. However, I noted that the conference failed to take place because the ECD conference planning processes were overshadowed by the Education for All Conference that was to be hosted by UNESCO in Dakar in 2000. With this UNESCO-sponsored Education for All Conference taking precedence, the Senegalese proposal to host the ECD conference became dormant and the next conference in the “series” would not be held until 2002.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> African International ECD Conference - Asmara, Eritrea October 29-31, 2002**

As alluded to in the previous section, the UNESCO funded Education for All Conference held in Senegal in the year 2000 pushed further the holding of another ECD conference on the African continent. The conference documents I analysed indicated that the

2<sup>nd</sup> African International Conference on ECD was then held in Eritrea in 2002. The main theme of this conference was ‘Early Childhood Interventions: What Works and Experiences Learned’.

True to what I learned that history of particular phenomena is not always linear, I had to find and analyse documents that would inform me on why the conference was eventually held in Eritrea. In doing so, I discovered that the World Bank had reappeared as a key influencer of this conference too. I went back into the history and learned that in the year 2000, the World Bank had approved funding for a US\$ 45 million ECD project in Eritrea titled Integrated Early Childhood Development Project (Sayre *et al.*, 2015). Similar to the NECD project in Uganda in 1999, the World Bank had intended to showcase this project and was supportive of Eritrea’s desire to host the second ECD conference.

In December 2000, a conference planning meeting was held in Asmara, Eritrea to discuss the conference and identify the steps that would need to be taken in order for Eritrea to host a successful event. In attendance at the meeting were the University of Victoria’s Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) participants Abeba Habtom, Wunesh Woldeselasi, Yordanos Seium (World Bank) and the ECDVU Director, Alan Pence. I analysed a report of this meeting which indicated that Alan Pence had provided a historical summary of the events leading to the first African International ECD conference held in Uganda. In addition to providing this historical narration, primarily due to the planning role he had with the Uganda conference, Alan Pence expressed the need to have a strong and capable team on the ground that would be able to coordinate the management required for a successful conference (Unpublished Eritrean Conference Planning Meeting Report, December 2000). I noted that the participants in this planning meeting had agreed that the conference would be of a more participatory nature than having presentations “dominating” the conference. The planning committee agreed that there would be a keynote address for each conference sub-

theme and that the keynote speakers would all constitute a panel for a plenary session on the last day of the conference that would address issues relating to integrated approaches to ECD in Africa.

I found the drive for an interactive conference to be very important as I also reflected on some conferences that I had attended before. I remembered having been to conferences that would have different presenters share their papers with little or no interaction with the conference participants. It would present an image of one person being the giver of knowledge and the participants just being receptors. I mentioned earlier above, how this notion would seem to represent a colonial way of dominance and control over conference proceedings. Thus, the conscious and deliberate efforts of creating a knowledge interaction platform were a laudable effort that Eritrean ECD conference organizing team was working towards. The Eritrean conference planning team also allocated roles and responsibilities to the different participants as part of the steps of developing a conference structure.

Following this planning meeting a conference concept paper was developed by the Eritrean team composed of Abeba Habtom, Yordanos Seium, Wunesh Woldeselasi, and Gebremeskel Fesseha. This team would receive technical support in conference planning from Professor Alan Pence and Professor Peter Wolff. Within this concept paper, the conference planning team proposed to have the conference address four sub-themes based on the work that was being supported by the World Bank through its ECCD Project in Eritrea. The sub-themes included: *Nutrition, Children in Need of Special Protection, Health and Early Childhood Development*. The conference concept note suggested that the proposed conference in Eritrea would move beyond showcasing innovations in ECD as had been done during the Uganda conference. Instead they recommended that the conference move towards focusing on the identification of solutions to the common problems that were being encountered within the African ECD sector. Issues that eventually would be covered at the conference included

policy development, planning for integrated ECD, and effective community development approaches.

The influence of World Bank in the conference planning process continued to permeate and be visible in the documents I analysed. I noted that in January 2002, the World Bank had a ten-day supervision mission in Eritrea. This mission was to assess progress made with the Eritrean “Integrated Early Childhood Development Project” that was being funded by the Bank. The World Bank mission team held a meeting with Mr. Tesfamicael Gehratu, the Director General in the Department of General Education of the Eritrean Ministry of Education, to discuss the conference preparations. At this meeting the conference budget was discussed, and the World Bank then confirmed conference funding to the tune of US\$ 80,000 (IECD, 2002). During this visit by the World Bank, the bank’s mission team members expressed their intention to review and approve the final conference budget and confirmation of Conference Taskforce members. In this meeting the World Bank also approved the conference program which would address health, nutrition and the social development of children. The World Bank also noted that a conference administrative secretary, to support the conference preparations and administrative work, would be identified and be housed within the offices of the World Bank funded ECD project in Eritrea (IECD, 2002). Why would the World Bank want to fund and then also host the secretariat at the same time? I recognized this as being possibly an imposition of the financial might and interests of the World Bank as it would seem that Eritrea would not be able to provide facilities for hosting the secretariat.

I noticed some strong influence coming in from the World Bank. Initially it had appeared to me that the country team composed of both government and civil society representatives who I identified by name above, was responsible for making all the decisions concerning the conference. However, despite having this local organizing committee, approvals still had to be given by the West. In this case, the World Bank having the power to

approve who was going to be part of the conference taskforce and who would not. This reminded me of the adage that says, 'he who pays the piper calls the tune'. I observed how due to the fact that the World Bank had provided US\$80,000 towards this conference, they had to have a say in how it would be organized and who would do the organizing. I have seen this countless times in the development sector when funds are granted for specific proposed projects. Instead of allowing the grant recipient to implement the project based on the proposal submitted, the funder sometimes steps in, requesting variations or often times directing how funds should be utilised. Through a review of the Mission Report, I could notice how this had been the case for Eritrea. With conference plans and funding in place, the State of Eritrea, in collaboration with UNICEF and the ADEA, commenced the preparations and organizing of this conference.

### **Conference Structure**

I observed that the 2<sup>nd</sup> African International ECD conference looked uniquely different from the first conference that had been held in Uganda. As noted above, the majority of the conference participants were from Eritrea itself. I also observed through the planning documents that there was leadership and direction being provided directly by the government during the planning and organizing for this conference. This however had both negative and positive influences throughout the process. For example, one of the key conference advisors alluded to some changes in the conference program due to some procedural challenges and delays in decision making. As I enquired further, these delays were mainly as a result of the increased involvement of political actors in Eritrea which meant that the decision-making process was not as efficient in order to successfully organize the conference.

In addition to this, other conference organizing challenges I identified during this research included restricted organizational capacity of the local organizing committee. I noted that the dates for the conference itself were changed a number of times amidst poor

information sharing and communication with the ECD stakeholders on the continent. This delay in confirming the conference dates could have been the reason why only 100 participants at the conference would come from outside Eritrea itself.

As discussed above, I learned that, due to increased political interference by the Eritrean government, the donors that had played a key part in the planning and organizing of the Kampala conference did not play a hugely visible role in the planning and organizing of this conference with indications that most support came in towards the final preparations of the conferences. This support was not in organizing but it was through technical backstopping on presentation panels, drafting of conference documents and supporting conference facilitation.

However, one aspect that stood out for me when analysing the way this conference was structured was the fact that the summary reports were being developed after each conference session. These summary reports were aimed at identifying the key issues that were arising out of the conference workshop sessions so that they could be discussed and further addressed during main plenary sessions. The Eritrean Conference organizers ensured that for each of the thematic areas that had been identified, panels would provide recommendations which would be discussed in plenary sessions so that these synthesis reports would be drawn up. These reports would lead to the production of an “Asmara Declaration” that would be discussed and adopted by the participants at the end of the conference. Whilst this process seemed to be tedious and cumbersome from an organizational perspective, I appreciated the fact that the conference organizers embraced the need to include each discussion. This gave credence to the fact that the Eritreans wanted to ensure that every voice was being heard. The synthesized statements would represent the outcomes of each panel or group presentation. To me, this process represented an inclusive process of co-developing conference declarations with participants. Additionally, this also showed a willingness on the part of the organizers to

incorporate the voices of participants through a deliberate process of synthesizing the thematic reports from which a conference declaration was developed.

I have been to conferences where, at the end of the two or three days of deliberations, the host of the closing session reads a conference communiqué that has been agreed to by ‘all’ participants. Colleagues I have met or travelled with to these conferences joined me in astonishment, wondering why we had not been part of the process to develop and agree to these declarations being made. I have since learned that at times, just four or five participants, mostly from the organizing committee, tend to produce these declarations that are then presented as if they have been developed by all the participants in unison. As I analysed the process that the Eritrean conference planning team had taken, I was encouraged by the deliberate process they had taken to develop a wholesome conference communiqué out of the synthesized reports. The conference planning team also developed a conference website that went “live” at the end of April 2002. This was something different from the Ugandan conference as this was useful in sharing information about the conference (ADEA, 2004).

As I stated earlier, I noted that the government of Eritrea seemed to have played a huge role in influencing the conference planning team. This assertion was supported by conference planning documents that I analysed which showed that due to the high-level involvement of government bureaucrats in the planning process, the conference itself had a largely “national stamp” to it. I then realized that this was also why there were more local participants at a conference that had been touted as the second African International ECD Conference. However, whilst this may have reflected broadly on how the conference was organized, I recognized the importance of scholarly capacity-building programs such as the University of Victoria’s ECDVU program.

The participation and leadership from ECDVU participants in the Eritrean conference planning team, as well as in supporting implementation, indicated to me that this network of

alumni, bound by their ties to the University of Victoria, were working together, supporting their Eritrean colleagues. For example, one ECDVU alumni, Abeba Habtom who was based in Eritrea, had provided leadership, contextual knowledge and expertise to the conference planning processes. This demonstrated to me that promoting the capacity of local ECD leaders is an important aspect of community and international development. The role of the University of Victoria through the ECDVU leadership development program was again visible through the analysis of the presentations. This was laudable because it showed the continued desire and motivation by the university to support leadership capacity development in the developing countries. I observed that not only had alumni from Eritrea contributed immensely to the conference, others from Ghana, The Gambia, Nigeria and other countries had also participated in the deliberations, planning and conference proceedings. This was a clear result of the capacity building efforts made through the ECD Virtual University (ECDVU).

### **Conference Outcomes**

Through analysis of the conference documents, I wanted to have an understanding of what the conference outcomes were and how they informed ECD policy and practice on the African continent. Starting with the conference outcomes, I saw that the conference held in Eritrea concluded with consensus on an agreement regarding an ‘Asmara Declaration on an ECD Framework for Action’ document, intended to be used as a reference for action and collaboration in ECD networking in Africa. Within this ECD Framework for Action were plans for a 3<sup>rd</sup> African International Conference on ECD. This was important for me to notice because this indicated that the conferences were now becoming a series and thus would provide an opportunity for follow-up on actions agreed in previous conferences. Other conference outcomes I reviewed in the ECD Framework for Action included the following recommendations:

1. For African countries to conduct participatory national ECD policy planning processes;
2. For African countries to undertake research and evaluation of ECD programs;
3. For countries to advocate for the development of national priority plans for ECD;
4. For countries to strengthen and utilize existing networking at country and sub-regional levels.

Along with the above paraphrased set of recommendations that I gleaned from various conference documents I was also interested in identifying any ECD policy development related conversations. I had observed, when analysing documents related to the first conference, that ECD policy did not feature much at the African International ECD conference held in Uganda. In terms of broad ECD policy development processes, the second African International ECD conference highlighted the idea that countries should support the development of inclusive and all stakeholder policy development processes. One of my interview participants, Stella Etse, the WGECD Coordinator during that time period, attended the conference and narrated the following:

I participated in the ECD conference in Eritrea and we had a lot of ECD practitioners from the international ECD community as well as other parts of Africa. The conference was not just talking about ECD policy but also about ensuring that there were inclusive approaches to ECD policy development, with all sectors being involved. In the case of Ghana, for example, during the ECD policy formulation process, we had to organize meetings to bring in health, education and child protection sectors into the policy formulation process. At the Conference, the main focus and interest was that countries should be involved in broad consultations as they developed or came up with their ECD policy documents (Stella Etse, Former WGECD Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

I was pleased to record this narration because it was pointing to the importance of inclusive ECD policy development processes. This narration also corroborated the data I had

analysed that was within the Asmara Declaration on an ECD Framework for Action confirming that the conference had indeed focused on ECD policy discussions. I also noted that the year the conference was being held also coincided with the WGECD project on ECD policy development. The ECD Policy studies projects were being implemented in order to support countries in developing frameworks that were aimed at the provision of integrated services for young children (Torkington, 2003). I observed that both the ECD Conference and the ECD Networks at this point in time were both engaged in advancing the ECD policy development agenda in Africa.

In my third category, I will further provide findings that respond to my third research question concerning the impact and influence of ECD networks and ECD conferences on ECD policy development in Africa. As I continued to make sense of the data coming from the conference documents, I also wanted to know how these discussions were going to be packaged in the conference communiqué. This was because I wondered if there would be any specific ECD policy recommendations that the conference would suggest for African countries.

### **Conference Communiqué**

Noting the aspects of ECD policy development as outlined above was very important for my research because one of the questions I had to address related to the extent to which the networks and conferences influenced ECD policy development in Africa. In the past decade I had attended numerous education-related conferences that also produce these conference documents and communiqués. I now had a keen interest to identify whether this second conference had built upon the foundation (or foundational elements) established by the last the last conference.

My analysis of the Framework for Action revealed that the second conference was building upon the recommendations of the first conference that had been held in Uganda in

1999. I was pleased to note this because it was an important recognition of the work that had been done in the prior ECD conference. In the conference data I was analysing, I observed similarity in the ECD discussions held in these two conferences. I also began to anticipate whether the subsequent conferences would also follow this trend. In particular, I noted continuity of discussions in themes such as ECD financing, ECD policy development and ECD networking as well as ECD leadership capacity promotion. What was also pleasing to see was the call by conference participants for a stronger commitment to being accountable on the implementation of agreed actions. This indicated to me, as I analysed the meeting documents, that these were not just ‘talk shops’ but that conference participants were desirous of continued engagement, even after the event itself.

I am fully supportive of creating a mechanism of monitoring ECD conference outcomes and deliverables so as to promote accountability within the African ECD sector. Over the past decade, I have noted how there is rarely a post-conference accountability structure that can be utilised to follow up on agreed actions. Having been involved in conference planning as well, I have seen too how in developing budgets for these conferences, funding is only requested for the duration of the conferences and not for post conference activities. Once a conference has been wrapped up, I have rarely seen deliberate attempts to continue conversations on conference agreements especially within the ECD sector in Africa. It is important therefore, for ECD conferences to have these post conference follow up monitoring mechanisms that will track the implementation of agreed recommendations. As I analysed the documents on all conferences, I wanted to see if there were measures being discussed and put in place to address this observation.

The conference communiqué noted that the conference theme of “Early Childhood Interventions: What Works and Experiences Learned” had managed to provide a platform in which major issues related to policy development, ECD programs, Indigenous knowledge and

community approaches to child development were discussed. In particular, I observed that the document managed to encapsulate the conference discussions into five major action points that included: policy development; promotion of research and information; institutional development; organizational support; and monitoring. These were also major focus areas for my research, and as I developed the categories of ECD policy development, national and regional ECD networking, I would revisit these documents to get perspective and clarity. For example, in seeking to answer my research question on the influence of ECD conferences on ECD policy development, I identified that the Asmara Framework for Action called for conference participants to advocate for their countries to develop national ECD policies as an integral part of the broader national development strategies.

In particular, the establishment of national policy frameworks for integrated ECD were seen as a guide to the preparation of comprehensive annual operational plans. These plans would be used as a guide to ensure that children living in poor communities on the continent would receive the resources and support they needed so that they could develop and prosper. This was an important major action as it would see ECD being mainstreamed into national development priorities as opposed to remaining in the periphery of national development. I therefore understood that this conference recommendation implied that the development of Poverty Reduction Strategic Plans (PRSPs) and other macro level policy initiatives should have ECD as an integral element in them. This was seen as crucial, if countries wanted to have the early learning and development of young children at the centre of all national development plans. These were impactful recommendations on ECD policy development processes and in that respect noted the influential impact of the conferences.

In analysing the conference program documents, I identified a workshop on the conference program titled “Working Group on ECD Policy, Planning and Research”. Digging deeper into this particular workshop as part of my analysis I discovered some feedback on the

deliberations that had been reported through another of my interview participants Dr Emily Vargas-Baron, who had facilitated that workshop. The recommendations on ECD policy development that emerged from that conference workshop included the need for every nation to:

- i. Promote integrated early childhood development as a national security issue and a tool for poverty eradication and socio-economic development;
- ii. Develop, adopt and implement integrated ECD policy frameworks as rapidly as possible since children could not wait and that the annual operational plans would allow for program revisions over time;
- iii. Ensure that community participation in conducting needs assessments, developing strategies for policy frameworks, planning and designing culturally sensitive local ECD programs and coordinating the implementation of programs at a local level was critical in the ECD policy formulation process (Vargas-Baron, 2002).

From these documents I could deduce that ECD policy development was a critical and important conversation that had taken place at the Eritrean conference in 2002. The issue of inclusive policy development processes was also central to these conversations at this conference. The Asmara Framework for Action also called for countries to have inclusive, participatory and cross sectoral ECD planning processes that would see the participation of stakeholders in the development of ECD policies. I found this to be an important aspect in the sense that policy formulation needed to represent the voices of all stakeholders. It was discussed that this inclusive process should be built on the foundations of participation by all the stakeholders, thus ensuring that the formulation of ECD policies represent the needs and aspirations of children and their families.

The Asmara Framework for Action also suggested that the development of these ECD policies should be part of the backdrop of research and program evaluation done to promote action-based research and evaluation at the grassroots level. Within this category of ECD networks, I noted that the Asmara Framework for Action called for countries to develop national ECD networks that would have partnerships with communities to develop programs for young children. The Asmara Framework for Action suggested that ECD stakeholders had to strengthen and utilize existing networking on ECD and work for the establishment of ECD networking at country and sub-regional level.

My analysis of the conference documents revealed that ECD Networking had been discussed extensively in conference break-out sessions and was seen as a way in which the sharing of goals on policy advocacy, capacity building and training, knowledge and skills training and ECD research would promote the ECD agenda on the continent. I recognized that the call for action on ECD Networks in the Asmara Framework for Action was very instructive as it not only supported the development of national ECD networks but called for the support and strengthening of sub-regional networks. This was coming at a time when there had been a recent merging of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) into the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) as a way of strengthening the regional ECD network. I noted that during this conference, the WGECD, which had been under the leadership of the Netherlands government, was implementing its own ECD policy case studies project. This project would later produce a report that provided insight into how three countries had embarked on their ECD policy formulation process. I will narrate these findings in my third category on ECD policies.

As I analysed the conference documents and my interview transcripts for aspects to do with this second conference, I observed two issues. Firstly, I noted that by the end of this 2<sup>nd</sup> conference in Eritrea, a decision had not been made as to when and where the next conference

would be held. Conference planning reports and WGECD documents showed me that meetings that would take place two years later would determine which country would host the third ECD conference. I learned that meetings held in June 2004 by the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) and the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) in Accra, Ghana, put in place an agenda of resolving which country would host the next conference. The ECDVU participants (28 individuals from 9 SSA countries) were a part of this consultation with the WGECD. I wondered whether a decision had not been made by the end of the Eritrean hosted conference because there was no funding in place to support the next conference.

Secondly, I noticed that there were two African countries that had expressed interest in hosting the next conference. These two countries, Ghana and Senegal, were then invited to make presentations to the WGECD Steering Committee on why either country could be selected to host the conference. As I analysed my documents, I was now looking at this conference host selection process keenly. This was now a different process from how the first two countries had been hosted. I remembered that for the first two conferences, the World Bank had pretty much decided where the conferences would go.

The third conference now had a different organizational process because I observed that the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD), which was now taking the lead, had an active Steering Committee that was now leading the conference organizing process. This Steering Committee then had meetings together with the leadership of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) in June 2004. At these meetings, a Minister each from Ghana and Senegal was present to make a case for their country to host the next ECD conference (ADEA, 2004). I understood from an interview participant, Alan Pence, that these two countries made robust presentations as to why their countries should be selected to host the conferences. I also learned that following these presentations, negotiations

between the two countries also occurred and out of these Ghana emerged as the lead contender to host the next conference. In analysing one of the documents that was developed after this process, I learned that one of the aspects that was reportedly in favour of Ghana was that the President, John Kufuor, was at that time chairing the regional economic and political bloc called the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This position provided the political clout that Ghana would use to get the nod to host the next ECD conference.

### **3<sup>rd</sup> African International ECD Conference- Accra, Ghana, May 30- June 3, 2005**

Following the above narrated meetings of the WGECD in Ghana in June 2004, the conference organizing structures for the third ECD conference were put in place by the Steering Committee. A planning committee, national logistical committee and an international advisory committee were established to spearhead the conference planning process for the third conference. To support and inform the conference planning process, the International Advisory Group was composed mostly of donors or their representatives, and then a four-person Planning Committee for the conference program and finally a 31-member National Logistics Committee that was tasked with overseeing the local preparations for the conference.

This National Logistics Committee was comprised of members from Ministry of Education and Sports, Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Information, Ministry of Foreign Affairs and other national based development organizations. I gathered that this had been necessitated by the need to have a collaborative process that involved all the stakeholders in the country. Insight into the Ghanaian ECD policy development process led me to believe that the national logistics committee had wanted to have a very inclusive process that made sure every stakeholder who had a role to play in

ECD at a national level was included. In my view, this was a great way to set a precedent for inclusive planning processes.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> African International Conference on ECD was subsequently held in Accra, Ghana in 2005 under the main theme ‘Moving Early Childhood Development Forward in Africa’. This conference was considered as the third in a series of African International ECD conferences that had begun with the first one in Kampala followed by the Asmara conference in Eritrea as discussed in sections above. The Ghanaian government, along with international development partners such as UNICEF, UNESCO, WHO, World Bank, the Consultative Group on ECCD, ADEA WGECD and the ECDVU sponsored and organized this conference.

I could see that this conference had been a huge undertaking, especially noting the delegate count and the number of countries they were coming from. The conference and logistical planning for this conference led to over 300 participants from 35 African countries attending. The conference had 27 sessions over the three days with 60 presenters or speakers and as I analysed the documents relating to the conference, I noticed a more complex structure when compared to the first two conferences. The conference organizers had planned for three days of technical presentations followed by another two days of a Ministerial consultative meeting that would consider and adopt the proposals that had been made throughout the preceding three days of the conference. The Ministers would then issue what the Planning Committee proposed as a “Way Forward Policy Document”.

I then delved into making an analysis on the conference structure, looking closely at the themes of the conference and how they interacted with each other. This level of analysis would help inform my third research question which focused on how the conferences had influenced ECD policy development on the African continent. The conference program itself had been organized around three sub-themes. These sub-themes were developed through a process coordinated by the International Organizing Committee in partnership with the Local

Organizing Committee. The themes for the conference were ensuring a supportive ECD policy environment, ensuring effective care practices within the family and community, and ensuring access and use of quality basic services. A thematic paper addressing each of these sub-themes would then be presented through a plenary keynote address at the beginning of each day with the keynote speakers being Africans. This was in line with the principle that had been stated in writing following the first conference and has been discussed extensively in an earlier section above, wherein African experts would be the ones providing keynote speeches.

During the review of documents pertaining to this conference, I identified that Dr Issatou Jallow, who was the Executive Director for the National Nutrition Agency of the Gambia, addressed the first sub-theme. Dr Peter Mwaura, a Lead Researcher with the Madrasa Regional Resource Centre in Mombasa, Kenya delivered a paper on the second sub-theme. The third keynote speaker was Dr Agnes Aidoo, a consultant for the WGECD, who delivered the keynote on the third sub-theme. I observed that these three thematic speakers were African ECD experts and I noted that the identification and selection of these sub-themes was done through a consultative process that ensured that voices of African researchers, ECD practitioners and sectoral stakeholders were represented (UNESCO BRENDA, 2008).

My approach, as with the other conferences, was to also understand how the conference would assist in addressing my research question on ECD policy. I noted that the conference deliberations considered the need to scale-up country-identified ECD innovations and programs through promoting ECD policy formulation in countries without ECD policies. This was to ensure that these would be given the spotlight they deserved and were included in the ECD policy planning and development processes at a country level. In addition to this, it was expected that through the Accra conference there would be increased political commitment to ECD by African countries.

## **Analysis of conference presentations**

At the Accra, Ghana conference, fifteen conference papers focused on ECD policy development and implementation in Africa. Three conference papers had presentations focused on regional and country ECD networking. As this research study was focused on identifying the extent to which the ECD networks and ECD conferences influenced ECD policy development and policy implementation in SSA, specific analysis was carried out on the keynote presentation by Dr Agnes Akosua Aidoo on the provision of a supportive ECD policy environment.

The plenary session for this keynote presentation was chaired by the Executive Secretary of ADEA at that time, Mamadou Ndoye. Agnes Aidoo, in her presentation, noted that ECD in Africa had been influenced by the CRC and the ACRWC, as I highlighted earlier in my literature review section. In her presentation, Dr. Aidoo suggested that due to the ratification of these conventions by African leaders, children were becoming more visible in government policies and structures. Dr Aidoo argued that the 1998, 7<sup>th</sup> Conference of Ministers of Education of African States (MINEDAF VII) held in Durban, SA had provided a significant push for the formulation of country ECD policies. She noted that since then, key development partners such as the World Bank and UNICEF had increased their support towards programming on childcare, health, rights of the child, education, food and nutrition in Africa.

Major notable contributions to ECD Policy development highlighted in the presentation included the WGECD Policy Project which involved the country surveys, case studies and technical support towards the national policy planning processes. The University of Victoria's ECDVU program and the African International ECD Conference series were also highlighted through this keynote address as having been major influences in pushing countries to develop policies. Dr Aidoo noted that lessons that had been learned in developing

national ECD policies in Africa included the need to have wide consultation and participation of all the stakeholders, inclusive of families, to ensure that there was consensus, ownership, synergy and cost-effective development of the ECD policy.

In line with the structure of the conference, the presentation by Dr Agnes Aidoo was also subjected to a discussion at the day-end plenary session. Participants alluded to the need for increased advocacy on development of integrated ECD policies and implementation of the same. Delegates pointed towards the need of having the issues of children included in the bill of rights of constitutions as well as having a wider linkage between the African Union and national level policies so that there was improved alignment of policies in order to push for increased financing of ECD. One of my interview participants, Stella Etse, had played a key role in the planning process for the conference. Working as the Coordinator for the WGECD during that time period, Stella Etse noted that:

At the 3<sup>rd</sup> African International ECD conference in Ghana our [WGECD] participation was very key, but maybe because we were hosting. We did a lot of consultations before the conference, so we knew we were sure of the people who were going to be participating. We had to identify those who were going to present in various panels, and we had to get great outcomes from this conference that would support the implementation of ECD policies (Stella Etse, Former WGECD Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

As I analysed the policy discourse within the context of this presentation, I also noted that some delegates were dismayed by the absence of information on ECD policy and financing as well as the budgetary process that informed development of ECD policies. I noted that a delegate from Nigeria also raised the concern that the cultural importance of children in an African society was not represented within the context of ECD policy development. A delegate from Burkina Faso suggested that the challenge with policy development in Africa was that there was a low level of policy implementation. This notion was also supported by a delegate from Rwanda who wondered whether it was worth having the ECD policies in place or not since in the first instance many countries were highlighting

that there were many draft policies waiting for approval. Even upon approval the policies would rarely be financed and implemented. Responding to this, a UNESCO representative highlighted that it was important for countries to develop national plans that were also informed by research so that the interesting work that was happening in the communities would be documented. Adding that the donors would only put funding where they were convinced that the plans would be feasible.

Through these discussions and exchanges that I managed to capture above, I got added confirmation that indeed the ECD conferences were influencing ECD policy development in Africa. This was because it was pleasing to note that the conferences were providing a platform for which delegates would voice out concerns that they had in their own countries regarding the ECD policy formulation process. The main concern was the non-implementation of policies or failure to even develop the ECD policies. I understood that due to the repressive nature of some governments in Africa, having a platform to robustly challenge policy formulation processes was important. This would bring about an exchange of strategies and ideas that would inform ECD policy development in Africa. As I continued to analyse these documents, I would imagine myself sitting in these meeting halls, engaging, learning and benefiting from the robust discussions that were going on. The plenary session on a ‘supportive policy environment’ concluded by recognizing that there were many points of entry for the African Union to engage in ECD policy making. Countries were urged to produce and articulate a clear vision for children so that these could be reproduced through ECD policy documents. Commenting on the Ghana Conference, Stella Etse noted that:

The conference in Accra was a big one and it was open to all the countries on the continent. We had participation by a lot of groups such as international NGOs, World Bank, UNESCO, and UNICEF. There was also a lot of government involvement in organizing the conference as well as interest from government departments because at that time, the WGECD was focusing on ECD policy development. The conference strand on policy development was very popular (Stella Etse, Former WGECD Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

The 3<sup>rd</sup> African International ECD conference therefore had a considerable impact and influence from the lens of ECD policy discussions. I then wanted to see how these ECD policy discussions would influence the ministerial consultative meeting that was held at the end of the formal proceedings of the conference. This would then assist in providing an insight into whether the politicians appreciated the rationale and importance of having ECD policy documents in their countries.

### **Ministerial Consultation**

I found these additional two days of the “ministerial summit” for the ministers to be a good strategy when used by the conference planners to engage with political leaders. I noted that these two days provided an opportunity for the ministers to receive some information on the importance of ECD as well as the rationale for countries to develop ECD policies. I have already stated above that the conference also had 28 African ministers from different countries — this was a very sizeable increase when compared to the two earlier conferences. The Ugandan conference had three Ugandan ministers in attendance whilst in Eritrea seven ministers had attended including the Eritrean President who had given the keynote opening address.

As I alluded to earlier, in order to secure increased political commitment to the ECD sector on the continent and to facilitate increased movement on development of ECD policies and a whole child approach, the two-day ministerial summit was held after the three day ‘technical conference’ (Accra Communiqué, 2005). The conference organizers envisaged that the summit and presentation of technical information on ECD to the ministers would lead to increased attention on ECD by continental political bodies such as the African Union and regional economic and political blocs. These blocs represented at the ECD conferences included the Common Market for East and Southern Africa (COMESA), Economic

Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). With a particular advocacy focus on ECD policy development, the conference organizers had wanted to ensure that the government representatives would go back to their countries with enough information that would make them allies and strong advocates for ECD in their countries.

This ministerial meeting was chaired by the Ghanaian Minister for Women and Children's Affairs. In her presentation the minister had highlighted the progress that Ghana had made in advancing the ECD policy development agenda. The minister noted that the commitment by Ghana to ECD policy development indicated the priority that was being given to ECD in that country. During the ministerial consultative meeting, Dr Agnes Aidoo [keynote speaker and ECD consultant] delivered a summary technical report which included the key highlights from her keynote presentation. In addition to this, Dr Aidoo had highlighted that whilst significant improvement had been made on the situation of children on the continent, there still remained threats such as armed conflict, HIV/AIDS, gender inequality, nutritional deficiencies amongst others. I have earlier on alluded to my own experience regarding these pervasive realities that children and families living in poor African communities faced. I was happy to see that the presenter managed to provide a report that encompassed these factors because these were leaders coming from nations with conflict, gender inequalities and children with nutritional deficiencies.

My fervent hope as I analysed this information was that the ministers and representatives of governments would take back informed ECD policy briefings to their principals. I noted that the conference organizers had not left the advocacy messaging to the consultants alone, and it was worth noting that two countries had also been invited to provide presentations on what actions they were going to implement after the ECD conference. Tanzania and the Central African Republic made presentations in the plenary meeting, sharing

their post-conference ECD policy development plans. It is challenging to organize a conference of this magnitude, let alone also have to bring in political players into the same gathering. I was now keen to analyse the reaction by the ministers through the conference communiqué. I now share some of my findings on this communiqué.

### **Conference Communiqué**

My analysis of the communiqué from the 3<sup>rd</sup> African International ECD conference held in Ghana revealed two observations that may have influenced the ECD policy development process in Africa following this conference.

Firstly, the communiqué indicated that it had been issued as a ‘ministerial communiqué’ and not an ordinary conference communiqué. This ‘ministerial’ stamp provided an indication of high-level political expression of commitment to ECD by the 28 Ministers and 21 African Representatives of ministers who had attended the meeting. In total 49 high level government officials had endorsed this communiqué on behalf of their countries, a broad ranging statement on ECD in Africa. In many education-related conferences that I have attended, communiqués are issued as a binding agreement on the main resolutions acceded to by all the conference participants. In this case, the fact that ministers of government met for two days and debated and agreed on a document over the issues facing children on the continent was astounding. This showed me that the ministers wanted to send a resounding message to their political principals in their own countries as well as to the regional and continental blocs indicating the importance of investing in ECD as well as supporting the case for developing ECD policies. Through this ministerial communiqué, the ministers called, among other issues, for the:

Commission of the African Union and the Secretariats of the sub-regional political blocs to promote and support holistic development and life-saving interventions for all infants and young children (Communiqué of the 3<sup>rd</sup> African International Conference on ECD, p. 3).

The ministers also called upon the Member States of the AU to make the development of infants and young children an urgent priority on their agenda. This was a strong call for the provision of integrated early childhood development services and a call to action for governments that were being seen to be lacking behind in prioritizing the ECD sector. I was keen to see however, if this call through the ministerial communiqué had been taken up by the African Union secretariat as well as the sub-regional political blocs mentioned earlier above. I was also interested to see if progress had been made on recommendations made through this ministerial communiqué, before the next ECD conference. This I would only get to know after analysing the fourth ECD conference.

Secondly, I noted that the ministerial communiqué that was issued in Ghana had recommendations that encompassed promoting effective caring practices within families and communities; ensuring access to quality basic services for young children; and creating an enabling policy environment to support delivery of ECD services. In order to ensure that the children were a priority in policy formulation, the ministerial communiqué had recommended various ways in which African countries could address some gaps and challenges within the ECD sector. I learned that the communiqué had called for African countries to accelerate the completion of ECD policies which would state minimum standards to be observed on implementation of the policies. I also noted that the ministers had adopted one of the key issues that had been raised by the keynote speaker and ministerial meeting technical consultant (Dr Agnes Aidoo) which was aimed at the harmonization of ECD policies with other national development plans and priorities. This suggestion for harmonization of ECD policies was a very important recommendation because it was aimed at removing the too common sectoral approaches that appear in many governments' approaches. I had had some experiences with challenges associated with sectoral approaches.

In 2014, I was developing a strategy on ECD advocacy for the Zimbabwe Network for Early Childhood Development Actors (ZINECDA), an organization I had founded two years earlier. Part of the plan entailed some collaborative synergies with government departments. As I was developing this strategy I visited various government offices to get clarity on certain policy directives as well as to enlist partnership for the implementation of the strategy I was working on. To my dismay, I noted that there was a disconnect between various departments when it came to ECD. When in a meeting at the Ministry of Health and Child Care (MoHCC) I would be redirected to the Ministry of Education, Sport, Arts and Culture on some child development aspects that could not be responded to there. On issues that this ministry failed to respond to such as the mechanisms in place to protect school going children from physical abuse and exploitation I would be directed to the Ministry of Social Services. When it came to standards relating to the construction of ECD centres I would be referred to the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works. This was frustrating, to say the least, because a lot of productive time was lost shuffling between one ministry and the other for information that could easily have been housed within one ministry. As I shared my frustrations about this process, I learned from colleagues in other countries that this was not peculiar to Zimbabwe alone.

This lack of integration and collaboration among ministries was one issue I identified within the analysis of this ministerial communiqué. The call for a clear link between national development plans and ECD was important because once every stakeholder realizes the importance of a great foundation for young children, it becomes imperative that sector ministries come together and make it easier for strategy and program implementation. I was pleased, therefore, to note that the ministerial communiqué was highlighting the importance of having ECD policy frameworks that would support the implementation of ECD programs in their countries.

I also noted that the ministers had discussed within their closed debate session, the need to ensure adequate funding for ECD programs. In these discussions I recognized that the ministers may also have deliberated at length the issue of ECD financing. The communiqué had called upon the development partners:

to uphold the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development in which development partners had committed themselves to provide increased resources to the developing countries (Communiqué of the 3rd African International Conference on ECD, p.4).

I learned that the “Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development” arose out of an International Conference on Financing for Development held in Monterrey, Mexico in March 2002 and the outcome of the conference was an agreement between developed and developing nations on areas such as debt relief, trade and aid (UN, 2003). This position statement within the Ministerial Communiqué was very concerning to me because I had observed that in the communiqué statement itself there had been no explicit financial commitment by the governments represented by the ministers.

As I analysed the communiqué, it appeared that the ministers had failed to commit financial resources from their countries towards ECD policy development. I could not find a recommendation or an attempt within the communiqué to include language that would show that the countries were committed to investing their countries’ funds towards ECD. Also missing was even salient recommendations for countries to at least explore some internally generated revenues to fund some portions of the ECD policy development process. This call by the countries through their ministers, to implore development partners to provide “increased resources” as part of upholding Monterrey Consensus on Financing Development, highlighted a deep gap in the lack of priority or consideration for ECD financing by African governments. I wondered why the ministers would call upon development partners to uphold the Monterrey Consensus but leave out a specific action or commitment from their own countries. Surely the countries had some financial resources to commit that would show that

they could also fund some of the ECD initiatives? Throughout this research I have noted the constant appearance of the World Bank, UNICEF, the BvLF and others who provided funding for ECD programs. In my analysis of ECD Conference presentations and ECD Network documents I found little evidence that would show commitments on direct funding to ECD by African governments. I noted instead that most of the funding was coming from international donors. This made me recognize that financial support for ECD is often very inadequate and where national government funding comes in, the contribution is miniscule.

Whilst I appreciated the rationale behind international cooperative agreements and partnerships mostly within the social services sector, ECD in Africa has mostly been dependent on international funding support. This dependence on international funding makes the ECD sector vulnerable to outside influences either through western driven curricula or through economic models for ECD that have no bearing to the realities of the African continent. This makes ECD in Africa fragile and precarious, hanging onto the whims of benevolent western funders with their stringent or unrealistic conditions. In my analysis of this communiqué, the very apparent lack of responsibility and commitment to fund the ECD sector was appalling but even more astounding was the call by the ministers for ECD initiatives in Africa to be funded by development partners. If African nations are to secure a bright future for the children, then the national governments have to be prepared to make commitments towards funding the sector.

In concluding my analysis of the third African international ECD conference held in Ghana, I want to advance that if Africa is to progress, it should recognize the agenda of children as its own agenda and not relegate funding of this to external western-based partners. There is a need for African countries to look within for resources to support ECD activities and then when funding gaps emerge then request support from partners. It is inconceivable that the partners would be the first port of call before making national level commitments.

This would indicate to children and their families that the government was taking their growth and development seriously by making provisions to fund ECD using internally generated resources.

Following this analysis, I turned to learn and document the history of the fourth African International ECD Conference along with analysing the conference presentations and communiqués as I had done with the preceding three conferences.

#### **4<sup>th</sup>African International ECD Conference – Dakar, Senegal, November 10-13, 2009**

In the introductory section to this Chapter, I commented that through this research I had managed to identify four African International ECD Conferences that had taken place between 1990 and 2009.

As I worked through the data that I had collected from the documents and interview transcripts, I wondered how the conferences could provide a set of lessons for future African ECD conferences. For example, I wondered how these lessons could be applied by the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) in planning and hosting conferences. I noted how in October 2018, AfECN had advertised that it was hosting the 1<sup>st</sup> African International Conference on ECD running with the theme “*The Africa We Want – A Better Future Now*”. At the time of this first conference hosted by AfECN, I had not yet started my research and thus did not have the information I have unearthed here. I applauded the fact that this new ECD network had started off well by bringing together ECD stakeholders to discuss the future of young children. I was oblivious to the fact that the ECDNA and other collaborators such as the World Bank and UNICEF had 19 years earlier hosted in Uganda what they too had called the 1<sup>st</sup>African International Conference on ECD. I have narrated above how the first, second and third international conference had been named, organized and structured.

As I looked at my data and reflected on how these four conferences had been building on each other, I wondered why the Secretariat of the AfECN had not called their conference

the 5<sup>th</sup> African International ECD Conference. Coincidentally, when I eventually started my document and interview transcript analysis, I saw an invitation to another AfECN hosted conference titled the 2<sup>nd</sup> African International ECD Conference set for October 2020 in Senegal. The main theme for that conference was “The Africa We Want for Our Young Children: Taking Stock of Progress”. The novel corona virus pandemic would lead to this conference being postponed amidst the travel restrictions placed by countries in a bid to control the spread of the virus. However, despite this cancellation, I could not help but notice some of the conference partners listed on the invitation.



**Figure 7: Conference Notice AfECN Postponed 2<sup>nd</sup> African International ECD Conference (Senegal)**

In the above picture, I noted that some of the partners and funders for this conference included UNICEF, The World Bank and the BvLF. These organizations as I have already mentioned in Chapter 1 and 2 had provided funding support towards the implementation of ECD programs in Africa and also the first set of ECD conferences that had been hosted on the continent nineteen years earlier. I then wondered if these organizations listed on this conference notice had in their own organizational archives, the history of the ECD conferences. Had they seen that the conference they were funding as the 2<sup>nd</sup> African International Early Childhood Development Conference could actually, and more accurately, be referred to as the 6<sup>th</sup> African International ECD Conference? Did they know that their organizations had been part of funding the long history of ECD conferences that had been held in Africa?

Along with this, I also thought about the cadre of staff that had once worked for these organizations and had probably left with all the history on the involvement of their organizations. Had some of the history been passed on to the new generation of staff now supporting the ECD programs globally? I also remembered how as a member of the founding steering committee during the formative years of the AfECN, we had made numerous overtures to the leadership of the former WGECD network coordinators in order to get more information. Some information had trickled in and I continued to think about which information had been used or not during the formative years of the AfECN.

At this stage I had a renewed awareness of the importance of what I was working on. This was because in light of these misrepresentations of the sequencing of ECD conferences, a historical record of the ECD conferences would be important to have in the public domain so that anyone requiring information would be able to access it. I also then realized other important elements of my research that I had to consider as an ECD practitioner.

Firstly, I recognized that the history of ECD networks and ECD Conferences should not reside with one individual. The history has to be packaged in a format that makes it available for anyone to access it, learn from it and use it to inform their work. The availability of the research findings would assist donors, partners and ECD network leaders to make informed decisions. It would be important to have this research not only within the library of the University of Victoria but also in books, websites as well as through journal articles. This sharing of information would help to ensure that there would be correct sequencing of conferences, awareness of the historical involvement of western based funders as well as the roles played by various individuals and organizations in the history of ECD networks and conferences on the continent. Secondly, I saw the many different avenues through which the findings could inform and assist in shaping African ECD conferences. I was now aware of how the gap in historical ECD information had provided a scenario where ECD stakeholders

in Africa did not know that there had been a history of ECD conferences. My research will indeed help fill this void. Thirdly, I realized that it was also important for me to think through the various ways I was going to disseminate the findings of my research so that they could be accessed by all the stakeholders in ECD in Africa and globally.

I learned that the 4<sup>th</sup> African International Conference on ECD had been held in Dakar, Senegal in 2009. The main theme of the conference was 'From Policy to Action: Expanding Investment in ECD for Sustainable Development'. The Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) was the convenor of this conference with support from the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA). Sponsorship of the conference was also coming from 17 development partners that had interest in ECD in Africa.

I recognized that this conference was occurring at a time that would represent a significant celebration of the African child for a number of reasons. Firstly, the year 2009 marked the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ratification of the CRC. This meant that 2009 was a year for celebrating not only one of the most quickly and widely ratified international conventions but also provided an opportunity for the world to reflect on the progress that had been made in addressing the rights of young children.

Secondly, that year was also the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the African ECD Conference series which had begun in 1999. I recognized that holding the conference in 2009 provided an opportunity as well as be an appropriate time for the conference participants and the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) to also celebrate the successes and outcomes from the three previous ECD conferences.

I observed that the conference had 406 delegates from 42 African nations. This was the highest number of countries to attend the ECD conference since the beginning of the conference series in 1999. In addition to the conference delegates, I noticed that the conference opening was also attended by three First Ladies from Cape Verde, Zanzibar and

Senegal. I observed that the participation at this ECD conference by the spouses of the Presidents from these three nations was an important nod to ECD. This was important because, like the third conference where a high number of ministers had participated, the First Ladies could also add to the chorus of stakeholders promoting early childhood development. Whilst the First Ladies' role is largely ceremonial, I recognized that they tend to sway a lot of opinion in their countries. These First Ladies contributed and participated in the First Ladies Colloquium which will be discussed in a later section below.

In another significant, new development the Dakar Conference was officially opened by two Presidents: the Dakar Conference was officially opened by President Abdoulaye Wade of Senegal and President Amadou Touré of Mali. In their remarks both Presidents expressed their commitments to ECD and placed special emphasis on expanding the ECD services for young children in their countries and on the continent as a whole. As I continued with my analysis, I hoped that this high-level political representation would also lead to greater responsibility by governments when it comes to prioritizing ECD financing as well as policy formulation and implementation. As the fourth ECD conference in a series that had started in 1999, my analysis of the participant lists and attendance registrations from the Dakar ECD conference indicated that there was increased participation by government officials from African countries. I had observed this steady increase from Asmara to Accra and now in Dakar.

My analysis revealed that the poster presentations at the ECD conference were all 100% authored by African ECD specialists, indicating strong participation by Africans in the conference. As had been the case with the Accra and Asmara conferences as well, all keynote speakers at the conference were leading ECD specialists from Africa. This was an important aspect of recognizing the key role that African ECD specialists played in the sector. In addition, I saw this as a way of promoting African leadership in the field of ECD as opposed

to bringing in Euro-North American experts to come and speak in a context they had little experience in or exposure to. This is an issue that I have alluded to in my first category.

I also noted that the fourth African International ECD Conference had been convened by the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD). I saw this as a significant progression from 1999 when the first conference had been influenced largely by the World Bank. To have an African ECD Network be the host and having taken the lead in organizing the conference represented to me a significant 'coming of age'. The ECD networks could, going forward, begin to have a more structured plan and strategy in regard to holding continent wide conferences that would maintain the momentum on ECD issues as well as an accountability mechanism in which colleagues within the ECD sector could share and support each other on ECD-related challenges and successes.

As I had recognized that each conference had its own planning and organizing dimensions, I wanted to know how the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) had worked through the entire process of organizing conferences. My aim was to record these experiences so that they could be helpful to future ECD networks when they plan and organize conferences. I asked an interview participant, Rokhaya Fall Diawara, to comment on the experiences of convening the 4<sup>th</sup> African International Early Childhood Development conference held in Senegal in 2009. The former co-Chair of the WGECD, Rokhaya Fall Diawara narrated:

The Dakar ECD Conference in 2009 was big and difficult to manage and put everything together. With two African presidents participating in an ECD Conference, it was attracting a lot of interest. At the same time, we had to put together the funds to be able to host this conference. As a co-chair representing UNESCO, we were not able to put a lot of money on the table, it was not and continues not to be our role. Most of the budget was being supported by the World Bank, who gave a grant of US\$200,000 and after that we received US\$50,000 from UNICEF. We also received from other bilateral partners for example ministers that joined the conference were sponsoring their own participation costs.

It was a rich experience, though for the next time I would try maybe do things differently, to involve an even bigger team. It was also challenging to organize this conference because there were two different styles of management. There was the management from an international NGO and management from the UN system and so how to get decisions made and how we can convene this conference together was very difficult. However, it was a unique conference, where different stakeholders were meeting, coming together to learn from each other and to appreciate the work being done within the ECD sector. After that conference and experience, I think we are now missing this type of international African ECD conference (Rokhaya Fall Diawara, UNESCO Education Programme Specialist and Global ECD Adviser, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

The last sentence from this participant made me reminisce too. I thought about the numerous ECD conferences I have attended and the knowledge and value I have derived from participating in them. I remembered how an indelible impression of the importance of ECD was left on me by a 2009 ECD conference I had attended in Northern Ireland. This conference had led me to explore more on the ECD sector in my own country and was pivotal in my redesigning the programs we implemented through my non-profit, the Nhaka Foundation. I wanted the same for my own continent, where ECD conferences are not just held to check certain funders 'checklists' and project deliverables but instead be transformative to communities and nations.

As I analysed the interview transcript from this particular interview with Rokhaya Fall Diawara, I wanted to understand why the participants had made reference to the unique nature of this conference. What had been different from the previous conferences? What lessons were available from history for future African ECD conference organizers? Along with that and in line with responding to my research question, I wondered how the conference had also influenced ECD policy development on the African continent. In order to get some answers to these questions, I analyzed documents that I had been given access to by another interview participant, Emily Vargas-Baron, to gain some insight and understanding on these issues as well as others. I managed to identify how this conference had been organized, who was

involved, which partners provided funding and who was leading the ECD policy discourses. Through analyses of these documents I learned that to support the organizing of the conference the WGECD Secretariat, which was now led by Save the Children USA, hired a Conference Consultant.

### **Conference Organizing**

The Consultancy contract between Dr Emily Vargas-Baron and the WGECD Secretariat was for a period of 80 days spread across the period starting March 1 to December 31, 2009. The main objective of bringing in a consultant with vast experience was for the WGECD to get “technical assistance and coordination in the planning and organizing of the fourth African International ECD conference taking responsibility for overall conference planning, shaping of the program content for the core days of the conference” (undated Terms of Reference for consultant document). Noting the role of the consultant, Pablo Stansbery said that:

As part of the preparation for the 4<sup>th</sup> International ECD conference, we brought in Emily Vargas-Baron to help with the technical pieces, she made it clear that she did not want to be tied up with organizing hotels, transportation logistics, etc., [that] she wanted to support the technical aspects only. These aspects included development of the conference concept paper, developing of conference themes as well as identification of conference speakers (Pablo Stansbery, former Regional Director for Education, Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020).

Within the context of this conversation with Pablo Stansbery, I observed that the WGECD Secretariat viewed the conference as being important for ECD programming in Africa. The technical pieces that were being developed by the consultant included sharing of ECD best practices and innovative ECD financing models as per the terms of reference that had been agreed upon. The consultant therefore was tasked with developing the themes and sub-themes of the conference, identifying and supporting thematic leaders to develop key conference papers (WGECD, 2009). The consultant also supported the WGECD Secretariat

on the development of conference plans by the host country and produced the conference report at the end of the conference. In an interview for this research, Emily Vargas-Baron opined that it was important to showcase, recognize and celebrate the leading role of African ECD practitioners. She further narrated:

I wanted to plan a conference focusing on African ECD leaders for the promotion of ECD in Africa. I thought, now I have the opportunity to give the people I know all over Africa an opportunity to shine. By that time, I had worked in Senegal, Mauritania, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central Africa Republic, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, and Lesotho, and a bit in other SSA countries. I decided to create a multi-faceted conference where we would have a “competition.” African leaders in ECD were asked to submit their most innovative projects to us. A board of leading African and international ECD specialists was created to judge the submissions. The presenters were judged by the quality of the different ECD innovations they had done, and the result was an ECD innovations booklet for the conference, as you have seen. During the conference, people from Africa gave virtually all of the leading talks and workshops. My role was to ensure that everything was well organized and that all leading African ECD specialists we could identify were invited. During the conference, it brought tears to my eyes as I watched people who had worked selflessly in country after country, never recognized, and often not even recognized in their own countries and certainly not at the African level, be recognized, applauded and uplifted. They, for the first time, were being recognized and the look on their faces was simply amazing (Dr Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the RISE Institute, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

It was great to be able to record this conversation and to learn about the conscientious involvement of African ECD practitioners at all levels. During the interview, Emily Vargas-Baron expressed that the conference had been organized through a very consultative process that involved local, national and international ECD stakeholders. Through these consultative processes, the conference date was set for 10-14<sup>th</sup> of November 2009. I noted that there is a story that was behind these specific dates. It was almost election season in Senegal at that time and this date was agreed upon so as to also align with the request that had been received from the Office of the Senegalese President. The rationale proffered was that these dates would not conflict with the Presidential schedule. In noting the positioning of ECD by President Wade of Senegal, Pablo Stansbery said that:

President Wade was up for re-election and he was really beginning to use ECD as a campaign strategy, I thought this man was very savvy because who doesn't like seeing beautiful children with ribbons in their hair, nice uniforms, pencils, backpacks and all going to school? Their healthy, beautiful smiles, who doesn't love that? (Dr Pablo Stansbery, former Regional Director for Education-Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020)

I was glad to see that the Senegalese President had shown a keen interest in ECD and through the weight that comes with a presidential office; I thought that this interest would position ECD in Senegal and in Africa at a great vantage point. However, as I thought about this, I was saddened by the realization that when it is campaign season, politicians latch onto anything that may be politically expedient for them. I have noticed that many times when it is election season, politicians tend to take advantage of current pressing needs in their communities or country in order to secure as many votes as possible. Sadly too, in Africa, these pressing community needs are never addressed once the politicians have been elected into office. Whilst it is noteworthy to have these political actors in Africa showing an interest in ECD, it is important to provide adequate ECD related information to those officials that work in government as full time civil servants. This, in my view, will ensure that when the political leaders leave elected offices, there is continuity when it comes to accountability on ECD sector financing and ECD policy implementation, among other issues.

As part of the Ghana conference preparations, Emily Vargas-Baron prepared a concept paper that was used to promote the conference. I noticed that the conference paper provided a rationale on the importance of investing in ECD and set a foundation for which the conference would be built upon (4<sup>th</sup> African Intl. Conference, 2009). The conference concept paper also highlighted the models of economic returns on investment in ECD providing an example of a study that had been carried out in Turkey (Göskel, 2008) where an average rate return of US\$ 7 was expected from investment in quality ECD programs. Here again I was finding some examples that were mostly developed in the West being used as a rationale for investments in

ECD in Africa. The same question arose again, were these models relevant in the African context? In addition to Turkey, the conference concept note touted the work that had been carried out by Dr. James Heckman, a Nobel Laureate in Economics. Following on the much earlier work of Weikart and others in the U.S., he had studied the rate of return or profit on the investments made in ECD within the USA in relation to other investments in education and training. His research indicated that the highest rates of return were from programs that targeted children from birth to age three (Heckman, 2011). As I analysed this concept paper, I again observed the continued use of western generated evidence of return on investment in ECD in an African context. I wondered whether these examples were appropriate or how the economic models were applicable to the African continent. I will discuss this further in Chapter 5. I turned to analyse the information that was related to how the conference had been structured so as to record and provide an insight to ECD networks and how previous ECD conferences had been organized.



**Figure 8: Dakar ECD Conference Plenary Session**

## **Conference Structure**

Similar to the other conferences, I also analysed the conference documents to identify how the Dakar conference was structured. As part of the conference preparations the consultant proposed to the WGECD that three committees be established. The Advisory Committee would be comprised of members from the WGECD Steering Committee, and the Program Planning Committee would be composed of members who would assume overall responsibility for the conference structure, content and the conference outcomes. A National Organizing Committee would have responsibility over the logistical arrangements for the conference (Dakar Conference, 2009). Through these structures the consultant would then have consultations with ECD stakeholders to develop the conference program.

I noted earlier that there was participation by three First Ladies in a colloquium at the conference. The First Lady of Senegal, Viviane Wade, invited the First Lady of Cape Verde, Adelcia Pires and the First Lady of Zanzibar, Shadya Karume to participate in this colloquium. The agenda for the First Ladies colloquium included discussions on the importance of the early years and discussion on the development of a Network of First Ladies to Promote Early Childhood Development. Included in the agenda items was a discussion and agreement on a draft proclamation that would be made by the First Ladies of Africa at the end of their colloquium. The First Lady of Senegal provided welcome remarks to this meeting along with Elaine Wolfensohn who was the wife of the head of the World Bank at that time and was representing the Wolfensohn Centre for Development. Having the First Ladies was a useful innovation for this conference, just like the Ministers meeting was an innovation for the Accraconference. The First Ladies then deliberated on the agenda items and provided their comments regarding the promotion of ECD in Africa and the potential establishment of the Network of First Ladies of Africa for ECD. These discussions then culminated in a First Ladies Proclamation being issued that among other issues they:

1. called upon African countries to give priority to expanding investment in integrated ECD services that included education, health nutrition, protection and sanitation;
2. encouraged African countries to adopt and vigorously implement ECD Policies and Strategic plans to improve child development and fulfil national commitments to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC);
3. promoted the expansion of promising national ECD programmes to ensure all vulnerable children are served from conception to age 8 (First Ladies, 2009).

This statement from the First Ladies Colloquium indicated a major projection of the voice of ‘mothers’ on the continent. As I analysed these documents, I remembered that in Africa, First Ladies are normally seen as the mothers or the intercessors who take the message to the father (the President). It was through this lens that I saw the importance of such a strong call to action by the First Ladies who were supporting and calling not only for the development of ECD Policies but also the implementation of ECD services that were multi sectoral in nature.

I noted that the conference had participation from 52 SSA countries, with up to 14 Ministers of government present and as I went through the available documents for this particular conference, I wondered why only three First Ladies would be invited from a continent as huge as Africa. I did not establish any link or invitation of First Ladies through the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS. In 2002, the First Ladies in Africa came together and established the Organization of African First Ladies against HIV/AIDS (OAFLA). The objective of this organization was of having a united voice for Africa’s most susceptible citizens: women and children living with and affected by HIV and AIDS. OAFLA, which was renamed to be the Organization of African First Ladies for Development (OAFLAD), was an advocacy organization. OAFLAD became a platform where First Ladies of Africa leveraged their unique position to advocate for policies that make health

services accessible and laws that boosted women' and youths' empowerment. I observed that it would have been more practical and sensible to invite as many First Ladies as possible through OAFLAD, if this message on behalf of the ECD stakeholders would be taken far and wide.

Whilst the First Ladies Proclamation from the countries Dakar conference was strong, its impact on national or continental conversations would largely remain to be seen as there was no evidence of how this Proclamation would be linked to the AU, where the husbands of these First Ladies sat and made political decisions on education and ultimately early childhood development. The absence of this direct connection to the AU was very concerning to me as an educational researcher. I then analysed the conference presentations focusing on those that were related to ECD Networks, ECD Conferences and ECD Policies. These three categories were related to my research questions and I was now specifically seeking to see how this conference had influenced ECD policy development.

### **Analysis of conference presentations**

The conference concept paper had noted that the preparation of ECD Policies and Strategic Plans afforded all African countries a golden opportunity to plan for increasing investments in services for young children (4<sup>th</sup> African Intl. Conference, 2009, p 9). This one statement provided me an insight to analyse all the conference presentations and identify those that addressed policy issues on the continent. This was in line with addressing my research question that sought to find out the extent to which the networks and conferences influenced current ECD policy development in the SSA region.

My analysis of the Dakar conference papers and presentations showed that out of the 146 ECD leaders that participated in chairing, leading or presenting in panels, 108 of these leaders were Africans representing 74% of the conference presenters. It is important to note

that 89% or a total of 362 delegates at the conference were Africans. This strong African participation and leadership is a characteristic of the series, as are certain other aspects. This was significant in that Africans had their own platform to discuss ECD policy issues on the continent and share their presentations on the various initiatives they were implementing in their countries. The conference also provided an opportunity for this strong African representation to listen to presentations by international ECD specialists thereby providing an opportunity to learn how other countries had implemented their ECD programs. As I worked through the interview transcripts and conference documents, I also noted that the conference organizers did not put out an open call for proposals for paper presentations but instead opted to identify and invite presenters based on the work they had been implementing in Africa. Dr Pablo Stansbery, who worked as the head of the WGECD Secretariat at that time, noted that:

We did not have too many calls for papers, usually you like to have a call for papers and people who aren't on the in-crowd might submit and be included. Dr Emily Vargas Baron [consultant] knew everyone who was important and strategic. So we didn't do much of a call for papers but even so I know it is sort of political, like you can't have twelve papers from Save The Children and none from Aga Khan, it has to be politically spread out, West Africa, East Africa, Southern Africa and at that point we included Northern Africa, they had been invited and it was sort of a targeted invite (Pablo Stansbery, former Regional Director for Education Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020).

In this narration, I identified a lesson for African ECD conference organizers. I recognized that by targeting specific African ECD experts, the conference planning team was being deliberate in bringing in subject matter experts. This approach was more guided and strategic thus reducing the time that was needed to identify program participants. For example, my document analysis of the Dakar conference revealed that there was a special pre-conference session and training on ECD for the media. Selected journalists from across Africa had been invited to come and learn about ECD and how to report on it. The reports that I

analysed showed me that the journalists were taught how to tell stories that promoted ECD in Africa. Pablo Stansbery narrated:

We got some funding to support media and so we scheduled a pre-conference with journalists so that they could learn about ECD and also for ECD people to learn about journalism. This was to support ECD people on how to frame their discussion, what to say and how to say it. Also, importantly, if one is going to do an interview, how to come up with core talking points and present to journalists. It was a very good pre-conference and we had excellent trainers from the International Journalists Association and ADEA had a Pan African journalist working group for education, so we made sure several of them came (Pablo Stansbery, former Regional Director for Education Save the Children USA, Semi-Structured Interview, June 2020).

I saw this as a good strategy for bringing in the media and training them on how to write stories about ECD. Thus, targeting and inviting specific participants was helpful in that the conference planners managed to execute a deliberate action with this select group.

I also was interested in analysing how the conference had addressed ECD policy. I identified that at this ECD conference, 23 papers had presentations that focused on ECD policy development and implementation in Africa. Only one paper had a presentation that focused on regional and country ECD networking. This indicated that the conference had a heavy bias towards ECD policy development. The conference announcement paper prepared by the conference consultant had suggested that time had come to:

conduct strong policy advocacy to expand investment in ECD and bring promising parenting and child development programs to scale (4<sup>th</sup> African Intl. Conference, 2009, p. 9).

I observed that this leaning towards ECD policy development could also have been largely because the conference consultant herself was an ECD policy expert who had worked extensively on the African continent supporting countries to develop ECD policies.

Having noted this bias towards ECD policy at this conference I then recognized that it was imperative for me to revisit the policy literature I had reviewed for my research. The literature had shown me that whilst many African countries had produced some draft ECD policy documents and also developed innovative ECD programs, many had neither formally

adopted their policies nor brought to scale the innovative ECD programs (Vargas-Barón, 2015; Neuman & Devercelli, 2012 and Colleta & Reinhold, 1997). I then saw why the conference had focused on:

conducting strong ECD policy development, implementation and advocacy to expand national and international investment in ECD, evaluating promising parenting and child development projects and programmes, bringing them to scale” (4<sup>th</sup> Intl. African Conference, 2009, p. 14).

I realized at this moment that, focusing on ECD policy had been a strategic approach towards ensuring that the conference participants would be able to advocate for the finalization and in some cases adoption of ECD policies. Having noted these strategies, I was keen to understand what the results of the conference had been and what the takeaway perspectives were for the delegates as they left the conference.

To close this conference, a Communiqué, discussed in greater detail below, was agreed to by the participants and the major highlights within the Communiqué included: the need for conference documents to give greater recognition towards expanded ECD services; and creation of avenues for collaboration, networking and partnerships between African leaders, ECD professionals and stakeholders. Lastly, the conference highlighted the importance of increased action research on ECD and the use of research in policy planning.

### **Conference Communiqué**

The conference documents I analysed showed that during the conference, the delegates developed and produced the conference communiqué in English with a French translation being made available and circulated to the delegates. During my analysis of the final Conference Communiqué from this conference, I observed that the document drew some of its recommendations from the 3<sup>rd</sup> African ECD Conference held in Ghana. Specifically, the communiqué noted that:

although many African countries had developed ECD policies, urgent challenges remain: few services exist for pregnant women and vulnerable

children birth to 3; parenting education and support services are limited; and pre-primary education cannot be accessed by most vulnerable children (4<sup>th</sup> Intl. African Conference, 2009, p. 1).

I recognized that this continuity and building upon recommendations from previous ECD conferences was important because it allowed focus to be on matters that had been discussed in prior conferences meaning that important ECD issues were not being forgotten. The Conferences not only carried forward key issues facing ECD in Africa, but also carried forward certain philosophies and structures from earlier conferences, while adding innovative aspects at each conference as well. As highlighted earlier, the conferences had been sequential and thus provided the impetus needed to keep the African ECD agenda on the list of developmental aspirations for the continent. By this action of following up on what previous conferences had recommended, I observed this as an important indication of the need for sequencing future African International ECD conferences. The conferences should be able to pick up from the conference series and be able to provide continuity, following up on issues recommended, following up on actions and ensuring that countries would be held accountable for the commitments they made to ECD in Africa during these conferences. The Final Conference Communiqué called upon the African leaders and stakeholders to “promote holistic and integrated ECD services for all children and to increase investments for the attainment of quality ECD services” and specifically called for:

1. African Heads of Governments and First Ladies who attended to serve as ECD champions as well as encourage other African leaders to rapidly expand investments on ECD;
2. The President of Senegal, Abdoulaye Wade to request the African Union Heads of government to hold a Special Summit for Young Children in 2011 (4<sup>th</sup> African Intl. Conference, 2009).

These abridged statements indicated to me strong political support for investments in ECD and the attendant desire by the African ECD fraternity attending the conference to have their Heads of State and government invest more in ECD. The conference Communiqué also called for countries to implement activities that would support and improve expansion of expanded integrated services. These activities included recommendations for countries to develop and implement comprehensive and inter-sectoral ECD Policies and Policy Frameworks, have monitoring frameworks and indicators that would guide ECD program implementation, and for countries to formally adopt ECD legislation, standards and regulations for ECD services. It remained to be seen whether these calls made in the conference Communiqués would be implemented and if the next conference in this series would also draw from the recommendations made from this Communiqué and make the follow up with governments, civil society and development partners. The 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> African ECD International Conferences had provided that link between them setting in motion the possibility for these issues to be identified and followed up on in future conferences.

In order to answer my third research question, I had to identify the connection between the ECD Networks and the ECD Conferences and how these had influenced ECD policy development in Africa. I turn now to share the findings of my research through the third category.

### **Category 3 – Early Childhood Development Policy**

My third research question was aimed at identifying the extent to which ECD Conferences and ECD Networks had influenced ECD policy development in SSA. In order to adequately respond to this question and to see the influence of ECD Conferences and ECD Networks on policy development, I had to analyse the historical context in which ECD had evolved in Africa.

In my review of the literature for this research in Chapter 2, I noted that the ECD Conferences and indeed ECD Networks had played a pivotal role in influencing the development of ECD policy in Africa. This was largely in part due to how governments from the early 1990s onward had begun to make concerted efforts to address the needs and welfare of young children in the context of implementing the ACRWC. Georgeson and Payler (2013) noted that although the governments' desired outcomes for children influenced the policy landscape, the diverse political agendas affected policy development. These diverse agendas would, however, intersect when it came to the agenda for the African child, with Aidoo (2006) suggesting that children became visible in government policies and structures through efforts by policy makers to ensure access to ECD services.

In the context of my research, I viewed these agendas as part of a journey that had also begun in 1990, the entry point for my research. I also revealed in Chapter 2 how the World Conference on EFA and The World Summit for Children in 1990 provided an unprecedented focus on children. A decade later the World Education Forum and the UN Millennium Summit, held in the year 2000, provided an opportunity to not only reflect on progress made in the passing decade but also to renew commitments on the welfare of children through the MDGs. As part of this journey revisited through my document analysis, the history of ECD program implementation in Africa as part of my tracing of the evolution of ECD policy development in Africa.

As I looked at the historical influences, in Chapter 2 I alluded to how in the 1970s, Kenya had played a leading role in inspiring other countries to develop early childhood programs. Through its' Preschool Education Project, Kenya led changes in early childhood development policy. It moved from ECD service provisioning from a centralized structure through the National Centres of ECD to a more devolved structure through what was called the District Centres of ECD in the 1980s (Njoroge, 1994, cited in Biersteker *et al.*, 2008). This

would also influence the way ECD programs in Zimbabwe, for example, would be provided with change from a national structure to community based early childhood development programs (Nziramasanga, 1999). I wondered then if the ECD Conferences and ECD Networks had also provided a platform for countries to learn from one another and influence how ECD policy development would occur. I noted, for example that the Conference of Ministers of Education of African States (MINEDAF VII) in 1998 had also provided an added political impetus by stating that clear policies had to be formulated on the continent in order to promote early childhood education and development (UNESCO, 1998).

As I analyzed the MINEDAF VII documents, I noted that this conference of ministers marked the increased intentionality by politicians to drive the ECD agenda politically. Indeed, the political agenda for ECD and more importantly the strong political commitment was seen as important in SSA if policy development and implementation was to proceed (Aidoo, 2006). To add to the calls for increased political commitment, I observed how the conference proceedings of the 3<sup>rd</sup> International ECD Conference had noted that:

one result of the Accra meeting was the expected increased political commitment to early childhood development in Africa that would facilitate accelerated action at country level and promote integration of ECD into other developmental processes (Accra Conference Proceedings Report Foreword, 2005, p.1).

The growing recognition of having key political commitments when developing ECD policies was critical because it allowed for an increase in ECD policy-making activities in SSA. I have also in preceding sections elaborated on the involvement of politicians and political leaders in the ECD conferences as a way of keeping the ECD agenda on the table. I found that the advocacy by the ECD networks and ECD conferences was highly influential and led to the increased number of countries developing ECD policies. Pence (2019) noted that due to the growing size and impact of the African International ECD Conference series “UNESCO determined that by 2008 the number of SSA countries that had tabled ECD

policies had increased by almost 10-fold in ten years” (p.331). This was a significant move from just a few countries that had policy development plans in the late 1990s to 19 in 2008, with an additional 20 engaged in preparations for their own ECD policy development (UNESCO BRENDA, 2012).

In analysing this information further, I observed that in the 10-year period (1997-2008), there had been increased activity when it came to ECD policy development on the continent. I counted and noted that there was a significant jump from only four countries with policies in 1997, to 19 countries with tabled policies and 20 more ‘engaged in preparations’ by 2008. That is, 39 of 54 countries in SSA were now actively involved in ECD policy formulation on the continent. I was conscious of the fact that ECD policy development is not easy. In my second category I alluded to one of the recommendations that emerged from the fourth African ECD conference which suggested that ECD policy planning had to be broadly consultative so that the product that results from this process represents broad ownership. To also see this significant increase in the number of ECD policies being developed or at implementation stage showed that there had been concerted effort by African countries on policy planning activities to ensure that the development of young children had been a priority.

As I analysed this trend in ECD policy development, I also noted that this increased activity had happened between the years 1997 and 2009. I observed that it was also the same period when the WGECD stepped forward to contribute to the 2002 Conference in Asmara, Eritrea, and to host the African International ECD Conferences in 2005 and 2009. This indicated and confirmed to me that indeed the ECD networks, as well as the ECD conference series had influenced the development of ECD policies on the African continent. This in part responded to my third question which had wanted to see the extent to which ECD networks and conferences influenced ECD policy.

From this top-level analysis, I then proceeded to then look at the specific activities that influenced this increase in ECD policy development activity. My document analysis and interview transcripts had given me some data which indicated that both the ECD Networks and ECD conferences had been a major influence on ECD policy development. With this data, I then narrowed my research down to the involvement of the WGECD which by the end of 1999 had merged with the ECDNA to form one ECD network. This one ECD network then engaged in two projects that were focused on ECD policy development in Africa. I share the findings on these policy projects below.

### **Rationale for WGECD Policy Project**

Earlier above in my first category, I narrated how in 1998 the Basic Education Section, Education and Developing Countries Division of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs had assumed the leadership of the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD). I also explained that in that year, a consultant (Kate Torkington) had been hired to lead the review of the work of the WGECD. As part of this work, the consultant also reviewed the status of ECD in Africa and recommended a way forward in terms of what activities the WGECD could tackle in the ensuing three-year period (Torkington, 2001). As part of the review work, the consultant had identified that whilst there were many ECD projects and programs that were being implemented across the African continent; these were largely uncoordinated and under-funded and were of low quality.

I also identified through my analysis of a report written by this consultant that there had been little financial commitment by African governments for the development of ECD programs and services (WGECD Policy Studies Report, 2001). To support this, I also analysed data collected from a study by Colleta and Reynolds (1997). The data indicated that out of 25 countries that had been surveyed during the study in 1997, only four of them had official budgetary allocation to the ECD sector and these allocations were not enough to meet

the required needs. As a result of this review of ECD in Africa, the consultant's recommendations that emerged led to the reconstituted WGECD to focus on governmental commitment towards ECD policy development. The underlying assumption that was held by the WGECD was that if national commitment to ECD increased, then there would also be a concomitant interest in the development of national ECD policies. This would lead to the improvement and expansion of ECD service provision in Africa (WGECD Policy Studies Report, 2001). The challenge that I noted with this assumption was that, having an ECD policy did not automatically mean that the policy would be implemented. If not implemented the expansion and improvement of ECD services would be jeopardized.

In one of the first consultative meetings of the WGECD held after the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs had assumed leadership of the network, the meeting participants recommended that ECD policy development in the context of national development processes was important (WGECD, 2001). Noting this focus and agreement by the meeting participants, which included African ECD specialists and global ECD experts, the WGECD then embarked on an ECD policy case studies project which I discuss below.

### **WGECD Policy Project objectives**

As I analysed the documents relating to the work carried out by the WGECD, I observed that scholars such as Sifuna and Swamura (2010) had suggested that the WGECD had made a significant contribution towards the development of ECD policies in Africa. I was curious then to see how this ECD network had done this. As I analysed the documents, I learned that the first set of activities carried out by the WGECD in the ECD policy work was to document case studies of countries that had implemented ECD policies or were in the process of developing the ECD policies (WGECD Policy Studies Report, 2001).

The WGECD identified the ECD policy case studies project as part of its core work and this was seen as falling within three strategic areas for the network. These strategic areas

for the WGECD programming had been identified by the Secretariat as ECD policy advocacy, ECD research and capacity building. I wanted to know how the WGECD would address these strategic areas in the context of the policy case studies. I noted that in addressing research, it was premised that the policy case studies would assist in identifying the critical issues in ECD that would require further in-depth research across the African continent. The WGECD also wanted to influence the development of ECD policy across the continent.

The ECD policy case study research work would be therefore be used to provide evidence to other African countries on how to develop these policies and also secure the requisite funding for the implementation of the policies. I also noted through my analysis that the WGECD had envisaged that results of these policy studies would influence, through advocacy, the ECD funding policies priorities of donor agencies, particularly in the three countries (Namibia, Ghana and Mauritius) that had been identified for the initial case studies. Furthermore, the results of the Policy Studies project were seen as a conduit for encouraging investment in the development of ECD policies in other African countries (WGECD Policy Studies Report, 2001).

Having understood this background of the WGECD Policy Studies projects, I then analysed documents to identify the specific ECD Policy activities that had been implemented. I learned that the WGECD had commissioned two sets of ECD Policy projects. The first, carried out between the year 2000 and 2001, focused on three countries, Namibia, Ghana and Mauritius. The second ECD Policy project (Francophone) was then carried out between 2003 and 2004 in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal. This second project had been under the guidance of an ECD Policy consultant who had been hired for this task. Below, I narrate my findings on these ECD Policy projects that were influenced by the WGECD.

## **WGECD Policy Studies project in Namibia, Ghana and Mauritius**

The participants at a meeting hosted by the WGECD in The Hague in March 1999 made a number of recommendations to the network Secretariat concerning actions on ECD in Africa. One of the recommendations was that the WGECD should embark on an ECD policy case studies project which would see three countries being identified for this project.

The WGECD in responding to this particular recommendation, decided to implement a project that contained three main elements. The project elements included: the production of three case studies on the development and implementation of an ECD policy in Ghana, Mauritius and Namibia; a survey of the state of ECD in all African countries, specifically looking at ECD policy development and lastly, carrying out a meta-analysis of the case study project and ECD policy survey (WGECD, Unpublished Policy Studies Report, 2001). My analysis focus was on the ECD policy case studies project as I intended to understand features that influenced ECD policy development at a country level.

As I read through the ECD policy case studies project documents, I learned that during this meeting hosted by the WGECD at The Hague, participants also developed guidelines that would be followed in selecting countries for the ECD policy case studies project. The major guideline that influenced the selection of countries was that of holistic child development. Greener (2002) suggested that holistic development entailed a synergistic relationship between development areas of health status, nutritional status, growth, spiritual development and psycho-social well-being. The support for this guideline was premised on ensuring that children developed satisfactorily in all their different developmental domains. These developmental domains for children include physical, cognitive, language, and social-emotional with children having changes and shifts from one domain to the other. Myers (1995) posited that these domains worked together to enhance their effectiveness.

The meeting participants agreed that these domains were interdependent and therefore a critical task was to identify those countries that had focused on developing integrated ECD policies (Torkington, 2001). I also learned that this holistic development approach had been informed by the main aim of the ECD policy case studies which was:

to expand and improve sustainable and appropriate ECD provision in Africa, by stimulating and supporting increased commitment by national governments through the development and implementation of national ECD policies which reflect and acknowledge children's holistic development (WGECD, 2000).

As I analysed the documents from this meeting, I noticed that it became important for the ECD policy consultants to ensure the country or national ECD policies that would be reviewed were cross-sectoral and incorporated the principle of supporting the whole child. Using these selection criteria, the WGECD identified three countries for its first phase of the ECD policy project.

Earlier above I mentioned that Namibia, Ghana and Mauritius were selected. These countries were identified mainly because the lead consultant [Kate Torkington] had been involved with all of them in the "early stages of developing their policy" (WGECD, 2001, p.11). These countries were also selected on the basis of having cross-sectoral policies that focused on holistic child development (Torkington, 2001). As I learned this information, this explained to me the selection of Namibia, Ghana and Mauritius. As noted earlier above, these countries would then become examples of good practice for other countries to learn from on ways to provide and expand holistic ECD services to children.

I analysed my data further in order to unpack and investigate the unique characteristics of each of these countries. I learned that Namibia had been identified because it was recognized as the first country to have had a cross-sectoral ECD policy approved by its Parliament in 1996. It could provide a model for other African countries on how to develop and implement ECD policy. The Namibian ECD policy had recognized that the development of children could not be compartmentalized into health, nutrition and education since these

were recognized as being interwoven into the life of a child. Namibia therefore had a clear example of what was called holistic development embedded into the ECD policy.

Ghana, on the other hand, had been identified because of the journey the ECD policy formulation process had taken. It had involved a multi-level participatory consultative process that was seen as having been inclusive to all stakeholders (WGECD, 2001). In addition to this, the Ghanaian policy formulation journey was viewed as having been recent. At that stage the Ghanaian ECD policy document was ready to be presented to the Cabinet and Parliament. Thus, it was determined that the Ghanaian ECD Taskforce had their policy formulation process fresh in their minds and were seen as major contributors to this ECD policy case study project.

Lastly, I understood that Mauritius had been selected because it had an ECD policy that focused on children who were under three years of age and thus provided to the WGECD, an added element of working with parents and caregivers and not only at the school level with ECD teachers. In addition, Mauritius was identified as a bilingual country, with both French and English being spoken there and thus the results would also be helpful in influencing policy formulation and implementation in Francophone Africa. The ECD policy case studies commenced and the ones for Ghana and Mauritius were completed within a year and for Namibia, the case study was completed by May 2001. My analysis of the findings of the ECD policy case studies revealed that there were three major learning points.

Firstly, countries had to have national political will and a vision for young children before embarking on ECD policy development. For example, I noted that Ghana and Namibia had identified national conferences for the state of children that had been held in those countries as the 'fire starters' for the development of ECD policy development. For Mauritius, the process of ECD policy development had been triggered by a regional seminar on ECD that

had been organized by UNICEF. In these three countries there had been demonstrated political will to have the ECD policies developed (WGECD, 2001).

Secondly, another major learning coming out of the ECD policy case studies project was ECD financing and its implication on ECD policy development. I learned that both Namibia and Mauritius had not adequately budgeted for the ECD policy implementation process (Namibia Resource Consultants, 2001). For example, I learned that the case study project had revealed that within Namibia's ECD policy there had been a provision for an ECD Trust fund to be established. However, the ECD Trust fund had still not been established five years after ECD policy had been adopted. Without adequate financing for the ECD policy implementation it becomes very difficult for countries to see through activities designed to support the holistic development of young children. Whilst there was some recognition that the government departments on the Namibian ECD coordinating committee had provided some resources for the implementation of the policy, funding was still inadequate. In making a determination on this, a review of the Namibian ECD policy noted that although partners did meet annually to discuss ECD activities, they did not produce detailed annual joint implementation plans, budgets and targets (Namibia Resource Consultants, 2001).

Thirdly, I learned that the ECD policy case studies project identified that it is important to have an operational plan that guides and informs how the ECD policy is going to be deployed. The WGECD Policies project report noted this as a good practice because once approved, countries would then use their operational plans to bring those policies to life. As a development practitioner I have observed in many meetings in Africa, ECD sector practitioners lamenting the non-implementation of the ECD policies at a country level. The main reason offered when I asked why this was so, would be that the absence of an operational plan developed by stakeholders delayed the implementation of the policies. This was in addition to funds and human resources to support the implementation of the policies. In

other situations, I would be told that some governments would refuse to fund the implementation of policies because they did not see them as advancing the agenda of the day. This would point back to the first learning I had, which was to ensure that there is political commitment when developing the ECD policies. The ECD Policy case studies report concluded by noting that although national governments in Africa had committed to ECD, the requisite financial resources were inadequate to support expanded ECD policy and program development. Having analysed and understood the rationale and findings from the first policy studies project, I then analysed information on the second policy studies project implemented by the WGECD.

### **WGECD 2<sup>nd</sup> Policy Studies Project in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal**

In the documents I was analysing, I noted that a Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) consultative and review meeting was held in The Hague in December 2001, to review the results of the first ECD policy case studies project that had been implemented in Ghana, Mauritius and Namibia. This consultative meeting led to a second ECD policy project being proposed with three Francophone countries, Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal, being identified (Three Countries Report, 2004).

I noted that in the meeting which had been held in March 1999, the WGECD had developed generic terms of reference that were intended to cover all the ECD policy case projects. However, these terms were then changed for the second policy studies with some different elements to it that related mainly to the development of policies. In analysing these changes to the terms of reference, I noticed that the changes made specified supporting Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Senegal to conduct policy planning and develop ECD policies for implementation. Furthermore, within the context of the terms of reference, the WGECD now wanted to also strengthen partnerships with national ECD networks, improve cooperation and policy dialogue amongst practitioners, communities and other stakeholders who were

working on integrated early childhood development. This signalled to me that the WGECD was looking beyond just supporting countries to develop ECD policies.

I noted that there was deliberateness within the framing of the terms of reference, to include aspects of capacity-building national policy developers as well. The WGECD expressed a desire through the terms of references of enhancing the analytical and methodical skills in ECD policy development and analysis of policy makers in the three countries that had been identified for the project. In order to roll out this work, a consultant was then recruited by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Netherlands Government on behalf of the WGECD to assist the country policy planning teams with the policy development projects (Vargas-Baron, 2005). The WGECD policy project titled “Project to Support National Policy Planning for Early Childhood Development in Three Countries in West Africa” then began in June 2002 and lasted until November 2003.

In making country assessments, the consultant noted that there was lack of experience by policy makers in developing coordinated and integrated policies that encompassed health, nutrition, sanitation and education in the three selected countries. During the implementation of a project inception analysis, the consultant had noted that the three countries had limited understanding, at both national and local level, of the importance of ECD and why an investment into the early years mattered. As I noted in the previous category, the level of government investments into ECD in Africa had not been successful. It was not surprising too that in the countries that had been identified for the study, the investment in ECD had been poor.

In the second category where I shared findings on the conferences, I noted how the expert consultant at the 3<sup>rd</sup> ECD conference in Ghana, Dr. Agnes Aidoo, had called for an integration of ECD policies with national development plans. I observed that this was important so as to avoid the sectoral approaches to early childhood development. If ECD

policy is integrated within the development plans, funding of the whole plan would also mean that ECD is funded. As I analysed the ECD policies projects I noted that the integration of ECD into mainstream national development plans was a key feature of the work that was being done in the three countries. To support this notion, the consultant also observed that Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal:

are facing many challenges to achieving comprehensive and participatory national integrated ECD policy planning with high levels of endemic poverty due to desertification and other environmental challenges (WGECD, 2003, p.2).

In order to ensure that some of these challenges were addressed, the consultant noted that efforts on a more coordinated and integrated approach in the development of national policies and action plans was required. These efforts had to ensure that the national early childhood development policies:

were carefully aligned with the Millennium Development Goals, each nation's Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers, the EFA plans as well as the requisite sectoral plans (WGECD, 2003, p.2).

I asked the ECD policy consultant who had been hired by the Working Group of Early Childhood Development to provide some comments on the policy development process. In reflecting on the policy development process in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal, the consultant Dr Emily Vargas-Baron narrated:

We got three countries with ECD policies and strategic plans. The ECD policy in Senegal was very well implemented. There was great synergy amongst the teams that were working together to develop this policy. In Burkina Faso, we did a great deal of work, but the World Bank wanted them to focus more on formal primary education and thus undercut what we were doing in early childhood development. But the people of Burkina Faso did not forget, they came back and returned to the ECD policy and implemented it. With regard to Mauritania unfortunately there had been a succession of authoritarian leaders. Though there was some policy implementation, it was never what it could have been (Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the RISE Institute, Semi-Structured Interview, August 2020).

In this narration I picked up a significant issue that was also aligned to my research. I noted that in the case of one country, Burkina Faso, the World Bank had some expectations on what the policy development process should focus on. Whilst the country intended on developing and implementing their ECD policy, the World Bank pushed for primary education policy instead. However, the Burkinabes would still push for the implementation of their ECD policy. I reflect on how one of my theoretical frameworks would apply in this instance. Foucault (1991) had challenged the idea that power is wielded by people or groups by way of sovereign acts of domination. This perspective supported the development of my understanding in investigating the existing power relationships between institutions such as the World Bank and countries that were receiving loan packages and in this case Burkina Faso. Foucault (1998) had further suggested that power was found in groups of people through what he termed “episodic or sovereign acts of coercion or domination” (p.63) and he saw power as dispersed and pervasive. In this case, I noted how the World Bank would use its power to push for the implementation of the primary education policy wherein the country wanted to support ECD policy. Using this Foucauldian theoretical framework, I thought that the later return to the ECD policy by the Burkinabes also highlighted a part of the action and resistance that Foucault (1994) had also touted. This action of resistance and push back is important in an era where financial packages are given to developing countries once they accept often tough and non-contextual conditions that take away their independence and freedom to make decisions. These packages, often wrapped under the guise of public good, sometimes create more harm than good in developing nations.

Through these two ECD Policy projects that had been carried out, I observed a number of lessons arising out of my analysis.

### **Observations made through the Early Childhood Development Policy Projects**

A major challenge that has been evident in most countries is found when one looks for a particular ministry that is responsible for ECD. In the ECD case studies project, each country had to consider the roles and responsibilities of a lead ministry that would take charge of the ECD policy formulation process (Torkington, 2001). Pence *et.al.*, (2004) opined that the Namibian ECD case study exposed the fragility of policies and their associated implementation and underscored the tension that often exists between Ministries regarding who will do what, how and with what resources.

For Namibia, the findings of the case study noted that the Ministry of Education had been the lead in the development of the policy. However, at the end of the ECD policy development process, the Taskforce leading the process decided that the ministry responsible for implementation would be that of Regional, Local Government and Housing. The rationale proffered was that care of a child was the responsibility of the family and community and therefore the government made a decision to make ECD a community-based program. Unsurprisingly this was to change with the government later deciding that the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Child Welfare would be the appropriate ministry to house the ECD policy. The resultant impact of this shift would be a reinforced attitude that children were only a women's affair and not necessarily that of other Ministries.

In the case of Ghana, the country had the Ghana National Commission on Children (GNCC) as the national coordinating authority for the policy development and implementation. The GNCC had a notable advantage in that it was a quasi-government agency and it therefore had a degree of independence that allowed it to avoid bureaucratic delays and institutional inefficiencies found within ministries.

In Mauritius, the Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development was recognized as the lead ministry with a Child Care Advisory Committee having responsibility to oversee the implementation and monitoring of the ECD policy. There was not much

confusion there as to which ministry would play the lead in policy formulation and implementation. In most African countries however, it is always difficult to identify which ministry has overall responsibility for the implementation of the ECD policy. Where one ministry is found, difficulties in implementation can still be evident through lack of cooperation, bureaucratic delays and lack of financing for the ECD sector between the ministries. ECD sector financing was another issue I identified as I analysed the ECD policy studies documents. I observed in the documents relating to Mauritius, Ghana and Namibia that inadequate funding hampered the ECD policy formulation process. In discussing the Accra Conference communiqué earlier, I noted how Ministers had called upon development partners to uphold the Monterrey Consensus. This was in relation to the provision of funding support to develop and implement ECD policy at a country level. In my analysis, it emerged that it is of optimal importance for countries to put in place budget and financing mechanisms to support ECD policy activities.

## **Conclusion**

The WGECD had identified ECD policy formulation and implementation as one of the key areas that its partners could make a major contribution to supporting sustainable and holistic child development programs (Torkington, 2001). At its 1995 annual meeting, the WGECD had identified policy development in SSA as a priority area and thus the Policy project focused on carrying out a policy analysis in Ghana, Namibia and Mauritius (Torkington, 2001) and follow up policy analysis work was carried out in Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Senegal (Vargas-Baron, 2004). The WGECD encouraged the development of national ECD policies in a number of countries through regional and cross-country assessments and capacity building initiatives. The WGECD then took as a primary role of the

network, the development and strengthening of national comprehensive and integrated policy frameworks (Namibia Resource Consultants, 2001, p.1).

My analysis of the WGECD policy projects revealed that a lot of work had been accomplished through the African International Conferences on ECD and the regional early childhood networks. Noting that these networks and conferences were bringing together hundreds of stakeholders, this indicated a long and strong commitment to early childhood development by many organizations and individuals between 1990 and 2009. It is important that the ECD Policy work goes beyond conferences and those who can attend such important events. There is need to reach the smallest of villages and the largest of institutions found in Africa and that efforts are not complete until these too are reached, and they too support the work of ensuring that Africa's children thrive. This can happen when there are sequential ECD conferences that build upon issues discussed in prior conferences, providing a stronger foundation from which early childhood development actions are premised. ECD Networks should understand the history of the conferences, pick up on thematic issues that were key and explore ways in which development partners and national governments can develop a common ECD agenda to address at a national and regional level.

The conferences allowed African ECD policy development initiatives to be shared and increased awareness of innovative ECD practices and successes on the continent within this sector. At the same time, stories of challenges, shortcomings and weaknesses in programming, policies and implementation were also identified during the analysis of the conference reports. Through the influence of these conferences and networks, ECD policy conversations emerged at both regional and national levels, heightening attention towards having ECD policy frameworks that would support provision of service for young children in Africa. ECD policy conversations at conferences also included the importance for the sector to respond to gaps in ECD financing, coordination and limited knowledge. Through all these issues I recognized

that African International ECD conferences and networks played a significant role in sharing the richness, diversity and challenges of ECD policy development and implementation experiences within Africa.

Having concluded with the third category, I turn now to my next chapter where I discuss each of these categories, offering perspectives on the findings. I link each of the categories with my main research questions to ensure that each one has been addressed through this research.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has looked at the journey of these international ECD conferences and ECD Networks and discussed how they influenced the African ECD agenda and fostered closer collaboration amongst various stakeholders on the continent. The chapter took a historical narrative approach in discussing the past five conferences paying close attention to the key thematic areas and the relevance and importance of these themes. The chapter also discussed some of the successes within the ECD sector in Africa following these conferences and it concluded by looking at how all stakeholders can maximise the impact of international ECD conferences held in Africa.

However, questions still existed throughout the research process. Why would two networks (ECDNA and WGECD) with very similar mandates emerge at almost roughly the same time? Who was promoting the agenda of network establishment and to what end? How did these networks and the subsequent conferences held influence the African ECD policy development agenda? How much of the current ECD practices on the continent are influenced by the events surrounding the formation of these networks in the early '90s? These questions

are part of the following next chapter that is focused on a discussion of the findings of this study on ECD Networks and ECD Conferences.

## CHAPTER 5: Discussion of Findings

This chapter discusses the findings on the African International ECD Conferences and the main ECD networks. I provide an interpretive account of the findings that I have presented in Chapter 4. I reflected on issues and questions arising out of the findings that informed and responded to my research questions. The discussion in this chapter is aimed at bringing meaning to the findings as well as shedding light on the almost 20-year journey that the ECD networks, conferences and policies were on. In this discussion I also reveal possible assumptions arising out of my analysis of the findings.

The recognition by the African Union (AU) that “early childhood care for survival, growth and development is not an obvious humanitarian action, but an action at the centre of the long- term development and evolution of society” (African Union *et al.* 2003, p. 14) is a very fitting entry into discussing the findings of this educational research study. In my discussion I used my theoretical framework of social network analysis, Foucauldian theoretical framework and the ecological theory to analyse and discuss the findings of this research.

I also discussed the role played by funding organizations such as UNICEF and the World Bank as well as individuals who provided key contributions to the development of the ECD Networks and ECD Conferences between 1990 and 2009. Whilst the individuals and organizations were identified through this research, it was important to discuss their involvement in the African ECD sector as part of this dissertation’s aim to provide a historical record on key ECD players during this time period. This will enable present and future generations of historical scholars and stakeholders on ECD in Africa and beyond to be able to trace the journey of the ECD Conferences and ECD Networks with these pioneers as a reference.

In this chapter I focus my analysis and discussion using the three main categories I identified. My discussion also then follows a similar pattern to the findings in Chapter 4 wherein I categorized my findings into Early ECD Networks, ECD Conferences and lastly ECD Policies.

### Category 1 – Early Childhood Development (ECD) Networks

Interaction between ECD Networks and ECD Conferences

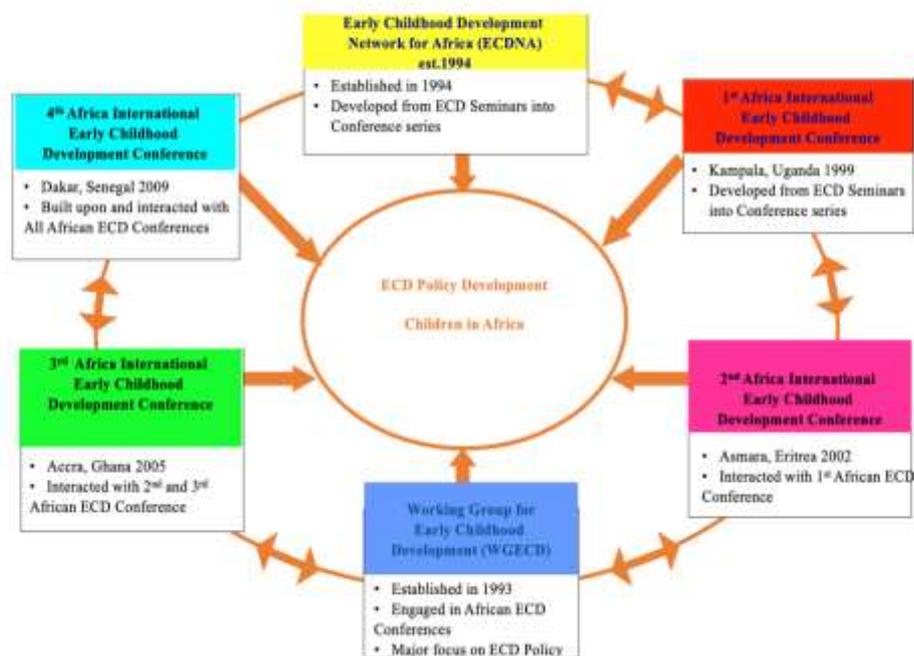


Figure 9: Interaction between ECD Networks and ECD Conferences

The activities of the early childhood development conferences and networks highlighted the importance of relationships, collaborations and cross-sectoral partnerships in advancing the ECD agenda on the continent. As I worked through my analysis of the findings and making sense of the information, I developed Figure 9 above to show the relationships between the ECD conferences and the ECD networks as well as how these interacted with the early childhood development policy in Africa. In the above diagram, ECD policy and the children in Africa were at the centre of being impacted by the work that was being carried out at a networks and conferences level. As narrated in Chapter 4, the Early Childhood Network

for Africa (ECDNA) had an early influence on the first African International ECD Conferences, with each of these conferences building up from each other due to their sequential nature. The conferences also interacted with each other through relationships that existed between the conference organizers and the ECDNA secretariat and its Africa focused activities.

The Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) also benefitted from the historical work and influence of the ECD conferences that were held in Uganda in 1999 and in Eritrea in 2002. This history included how these conferences were organized, the conference outcomes and the early childhood development policy discourses that would lead to the ECD policy studies projects as outlined in Chapter 4. The WGECD itself then took leadership in organizing the African International Conferences held in Ghana in 2005 and later in Senegal in 2009. From this series of interactions and building up from conferences prior, the children in Africa benefitted from the ECD policies that were now being developed at a country level.

In line with one of my theoretical frameworks, the social network theory (Daly, 2010), I analysed the relationships that existed within the networks and conferences and identified that the ECD policy sector would emerge as a 'central actor' arising from these interactions between networks and conferences. Daly (2010) defined central actors as units which had the most ties within a network and had access to information, knowledge and communication more than others within the system. Emerging from this analysis of African ECD conferences and networks, the centrality of ECD policy development and implementation qualified for it to be a central actor. This was because the ECD policy work was being informed by the presentations and communiqués coming out of both the African ECD networks and the ECD conferences.

## **Intersection of Funders and ECD Networks**

Through this research I worked to establish answers to some questions that arose during my first level of data analysis. For example, why would two ECD networks with almost identical objectives be established within one year of each other? Who championed the establishment of these two networks and what were their agendas? Why would the ECD Networks only merge into one organization five years after establishment and not during the first year or second year, after realizing that they had similar objectives? What happened in the formative years of these networks? Questions such as these were part of my deeper analysis of the data related to this research.

In order to get the answers to these questions, I applied the social network theory in the context of educational change (Daly, 2010) to examine the relationships that existed between the two networks and the conferences. I also analysed the influence of funding organizations and individuals associated with leading the networks and organizing the conferences. Daly (2010) postulated that it was important to look at the individual relational ties that lie within the network itself and how these relationships influenced the attitude and behaviours of members to achieve a desired outcome. These myriad connections between individuals within the funding organizations and the agenda of establishing ECD networks seemed to have been driven from outside the African continent in addition to some of the involvement of a few African ECD leaders.

The networks started off being championed by different promoters such as the Donors for African Education (DAE) and the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development (CG-ECCD) whose involvement and influence in ECD Networking on the continent has been narrated in Chapter 4. The Working Group on Early Childhood Development had funding support from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, UNICEF, USAID, Aga Khan Foundation and Save the Children (UNESCO BREDIA, 2008).

On the other hand, the formation of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) had been initially championed by the CG-ECCD who themselves were not a funding agency but were providing seed capital to support the establishment of this network as part of their own broader strategy that was aimed at addressing some membership deficiencies within this international group.

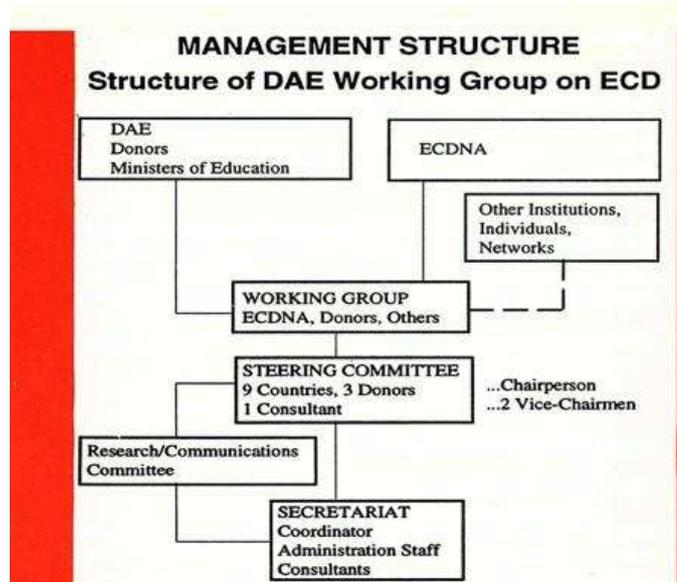
This meant that these networks had at one time had a connection to the same funders which led to the assumption that the funders were aware of the activities of the two ECD networks that had been operating at the same time period. This could mean that there were different interests that could have been pursued as part of the ECD network agenda being pursued through the interaction of the same donors. The CG-ECCD and the DAE had to identify a mechanism for this, with the outcome in this case being the establishment of African ECD networks. An assumption from looking at this data was that one possible strategy deployed by these organizations was to pursue the establishment of the ECDNA whilst concurrently pursuing the formation of the WGECD in the hope that one of the two would be successful. This would answer why these two networks operated side by side and had some of the same funders. I observed that the establishment of the ECDNA had been part of an exogenous push by the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Development (CG-ECCD). This group had ostensibly provided leadership and established mechanisms for networking within the ECD sector globally. The CG-ECCD was positioning itself as a ‘network of networks’ and whilst it had representation of members mostly drawn from North America (Myers & Evans, 2009) it was also beginning to strategize on the composition of its membership and was now working to incorporate other regions. The motivation of the CG-ECCD was to create regional ECD networks that could be used to champion the early childhood development agenda. As I analysed this, I thought that this could possibly have been an act of domination by the Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and

Development (CG-ECCD) because they would then be providing oversight over these networks.

### **Ideological and Afro centric identity of Early Childhood Development networks**

I analyzed how the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) had been structured and make sense of why there could have been some ideological differences between the initial supporters of the ECDNA and the WGECD. I also wanted to understand what the differences were, and the different motivations, and the ways in which colonial power had an impact on the formation and running of these ECD networks. This would be in the context of my use of the Foucauldian theoretical proposition that power is everywhere.

I observed that the Secretariat of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) continued to seek engagement and a formal connection to the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) from 1995 through to 1999 when ADEA accepted the ECDNA to be merged into the Working Group for Early Childhood Development. This was important to note because key leaders within the ECDNA had always wanted to provide the Afro centric identity that they felt was missing in the work of the Working Group for Early Childhood Development. An assumption was that the proposal by the ECDNA to the Donors for African Education group might have been developed in order to ensure that African ECD issues were being discussed at the level of donors, governments and development partners. Whilst at the same time, the ECDNA would exist to provide leadership on continental ECD issues. This could explain why Figure 10 below showed the management structure of the ECDNA looking the way it did, with the WGECD being a complimentary coordinating unit operating under the ECDNA and not a “competing” network.



**Figure 10: Management Structure of Donors for African Education Working Group on ECD, 1995**

In the figure above, the structure represented on the top left side was composed of the DAE group, with ministers of education and on the top right hand the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) and right below this structure the Working Group of ECD which was composed of the ECDNA and donors amongst other stakeholders. The Working Group supposedly from this structure would be the “melting pot” or a super-ordinate Working Group where the DAE, the ECDNA, donors and other stakeholders would come together and have an official platform to jointly discuss ECD in Africa. An analysis of this picture as depicted in this 1995 pamphlet from the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) supports the notion that the intention of the founders and promoters of the ECDNA was to have the network be a stand-alone organization that was separate from the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD). The WGECD was in this instance being represented as a coordinating structure or body that would in essence be a platform for interactions between the ECDNA, donors and other identified stakeholders.

In order to analyse Figure 10 and the implications it had, I then drew from Foucault (1991) who had challenged the idea that power was wielded by people or groups by ways of sovereign acts of domination. With this theoretical positioning, I began to see the possibility of why the ECDNA managed to survive alongside the WGECD. The founders probably did not want to be seen as working under the WGECD, itself an organization and idea that had come through from the donors that had coalesced under the DAE that later was renamed to become the ADEA. Why then would the two ‘networks’ be established and work alongside each other from 1994 to 1998? As the structure in Figure 10 above illustrates, the ECDNA perceived itself as the network and the WGECD was envisaged to be feeding into that coordinating structure or melting pot.

As I applied the Foucauldian theoretical framework in this case, I recognized the possibility of power dynamics at play, particularly between the group of donors who may have felt that the WGECD needed to have its own voice as a stand-alone network or possibly that the group of donors were inclined to ‘bet’ on both networks at the same time and see which would be successful over the long term. I had to ask the question, could there have been issues of mistrust, ownership and ideological differences between the founders of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa and donors? Through my analysis I could answer this with certainty because this research has revealed that on numerous occasions the founders of the ECDNA would posit at various fora that their network was an African led network and that it was independent and not affiliated with any other organization. Perhaps too, the founders of the ECDNA could have felt some perceived acts of what Foucault (1998) termed “episodic or sovereign acts of coercion or domination” (p. 63) and thus they wanted to maintain their Afro identity and independence from any donor or force that might have subjugated their ideas.

I noted through the Foucauldian theoretical lens that there could have been some resistance coming from the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA). By not joining the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) right from the early onset, they opted instead to maintain the Afro identity of the ECDNA thus resisting the pressure to join an organization that would not be identified as having roots in Africa. Herein I linked this potential resistance to the Foucauldian notion of action and resistance. Foucault (1991) argued that to challenge power was a way of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony that may be operating at a certain point in time. This resistance to establish an ECD network based on the exogenous push from other global networks such as the Consultative Group for Early Childhood Care and Development or donors would then eventually lead to Barnabas Otaala, Margaret Kabiru and Cyril Dalais forming the ECDNA and grounding it in an African context. This was because the three African leaders were focused on building a network that would reflect its own African identity. It appeared that these three African ECD leaders had the intention of developing a network that not only would be free from other hegemonic backed agendas such as having the CG-ECCD have control of the African network but have the network focus on African led and owned initiatives.

The Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD), on the other hand, lacked this Afro-centric identity during its formative years. My research findings indicated that the WGECD struggled with “identity, specific mandate and grounding within the African context” (WGECD, 2001, p.2.) This was a strong statement being presented during a WGECD consultative meeting that had been held in The Hague in March 2001 in order to restructure and reconstitute the WGECD. In light of the ECDNA having been established at nearly the same time, this inferred that the WGECD struggled to make itself different from the ECDNA. Specific mandates would relate to the goals and objectives of the WGECD and if the network

struggled with this too, it indicates that there was probably a conflict that existed internally on what the agenda of the WGECD should be and how different this would be from the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA).

I could not ignore the reference made to the WGECD struggling with “grounding in the African context” and this warranted some further analysis. This statement related to the network’s inability to provide leadership on ECD matters utilising an Afro centric perspective. The findings have shown that the WGECD had been hosted by the Basic Education Section of the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Europe and did not take place in Africa. Similarly, too, the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) secretariat itself, as highlighted earlier, had been hosted since 1992 by the International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) of UNESCO in France. It would only be in 2008 that the ADEA secretariat would make a move to Tunisia and be hosted within the Africa Development Bank (AfDB) in 2008.

This matters a lot when looking at the WGECD because all the ADEA working groups were connected and thus if for 16 years, they operated out of Paris, France then indeed “grounding in the African context” would be a challenge. I noted the possibility of hegemonic and imperialistic influences on ECD programs in Africa due to the location of these groups outside the continent of Africa. It seemed, therefore, that after having realized this lack of identity within the African context, the WGECD secretariat began a process of course correction to ensure that they had grounding in Africa.

In order to ground the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (WGECD) in an African context this communication by the WGECD to UNICEF, the World Bank, Aga Khan Foundation and other key African ECD stakeholders reflected the need to join forces with African organizations as part of the thrust of developing an African identity. Writing as

the Coordinator of the WGECD, Jeannete Vogelaar, who was working for the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, appraised this group of donors and stakeholders by stating that:

Following the meetings around the Association for the Development of Education in Africa Biennale on the future of the ADEA WGECD, the main conclusion was that we will use the upcoming two years to transform the WGECD into an ECD-Africa network that is based on networks that exist in-country and international partnerships between agencies and key players that support national processes (Jeannete Vogelaar, Coordinator of the WGECD, Personal E-mail communications to Dr A. Pence *et al.*, May 23, 2006).

It was clear to me as I analysed this communication that there had been a fundamental realisation on the part of the WGECD through the strategic planning meetings that there was a need to have an early childhood development network that was based in Africa. Further analysis revealed to me that the WGECD was now being positioned to operate under the ambit of the ADEA with an aim of identifying an African-based institution that would host the secretariat.

### **Rationale of establishing ECD Networks with almost identical objectives**

Having discussed the identity and grounding in the African context of the ECD networks, I focus my discussion on why these networks operated during the same time period. I analysed a speech presented at the opening session of the Early Childhood Network for Africa (ECDNA) convened ECD Summer Institute hosted in the Gambia in 1998. The Gambian Secretary of State for Education at that time, Satang Jow, noted that the ECDNA had been one of the successful ECD networks on the continent. In her opening remarks Secretary Jow posited that:

the ECDNA committee some time ago prepared a proposal for establishing and operationalising Early Childhood Development Working Group within the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ECDNA, 1998, p.3).

This gave me an insight into a possible reason why these two networks existed side by side. It could have been possible that these two networks could have operated side by side because they were operating from different ideological standpoints. One network, as discussed above,

had grounding in the African context whilst the other did not. This meant that there could have been jostling and contestation for operational turf based on identifying which of the two organizations truly represented Africa and the needs of her children well. This led me to consider the fact that this contestation largely fell on who was leading these networks. One ECD network had been formed and led by a group of African ECD leaders whilst the other did not reside on African soil and was led by persons from outside of Africa.

I observed how the ECDNA was always highlighting how it was grounded in the African context and not aligned to any external institution. This in my view was an attempt by this network to separate itself from the appearance of being a western domiciled ECD network that may not have the necessary Afro-centric identity to champion the issues facing the children in Africa. What I also had to contend with was the reality that these two networks had nearly the same funders. I dug deeper into the troves of documents I had access to in order to understand the extent to which the funding agencies and organizations earlier identified had influenced the agenda of the ECDNA and the WGECD. Part of doing this entailed establishing why the ECD networks were receiving funding from almost the same sources at roughly the same time period. It didn't make sense why two networks would operate side by side at the same time as if they were competing but now that the African identity was one of the issues coming to the fore, it made sense why these ECD networks would exist side by side. One was modeling itself as purely an African led organization whilst the other was struggling to ground itself with an African identity as my findings have indicated.

### **Understanding relationships in Early Childhood Development Networks**

Borgatti and Ofem (2010) asserted that organizations by nature are inherently relational and that they are social systems that consist of people who have different goals, preferences and interests. In discussing the findings of my research, I realise that within these various interests lie complications of understanding the actions and reasons for both individual

and organizational behaviour within the networks and the professional relationships that exist. This observation and learning was informed by the social network theory that was advanced by Daly (2010). Daly argued that the social network theory examines the relationships that exist between individuals, family members, groups, and societies. Daly further argued that within the context of social networks, there was less importance placed on the individual members than the relational ties within the network itself. These relationships influenced the attitudes and behaviours of members pushing the networks towards a desired outcome.

In framing my discussion of these findings, I applied the social network theoretical framework to examine the relationships that existed between the individuals from the funding organizations such as UNICEF, AKF and BvLF and the individuals that were heading ECD networks at particular points in time. I also applied this theoretical framework in relation to the connections and interactions amongst individuals that were found to be lead organizers of the ECD conferences. For example, the ECDNA documents I analysed indicated that one of the co-founders, Dr Cyril Dalais had numerous connections from which he drew support for ECDNA. Starting from his key role at UNICEF, his close communications with various actors within the ECD sector and their reciprocal responses indicated that he was a networker and had the ability to connect with resources. The ECDNA must have certainly relied on the networks that he developed. As a person who had a great vantage point within Africa as well as from his role at UNICEF, the parallel operation of the WGECD would not have gone unnoticed by him and therefore this reinforced the notion that he wanted the ECDNA to remain an Afro centric rooted organization. Commenting on the relationships that Dr Cyril Dalais had within the African ECD sector, a close associate of his reflected by noting that:

Anything that Cyril was doing in Africa he was always doing that in conjunction with the ECDNA. In my view he was a gifted rapporteur, a great connector and good at pulling together relationships (Alan Pence, ECD Summer Institutes Coordinator, Semi-Structured Interview, July 2020).

As postulated by Little (2010), these relationships influenced how network members related to one another and to me this would also be an indication of why the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa would be guided by Afro centric agenda. In this case, the resistance to establish an ECD network based on the exogenous push would then eventually lead to Barnabas Otaala, Margaret Kabiru and Cyril Dalais forming the ECDNA and grounding it in an African context. This was because the three African leaders were focused on building relationships and a network that would reflect its own African identity. It appeared that these three African ECD leaders had the intention of setting a Network that not only would be free from other hegemonic backed agendas but also focus on African led and owned initiatives. I had to ask the question, could there have been issues of mistrust, ownership and ideological differences? Through my analysis I could answer this with certainty because this research has revealed that on numerous occasions the founders of the ECDNA would posit at various fora that their network was an African led network and that it was independent and not affiliated with any other organization.

Perhaps too, the founders of the ECDNA could have felt some perceived acts of what Foucault (1998) termed “episodic or sovereign acts of coercion or domination” (p.63) and thus they wanted to maintain their Afro identity and independence. I noted through the Foucauldian theoretical lens that there could have been some resistance coming from the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA). By not joining the WGECD right from the early onset, they opted instead to maintain the Afro identity of the ECDNA thus resisting the pressure to join an organization that would not be identified as having roots in Africa.

Herein I linked this potential resistance to the Foucauldian notion of action and resistance. Foucault (1991) argued that to challenge power was a way of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony that may be operating at a certain point in time and

instead advancing the need to create and develop an authentically African network. Other close associates of Dr Cyril Dalais saw him as a person who had an Afro centric agenda at heart with one interview participant noting that:

The Working Group for Early Childhood Development as a part of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) was always restricted a little bit by being a part of ADEA and they really became restricted when UNESCO BRENDA took over the work. During all that period of transition, Cyril as an African leader tried very hard to build a truly African network (Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the RISE Institute, Semi-Structured Interview, August 2020).

Thus, with these two observations from his colleagues, I noted through the Foucauldian theoretical lens that there could have been some resistance of having outsiders influencing the formation of the Early Childhood Development Network.

## **Category 2 - ECD Conferences**

My analysis of the ECD conference documents from 1999 through to 2009 revealed that one of the major thrusts for these conferences was to enhance the capacity of African ECD stakeholders and to ensure that African early childhood development initiatives were being spotlighted on the continent. I identified this thrust in two broad areas, firstly through the showcasing of African ECD initiatives and secondly by how the conference series promoted African leadership and scholarly capacity development. I recognized that the conference organizers from the first conference in 1999 through to 2009 aimed to ensure that African voices were heard, that Africans were leading the discussions and that the often gory narratives of death, despair and disease portrayed about Africa would be set aside (Garcia, Pence & Evans, 2008). Whilst I provided the historical narration of these conferences, what were not shown were the “behind the scenes” perspectives. The social network theory managed to inform how I looked into these behind the scenes relationships between key

individuals who worked together to implement activities that ultimately influenced how the ECD conferences emerged.

Wheatley (1994) posited that within organizations, real power and energy was generated through relationships and that the patterns of relationships and the capacities to form them are more important than tasks, roles, positions and functions. I observed how professional relationships that dated back to the ECD Seminars that were held at the University of Victoria in Canada in the summer of 1994 (called Summer Institutes at UVic), would lead to ECD Seminars in Africa and then to the African ECD conference series. Meetings and professional relationships between Cyril Dalais, Barnabas Otaala and Alan Pence, among others, helped to foster relationships that would lead to various ECD focused activities on the African continent. When carrying out analyses on the ECD Summer Institutes which later evolved into the first ECD Conference in Kampala, Uganda in 1999, the professional relationships that existed to make these events happen could not be ignored. It is also useful to note Dalais' interest in and support for the culturally and contextually supportive approach Pence had taken in his years of working with Indigenous communities in Canada (Pence, Kuehne, Greenwood, & Opekokew, 1993).

In applying the social network theory into this circumstance, the work by Daly (2010) was useful in understanding the value of relationships within the education sector. Daly posited that the transfer of knowledge can be assumed to move in a rational and predictable manner through professional development experiences, trainings or some form of professional community. This provided added context for me when I thought about the maxim 'it is not what you know, but who you know' that matters. Cross, Borgatti and Parker (2002) argued that who you know defines what you know and thus within the context of the journey of the ECD Conferences, it took Cyril Dalais and Barnabas Otaala's invitation and participation in the ECD Summer Institutes held at the University of Victoria in Canada to light the spark and

eventually the fire that led to the ECD Conference series from 1999 to 2009. This was not because of what they knew but who they knew, in this case Alan Pence, a University of Victoria professor, who had invited them to the Summer Institutes at the University of Victoria.

Utilising the theoretical proposition by Daly (2010), I observed that the professional development experiences and trainings that Cyril Dalais and Barnabas Otaala went through at the ECD Summer Institutes held at the University of Victoria provided the learning or indeed sowed the seeds for the ECD conferences to be held in Africa. This then began the conversations on how Africa could also have similar institutes or conferences. This could not have been possible in the same way without the professional relationships between these three. Social network theory, when applied to the formative years of the ECD conferences, assists in highlighting the value of professional development networks and how the relationships really led to the transformation of the African ECD landscape through the conferences.

### **Action, Resistance and Imposition**

In my analysis I began to look at the history of the African ECD conferences from a Foucauldian lens wherein I premised that the World Bank had the financial muscle to support the holding of the first conference by virtue of the in-country loan for the Nutrition and Early Childhood Development (NECD) project that had been given to Uganda. Garcia and Pence (2010) posited that the World Bank supported the idea of a two-week Seminar, with the proposition that the first week would focus on the showcasing of innovative ECD activities in Africa whilst the second would be focused on Ugandan country specific ECD activities.

There was considerable power residing within the ambit of the two World Bank staffers whose decisions to support the first African ECD conference would change the ECD landscape on the African continent. This was due to the fact that Susan Opper and Marito

Garcia could make decisions on how to fund the ECD seminars which would later lead to, in the case of Uganda, into a fully fledged conference in 1999. Foucault (1998) had argued that power was found in groups of people through what he had termed “episodic or sovereign acts of coercion or domination” (p.63).

This I gathered through analysis of the documents, using a Foucauldian lens which suggested the idea that power was wielded by people or groups by way of sovereign acts of domination. The domination in the case of the conference manifested itself through how the World Bank was utilising the loans it was giving to these countries as a way to indicate that it had investments in ECD. These were in fact loans that were being granted to these nations, and thus as loans from the World Bank these were investments that were being made by the countries themselves into the ECD sector. The notion that the World Bank wanted to showcase its ECD projects therefore becomes one that can be seen as an act of domination. This is a complication that is seen when it comes to the treatment of African countries by the multi-lateral lenders, particularly through packages that are given to the countries as support for education sector reform, ECD projects or national budget support. It was unavoidable for me to look at the role of colonialism, imperialism as key factors in the development of the presence of the World Bank. For example, in discussing how financing institutions work with countries they provide loans to, an interview participant; Dr Emily Vargas-Baron noted that:

There is some imposition of what is called packages. Packages are very simple toolkits that say if you do this and this you will get this. Well, not always! The packages come in from a western orientation; they are not derived from the culture of the recipient country. Some of the packages that have been prepared by various UN agencies give some good ideas as they are underpinned by research-based evidence. Packages are not necessarily within the mental framework of the people in the country. Something imposed as an outside package may not be adequately adapted (Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the RISE Institute, Semi-Structured Interview, August 2020).

Power was therefore being wielded by the World Bank not only through the case in Uganda but in Eritrea too. Garcia and Pence (2010) noted that the Asmara Conference, like

the one preceding it in Kampala, enjoyed strong World Bank support due in part to a bank supported ECD project in that country. The World Bank used the Eritrean ECD Project on Health, Nutrition, ECE and Child in Need of Special Protection as an entry point towards supporting the 2002 ECD Conference in Asmara, Eritrea.

The analysis of the Asmara conference documents assisted in connecting the dots on the various interests that funders had. These interests, whether overt or covert, would be seen through the specific funded programs and projects for the World Bank it was the ECD conferences. Other conference partners would support these conferences simply because they wanted their own programs or projects showcased. This line of inquiry and analysis led to questioning how damaging the loans and support from the institutions such as the World Bank can be to developing nations. For example, to what extent do the packages represent the local context and respond to the issues that mean and matter the most to countries? When countries get loans from the World Bank to fund ECD projects, to what extent are they able to influence the kind of programs or projects they are going to use the loan funds on? Conference partners tend to fund their program staff to make presentations at the conferences to mainly highlight the good work they are doing within the ECD sector, thereby advancing their own agenda. This is because this is also highly political work in which the funders are able to push forward the agenda they will be having, advancing their own interests over those of beneficiary countries or programs. The notion of who is funding what within the conferences, what their agenda is in providing those funds and what informs these decisions becomes a departure point for ECD conferences and ECD Networks.

The resistance by the leaders of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) to establish an institution that could have been influenced and controlled by powers outside Africa could be viewed through the Foucauldian (1998) theoretical proposition of linking the concept of power to the construction of discourse in specific historical times. I

thought of how Foucault (1991) had opined that with the use of power also came the possibilities of action and resistance. Foucault had argued that to challenge power was not a matter of seeking some absolute truth but rather it was a way of detaching the power of truth from the forms of hegemony, social, economic, and cultural that may be operating at a particular period in time. This could have explained why the three leaders Barnabas Otaala, Margaret Kabiru and Cyril Dalais had maintained the position that the network had to be independent and African led as an Afro-centric approach was evident within the leadership of the ECDNA and its philosophical approach.

### **Category 3 - Early Childhood Development Policies**

I discuss the early childhood development policy landscape within the context of answering my third research question which was examining the extent these networks and conferences influenced current policy development policy and practice in SSA. I had to critically examine the area of education policy so that I could have an understanding of how ECD policy discourse impacted networks and conferences and how that in turn influenced current policy development processes in Africa. Downey (1988) stated that policy is “an authoritative determination by a governing authority, of a society’s intents and priorities and an authoritative allocation of resources to those intents and priorities” (p.10). Levin and Young (1994) provided a broader definition of policies and argued that a policy is a “general approach to things, intended to guide behaviour and which has broad implications within a particular setting whether be it a country, province or a school” (p.60). They further argued that policies determined how much money was being spent, by whom and on what. The last definition that I found to be compelling in the context of my theoretical framework was one by Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005) who argued that “policy then is the result of politics, the result of that allocation of values; policy is what governments choose to do” (p.5).

In the context of these definitions what was clear to me was that policy development processes should be intentional and formalized by governments and early childhood development stakeholders and, as argued by Delaney (2017), policies must be approved and sanctioned by an institutional authority and who that institutional authority is, becomes very important. I discuss my findings on the ECD policies by looking at the influence of each of the two identified early childhood development networks on policy discourse.

### **Early Childhood Development Network for Africa and Policy**

In reflecting and distilling the ECD policy formulation and implementation of the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) I had to grapple with a number of issues. For example, documents on the ECDNA such as minutes of meetings, reports of workshops and speeches by the Secretariat did not reflect many conversations that were related to ECD policies. My understanding from the ECDNA documents was that while the right to education within the human rights-based approach was a universal, the means to achieving it had to be informed by having particular policy issues addressed.

The influence of Indigenous knowledge was one policy issue to be addressed. The concerns that the image of children was increasingly homogeneous and Western-derived (Pence & Hix-Small, 2009) challenged the integration of Indigenous knowledge systems in the ECD policy formulation process of Africa. I could not find where the ECDNA as a network provided a platform for the recognition of these Indigenous ways of knowing or countered the perceived benefits of western-derived ECD curricula. I only identified reference to Indigenous knowledge when analysing the constitution of ECDNA wherein it was noted that one of the broad goals of the network was to “influence the formulation and implementation of appropriate ECD policies in Africa” (ECDNA Draft Constitution, 1998, p.1). The word ‘appropriate’ stood out because the ECDNA was recognizing that each country had its own different cultures and ways of implementing ECD programs and thus the network

would support the countries based on their local context. In this way, the ECDNA would avoid Euro–Western childcare and development approaches that were promoted in a manner that suggested both an ignorance of the other heritages and a belief that Indigenous systems were incapable of producing a healthy adulthood. In practice, however, it does not seem like the ECDNA was going beyond the rhetoric and actually advocating for the incorporation of Indigenous knowledge into early childhood development policy because missing in the documents analysed were the specific actions taken by this network in promoting Indigenous knowledge.

### **Going beyond the rhetoric – Scholarly capacity initiatives**

I recognized that in order to promote these Indigenous ways of knowing in the context of ECD policy development, there had to be a leadership capacity development process. The emergence of scholarly capacity building initiatives such as the University of Victoria’s Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) provided a turning point in the ECD policy formulation discourse on the continent. Within the ECDVU program, through assignments and related employment activities, the program participants became involved in initiating or supporting country-based ECD policy development initiatives. The ECDVU curriculum itself promoted decolonizing discourse and indigenous knowledge and also paved the way for other ECD stakeholders on the continent to carry out the work (Pence *et.al.*, 2004; Pence & Benner, 2015).

The Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) and later on the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD), in developing partnerships and allies on the continent, should therefore have had to recognize that centuries-old traditions of childcare had survived and that local ways of knowing continued to be useful and had not entirely yielded to colonial efforts and waves of intervention to replace them (Nsamenang, 2008; 1992). It was important for both ECD networks to fully address the gaps in promoting

the Afro centric approaches to child development. A good partner for this was the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU) because it encouraged the Africa students to look closely at the ECD policy processes for their own countries and began to actively input into them.

To understand and better discuss the role played by the ECDVU in promoting local perspectives, I also had to identify some examples of ECD policy initiatives that had been supported. In East Africa, in Tanzania, George Tameka, who was working as the Commissioner for Social Welfare in the Tanzanian Ministry of Labour, Youth Development and Sports, worked on a project that looked at the challenges faced when trying to achieve intersectoral cooperation and coordination amongst ministries, each claiming a piece of the ECD cake (Tameka, 2004). At the core of this project were the ECD policy formulation processes and challenges faced at a country level.

In Southern Africa, in Malawi, Francis Calamander, who was a National Coordinator for ECD in the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services, worked on a project that came at a time when the Malawi government was considering enacting a National Policy on ECD. His project focused on supporting the coordination, development and implementation of a national Action Plan for the survival, protection and development of children in Malawi from 2003-2013 (Chalamanda, 2004). In West Africa, Margaret Amponsah, who was working as the National Director for Early Childhood Care and Development within the Basic Education Division in the Ghana Education Service of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports, worked on a related ECD policy project. The focus of her work was based on the extent to which ECD was conceptualized by colleagues within her Ministry (Amponsah, 2003).

In East Africa again, and this time in Eritrea, Abeba Habtom who was the Section Head for Early Childhood Development and Special Needs in the Ministry of Education,

focused on “developing an Eritrean Parenting Enrichment strategy using a participatory process with parents and grassroots communities at the forefront” (Habtom, 2004, p. ii). This work provided insight into participatory ECD policy development processes which saw the finalization of an ECD curriculum for both formal and non-formal community-based children’s programs (Habtom, 2004).

A common thread that ran through these projects was their localisation and response to local level policy challenges utilizing local solutions. This emphasized the importance of building on existing knowledge bases as opposed to importing solutions. I also understood these ECD policy projects in this discussion through the context of relationships that existed between individuals, groups and organizations as advanced by Riketta and Nienber (2007) when discussing social network theory. This theoretical framework assisted me in examining the relationships in scholarly capacity building initiatives. The theory assisted by helping me to analyse the relationships that had begun when ECDNA founders and African ECD experts Cyril Dalais and Barnabas Otaala had visited and participated in an ECD Summer Institute held at the University of Victoria in Canada. The relationships forged within a scholarly capacity building network supported conversations and projects that influenced ECD policy development initiatives in the African countries identified above. The ECDNA thus had contributed to an ECD policy process on the continent. I now discuss below how the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) had influenced ECD policy development in Africa.

### **Working Group for Early Childhood Development and Policy Development**

I recognized that the ECD Policy Studies project emerged from the background of a fledgling Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) that needed resuscitation as well as direction in terms of programming and relevance. The WGECD which had been hosted by the Dutch government was struggling to maintain an African identity and

relevance and as I reflected on the policy work carried out by the two ECD networks, I observed that the WGECD had deeper engagement and involvement with the ECD Policy work as compared to the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA).

I have already shown in Chapter 4 how the WGECD had embarked on policy projects in six countries (Mauritius, Namibia, Ghana, Mauritania, Burkina Faso and Senegal). In examining the reports on the WGECD Policy Studies project, the notion of hegemony and imposition constantly recurred in my mind. I asked, to what extent were these countries able to completely develop their own ECD policies without being offered a template from western countries? Were the countries able to chart their own course forward and determine what would be included and not included in the policies? The Foucauldian frame of reference assisted me to think about how the general power dynamics may have looked like between the countries and the consultants that had been brought into support the ECD policy development process. I pondered over the notion of power being found in groups and within episodic or sovereign acts of coercion as postulated by Foucault (1998) and how there could have been potential negative influence on the ECD policy processes at a country level.

I then had to find out who was leading these studies and how their leadership praxis was informing the policies that were being produced in these countries. The leadership and decision-making process became an entry point for my analysis. The Netherlands, through Jeanette Vogelaar, the WGECD Coordinator at that time, had received recommendations on the ECD policy project from a consultant, Kate Torkington who was not an African and had been hired from 'outside' the continent by the Netherlands government when it had assumed control of the Working Group on Early Childhood Development. The ECD Policy studies work in Burkina Faso, Mauritania and Senegal were led by Emily Vargas-Baron, a Colombian/American. The composition of the policy formulation teams became the next point of interest. I analysed first the process undertaken to identify the countries that would

participate in the ECD Policy case studies to identify any areas of undue influence from within the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) team.

According to Torkington (2001), Namibia had been selected for the ECD policy studies by the WGECD because it had been identified as the first African nation to have developed a specific ECD policy whilst Mauritius had an ECD policy that focused specifically for children 0-3 years and had an emphasis on parental engagement and education. In addition to this, Mauritius was an English and French speaking country and the ADEA WGECD could have seen this as potentially advantageous when seeking to support ECD policy development processes in Francophone Africa. Ghana, on the other hand, had been identified because it had already gone through its policy development process and the ECD policy was now awaiting approval by the Cabinet and Parliament of that country.

The rationale for selecting these countries appeared satisfactory and so too was the consultative process that had been undertaken in order to bring onboard Namibia, Ghana and Mauritius into the ECD case studies project. The ADEA WGECD had ensured inclusion and participation through their consultative process by key decision makers from each of the three countries which were involved in the design of the ECD policy studies project. There had been involvement of high-level decision makers who included a deputy minister of basic education from the Ministry of Basic Education in Namibia, the Permanent Secretary of Ministry of Women, Family Welfare and Child Development of Mauritius as well as the Executive Director of the Ghana National Commission on Children (Torkington, 2001).

As highlighted in Chapter 4, documents analysed showed that similar consultative and inclusive processes had been carried out in the next ADEA WGECD policy formulation project led by Dr. Emily Vargas-Baron. Country teams composed of consultants and government representatives led the development of policies in each of the three countries, with the ADEA WGECD Policy consultant providing overall coordination and guidance to

these teams. Of concern however was the influence of funders within the ECD Policy development context. As noted earlier in the dissertation Emily Vargas-Baron noted:

The ECD Policy project in Senegal was well implemented and Burkina Faso also did a great deal, but the World Bank wanted them to focus more on formal primary education and undercut what we were doing in early childhood development. The people of Burkina Faso did not forget their policy, they came back and returned to the ECD Policy and implemented it later on (Dr Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the RISE Institute, Semi-Structured Interview, August 2020).

This narration was an indication of what Foucault (1991) had termed action and resistance through the use of power. The Burkinabe had resisted an imposition by the World Bank which had insisted on a particular model but instead they had come back and implemented their own ECD Policy. This active resistance to conditions of packages offered by western hegemonic forces is powerful in that it provides the opportunity for countries to choose the course that is best for them and calls for such forces to partner with countries instead of imposing their models.

### **Challenges and Issues in Policy Development in Africa**

Through this research I have learned that the adoption of conference communiqués and declarations is rarely matched by concomitant funding to implement these resolutions. In Africa, ECD Policy development is constrained by limited financial resources. Whilst conference communiqués and resolutions call for certain action steps, the limited funds allocated to ECD hinder the implementation of such steps. In addition to this, political will and political choice become very stark challenges for ECD policy development because in the absence of political commitment there is no development of policies that takes place. Earlier I have noted how Marshall and Gerstl-Pepin (2005) noted that politics determined how policies were formulated and implemented. They argued that “policy is what governments choose to do” (p. 5). Governments should choose and prioritize the development of young children

above all political considerations that they make. In making decisions on where to spend the financial resources, politicians tend to maximize investments in those activities that provide an immediate and 'visible' return on investment, thus posing great risk on ECD financing. This is because in situations where politicians are not well informed about the importance of early childhood development, budget allocations towards this sector are minimal since an immediate visible return is not seen. Some of the activities are then funded possibly because they help the incumbent politician retain power and office at the expense of meaningful investments in the lives of children. Koenig (1986), in his seminal work on policy development, noted that "the great Achilles heel of the policy process is implementation" (p.149). Countries may produce great ECD policy documents but if they are not implemented, they just are a reflection of what could have been and in this case, the bright future for young children. ECD Policy implementation becomes where the proverbial rubber hits the road and allows for the manifestation of the dreams and aspirations that communities have for their children. If these policies are not implemented, they then just remain pipe dreams.

In my working with various government ministries in my own country of Zimbabwe, I observe that implementation of ECD policies can be complicated when different ministries bear the responsibility of certain facets of the policy and as a result turf wars and shirking of responsibility become the order of the day and thus nothing is implemented. McLaughlin (1991) noted that it was difficult to make anything happen, especially when one is working across layers of government and institutions. McLaughlin (1991) further noted that this becomes especially complicated when it concerns policy implementation, noting that implementation takes place amidst an ever-changing landscape and the challenges are never solved completely. However, having noted this I agreed with Hogwood and Gunn (1997) who argued that perfect policy implementation is unattainable in practice unless those that are in authority demand and obtain perfect compliance. As I analysed this statement, this argument

landed policy implementation back in the hands of the politicians and political operatives. As such a huge challenge on ECD policy implementation lies with the political stockholders.

Through this research, therefore, it was important to identify some of the important issues that were important in order to have successful ECD policy formulation processes. Aidoo (2006) noted that the experiences of policy development in Africa indicated that formulation of policies was long and that it would take up to two years for ECD policies to be formulated. I recognized the importance of ensuring that any policy formulation activities need to be supported by broad-based consultation and participation by all the stakeholders from families to other community stakeholders to ensure consensus, synergies, cost effectiveness as well as ownership of the process. ECD policies should be integrated with existing national plans and strategies. Aidoo (2006) argued that it was important for ECD policies to be aligned with the major national and sectoral development strategies and policies and through this have the availability of the technical and institutional capacity for cross sectoral policy planning.

### **Inclusive early childhood development**

From the analysis of the ECD Networks and Conference documents I could not locate any record of conversations on ECD policies in relation to neglected areas such as inclusive education and equitable provision of ECD resources in communities. For example, a long-standing issue in various parts of SSA has been the exclusion of girls, the disabled and poor from accessing critical ECD services across SSA (UNESCO, 2012). This exclusion operates at various levels, including being informed by archaic cultural considerations that place male children above their female counterparts and the failure to design and operationalize programs that cater to the physical needs of the disabled. In most places, preference is given to those in urban centres, abled bodied males and those able to pay for the services (Dakar Declaration, Article 16).

The poor and marginalized often emerge as the losers as better positioned families tend to be beneficiaries of the scarcely allocated resources. In countries that require school fees to be paid before children access school, one salient result of this is the negative impact on enrolment the levying of these fees has on the poor as they fail to access basic education. This as a result of un-affordability and poverty, amongst other factors, despite education being an internationally assured right. Furthermore, in entrenching the promotion and protection of the right to ECD, the United Nations General Assembly set the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). SDG Number 4 and specifically target 4.2 states 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 (UNGAS, 2015).

In my analysis of the conference documents presentations, these are issues that were not discussed at the conferences and deserve attention if Africa is to provide opportunities for young children to succeed through the education system. I could not identify any work that had been done by the ECD Networks to address the issue of exclusion and poor access to early childhood development opportunities for children in Africa.

Whilst concerted efforts might be made towards formulating ECD policies, challenges in implementation emerge when children are unable to access equitable services. In my concluding chapter, I now offer some potential next steps arising out of this research and how some of the issues that have been identified can be addressed.

## **Chapter Summary**

This chapter has discussed the findings of this research. The use of the social network and Foucauldian theoretical propositions assisted me to dissect and discuss some crucial aspects of the findings in this research. Included in this discussion were issues relating to the ECD conferences, ECD Networks and ECD Policy initiatives that took place between 1990

and 2009. This section has also discussed the importance of professional relationships in the context of the capacity development initiatives that were undertaken by the ECDNA, ECDVU and other stakeholders in enhancing the skills and abilities of ECD practitioners in SSA. I discussed ECD policy development in Africa and the importance of ensuring that local knowledge and information is of utmost importance as it informs policy formulation and implementation.

The argument by Marfo *et al.*, (2008) that ECD programs in the African context must be built on existing assets and initiatives addressing the survival, health and nutritional needs of children provides a fitting summation to the discussion on these findings. It is pleasing that the initial sequence of four conferences has now been taken up by a more recently established network with its own contemporary commitments to the well-being of Africa's children. It is important that the work goes beyond conferences and those who can attend such important events. There is need to reach the smallest of villages and the largest of institutions found in Africa and that efforts are not complete until these too are reached and they too support the work of ensuring that Africa's children thrive. The next chapter provides some recommendations and possible next steps for ECD Networks and ECD conferences in Africa and how they can influence ECD Policy development in Africa.

## CHAPTER 6: Next Steps and Conclusion

The research revealed massive gaps in the recording of historical processes and events that influenced the development of ECD Networks and ECD conferences in Africa. The Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD), for example, lost a lot of information when laptops containing publications, conference information, contacts and other important documents were lost. This meant that years of documentation and historical information on the organization itself, the ECD conferences and other funded projects was lost. The provision of a historical outline of the early childhood development networks is critical in that it will provide scholars, governments and stakeholders with contextual information on how policies and practices were developed during this period as well as information regarding ‘what worked and what didn’t’ which establishes a base/platform to work from. Sifuna and Otiende (2006) argued that there was a particular conviction that the study of the past had crucial relevance to the task of improving the quality of action in the present.

The historical information on ECD Networks and ECD Conferences will support the implementation of the AU’s Agenda 2063 continental strategy, specifically African Aspiration Number 6 which addresses child development. Aspiration Number 6 states specifically that:

the aspirations reflect our desire for shared prosperity and well-being, for unity and integration, for a continent of free citizens and expanded horizons, where the full potential of women and youth, boys and girls are realized, and with freedom from fear, disease and want (AUC, 2015, p. 10).

I undertook this research being cognizant of the unavailability of an Indigenous African voice writing the history of ECD Networks and ECD Conferences. As noted by Pence and Benner (2015), despite SSA’s size and share of the world’s population, Indigenous African voices are seldom heard in the global child development and ECD literature. Africa too, clearly, has a rich history of early childhood development, but in the absence of a

historical narrative or documentation of this history it is a challenge for scholars to understand the journey and developments of this sector on the continent. As I outlined in Chapter 1, there was some urgency to this work as certain key knowledge holders of these ECD events in Africa, for example Dr Cyril Dalais and Dr Barnabas Otaala, had passed on, while others were aging. In addition, efforts to collect and preserve key documents and communications throughout the period had under various circumstances been dispersed and had yet to be systematically collected, collated and analyzed.

Looking back into the history of early childhood development (ECD) networks and conferences as well as their influence on policy development in Africa, provided me with a broad canvas on which I better understood the origins and actions of the ECD sector in Africa. The information I learned from this historical journey enables ECD practitioners in Africa like myself to know and learn from the good that was done before, the mistakes that were made along the ECD networking and conferences journey, and importantly the information assists possible in navigating the future directions of the sector on the continent.

In discussing the findings on the African International early childhood development (ECD) conference series, I noted and acknowledged that these ECD conferences from 1999 to 2009 to a significant degree built on each other and maintained key thematic areas for continued follow-up. In addition, the conferences all managed to showcase the different ECD practices, innovations and successes of African ECD practitioners and programs. ECD organizations and broader civic society stakeholders managed to showcase their ECD-related work through poster presentations, keynote speeches by African ECD experts and field trips which allowed participants to see in person some of the work that was being carried out. My analysis of the conference presentations, particularly those that focused on ECD policy and ECD networking, revealed that efforts were being made in bringing to the fore ECD issues in Africa. This research study involved taking an inordinate amount of time first collecting and

then pouring over the documents and their implications to the study. This was very useful as it allowed for a historical narration and story of the networks and conferences to emerge and be recorded in one document. I found this narration to be important for a number of reasons.

Firstly, through this research study I want current and future generations of early childhood development scholars and practitioners on the African continent to learn the history of early childhood development networks and conferences between the period 1990 and 2009. In so doing, scholars and early childhood development practitioners will have greater awareness of what has been tried and what was accomplished through the African International Conferences on early childhood development as well as the work by the ECD networks which provided an appreciation and recognition of Africa's long and strong commitment to early childhood development. I am convinced that the information that has been revealed through this research will provide important bearings for those navigating the terrain of ECD networking and ECD conferencing in Africa. The long absent historical information on ECD Networks and Conferences established and held between 1990 and 2009 that was gleaned through document analysis of hundreds of documents and analysis of interviews is now made available through this research. The information, to the best of my time and ability, is now contained in this single, albeit long document for scholars and other stakeholders to support their planning and implementation of early childhood development networks and conferences on the African continent.

Secondly, it is important to note that the African ECD conference series provided a platform for ECD stakeholders on the continent to learn from one another as well as to support each other through stories of strength, resilience and creativity as shown through the different paper and poster presentations that were analysed. This research study has revealed that which was not known about ECD networks and ECD conferences in Africa and has managed to

provide a chronological narration of how these were established, their objectives and the work that they implemented during the course of their existence.

Thirdly, having records of the past will assist scholars, civic society and funders to know the journey that has been travelled. In knowing there is great learning from what was done well, what was not and in having an understanding of the challenges and opportunities that existed in the African ECD sector at certain periods in history. This then enables the development of strategies and programs using the past as a rear-view mirror that provides additional learning and context. In the absence of a repository for this historical information, future generations of scholars will be unable to pin-point events of the past to help inform the present and future actions within the early childhood development sector in Africa.

This chapter outlines some suggested recommendations based on the findings of this research. These suggested recommendations are directed towards those stakeholders working with ECD networks and are to be implemented by African ECD Networks and through ECD Conferences. The recommendations outlined also provide some potential actions for ECD policy development in Africa. I maintained the same categories that were developed in Chapter 4, used in Chapter 5 and now in this section. The rationale for this was that these categories made it easier for the reader to identify the specific sections from which they can draw information from.

In the first category I outline some recommendations for the ECD Networks in Africa, followed by the second category with recommendations for the ECD conferences whilst the third category provides some key considerations on ECD policy development in Africa. The final section provides some recommendations to ECD scholars, practitioners and the civil society based on observations made during the research process. The recommendations that are outlined in this chapter have been drawn from the findings of this research.

## **Category 1- Early Childhood Development Networks**

A major observation made during the analysis of documents and information related to the ECD networks was that a fundamental key to success in the process of building an African ECD network was the relationship building and networking opportunities that were created through capacity building initiatives. Fostering an African community of practice allowed participants in these networks to bring together a wealth of knowledge informed by their knowledge of the different countries they worked in. The following are specific recommendations for ECD Networks in Africa:

1. Africa-wide ECD Networks should develop and implement strategies for building the capacity and retention of skilled staff within the early childhood development sector. This will be going beyond just focusing on knowledge generation and information sharing activities. To support this, the regional ECD Networks should have well-articulated and collaboratively developed capacity building strategic plans. These capacity building plans developed at a regional level in collaboration with national ECD networks will support staff capacity development on emerging issues such as evidence-based advocacy, demanding accountability on ECD financing by governments and fostering transparency on ECD policy development and implementation issues in their countries. In order to do this, the ECD Networks should strengthen the capacity of national country level networks through institutional, policy and technical training to enable advocacy, knowledge generation and networking activities. These activities should be funded and carried out as part of ECD network staff capacity development. Partnerships with organizations such as the Early Childhood Development Virtual University, through its affiliations with the University of Ibadan in Nigeria representing West and Central Africa, the University of South Africa (UNISA) representing East and Southern Africa and Universite' Cheikh Anta Diop in Senegal, to support similar capacity promotion throughout Francophone

Africa should be established in order to meet this leadership capacity development objective. Those regionally based institutions should also work with post-secondary institutions in participating countries to advance ECD research and education at national levels. ECD Networks, at regional and country-levels, should work with these training institutions in order to strengthen the technical capacity of ECD stakeholders at a country and regional level.

2. Regional ECD Networks must work with national level ECD networks to advocate for disaster preparedness policies that include mechanisms for supporting the early childhood development sector. In light of frequently occurring pandemics and natural disasters in Africa, strategies for implementing ECD during emergencies need to be put in place. Scenario and standard operating plans should be developed by the ECD Networks and shared with senior government, civil society and parliamentarians for consideration and adoption. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed this lack of preparedness by ECD networks to address and provide direction to the early childhood sector. An emergencies and pandemic playbook plan should be developed and revised continuously so that guidelines and standards developed remain relevant. ECD should not remain on the periphery and be ignored when pandemics set in, children should be prioritized and be able to access ECD services in a safe and secure environment that promotes their optimal growth and development even in the midst of uncertainty.
3. Regional ECD Networks should demand transparency and accountability from governments on issues such as ECD financing, ECD policy formulation and implementation. This can be implemented through establishing bilateral and multi-lateral partnerships with clear and tangible win-win objectives between the funders, Regional ECD Networks and the country recipients of ECD designated funds. This should be done through developing clearly outlined partnership engagement strategies that promote

linkages designed to support effective resource mobilisation and use of financial, intellectual and other resources. Before, during and after funding has been provided, regional ECD Networks should partner with national ECD networks in order to first develop the mechanisms by which governments are made accountable and then secondly actively monitor the use of funds through various mechanisms that include technologically based budget trackers and dashboards. Regional ECD Networks should have greater involvement in monitoring the utilisation of funds and assessing funding effectiveness in promoting children's access to quality ECD services in Africa.

4. The networks of professional relationships amongst ECD stakeholders need to be stronger in order to influence ECD Policy at a country level through building synergies and sharing of good policy practices between national ECD networks across Africa. This can be implemented by regional ECD Networks through the intentional designing and implementation of networking and learning events that focus on governance, organizational development, policy analysis, research, negotiating and building skills to influence change agents. The skills acquired and relationships formed by the ECD stakeholders at a national level are then used as tools to engage governments in the form of policy forums for policy advocacy, research and knowledge sharing. Regional ECD networks should work with national ECD networks to hold governments to account on ECD policy issues through learning and sustained advocacy that promotes access to quality, inclusive and equitable ECD in Africa.

## **Category 2 - Early Childhood Development Conferences**

Discussion and analysis of the ECD Conference series revealed that Africa has a lot of knowledge to share with the rest of the world. Importantly, the African ECD agenda should be shaped by Africans, inspired by their own Indigenous epistemologies as well as learning from

other knowledge bases. Africa cannot and should not find itself only as a knowledge receptor but instead should play a leading role in the generation of knowledge and co-creation of early childhood development approaches with other partners. For example, my analysis of the second African International conference revealed that given appropriate support and guidance, “local voices” can take a lead in providing Indigenous perspectives on early childhood development. In order to do this, the following are recommendations of how ECD conferences in Africa can move forward this agenda:

1. ECD Conferences should have a pan-African identity and create an enabling environment where the participation by donors and funders should not supersede the objectives and interests of the conferences. In order to do this, regional ECD Networks need to play a leading role in convening ECD conferences that pick up from the history and legacy of the conference series that has been revealed through this research. Through these conferences, the regional ECD Networks can effectively influence ECD policy development and ECD financing through convening conference sessions on policy analysis by engaging with senior government officials, civic society and funding partners. Technology has made it easier for the regional ECD Networks to convene meetings without having to develop budgets for travel, accommodation and other overheads. They can be innovative and organize webinars and connect with different stakeholders across different time zones. It is important to have sessions of that are led by Africans and inspired by African ECD experiences if these conferences are to be truly African led.
2. The ECD Conferences should work to promote and engage with governments and sub-regional political blocs so as to have sustained advocacy on holistic ECD policy development that is anchored on human rights-based approaches to programming. The ECD Conferences should develop joint forums with sub-regional political blocs such as the African Union, East Africa Community (EAC), Economic Community of West African

States (ECOWAS), and Southern Africa Development Community (SADC) and ensure that a coordination mechanism that promotes the ECD agenda is developed. High level participation by political actors in ECD forums at both national and continental levels are very important as it facilitates access to information as well as promoting possibilities for quicker decision making. To ensure participation, the ECD Conference organizers should secure the attendance and participation of key political actors through the main continental bloc, the African Union. The participation by Heads of State and Ministers, or their delegated Representatives in ECD Conferences is an important signal of high-level political commitment to early childhood development in Africa. Such participation sends a strong signal not only to countries but to the various ECD stakeholders, indicating that African political leadership is serious about the welfare and development of young children.

3. Governments, civil society organizations, universities and scholars should champion local research on early childhood development in the local context. The early childhood development conferences in Africa should be used to showcase and promote the Indigenous ways and Afro-centric approaches to ECD as well as learn from what other cultures and communities from outside Africa have done. In order to do this, the regional ECD networks should work with country level networks in commissioning research that establishes the grounding of ECD in an African context. The findings of this research should then be shared widely including at conferences so as to inform the African communities on the various traditional epistemologies and ways of raising and supporting children that have existed on the continent. In doing so the ECD Conferences should provide culturally sensitive platforms that allow the African unique cultural values in raising children to be showcased.

### **Category 3 - Early Childhood Development Policies**

In order to reduce the education and development inequities that exist in Africa, it is important to promote access to early childhood development service provisioning through policy development and implementation. Scholars (Bainbridge, Meyers, Tanaka & Waldfogel, 2005; Magnuson, Meyers, Ruhm & Waldfogel, 2004) noted that there was strong evidence that inequities in access to education led to widening gaps in educational success. In my discussion of the research findings in chapter 5, I alluded to the gaping inequalities that exist when parents are asked to pay school fees for their children so that they can access education. Children whose parents can afford to pay these fees are able to secure an education whilst those that do not have the money are confined to their homes and do not go to school. Barnett and Yarosz (2007) noted that whilst targeted provisioning of early childhood development programs is common, it is of utmost importance to have universal provisioning so that all children and not just ‘some’ are able to attend early learning programs. Within the context of universal provisioning it is important to ensure that African children have education that resonates with their culture, tradition and context.

Ng’asike and Swadener (2019) noted that children should receive learning opportunities that match their culture so that they can grow in a holistic manner, knowing their values, beliefs and cultural traditions. Early childhood development policies therefore should be culturally adaptive and contextually sensitive. The following are recommendations for policy makers and ECD stakeholders:

1. Governments and ECD stakeholders should partner to promote ECD policy conversations and debates that should be ongoing at a continental level so as to promote access to information on quality, inclusive and equitable ECD services in Africa. This can be done through ECD Policy dialogue forums that can be hosted by the ECD Networks thus strengthening the vibrancy of ECD networks at a continental and country level. This can be

implemented through print and online media, social media sites to advance the policy advocacy agenda. These debates should be convened in a convivial atmosphere that allows for countries to draw lessons from each other as well as challenge each other to implement the ECD policies. Peer review mechanisms and accountability is very necessary amongst countries if there is progress to be made within the ECD sector.

2. Governments and Civil Society stakeholders should work together to ensure that there are effective linkages of ECD policies with the national development priorities and frameworks so that ECD is seen as an integral part of any national plan. High level political commitment is required in order to support the implementation of the ECD policies in Africa. There has been a surge in ECD specific policies being developed in Africa, however, what still lacks is the implementation of the same. Whilst the progress in developing ECD specific policies has been noted, there is the need to have political action and support to double the efforts being made in countries where this is not moving ahead in a timely pace. Political will and commitment are required to ensure that not only development of these policies proceeds but also to support and enforce the implementation of the policies when they have been approved. In order to activate high level political representation and commitment, there are many ways that can be used by the civic society for political actors to demonstrate their political commitment. Clear actions, key deliverables and persons/office bearers responsible should be outcomes of these conferences ensuring that there are avenues to hold officer bearers to account for non- performance.
3. Governments, local and international development partners, can invest and allocate sufficient financial resources for the ECD sector. Provisioning of targeted and direct budget support or financing is crucial for the rapid advancement of policy development and implementation processes. Whilst there has been progress made on investments in the ECD sector by African countries, there is a need for a rapid expansion in breadth and depth of

these investments. This can be done through recognition of the importance and role that ECD plays in the development of children by professionalizing the ECD sector. Within the context of this recognition are systematic issues that have to be addressed key among them prioritizing salaries of ECD teachers, renovation or construction of ECD facilities and training of teachers are baseline significant investments that still need to receive increased budgetary support by countries in the African region.

4. Governments and civic society partners can demonstrate political will, vision and courage to develop policies that are inclusive, collaborative and responsive to children's needs which should be a priority in Africa. This can be done through national level and continent wide ECD policy consultations, debates and deliberations that are championed by both government and civic society stakeholders in this case the ECD Networks. In order to accomplish this, the ECD Networks should build alliances with civil society, other national ECD networks, transnational organisations, multilateral and donor partners to bring to the fore all the voices that will promote, implement and ensure participatory legislative and policy development processes by national governments. At a regional level, the ECD Network should create an ECD Policy coordinating mechanism that is charged with the responsibility of working with regional political blocs to influence ECD policy development processes. At a national level, the national ECD network should replicate this coordinating mechanism and have responsibility for ensuring that there is inclusivity, broad consultation and participation by all the stakeholders is a critical aspect of the policy development process. This task force should have a clear mandate through terms of reference that indicate the key deliverables to be produced through the operations of that taskforce. The roles and responsibilities of task force members, government departments and other stakeholders should be articulated and clearly laid out. It is critical that members within these taskforces are empowered sufficiently by their principals so that they are able to make high level

decisions without having some back and forth to seek authority or approvals. This should be carried out in order to create inclusive civic spaces that promote equitable participation of historically disadvantaged groups such as the disabled, ethnic minorities and others. By doing this, the ECD policy development process becomes streamlined, efficient and effective.

5. Governments should take the lead in provision of policy guidance and support to the ECD Sector. Policy leadership and coordination should never be an after-thought if African countries are to reap rewards from investing in ECD. This can be done by governments working to ensure that ECD is coordinated from one central ministry as opposed to having multiple ministries laying a claim to ECD. Within the central ministry an ECD Coordinating Council or Board can be established and the membership of this council can be drawn from other sectoral ministries such as Social Services, Health, Finance, Education and Local Government among others. Policy development should include the needs of the ECD professionals by ensuring that there is provision for teaching aides, safe and habitable infrastructure, and minimum guidelines for operation of ECD centres and mechanisms for continuous teacher professional development.

### **Research Implications and Recommendations for Future Study**

Prior to this study there has been no published research that has been carried out on the broad history of ECD Networks and ECD Conferences in SSA. The information and documents that have been gleaned for this particular research study were found in multiple locations and in various forms. This information needs to be protected and secured so that there are archives that can be accessed by researchers and ECD stakeholders on the continent. Information, if not stored properly, can easily be lost and this robs generations of materials

they could have used to learn and understand the history of phenomena. In lamenting the loss of particular ECD related information in Africa, Dr Emily Vargas-Baron noted that

Staff who had been working for the WGECD lost their computers. All of the files and the history of the network which was all there was lost. So, I sent everything I had to the ECD Network and to others, along with another person who had been hired by UNESCO BRENDA, so that they would be able to keep a repository of the information. I was told later that everything I had sent had been lost again! I then sent the information to the new African ECD Network, but I don't see the information on their website. This saddens me a great deal because the history of ECD work accomplished and of the African ECD leaders, who led the way, is very important for planning for the future and for building on the basis of ECD strengths in the region (Emily Vargas-Baron, Director of the RISE Institute, Semi-Structured Interview, August 2020).

The above statement from this participant highlights an important rationale for establishing a virtual or online repository of this information that can be accessed by stakeholders. Further study is needed to document the origins of the country level ECD networks and how they have impacted national level ECD discourse. Arising out of this research, the following gaps have been identified and will need to be addressed by the ECD sector in Africa:

1. The creation of a repository of historical records and information on the ECD networks and ECD conferences is very important because it provides a reference point for which other individuals, organizations, academia and stakeholders within the ECD sector can utilise for program development. The existing ECD Networks such as the Africa Early Childhood Network (AfECN) could take this as a project wherein they collect all the available information and create archives within which this important information is stored.
2. Establishing clear, direct and targeted ECD policies based on localised and not imported research evidence. This research study has given a historical outline of the evidence that was utilized in advancing the ECD agenda. This evidence was found to have been influenced strongly by Minority World research and not African based research. As countries work to meet SDG 4 it is important that they utilize knowledge that is generated on the

continent to craft policies that are clear and specific to the needs of each country based on their cultural values and ways of knowing. Indigenous epistemologies can and should be the basis upon which African countries develop their policies working alongside other communities and cultures to draw lessons that will inform practice. National level ECD policies should respect and reflect the culture and knowledge repositories that inform the nation's history and developmental aspirations. ECD Policies must acknowledge and embrace the Indigenous knowledge systems in order to ensure sustainability of programs at a community level. The different cultures, languages and traditions within a country should all be embraced within the context of the policy. Reference for these can be made in line with the Indigenous ECD Curriculum developed by UNESCO's Institute for Capacity Building.

## **Chapter Summary**

In carrying out this research I was guided by three questions that provided a compass in my journey to uncover the journey of the ECD Networks and Conferences between 1990 and 2009. As a summary, I review how the findings responded to the research questions that guided this study:

### **1. What were the main early childhood education, care, and development networks and conferences established in sub Saharan Africa from 1990-2009?**

The research has established that there were two main ECD Networks that were established between 1990 and 2009. These two networks, the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) and the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) both played a significant role in the transformation of the ECD sector on the continent. They managed to do this through various leadership capacity building initiatives in the case of the ECDNA and the ECD policy studies projects that were led by the WGECD. The research also established that there were four conferences that were held in what would

become an ECD Conference series that began with the first conference held in Uganda in 1999, second in Eritrea in 2002, third in Ghana in 2005, and the fourth held in Senegal in 2009. Each of these conferences had different dynamics in how they were organized, delivered and in conference outcomes. I posit that much of what is seen today within the context of African ECD Networks and ECD Conferences can be seen as a reflection of the historical foundations and work carried out between 1990 and 2009.

## **2. What were their purposes and goals?**

Through document analysis and interviews, this research revealed the purposes and goals of the networks as well as the reasons behind holding the ECD conferences. This research has identified the various objectives set out by the ECD Networks when they began their operations in Africa. This research discussed some issues concerning the identity of the networks, who was funding them, and the agenda that was being advanced. All of these have been discussed and unpacked through the lens of the social network, Foucauldian theoretical and ecology of human development frameworks.

## **3. To what extent have these network and conferences influenced current early childhood development policy in sub Saharan Africa?**

An extensive narration of findings and a discussion on ECD policy development processes is in Chapter 4 and 5. I started off with how the Early Childhood Development Network for Africa (ECDNA) began to essentially scratch the surface when it came to ECD policy issues. I then outlined research findings and discussed how the Working Group for Early Childhood Development (WGECD) had a major focus and impact in the work it did through the ECD Policy studies project. Both networks and conferences had a major impact on the ECD policy discussions with this research citing research that was carried out on ECD policies.

## Conclusion

The past is often referred to as a prelude of what is to come and thus arising out of this research was my recognition that the preservation of documents and information is very important as the historical records assist in formulation of future actions. The process taken through this research of document analysis, interviewing and recording of the journey of ECD Networks and ECD Conferences is the beginning of an intentional scholarly journey of creating repositories of historical information that can be used by current and future leaders within the ECD sector in Africa.

The study of the history of early childhood development networks and conferences in Africa is important as it assists in the development of policies and frameworks such as the AU Agenda 2063 strategy. Historical information on the African International early childhood development conferences will assist the praxis of scholars, governments, and African and international early childhood development stakeholders on developing inclusive, integrated and responsive early childhood development practice and policies developed on the basis of Afro-centric approaches but also providing room for African countries to learn from and also inform western philosophies. This research work will be remiss without quoting a statement made by a late leading African ECD scholar and practitioner who noted that:

Documenting the past helps us to live the present and prepare for the future.  
(Dr Cyril Dalais, Co-Founder ECDNA, Personal Email Communication to Dr Emily Vargas-Baron, March 2010).

The journey of ECD policy development in Africa has been informed by the international and regional conventions or agreements that have been signed by African governments. As outlined in various sections of this dissertation, by assenting to these conventions, governments were placing on themselves the roles of duty bearers. Meeting in Lusaka, July 2001, the AU Heads of States and Government endorsed “*Africa Fit for Children: The African Common Position*”, stating:

We recognize that the future of Africa lies with the well-being of its children and youth. The prospect of socio-economic transformation of the continent rests with investing in the young people of the continent. Today's investment in children is tomorrow's peace, stability, security, democracy and sustainable development (para. 6).

Whilst statements like these are very progressive, the adoption of declarations and international policies in Africa is not matched by sufficient national funding. There is still a dependency on international donors and other private funders to support the implementation of ECD Policies and Frameworks. ECD in Africa has still not been given sufficient gravitas for it to have dedicated space within the national budgeting processes. Thus, it is very important for African governments to show greater political will as well as choosing to give the youngest children a great start in life, in the midst of all the competing socio-economic development priorities. As noted by Young and Richardson (2007):

Every child—poor and non-poor, rural and urban—in every country should have the opportunity to access and benefit from quality ECD services that offer cognitive, physical, and social stimulation; adequate nutrition; and proper care and nurturing.

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# Appendix 1: Research Ethics Approval Certificate



Office of Research Services | Human Research Ethics Board  
 Michael Williams Building Rm B202 PO Box 1700 STN CSC Victoria BC V8W 2Y2 Canada  
 T 250-472-4545 | F 250-721-8960 | uvic.ca/research | ethics@uvic.ca

## Certificate of Approval

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR <b>Jodi Streelasky</b> (Supervisor)	<b>ETHICS PROTOCOL NUMBER</b> Expedited review - delegated	<b>20-0199</b>
PRINCIPAL APPLICANT <b>Patrick Makokoro</b> <b>PhD student</b>	ORIGINAL APPROVAL DATE	11-May-2020
UVIC DEPARTMENT <b>Curriculum &amp; Instruction</b>	APPROVED ON	11-May-2020
	APPROVAL EXPIRY DATE	10-May-2021

**PROJECT TITLE: Addressing the Needs of Young Children? The Establishment and Outcomes of African Early Childhood Development Networks and Conferences, 1990-2009.**

RESEARCH TEAM MEMBERS: **None**

DECLARED PROJECT FUNDING: **None**

DOCUMENTS INCLUDED IN THIS  
 Appendix 2- Letter for Participation Consent v.2.doc - 08-May-2020  
 Appendix 1- Invitation Letter v.2.docx - 08-May-2020  
 Appendix 5-Skype Interview Script.docx - 15-Apr-  
 Appendix 3-Interview Questions v.1.docx - 15-Apr-2020  
 Appendix 4- Email script. v.1.docx - 15-Apr-

### CONDITIONS OF

This Certificate of Approval is valid for the above term provided there is no change in the

#### Modifications

To make any changes to the approved research procedures in your study, please submit a "Request for Modification" form. You must receive ethics approval before proceeding with your modified

#### Renewals

Your ethics approval must be current for the period during which you are recruiting participants or collecting data. To renew protocol, please submit a "Request for Renewal" form before the expiry date on your certificate. You will be sent an emailed prompting you to renew your protocol about six weeks before your expiry date.

#### Project Closures

When you have completed all data collection activities and will have no further contact with participants, please notify the Research Ethics Board by submitting a "Notice of Project Completion"

### Certification

This certifies that the UVic Human Research Ethics Board has examined this research protocol and concluded that, in all the proposed research meets the appropriate standards of ethics as outlined by the University of Victoria Research Involving Human Participants.

Certificate Issued On: 11-May-2020

## Appendix 2: Recruitment Materials



*Letter of Invitation*

Dear .....

My name is Patrick Makokoro and I am a PhD candidate in the Faculty of Education at the University of Victoria in Canada. I am embarking on a research study for my dissertation which focuses on the main African early childhood development networks and the African International early childhood development conferences between 1990 and 2009.

This research will focus on the purposes and goals of these early childhood development networks and conferences and how they influenced current early childhood development policies in Africa. My research questions are;

- i) **What were the main early childhood education, care, and development networks and conferences established in sub Saharan Africa from 1990-2009?**
- ii) **What were their purposes and goals? and,**
- iii) **To what extent have these networks and conferences influenced current early childhood development, policy, and practice in sub-Saharan**

This research is premised on two key issues. Firstly, in order to realize the full potential of children within the African context it is important to provide a historical narration of the evolution of early childhood development professional networks and conferences. My hope is that the information gleaned from this study will help guide the future implementation of early childhood programs on the African continent and provide useful knowledge to sub Saharan African Ministries of Education, Health, Social Services, Community, Child and Family Development.

Secondly, the absence of a historical record regarding a formative period wherein early childhood development networks and key conferences advocated for the design of holistic ECD service provision, policy development and robust policy implementation. If Africa is currently investing in networks and conferences that are meant to inform policy and practice, it is important to establish if any linkages exist between these two and how they can build synergies in advancing the African ECD agenda.

I am inviting you to be a part of this research by participating in an interview. I will be using open-ended interview questions and the interview process will take 1 hour. The interview questions will be given to participants in advance of the interviews so that they can make an informed decision on whether or not they wish to participate in this study. During the interview process, you are welcome to share any personal effects such as photos, letters, or

journals which may provide further context to an experience with the early childhood development networks or conferences during this time period. There is no requirement to share such personal effects and this is completely voluntary for you to do so. If you do decide to share such items during the interview, I may request to make copies or scans of photographs, letters or journal entries for further data collection and for display in my final manuscript only with your signed consent. If there are others in the photos, letters or journal entries, who have not consented to the use of their images and information, these identifiable images or references will be removed either via Photoshop or by blackening out. You have the right to decline such a request.

I plan to highlight the learning and themes that emerge from this interview in a dissertation with a goal to highlight the history of these networks and conferences and the influence they would have had on early childhood policy development and implementation in Africa. Although I will ensure confidentiality by using pseudonyms, I must let potential participants know that it will be difficult to provide complete anonymity with this particular study and participant focus as the sample population may be quite small. If there are any concerns about this, I am happy to discuss further. I expect the interviews to take place between August and October 2020. Interviews will take place over Skype.

I am looking forward to your participation in this research. My supervisor is also available to answer any questions regarding this study. Our contact information is:

Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

Patrick Makokoro

## Appendix 3: Semi Structured Interview Guide



*Skype pre- Interview Script*

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### Skype conversation between researcher Patrick Makokoro and Interview Participant

**Patrick Makokoro:** “Hello .....

**Participant Response:**

**Patrick Makokoro:** “Thank you for agreeing to participate in this Skype interview for my research project. I recently received ethics approval from the University of Victoria paving way for this interview. I would like to highlight that you have the right to withdraw from the research process at any time.

Do you still consent to proceeding with this interview being audio and video recorded as per your signed consent form?”

**Participant Response:** “.....”

(If participant declines to continue participating)

**Patrick Makokoro:** Thank you for having expressed initial interest in participating in this research.

**The call is then terminated.**

**(If they say yes, they want to continue participating...)**

**Patrick Makokoro:** “Thank you for your confirmation, I will also ask whether you want to continue with this research when I send the transcript from the interview to you for checking whether the transcript will be a correct reflection of our discussion.”

**Participant Response:** “....”

**Patrick Makokoro:** “I would like to reiterate that during the interview I will ask if you would like to take a break from the interview or continue another time if any discomfort arises.”

**Participant Response:** “.....”

**Patrick Makokoro:** “Turning to the interview questions I shared with you, is there any specific interview question you would like me to skip?”

**Participant Response:** “.....”

**Patrick Makokoro:** “Thank you for that, I would like now to turn to the interview questions, starting with the first one ....”

## Appendix 4: List of Documents Analysed

### ECD Conferences

Type of Document	Document Title	Produced By	Year Developed	Tag
Kampala ECCD Summary Report	ECD Conference Procedures Document	Conference Organizers	1999	UG Conf 01
Kampala ECCD Conference Papers	Uganda Conference Papers/Presentations	Conference Organizers	1999	UG Conf 02
Asmara ECCD Conference Program	Asmara ECD conference program	Conference Organizing Committee/State of Eritrea	2002	ER Conf 01
Asmara ECCD Conference Documents	Asmara ECCD Overview, Synthesis Statements and Declaration	Conference Organizing Committee/State of Eritrea	2003	ER Conf 02
Asmara Follow comments to Asmara Synthesis	Draft with comments from AP	Conference Organizing Committee/State of Eritrea	2003	ER Conf 03
Asmara ECCD Conference Documents	ECD Conference Information Packet	Conference Organizing Committee/State of Eritrea	2002	ER Con 04
Asmara ECCD Conference Documents	Promotional Activities for International Conference participants	Conference Organizing Committee/State of Eritrea	2002	ER Con 05
Asmara ECCD Conference Documents	Working Group on ECD Policy, Planning and Research	Conference Organizing Committee/State of Eritrea	2002	ER Con 06
Asmara ECCD Conference Documents	Notes for Moderators	Conference Organizing Committee/State of Eritrea	2002	ER Con 07
Accra ECD Conference	Conference Proceedings			

Documents Accra ECD Conference Documents	Volume 1	ADEA WGECD	2005	GH Con 01
Senegal ECD Conference Documents	Conference Proceedings Volume 2	ADEA WGECD	2005	GH Con 02
Senegal ECD Conference Documents	Conference Program	ADEA WGECD	2009	SN Con 01
Senegal ECD Conference Documents	Guide to ECD Innovations in Africa	ADEA WGECD	2009	SN Con 02
Senegal ECD Conference Documents	Panel Chairs and Paper Presenters document	ADEA WGECD	2009	SN Con 03
Senegal ECD Conference Documents	International Development Partners round table agenda	no author	2009	SN Con 04
Senegal ECD Conference Documents	Communiqué: A Call to Action	ADEA WGECD	2009	SN Con 05
ECD Conference Planning Communications	Official letter to SA Minister on hosting of 4 <sup>th</sup> Conference	ADEA WGECD	2008	Con Comms 01
ECD Conference Planning Communications	Email exchanges between WB, ADEA, WFF	Various individuals	2008	Con Comms 02

### ECD Networks

Type of Document	Document Background	Produced By	Year Developed	Tag
Memo from BREDA Director/Chair of WGECD Conference Announcement	Memo containing conference preparations for Senegal ECD Conference	ADEA WGECD	2009	WGECD 01
	Document announcing 4th ECD Conference in Senegal	ADEA WGECD	2009	WGECD 02
WGECD Policy Project Report	Report of the policy project looking at Mauritius, Namibia and Ghana	Kate Torkington- ADEA consultant	2001	WGECD 03

WGECD working group meeting notes	Notes from Jeanette Vogelaar-WGECD Leader Royal Netherlands Embassy	Jeanette Vogelaar	2004	WGECD 04
Rationale for Consultative meeting of WGECD	Background document for WGECD meeting held at the Hague	WGECD-Netherlands Foreign Affairs ministry	2001	WGECD 05
List of participants at WGECD meeting at The Hague	Participants who participated in meeting 10- 12 December 2001	WGECD-Netherlands Foreign Affairs ministry	2001	WGECD 06
Miscellaneous history of ECD in Africa	Two-page minutes of meeting between AP and Amani Tanzania	AP and Jessica Shaefer	2003	ECDNA 01
Faxed letters from K. Torkington on Policy Project	Faxed communication between WGECD Coordinator and UNICEF Namibia	Kate Torkington-ADEA consultant	2000	WGECD 07
Email communication on ECDNA endorsement	Original email from M Kabiru requesting international partners endorse ECDNA	Margaret Kabiru	1999	ECDNA 02
Discussion Paper	Paper on future of ADEA WGECD meeting held 10- 12 March 1999	Kate Torkington-ADEA consultant	1999	WGECD 08
Historical Perspectives on WGECD document	Document on WGECD Historical perspectives	UNESCO Breda (Dakar, 2008)	2008	WGECD 09
ECD Policy Studies communication	Facsimile exchanges between K. Torkington and UNICEF Namibia	ADEA WGECD	2000	ECD Pol 01
WGECD Policy Studies Project Overview	Summary of Policy Studies Project	ADEA WGECD 2000-K. Torkington	2000	ECD Pol 02
ECDNA Application for funding document	Proposal for funding the establishment and operationalizing the	ECDNA Secretariat	1995	ECDNA 03

African ECD Working Group  
within DAE

Unpublished ECDNA pamphlet titled "Towards and Early Childhood Development Network for Africa – The establishment of a DAE Working Group on Early Childhood Development	Unpublished informational ECDNA pamphlet	ECDNA Secretariat at Kenya Institute of Education	1995	ECDNA 04
ECDNA Draft Constitution	Draft Constitution of the ECDNA, Nairobi, April 1998	ECDNA Secretariat	1998	ECDNA 05
University without Walls Proposal by A. Pence of University of Victoria	Overview of proposed graduate degree in ECCD/CYC	Alan Pence, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria	1997	AP 01

## Appendix 5: ADEA Biennials from 1993-2008

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<b>Year and Location</b>	<b>Biennale Theme</b>
1993- Angers, France	Improving the Implementation of Education Projects in Africa Through Ownership
1995- Tours, France	Formulating Educational Policy in sub-Sub Saharan Africa
1997- Dakar, Senegal	Partnerships for Capacity Building and Quality Improvements in Education
1999- Johannesburg, South Africa	What Works and What's New in Education: Africa Speaks!
2001- Arusha, Tanzania	Reaching Out, Reaching All: Sustaining Effective Policy and Practice for Education in Africa
2003- Grand Baie, Mauritius	The Quest for Quality: Learning from the African Experience
2006- Libreville, Gabon	Characteristics, Conditions and Factors underlying Effective Schools and Literacy and Early Childhood Development Programs
2008- Maputo, Mozambique	Beyond Primary Education: Challenges of and Approaches to Expanding Learning Opportunities in Africa

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## Appendix 6: Major Historical Early Childhood Development events in Africa

Year	Event/Conference	Place
1990	Adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)	UN General Assembly
1990	1 <sup>st</sup> World Conference on Education for All	Jomtien, Thailand
1990	World Summit for Children	United Nations
1993	Creation of the Working Group on Early Childhood Development (ADEA-WGECD)	
1994	Calamar Declaration sets forth formation of the Early Childhood Development Network in Africa (ECDNA).	
1996	Creation of the Réseau Africain Francophone Prime Enfance (Early Childhood Francophone African Network).	
1996	World Bank Funding of ECD initiatives starts	Global
1997	First African Early Childhood Development Seminar	Windhoek, Namibia
1998	Second African ECD Seminar (Banjul, The Gambia)	The Gambia
1998	7th Conference of Ministers of Education of African Member States (ADEA-MINEDAF VII)	South Africa
1999	First African International Conference on Early Childhood Care and Development (ECCD).	Kampala, Uganda
1999-2001	First WGECD ECD Policy Studies project launched	Ghana, Namibia and Mauritania
2000	2 <sup>nd</sup> Education for All (EFA) Conference	Dakar, Senegal
2000	Adoption of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs)	New York
2000	UNICEF publication State of the World's Children focusing on Early Childhood Development	New York
2001	The Pan-African Forum – African common position and plan of action called Africa Fit for Children launched (Pan-African Forum for Children, 2001).	Cairo, Egypt
2001	Publication of We the Children	New York, USA
2001	The ADEA-WGECD survey of the 'state of the art' of ECD throughout Africa	Sub Saharan Africa (SSA)
2001	ADEA-WGECD consultative discussion of the results of the first study (1999 and 2001 Sequential Policy Study).	The Hague, Netherlands
2002	Publication of A World Fit for Children by UNICEF	
2002	United Nations General Assembly's Special Session on Children	New York, USA
2002	Second African International Conference on Early Childhood Care and Development	Asmara, Eritrea
2003	ADEA Biennial Meeting	Grand Baie, Mauritius
2002 – 2003	2 <sup>nd</sup> WGECD ECD Policy Project	Senegal, Burkina Faso and Mauritius
2002-2004	ECDVU and ECD Policy Development and Implementation Project in Africa (SSA-1) Master of Arts in ECD completed by 27 of 30 participants from 10 African countries	Africa
2005	3 <sup>rd</sup> African International Conference on Early Childhood Care and Development	Accra, Ghana

2007	Mid-Term Review of the African Common Position on Children	Across Africa
2008	Marito Garcia, Alan Pence & Judith Evans publish <i>Africa's Future, Africa's Challenge - Early Childhood Care and Development in Sub Saharan Africa</i>	
2009	Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) supported Initial Scholars' Workshop: 'Strengthening Africa's Contributions to Child Development Research' (Launch of African Scholars and Institutions Initiative-AS&I; co-leaders	
2009	4 <sup>th</sup> African International Conference on Early Childhood Care and Development	Dakar, Senegal

## Appendix 7: WGECD 2009 Steering Committee Meeting Participant List

Organization	Name
UNESCO BREDA	Mrs. Ann-Therese Ndong-Jatta
UNESCO BREDA	Rokhaya Diawara
UNESCO, Paris	Yoshie Kaga
Save the Children (USA) – DC	Pablo Stansbery
Save the Children (USA) - Uganda	Bonita Birungi
ADEA Secretariat	Robbert van de Waerd
The Consultative Group on ECD/ CG	Louise Zimanyi
Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Sonja Kuip
UNICEF / N.Y.	Nurper Ulker
UNICEF / ESARO	Aster Haregot
UNICEF / WCARO	Vigdis Cristofoli
UNICEF / WCARO	Vanya Berrouet
World Bank	Michelle Neuman
World Bank	Marito Garcia
World Bank	Mary Young
Finland Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Ms. Riitta-Liisa Korkeamaki
WHO	Meena Cabra de Mello
Save the Children (UK)	Katy Webley

OSI / Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation)	Sarah Klaus
PLAN International / WARO	Sven Coppens
Aga Khan Foundation	Kathy Bartlett
Bernard van Leer Foundation	Stephen Meershoek [Alternatif /L. Gertsch]  [Alt. / Lisa Jordan, Executive Director]  [Alt. / Selim Iltus
FAWE	Marema Dioum
ECDVU	Alan Pence
Honorary Member / Resource Person	Eveline Pressoir
Honorary Member / Resource Person	Emily Vargas-Baron
Honorary Member / Resource Person	Agnes Aidoo
Honorary Member / Resource Person	Jeannette Vogelaar
Senegal	Mme Diop
Mauritius	Hon. Mrs Indranee Seebun
Tanzania	Hon. MwantumuMahiza
Zambia	Hon. Geoffrey Lungwangwa
Cameroon	[Alt. / Françoise Soua]
RDC	Maker Mwangu Famba