



THE NEED FOR A MINIMAL ACCREDITATION MODEL TO ADVANCE AND MANAGE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION IN BOTSWANA: A PROPOSAL FOR A DEBATE

Naledi Binnie Mswelaⁱ

University of Botswana, Faculty of Education,
Department of Primary Education, Botswana

Abstract:

Universally, educational reforms are meant to positively impact a country. Botswana has over the years been introducing innovations through government funding of education especially basic education. Reforms have been focused on each level of education including early childhood education (ECE). While a move to develop early childhood education was slow as it started some few years back (2012) with the introduction of the first policy on early childhood education, the government should be applauded for taking this bold step signaling an international move to advance and manage this level of education. Experience has indicated that early childhood programs are mostly operated by non-government providers like religious groups, private organizations and individuals. However, there is nothing in place to regulate their provision in terms of an accreditation model. The absence of such a model can defeat the very efforts to improve, expand and support provision of ECE. This paper argues for the introduction of a minimal accreditation model taking into consideration the nature of provision and the fresh interest that the government has given to ECE. It is suggested that a minimal model can have tremendous benefits for Botswana. It can shape a remarkable trend of regular review, regulate issuance of certificates to practice, formation of a national accreditation body, development of standards for compliance and coordinate different provisions. Unquestionably, these milestones would not be achieved with unregulated practices that currently characterize ECE provision in Botswana. The paper supports efforts for relevant provision of ECE which can spark renewed interests by all stakeholders including parents, communities and nation at large.

ⁱ Correspondence: email mswelan@mopipi.ub.bw

Keywords: early childhood education, accreditation, minimal accreditation model, government providers, none-government providers

1. Introduction and Study Contexts

Early Childhood Education (ECE) refers to branches of education and care of young children from birth to 8 years (Henniger, 2009). Related names are pre-school, kindergarten, nursery, and crèches. ECE is an integral part of modern education systems in many countries with the Botswana government having acceded to this need just recently, precisely in 2001. Ownership has been within the hands of private institutions and individuals. Now the Government of Botswana has made a great commitment in this regard.

In line with global interest such as the Jomtein Conference 'Education for All Thailand (1990), Botswana through various Government Policy documents such as Revised National Policy on Education, 1994, Vision 16, National Day care Centre Policy 1980, Early Childhood Education Policy 2003 has also shown interest in Early Childhood Education. Provision of ECE in Botswana dates back to the early 70's when day care was mostly done through home care by women who did it voluntarily (Maundeni, 2013). However, it has been indicated that prior to these women's sacrificial work, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations and private ones also have contributed to the present situation or advancement of ECE in Botswana (Maunganidze & Tsamaase, 2014).

Early childhood education has clear goals. Some of these goals as stated in the Botswana Early Childhood Education Policy (2001) include the following; *"developing care and education services for children so as to; promoting opportunities for children's full physical, cognitive, social, emotional and mental growth and stimulation"* (Division of Pre-school, Department of Primary Education, 2001, p. 5). These goals may not be realized if nothing is in place to monitor their implementation and assess worth or value. It is thus imperative for any Botswana to monitor education given to its early learners to make sure it meets the national standards.

2. Historical overview of early childhood education in Botswana

Post-Independence was a difficult time for the newly elected government as there was almost nothing the country had inherited from their colonial master in terms of robust educational systems. While mainstream schooling such as primary and secondary education existed thinly around the country, ECE were not common. The Government

of Botswana at the time of independence paid little attention and concentrated on developments such as building infrastructure, roads so as to build an economy rather than issues of “luxury” such as ECE (Kammerman, 2006). Actually, the history of early childhood care and education in Botswana dates as far back as the 1960s. During that time, women in various parts of the country gathered children in their homes for custodial care while at the same time teaching them various activities that stimulated their development. Complementing these efforts by women were various forms of day care centers, which were operated by voluntary organizations such as churches, the Red Cross and private individuals (UNESCO, 2000). With the passage of time, concern was raised that some of the centers were not adequately run. It was at that time when UNICEF started to develop interest in ECCE in Botswana. Due to the “lack of involvement” by the government in regards to Early Childhood Education, this field was then taken by private and non-profit organizations. The structure of the programs remained those that resembled ECE programs from the colonial masters’ country of origins in structure as well as the names such as pre-schools, nurseries, crèches and kindergartens (Kammerman, 2006).

Consequently in 1980, (14 years after Botswana attained independence), the National Day Care Centre Policy (NDCP) was developed (Republic of Botswana, Division of Pre-school, Department of Primary Education, 2001). The policy provided guidance in the: *“management, protection and education for children of ages two and half to six years”* (p: 2).

As the years went by, there was a rapid increase in the number of women who participated in employment outside the home. Moreover, Government took a conscious decision to pay attention to women’s empowerment; hence, women became active in productive economic activities more than ever before in the history of the country. This then heightened the need for ECCE provision. The economic boom also meant more disposable income, meaning that more and more people became eager to offer their children quality education. This drove the social demand for ECCE provision.

Maundeni, (2013), states that pre-school education in Botswana started after independence and has grown by demand ever since. Pre-schools were run by organizations like women’s groups, churches, Red Cross and individuals without any policies. During that time, Pre-school was enjoyed by few children due to financial constraints experienced by some families. This statement is also verified by [Mwamwenda \(1996\)](#) who argues that most children in the west attend pre-school programs while only a privileged few do so in Africa. The above reading depicts Botswana’s situation. Pre-school education is available only to those children whose parents can afford to send them to expensive private day care centers and pre-schools.

The overwhelming majority of parents have no access to pre-school programs ([Mwamwenda, 1996](#)).

Due to a high social demand for more widely available pre-school education in Botswana, there has been a large increase in different kinds of pre-school provision since 1997. This necessitated the establishment of a multi-sectorial Reference Committee on early childhood education in 1980 which was composed of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Health, Local Government and Lands, voluntary and religious organization. Its mandate was to look into the activities of pre-schools and draw up guidelines for their operation (Otaala, Njenga & Monau, 1989). The work of the Committee resulted in the adoption of the National Policy on Pre-Schools Centre in 1980. The policy was to provide guidance and reduce problems that were inherent in the uncontrolled establishment of pre-schools in the country.

The Ministry of Education has continuously made proposals since the late 1980s for a greater involvement of the education sector in the provision of pre-primary education. This was recognized by the Government in National Development Plan 7 where a commitment was made to prepare a comprehensive policy on pre-school education and to link it to the formal education system ([Republic of Botswana, 1994](#)). Currently, the government has rolled out two hundred and twenty six (226) ECE programs around the country to add on the ones that have been run by both non-governmental organizations as well as private individuals. However, despite all these developments, no accreditation standards have been developed to guide the provision of ECE

In Botswana, early ownership of early childhood education (ECE) was by private institutions and individuals (Maundeni, 2013). It is only recently in 2012 that government made ECE an integral part of the education systems of Botswana. The Botswana Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP) of 2015 have identified *“lack of access to Early Childhood Development programs despite its importance on learner progression and pupil performance at schools as the early years prepare children for school readiness”* (Republic of Botswana, Ministry of Education, ETSSP, 2015:23). The ETSSP also underscores the fact that pre-primary education is largely provided by the private sector. To increase access to ECE, the NDP 10 has a set target of 40% increase in enrolment using a scale of 18.4% of children entered primary standard 1 in 2011 who had attended early childhood education at government run schools (Statistics Botswana, 2012 cited in Republic of Botswana (ETSSP), 2015).

The first bold step by the government of Botswana to increase access to early childhood education or pre-primary education was to introduce orientation programs for *“prospective Standard One pupils in 2012 and reception classes in public schools in 2013”*

(UNICEF, 2000). An Orientation program is for a period of six weeks and introduced in all public primary schools. The program is to partly prepare children for learning, with the provision of readiness activities and also to help children settle into schools. A one-year Reception Program has been introduced in 115 schools out of a total of 756 public schools in January 2014 and currently Government has made a great commitment in regards to the provision of ECE (Republic of Botswana, Ministry of Education, ETSSP. 2015:23).

Early childhood programs in Botswana are varied, for example, faith based program, intervention programs, in-school programs and public or private programs, child care centres, and private nursery schools. They basically come as small and larger programs. Large programs are those that are developed by organizations like the church based and Non-Governmental Organizations. School based child care is also becoming popular. This kind of care is usually located inside a public school or private school and operates under the direction of the main school. In terms of the length of time per day, most programs open in the morning and run either half or full day.

2. Why Botswana's government interest in early childhood education? Benefits of ECE

There are numerous benefits associated with ECE. Among these benefits are (i) easy progression when they start primary or elementary schools, for example, children who underwent quality early childhood are said to have increased productivity over a life time, thus improving standards of living, saving costs on remedial education and care, higher earnings for parents especially women who would be free to join the labour market (Henniger, 2009). Investment in ECE also reduces social disparities as well as race and gender inequalities. ECE also has the potential to end the cycle of poverty (Meier & Marais, 2012). When children are enrolled in ECE programs, they are likely to learn values that could instill peace, compassion as well as issues of democracy, unity, self-reliance as well as *botho*. In the case of Botswana, *botho* denotes a well-mannered, courteous and disciplined person who disapproves of anti-social, disgraceful, inhuman and criminal behaviour, and encourages social justice for all (Republic of Botswana, Presidential Task Force, 1997). Indeed, the benefits of attending early childhood education have been mentioned by a number of authors. Aubrey, David, Godfrey and Thompson (2000), for example, contend that children who receive high quality ECE have fewer problems progressing in school than those who received low quality care. They are said to score higher on tests gauging cognitive and academic achievement. Furthermore, children who attended early childhood schools are less likely to engage in

problem behaviours (fighting, arguing, being mean to others) than those who received low quality care (Follari, 2015). These are some of the many benefits that make early childhood education a priority in many countries; Botswana included though having recently supported this sector of education.

At the same time the early years are critical for the development of potential human beings, the first 8 years are characterized by rapid, physical, intellectual, social and moral development (Meier & Marais, 2012). As a result, this period is important for young children to be provided with a quality early childhood education that can develop them in all the areas outlined above.

Based on these benefits, it was only in 2001, that the Botswana government came up “Early Childhood Education Policy” as an attempt to provide a holistic approach to the developmental needs of a child, in particular its healthy growth and preparation for primary education” (Division of Preschool, Department of Primary Education, 2001, p.10). The policy reveal areas that are of concern for example, shortage of trained teachers, lack of equipment and facilities and overcrowded classrooms. Not much has been done in terms of implementation of this policy. Differences exist in the provision, some good and others leaving much to be desired. In the absence of strict enforcement of the implementation of this policy, some parents and their children are likely to be cheated. There are bound to be a lot of variations as well as various levels of care around the country. Unfortunately, very little research is done in this field of ECE. Basically, Botswana has lagged behind with developing standards to ensure quality provision. The 2001 policy framework is commendable though its impact is unknown today basically because of no research studies to this effect. However, policy framework is never a single tool used to regulate or monitor the provision of quality education, other standards are necessary. Some integral components of policy implementation include monitoring and evaluation standards, accreditation standards, training and development plans as well as financial strategies, just to mention a few.

Of noteworthy is that pre-school education is available only to those children whose parents can afford to send them to expensive private day care centers and pre-schools. The overwhelming majority of parents have no access to pre-school programs ([Mwamwenda, 1996](#)). Due to a high social demand for more widely available pre-school education in Botswana, there has been a large increase in different kinds of pre-school provision since 1997. This necessitated the establishment of a multi-sectorial Reference Committee on early childhood education in 1980 which was composed of representatives from the Ministries of Education, Health, Local Government and Lands, voluntary and religious organization. Its mandate was to look into the activities of pre-schools and draw up guidelines for their operation (Otaala, Njenga & Monau, 1989).

The work of the Committee resulted in the adoption of the National Policy on Pre-Schools Centre in 1980. The policy was to provide guidance and reduce problems that were inherent in the uncontrolled establishment of pre-schools in the country.

The Ministry of Education has continuously made proposals since the late 1980s for a greater involvement of the education sector in the provision of pre-primary education. This was recognized by the Government in National Development Plan 7 where a commitment was made to prepare a comprehensive policy on pre-school education and to link it to the formal education system ([Republic of Botswana, 1994](#)). Currently, the government has rolled out two hundred and twenty six (226) ECE programs around the country to add on the ones that have been run by both non-governmental organizations as well as private individuals. However, despite all these developments, no accreditation standards have been developed to guide the provision of ECE apart from some policies that are used in provision of ECE in Botswana.

3. A brief review of the literature on early childhood education: A focus on benefits

There is a wide variety regarding the scope, structure as well as implementation and programming among early childhood programs. Children who enroll in these programs also bring assortment to the programs in terms of ability, interest, culture, values, languages, professional preparation etc. (Follari, 2015). Some children come from low-income families, their social and emotional status differ and their proficiency in language and instruction also differs.

This research will thus focus on the issue of quality provision of ECE. However, particular attention in this study is directed to the issue of accreditation. Accreditation simply means a quality assurance framework developed by a recognized body/ agency to regulate / validate the content, processes, outputs and products of the program offered. It gives credibility and standard to program. However not all countries have accreditation framework in place for ECE, Botswana included.

The increasing interest in and importance of an accreditation model comes with public investments directed especially at improving the development of all young children and particularly the socially disadvantaged groups (Sirag, 2015; Demma, (2010); Aguilar & Tansini 2011). A number of benefits are cited for having quality early childhood education. These include though not limited to the following positive effects on cognitive, social, and emotional development (Gordon & Browne, (2000); Cohen & Best, (2013) Ishimine & Tayler, 2014). Children who receive high quality education and care are better in Maths Skills prior to school 1994 entry (Leavers, 1994). Children who received high quality child care had fewer problems than those who received low

quality care. On the contrast research found out that children who received lower quality child care during the first three years were rated “more difficult” by their teachers. Those who received high –quality child care scored higher on tests gauging cognitive and academic achievement. Similarly, children who received quality child care are less likely to engage in problem behaviours (fighting, arguing, being mean to others) than those who received low quality care (Leavers, 1994).

It is on the basis of these presumed benefits that governments, development partners, private organizations, non-government organization, churches as well as individuals spend resources on ECE. Virtues derived from ECE are the building blocks of productive citizens, quite well that they are the building blocks of productive citizens. The vision for the Government of Botswana’s early childhood “*focuses on the problems and needs of early childhood care and education programs and seeks to create an environment in which services of a high quality would develop*” (Republic of Botswana, Division of Preschool, Department of Primary Education 2001).

In the African context, the need for ECE programs has also been necessitated by modernization which brought with it the disintegration of the traditional social setup in which the extended family was the basic unit within which children were cared for and socialized (Kamerman, 2006). The rise of the nuclear family (in which both parents may be in employment) and the single-parent family necessitated establishment of secondary institutions of socialization to play the role that was played by the extended family before ECE was a handy substitute. The effects of these developments combined led to a mushrooming of pre-school centers which went by various names such as day care centers, nursery schools, crèches, pre-primary units, reception schools and kindergarten classes. As the demand for ECE increased, issues that needed attention became multifaceted including the need for an accreditation model to regulate ECE provision.

4. The need for an accreditation model to advance early childhood education in Botswana

Pre- schools in Botswana are said to be faced with a number of problems like lack of proper structures, overcrowded classrooms, lack of facilities, not following standards set by ECE Policy, such as using teachers without relevant qualifications or with inadequate preparation to teach at this level (Maundeni (2013). As stated by Meier and Marais, (2012) there is a positive correlation between teachers’ qualifications and the quality of and early childhood education program (p.79). Thus, where ECE operates without qualified teachers, quality is compromised. Monyatsi, Bose and Mberengwa

(2012) further state that pupil-teacher ratio in some schools tend to be higher than what is suggested in early childhood education policies. The Early Childhood Education Policy (Republic of Botswana, Division of Early Childhood Education, Department of Primary, 2001 p. 15) states that a program shall have a maximum of 25 children aged 2 and a half to 4 years per class and a maximum of 30 children aged 4- 6 per class, yet some schools are said to have high ratios of 50 – 60. In some of the schools, children are overcrowded and lack space to move around to interact with others. Maundeni (2013) also states that there is lack of materials, equipment that children can use to play with. As recommended by worldwide organizations that advocate for quality early childhood education such as the National Association for Education of Young Children (NAEYC), children need to be provided with age appropriate materials so that they can learn from them using all their senses.

As it may be expected, the increasing interest and the importance of ECE come with public investments directed especially at improving the development of all young children and particularly the socially disadvantaged groups (Sirag, 2015; Demma, (2010); Aguilar & Tansini 2011). It becomes important therefore that care should be exercised in the provision of ECE and without an accreditation guidelines, no one is unsure of what happens inside the many ECE schools in Botswana.

There is also a wide variety regarding the scope, structure as well as implementation and programming among early childhood programs. Children who enroll in these programs also bring assortment to the programs in terms of ability, interest, culture, values, languages, professional preparation etc. (Follari, 2015). Some children come from low- income families, their social and emotional status differ and their proficiency in language and instruction also differs. In Botswana for example, English is usually the medium of instruction. This variety makes an accreditation model importance to regulate and ensure acceptable standards of provision. As Ishimine and Tayler (2014) state, all stakeholders, politicians, parents, governments around the world have taken a keen interest in issues of quality. President Obama in his address to a joint session of Congress in February 24, 2009, for example, underscored the need for quality ECE by stating that in America, 'we have dramatically expanded early childhood education and will continue to improve its quality, because we know that the most formative learning comes in those first years of life' (NECTAC Quality Indicators of Inclusive Programs, 2010). However not all countries have accreditation framework in place for ECE, Botswana included. Thus, special attention is focused on this need to have an accreditation model. The National Association of the Education of Young Children (Bredekamp, 1997) states that all young children need to be provided with a

safe, nurturing environment that promotes the physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development of young children while responding to the needs of families. Despite these many efforts targeted at bringing quality in the provision of early childhood education, Botswana still lags behind with the development of accreditation guidelines hence the discussion that follows.

5. The need for an accreditation model: A proposal for the debate

Accreditation efforts in many countries followed specific models and these models may differ according to country's level or growth or advancement of early childhood education. Models are used as government regulations of the provision to ensure quality or standardization across different providers. Botswana has not yet developed some accreditation guidelines.

Before suggesting a model to be used in Botswana, it is perhaps important to shed light on some basic accreditation models so that readers can understand why one model, the minimal model has been suggested. As the title of this paper indicates, the suggestion can be debated bearing in mind that different providers are at different levels or years of provision. Depending on the experiences of some providers, a different model may seem appropriate.

A brief overview of the different models is presented below.

5.1 The Regulatory Model

The regulatory model (Van Damme, 2002) tasks policy makers to make recommendations about accreditation standards that require providers to strictly adhere to the core requirements set to be followed by those engaged in early childhood education. The model usually considers all aspects of quality provision like human resources required such as expertise or training of teachers, managers and leaders as well as for those who design the curriculum for early childhood learners. Standards set are to be strictly adhered to as compared with other models that do not consider a holistic picture of accreditation and demand that all standards are adhered to. Specifically, the value of this type of accreditation model is felt in a situation where providers have been exposed to other less strict models like Peer Review or Program Model (Elliot, 2007). The Regulatory model may not necessarily be suitable to Botswana's situation because early childhood education has just currently gotten the attention and support of the government of Botswana thus models with lesser strict adherence expectations may be suitable for Botswana.

5.2 Peer Review Model

Peer Review Model has become a mark of excellence achieved through combination of school select peers forming a team as an accreditation body (Van Damme, 2002). As this model is constituted by peers, it is possible that only a fraction of stakeholders with common interest can be used as regulatory check points for quality provision. While members may seek accreditation to demonstrate their commitment to excellence, they can also bring divergent or conflicting views or clash about philosophies relating to the education and care of young children (Danahue, 2000).

In this model, accreditation can have private regulations because standards have not been set by the national body under the national government. Another variant of this type of non-governmental voluntary accreditation is the possibility that members may be chosen without clear criteria and this poses a number of challenges including selecting members to go into the accreditation body who do not have the right expertise (Gola, 2003). While there may be some significant benefits to the use of this type of accreditation as an alternative to other models, it may not be the best model for Botswana whose early childhood education has currently been made an integral element of the education system. Like (Van Damme, 2002) says, accreditation models, especially nongovernmental regulatory, tend to be much more flexible because they are not bound by the rigidities of government rulemaking procedures (Gola, 2003). This means that care should be exercised when an accreditation model is chosen to ensure that it can function well within the local situation.

5.3 Program Model

The program model will not be ideal where ECE has a single accreditation body because it depends on a program accrediting another program, for example, providers of infant/toddler through preschool program doing accreditation for each other and kindergarten through 3rd grade programs providers also concentrating on what their programs offer (Danahue, 2002). A concentration in a single program for a whole course menu of early childhood program would not give a holistic picture of what happens in the field of ECE and thus it may be unfair to have programs appraising one another (Danahue, 2002). This model may be used with care but it may be possible that in a situation like Botswana where regulatory standards are determined by the government which is the main provider and sponsor of ECE, the program model may not work well.

However, it has to be noted that the choice of any model is driven by the desire to enhance quality of provision. It may be possible that rigid adherence to standardization can work for some situations while other circumstances may need

flexible approach. In this study, the Minimal Accreditation Model is used as a theoretical framework as explained below.

5.4 The proposed Minimal Accreditation model

Accreditation standards as already explained is having in place some agreed upon criteria to be used to judge and compare ECE provisions or practices. The minimal models calls for some basic characteristics focusing on basic requirement such as finding out if providers have enough budget to run the pre-school, if infrastructure can accommodate children and their need; it wants to establish the size and skill base of school and adequate coverage of the basic topics in the curriculum (Gola, 2003). In short, the minimal models wants providers to satisfy minimal core and it is mainly used as an appropriate way to start an accrediting body (Gola, 2003) hence its suitability for Botswana, a country that does not have accreditation standards for its early childhood provisions/education.

It is understood that ECE provisions in Botswana will be different, not only from one region, location or village to the other and also depending on the size and resource available for ECE practices. However, across all these provisions, common sets of standards can be agreed upon to regulate quality across these diverse providers. Since Botswana will be experiencing with accreditation standards, this study has proposed to use the Minimal Model as explained above. Thus, among the models already discussed, this study shall use the Minimal Model of accreditation as the lens (theoretical framework) through which the thesis of this study is understood. As explained above, this model presupposes the use of a minimum set of accreditation requirements to be followed (Gola, 2003). These requirements include though not limited to the following;

- Having a formal authorizing power ((Hämäläinen et al, 2001) – Having accreditation standards implies the existence of an accreditation body which acts as an authorizing power (reviewing, assessing and giving permits for carrying out ECE provisions). In the case of Botswana, Botswana Qualification Authority is in place for issuance of accreditation and ECE Minimal Accreditation Standards may be developed by BQA in consultation with relevant stakeholders. Having BQA in place thus gives this study an impetus to propose the use of the Minimal Accreditation as a theoretical framework as BQA already deals with setting up minimal standards to be followed by other institutions of learning. In respect of an emphasis on having a formal authorizing power over all ECE provisions, the minimal model differ from other models such as Peer Review Model which recommends a combination of schools select peers to form a team

for an accrediting body. As already indicated, this type of a team may clash on philosophies relating to education and care of young children.

- Specifying worthwhile goals – all ECE provisions have goals which shed light especially on what the school intends to achieve (academic standards) through its curriculum. Using the minimal model would mean that policy makers come with basic goals to be achieved by the ECE providers and these should be communicated and understood by stakeholders including parents (Van Damme, 2002).
- Quantitative indicators – the Minimal Accreditation Standards uses quantitative indicators like required number of teaching staff, adequate size of the establishment, reasonable teaching load, spread of responsibilities, size of teaching rooms and laboratory facilities as well as library and computers (Gola, 2003). According to minimal accreditation standards, compliance is assessed in numeric value, for example, a minimum number of children with corresponding number of staff can be set for ECE program to start running or continue the provision. The model is found suitable as a starting point for Botswana to experience using accreditation standards. Like Van Damme, 2002 say, this model is easy to develop and maintain. A good thing for Botswana is to start with a simplified framework when compared with the other models discussed in this proposal.

To propose the use of a minimal model is to acknowledge that when accreditation standards are introduced, providers should not be overwhelmed with too many regulatory items. In critically analyzing the applicability of other frameworks such as Outcomes Based Model, Peer Review Model and Program Club Model, they do not make a better choice than the Minimal theory.

5.5 Responsibilities and Future Trends for Accreditation

At the national level, there is need to coordinate the implementation of the proposed model. The government of Botswana being the main provider and funder of education in Botswana should take a lead in developing the accreditation guidelines. However, a participatory approach should be adopted. Such an approach recognizes the contribution of all stakeholders from the time of planning to develop the guidelines through to the monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the guidelines. Partnership is a strategy that the government of Botswana recommends to increase the quality of education in Botswana and addressing to the challenges and growth of early childhood education should be treated worthy of a partnership approach. In its Vision 2036, the Government of Botswana makes it clear that for national priorities to be done

well ‘collective ownership and strong leadership from top levels of government are key’ Republic of Botswana, Vision 2036, 2016, p. 3). Indeed this call can benefit efforts to provide quality ECE education in Botswana. The government should take responsibility to lead the development of the proposed minimal accreditation model. However, the government alone would not succeed without active involvement of stakeholders such as non-government and private individual and all communities (Division of Pre-school, Primary Education, 2001). In a nutshell, the message is that there is need for coordinated efforts if quality ECE has to be achieved.

At the community/program level, ECE providers are responsible for the quality of their provision. Providers, for example, should ensure that they run programs with trained professional and that the content, infrastructure, resources, material and other match at least the minimum international requirements for running an ECE program. The principal government of Botswana policy document on ECE (Division of Preschool, Primary Education, 2001) makes it clear that effective ECE provision can only be achieved when certain requirements are met. Among key being involvement of competent staff (teachers and caregivers), safety and care of children enrolled in the program.

Finally, as already mentioned, the proposed minimal model of accreditation is put forth for more debate on its suitability for Botswana. Indeed in a situation where a country experiments with an accreditation model, it is advisable to apply a basic model like the minimal model suggested in this paper.

References

1. Aubrey, C., David, T., Godfrey, R., and Thompson, L. (2000). *Early Childhood Educational Research: Issues in Methodology and Ethics*. London: Routledge Farmer.
2. Aquilar, R., & Tansini, R., (2011) *Joint Analysis of Pre- School Attendance and Pre-School Performance in the Short and Long Run*. International Journal of Educational Development. Vol 32 (2012) 224-231.
3. Bose, K., (2008). *Gaps and Remedies of Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) Programs of Botswana*. Educational Research and Reviews Vol 3 (3). p77-82. Botswana. Gaborone.
4. Bredekamp, S. (1997). *Developmentally Appropriate Practice in Early Childhood Programs*. (Rev.ed.). National Association for the Education of Young Children. Washington DC.

5. Demma, R., (2010). *Building Ready States. A Governors Guide to Supporting a Comprehensive, High Quality Early Childhood State System*. NGA Center for Best Practices. Education Division.
6. Donahue, P (2000). *Joint Commission International Accreditation : Relationships to Four Models of Evaluation*, Oakbrook Terrace, Illinois, USA
7. Follari, L., (2015). *Foundations and Best Practices in Early Childhood Education: History, Theories and Approaches to Learning*. Pearson, Boston.
8. Gola M.M., (2003) *Premises to Accreditation: a minimum set of accreditation requirements*, Politecnico di Torino, Corso Duca degli Abruzzi 24, 10129 Torino, Italia
9. Henniger, M. L., (2009). 4th Ed. *An Introduction to Teaching Young Children*. Pearson Education. New Jersey.
10. Ishimine, K., & Tayler, C., (2014). *Assessing Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* European Journal of Education. Vol 49 (2) 272-290.
11. Kamerman,S.,(2006). *A Global History of Early Childhood Education and Care*. Paper Presented at the Education for All Global Monitoring Report. Washington DC.
12. Katz, L. G., Chard, S.C. (1989). *Issuing Topics for Projects*. ERIC Resources Information Centre. Retrieved from <http://ericece.org/pubs/digest/1998/katzpr98.ht>.
13. Laevers, F. (Ed.). (1994). *Defining and Assessing Quality in Early Childhood Education* Leuven. Belgium.
14. Mauganidze, L., & Tsamaase, M., (2014). *Early Childhood Education in Botswana: A Case of Fragmented 'Fits'* International Education Studies. Vol 7(5) p1-7.
15. Maundeni, T, (2013). *Early Childhood Care and Education in Botswana. A Necessity that is Accessible to few Children*. Creative Education. Vol 4 (7) p 54-59.
16. Monyatsi, T., Bose, K., & Mberengwa, L. R., (2012). *Parents' Perspectives on the Need for Professional Development for Early Childhood Professional Development in Botswana*.
17. Mwawenda, T.S., (1996). *Educational Psychology*. Butterworths. Durban.
18. Otaala, B. Njenga & Monau, R. (1989). *An Evaluation of the Day Care Programmes in Botswana*. A Report for the Government of Botswana and UNICEF.
19. Republic of Botswana, Division of Preschool, Department of Primary Education (2001). *Early Childhood Education & Care and Policy*. Gaborone: Gaborone Printers.
20. Republic of Botswana, (2016). *Vision 2036*. Gaborone. Gaborone Printers.
21. Republic of Botswana (2015). *Education and Training Sector Strategic Plan (ETSSP 2015-2020)*. Gaborone: Gaborone Printers.

22. Republic of Botswana, *Presidential task Force, (1997). Vision 2016*. Gaborone. Gaborone Printers.
23. Sirag, I., (2015) *Effective Practice in Early Years: Long Term Impact in Maths and English to End of Primary School and Beyond*. A Paper Presented at the Public Lecture at the University of Botswana.
24. The 10 NAEYC Program Standards for Families. Retrieved from <http://families.naeyc.org/accredited/article/10-naeyc-program-standards>
25. UNICEF (2000) *Botswana Education (Education for All Records)* (Country Reports
26. Van Damme, D. (2002). *Standards and Indicators in Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Higher Education: A Conceptual Framework and a Proposal*. In Vlasceanu, L & Barrows, L.C. (Eds). *Indicators for Institutional and Programme Accreditation in Higher / Tertiary Education*. Burcharet: UNESCO p. 127-158.

Creative Commons licensing terms

Author(s) will retain the copyright of their published articles agreeing that a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY 4.0) terms will be applied to their work. Under the terms of this license, no permission is required from the author(s) or publisher for members of the community to copy, distribute, transmit or adapt the article content, providing a proper, prominent and unambiguous attribution to the authors in a manner that makes clear that the materials are being reused under permission of a Creative Commons License. Views, opinions and conclusions expressed in this research article are views, opinions and conclusions of the author(s). Open Access Publishing Group and European Journal of Education Studies shall not be responsible or answerable for any loss, damage or liability caused in relation to/arising out of conflicts of interest, copyright violations and inappropriate or inaccurate use of any kind content related or integrated into the research work. All the published works are meeting the Open Access Publishing requirements and can be freely accessed, shared, modified, distributed and used in educational, commercial and non-commercial purposes under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License \(CC BY 4.0\)](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).