



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

MINISTRY OF GENERAL EDUCATION

Chapter 7

Parent and community involvement in ECE: An introduction



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I INTRODUCTION

1.1 PARENT AND COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN ECE

Parent and community involvement (PCI) in early childhood education refers to involvement of parents and members of the community in the activities/events and volunteer opportunities occurring between parents and members of the community and learners, or between parents and ECE teachers at the ECE centre that may contribute to the learner's educational outcomes, development and well-being.

Children with ECE background tend to perform better in school and are more productive in later life (UNESCO 2015a,74). Effective programming for ECE requires parental and community involvement throughout the child's development and education.

In Zambia, young children (3 to 6 years) have been officially targeted for ECE, but most times have limited opportunities for this.

One of the pragmatic ways to realise the right of children to ECE is to equip parents/communities as proxy right holders, with appropriate ECE knowledge and skills. Once empowered parents and communities will not only be able to promote the right to ECE (as duty bearers) but also to create platforms with schools (duty holders) to address the learner's rights to ECE through quality involvement.

Parents and communities face a couple of barriers to effectively get involved in the education of their ECE children. These barriers include but are not limited to:

- Ineffective communication methods between schools and families
- parents are unaware of or confused about their roles and responsibilities related to children's learning
- Lack of confidence on the part of parents in their abilities to fulfil their responsibilities
- Conflicting commitments, on the part of parents, that interfere with their ability to actively participate at home or in their child's school
- Mistrust between parents and teachers/administrators at school.

1.2 BACKGROUND

1.2.1 Input from the Ministry of General Education

To come up with the toolkit for teachers, four MOGE directorates were engaged to develop a framework which stipulates expectations and implementation strategies for integrated parental, family and community involvement, aimed to provide guidance to schools, communities and families as they support the planning, implementation and evaluation of ECE activities.

Some already existing documents such as the ones listed below were a source of information for developing PCI activities in ECE:

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- The Standard Guidelines
 - The guidelines on establishment of Low Cost ECE centres
 - The caregivers' manual

1.2.2 Inspiration from ZOCS

Zambia Open Community Schools (ZOCS), an implementing partner of the MoGE, developed a Parent Community School Committee (PCSC) training manual which has been used to train committee members on community involvement (ZOCS, 2015). This manual is used as an inspiration for the toolkit.

1.2.3 Epstein-model as basis

Based on research, Joyce Epstein (Epstein, 2002) developed a set of standards for parental, family and community involvement. The standards state six types of involvement:

1. Parenting
2. Communicating
3. Volunteering
4. Learning at home
5. Decision making
6. Collaborating with the community.

The Epstein model addresses all levels (state, province, district, school, classroom and family) of the educational system and identifies opportunities through which school, family and community partnerships can be strengthened. All input and inspiration, collected for the ECE PCI toolkit, will be structured using the six categories of the Epstein model.

1.3 PARENTS, FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

In the PCI toolkit we refer to parents, meaning all caregivers (parents and guardians such as relatives and friends) who are concerned with the early education of the learner at home.

Communities mean all community members and institutional organisations that can be linked to an ECE centre.

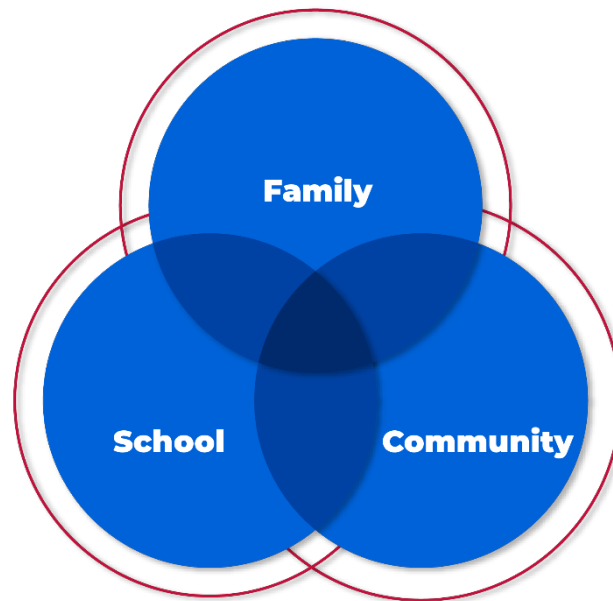
To reach out to parents, families and communities, schools and Ministry of General Education structures at all levels play a crucial role and might collaborate with certain stakeholders such as:

1. Media houses
2. Non-Governmental Organisations
3. Faith-Based Organisations
4. Civil Society Organisations
5. Co-operating Partners
6. Line Ministries
7. Traditional Leaders
8. Civic Leaders

2 PCI APPROACH FOR ECE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL LEADERS AN INTRO

2.1 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

ECE teachers and school leaders strengthen parental, family and community involvement in ECE in order to promote a conducive learning environment for young children in ECE schools and their homes.



2.2 EXPECTED OUTCOMES

In order to achieve the above-mentioned objective, ECE teachers and school leaders will be strengthened to build partnerships with parents, families and communities on all six levels of involvement as defined by Epstein. As such, the PCI approach will realise the following 4 outcomes:

- (1) ECE teachers and school leaders are strengthened to establish effective school-to-home and home-to-school communication (Epstein Type 2).
- (2) ECE teachers and school leaders are strengthened to support parents in positive and stimulating parenting practices (Epstein Type 1) and creating the conditions for their children to learn at home (Epstein Type 4).
- (3) ECE teachers and school leaders are supported and provided with modalities to engage parents, families and communities in voluntary work (Epstein Type 3) and to promote collaboration between the community and the school (Epstein Type 6).
- (4) ECE teachers and school leaders are supported to involve parents, families and communities in school decision making (Epstein Type 5).

2.3 STRATEGY

Teachers can be strengthened to involve parents and communities in ECE, by capacity building through training and through clearly defined activities, within the 6 strategies of the Epstein's model. Those activities are defined in the following chapter: the PCI approach for ECE teachers.

Teachers will be assisted to implement the PCI activities through trainings and coaching by school administrators and school in-service providers such as DRCC, ZIC, Head teachers.



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