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CARE AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING: CREATING AN ENABLING ENVIRONMENT TO IMPROVE LEARNING OUTCOMES

INTRODUCTION

All children require care and support in order to thrive and learn. Some children however, particularly those from very poor communities, have additional support needs.

South Africa has made progress in improving access to education for children since 1994. However, a number of barriers to education persist[1]:

- While learner enrolment rates for children aged 6 to 14 years have improved, over 400 000 children are outside the schooling system.
- Analysis of attendance by age shows a significant drop in attendance amongst children beyond 14 years.
- International assessments show that only 36% of grade 3 learners have age-appropriate literacy and 35% have the necessary numeracy skills.
- Children from disadvantaged backgrounds – either economically, lower levels of parental education or who have lost one or both parents - are less likely to enroll in school and more prone to drop out or progress more slowly than their advantaged peers[2].

WHAT IS THE CARE AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING PROGRAMME?

The Care and Support for Teaching and Learning Programme is a SADC initiative that was adopted in 2008 by SADC Education Ministers, based on the successful pilot of the programme, previously known as Schools as Centres of Care and Support.

The goal of the CSTL Programme is to realize the education rights of all children, including the most vulnerable, through schools becoming inclusive centres of learning, care and support.

Importantly, it is not a new 'policy' or 'programme'. It provides an overarching framework and a systems-wide response for the range of existing initiatives that has to date been lacking for the initiation and expansion of care and support activities in and through schools.

The Conceptual Framework outlined in this poster, articulates the Department of Basic Education's intention to scale up and mainstream care and support within the schooling system, based on a strong policy mandate, and available evidence and experience.

POLICY MANDATE FOR CSTL

As a signatory to a number of international and regional agreements, South Africa is obliged to deliver on the following provisions in a comprehensive and holistic manner:

- To make primary schooling compulsory, accessible and available free to all children
- To take measures to encourage attendance including special measures to protect vulnerable children
- To provide education that ensures advancement of all children to their full potential

The South African Constitution guarantees all children the right to basic education and this right is the only right in the Constitution not subject to the availability of resources.

The Department of Basic Education is further mandated to deliver on a number of care and support priorities as outlined in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: The Policy Mandate for Care and Support within the Schooling System

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE PROGRAMME

The CSTL Programme has adopted an ecological systems approach[3,4,5] to guide the programme conceptually. The Ecological Systems model recognizes that an individual's behaviour is determined by multiple spheres of influence as indicated **Figure 2**. These range from very direct influences such as individual beliefs and attitudes, to more indirect influences such as socio-economic factors and public policy.

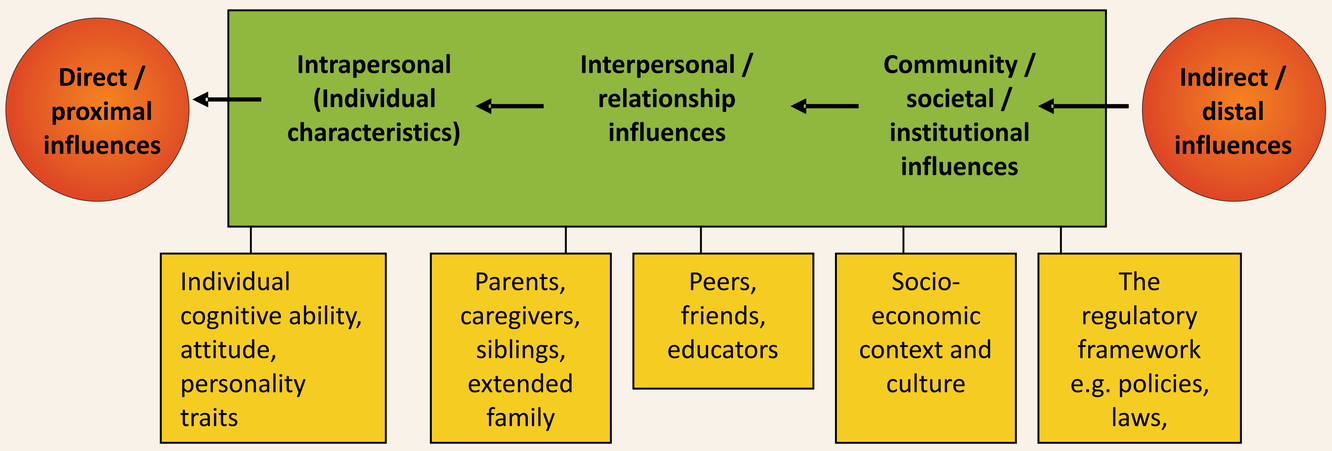

Figure 2: The Ecological Model

The CSTL Programme applies the ecological model by acknowledging the multiple sources of barriers to learning as intrinsic, systemic, and societal barriers. The CSTL Conceptual Framework situates the Department of Basic Education as a lead agency in addressing school-level barriers to education and creating an enabling environment for other stakeholders to support learners in and through schools (see **Figure 3**).

PRIORITY AREAS FOR THE CSTL PROGRAMME

Currently, the following nine priority areas have been identified for programme implementation based on the policy mandate and most immediate needs of communities. In time these may change as the socio-economic and educational landscape of the country shifts. The nine priority areas are the following:

- **Nutritional Support**
- **Health Promotion**
- **Infrastructure, Water and Sanitation**
- **Social Welfare Services**
- **Psychosocial Support**
- **Safety and Protection**
- **Curriculum Support**
- **Co-curricular Support**
- **Material Support**

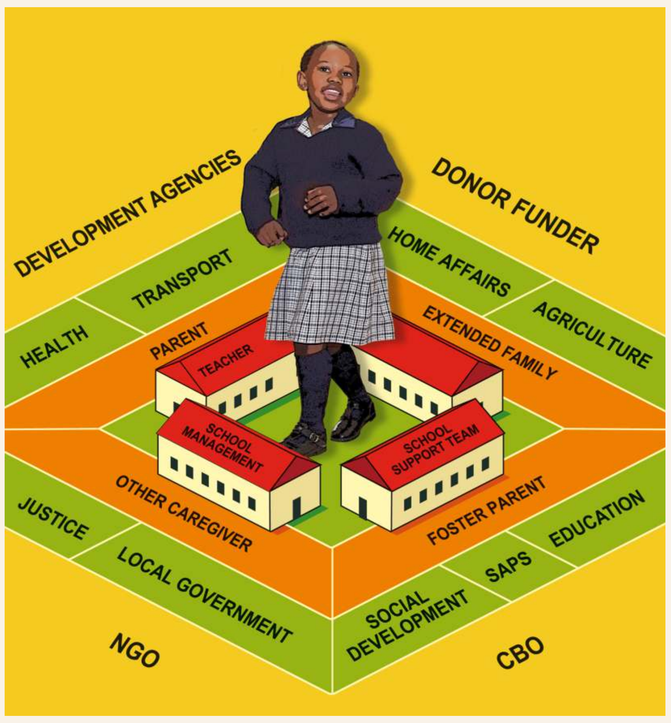

Figure 3: A Learner Centred, Multisectoral Approach to Care and Support

Figure 4: The National Support Pack includes 12 Action Step Booklets to Guide Programme Implementation

SUPPORTING IMPLEMENTATION OF CSTL IN SOUTH AFRICA

Schools will require substantive support to implement the nine priority areas of the CSTL Programme.

A National Support Pack has been developed to provide guidance at national, provincial and local levels for the roll out of CSTL.

The National Support Pack includes 12 action step booklets to guide implementation (see **Figure 4**).

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CSTL CARE AND SUPPORT FOR TEACHING AND LEARNING SOUTH AFRICA

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