

**Curriculum, Pedagogy
and Assessment:
A Handbook on Early Childhood
Education in South Africa**

**Edited by Hasina Ebrahim, Manjula Waniganayake,
Donna Hannaway and Matshediso Modise**



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Foreword 1

From an eminent South African scholar and global education leader

When I first returned to South Africa from studies abroad, my first job was to offer technical assistance and training to non-governmental organisations (NGOs) working outside of, if not also actively against, the apartheid state. Those NGOs included literacy organisations, adult basic education units, and of course early childhood centres. Until that time, I had been a high school science teacher with little to no knowledge of early childhood education. This would be a turning point in my professional life as I embarked on a steep learning curve working with early childhood NGOs from TREE in Durban to Ntataise in the Free State to Grassroots and ELRU in Cape Town. That learning journey helps me understand why this stunning new *Handbook on Early Childhood Education* offers a major departure point for education policy and practice in South Africa and on the continent more broadly.

When I started working with early learning NGOs, there was no ‘field’ of study as far as the South African landscape was concerned. Most of what happened in homes and backyards was little more than childcare as older women took care of the children of working mothers. High quality education for preschool children was the preserve of white, middle class families. It was therefore not surprising that the activism to extend this concept of quality education to disadvantaged children came mainly, though not exclusively, from middle class white women determined to level the playing fields when it came to the majority of South Africa’s preschool children.

Even then, the terrain was bleak and fractured with a tentative language to describe practice. Gradually, childcare became preschool education, educare and early childhood education became commonplace words, and eventually the broader caption of early childhood development (ECD) was found to be more acceptable. Those early development activists worked hard to bring some sense of systematisation to the field, and I remember HighScope (a philosophy of early learning) gaining traction in some circles even as the American-funded project I worked for insisted on making monitoring and evaluation the measure of a fundable organisation in early childhood education and other areas.

But there was dread in the air as the country moved towards the end of the apartheid era. Would the international and indeed local private sector funding of ECD programmes come to an end? The logic was that these NGOs were funded because they fulfilled a role that the white government did not, and that was to finance and support ECD for all children. With apartheid a thing of the past, there would be no reason for external funding of these critical but also fragile organisations. As it happened, the funding dried up as foreign governments shifted their resources towards the first democratic government led by President Nelson Mandela. Many NGOs disappeared from the development landscape, while others barely survived.

If the hope was that the new government would replenish the resources lost by introducing a systematic plan for the funding of early childhood development, the ECD activists were about to learn a hard and abiding lesson – that government rhetoric about the education of the youngest children did not match development reality on the ground. Yes, there were White Papers and all kinds of promissory notes, so to speak, but the proof of the

pudding was in the funding, and after more than 25 years of our democratic experiment, two hard lessons remain.

One, that the funding was not *adequate* for more than 8 million children from birth to 6 years of age. The adequacy benchmark in education finance means that there is enough funding, at some defined level, to provide the basic quality education required to support teaching and learning in a particular area, for example, early childhood education. Two, that the funding was never going to be *just*. What a social justice benchmark means is that a per capita distribution of funding would not be enough; the financing of early education would also have to redress the massive inequalities in favour of the children of the poor. On the one hand, the children of the privileged will always benefit from private resources (that is, family investments) to finance their educational experiences during and beyond the preschool years; on the other hand, the children of the poor are entirely dependent on government funding to support their education, especially in the years leading up to formal education.

If we do not get this right, the consequences are dire. We now have solid research to show that our anecdotes were correct: that there is a massive gap between the academic readiness of grade 1 children depending on whether they had access to quality preschool education or not. The worse news is that the gap never closes over the subsequent 12 years of schooling. In short, if the foundations of learning are weak, then the education house crumbles; it is as simple and serious as that.

Of course it was important to support the so-called ‘Fees Must Fall’ protests that engulfed universities in the historic protests of 2015–16. But remember, only a small percentage of young people who started schooling in South Africa reach university, and even fewer get their degrees on time or at all. In fact, about half-a-million children leave the system between grades 2 and 12, the sharpest fall-off being at around grade 10. A sizeable explanation for the poor participation rates in higher education can be found in the foundation years where, as we know from comparative studies, literacy and numeracy rates in South Africa are among the lowest in the world.

Besides adequacy and equity, however, another critical element often missing in the provision of early childhood education is efficacy, i.e. the ability to produce an intended result. Resources is one thing, even adequate resources that in their aggregate provisioning are deemed to be equitable from the point of view of inputs into early childhood education. But that level and focus of financing means little if the system cannot turn the resources into results, and that is what I mean by efficacy – quite deliberately side-stepping the more commonly used and instrumentalist word, effectiveness. By choosing as its focus the pre-service education of early childhood education teachers, the question of efficacy is addressed in this book. In other words, there is no way we can turn resources into results without well-trained teachers in all the disciplines of early childhood development; that has yet to happen.

In the end, this remarkable book achieves two very important objects. First of all, it begins to define early childhood education as a professional field in South Africa by creating the beginnings of a knowledge base that will come to define the content and contours of this exciting area of study. Critically, the experts contributing their knowledge to and indeed shaping the field are mainly South Africans writing from within their own research and practice. Yet their work is not closed-minded and brings in the formidable intellectual leadership of scholars like Australia’s Manjula Waniganayake who has contributed to the development of early childhood education in other national contexts.

Secondly, the book offers foundational readings in the full spectrum of concerns in an emerging field such as those three commonplaces – curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment in early childhood education. The 30 chapters cover everything from children’s play as pedagogy, to assessment in the early years, to early learning development, and language and multilingualism in learning. The theories, concepts, and methods across these many contributions lay the groundwork for new thinking in early childhood education.

Most importantly, the focus is on the initial (pre-service) training of teachers for the early years. Suddenly, teacher training in the early years moves away from the fragmented, diverse and often contradictory models and approaches that have come to define the terrain, to a systematic, theoretically informed, and empirically grounded account of the knowledge base required for the education of a next generation of educators.

All of this is contained in a single handbook which will no doubt become a rich reservoir of knowledge for researchers, a training resource for both pre-service and in-service early childhood teachers, a reference source for policymakers and planners, and an accessible guide for parents and the general public with concerns about the contemporary relevance and future direction of education in the preschool years.

This book is a monumental achievement in the field of early childhood education that will no doubt serve and benefit generations of teachers of our youngest children in and beyond the borders of South Africa.

Jonathan D Jansen

Distinguished Professor of Education

Stellenbosch University

November 2020

Foreword 2

From an outstanding African Early Childhood leader

It has been over thirty years since my very first experience as an educator in an early learning setting, and it was a treat! The children were happy, enthusiastic, warm, eager to try out everything and most of all, so trusting. It is this trust that captivated me and left a lasting impression in my mind and has been my inspiration to this day. That opportunity brought me face to face with the awesome responsibility that early childhood professionals have and how skilled and intentional they need to be in harnessing the trust vested in them by the children, parents, governments, the society at large, and indeed by the Creator Himself. Since then, it has been my honour to support educators in various ways, and to provide technical support to governments across the region in designing policy, curricula and training programmes to support ECE professionals. More recently, this has involved working with members of the African Union ECED Cluster to advance the early childhood agenda in various aspects, including the professionalisation of the ECE workforce as well as advocacy for increased investment by African Union Member States.

Over the years, with the rapid expansion of access to early childhood programmes across the region, there has been a growing recognition of the fact that it is impossible to improve programme quality and impact without paying attention to the capacity of the workforce. In recognition of this, the Continental Education Strategy for Africa or CESA (2016–2025) has included the revitalisation of the teaching profession to ensure quality and relevance at all levels of education as its first strategic objective. It is also becoming clearer that much more needs to be done in strengthening the capacity of teachers than merely imparting knowledge and gaining certificates. *Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment: A Handbook on Early Childhood Education in South Africa* shines a spotlight on the critical aspects of workforce capacity building that make a difference. This handbook provides evidence-based approaches that are contextually relevant, child centered and anchored in existing national policies and standards in South Africa. The handbook fills a critical gap in providing contextualised responses to the ‘what’, ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions and hence can serve as a useful guide to providing comprehensive support to the ECE professionals in this country.

Scientific evidence shows that it is during the first three years of human life that the basic building blocks are laid for later learning and development. Capacity building of ECE professionals across the region has however focused on children in the reception/preprimary classes and children older than three years. There is a dearth of contextually relevant resources targeting children under four years. This is the gap that *Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment: A Handbook on Early Childhood Education in South Africa* fills. The handbook provides developmentally appropriate guidance that articulates the critical role of parents, families and communities that are so important in the life of young children.

The authors, together with the editors Hasina Ebrahim, Manjula Waniganayake, Donna Hannaway and Matshediso Modise, in supporting ECE professionals in South Africa, share their insights based on their lived experiences as early childhood teachers and teacher educators. This is a critical contribution in a country where many of the resources used to support ECE professionals have been developed outside of the context in which they are

being used. This handbook therefore presents a relatively easier task for adaptation and use within the African continent.

Sometimes I feel that the great Nelson Mandela must have been thinking of ECE teachers when he said: “It always seems impossible until it is done”. With *Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment: A Handbook on Early Childhood Education in South Africa* we are certainly making very good progress towards improving the quality of ECE. It demonstrates our agency in the initial preparation and continuing professional development of the ECE workforce.

Indeed, together, we can ensure this work is getting done!

Lynette Okengo, PhD

Executive Director

The African Early Childhood Network

Acknowledgments

Our book, a first of its kind in the field, was a passionate endeavour and an exciting adventure. We were blessed to work with a motivated team in both authorship and technical support. We express our sincere gratitude to all the 24 authors who collaborated with us and contributed to the 30 chapters in this pioneering publication in the field of early childhood education in South Africa. We had a wonderfully diverse team of authors, mostly from South Africa, with two from Australia and two from Belgium, who cooperated and persevered through chapter iterations to deliver a quality manuscript that we can all be proud of. We appreciate the time, energy and expertise that each one contributed to produce this book.

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Our *Spotlight on practice profiles* present a story of authentic practice in the South African context and contribute to deepening understanding of the focus of each chapter. A sincere thank you to all the practitioners who generously gave of their time and enriched our book through their collaboration.

Our deepest appreciation goes to our families for their support and patience, which made writing this book possible. All the sacrifices that were made were well worth it.

We trust that those that use this book will grow in their wisdom to think and act in responsive ways for safeguarding the best interests of young children in the early years.

Hasina, Manjula, Donna & Matshediso

Publisher's note

At Pearson South Africa, two of our guiding principles note that people make progress in their lives through learning, and that learning is essential, and so are teachers. This scholarly text, which has an extensive and in-depth academic approach, focuses on the curriculum, pedagogy and assessment in early childhood education. It aligns with our mission by enabling us to offer a quality educational resource to those involved in the early years of teaching in South Africa.

Brave, Imaginative, Decent and Accountable are Pearson South Africa's core values that drive everything we do as a publishing house. This book reflects these values in at least three ways. Firstly, the conceptual orientation of the book calls on early years teachers to be courageous in engaging with early childhood education matters at a deep level. Secondly, the theoretical underpinnings of this book are reflective of democratic South Africa. Thirdly, its robust presentation of the tenets of Africanisation of education in South Africa has been thoughtfully mapped to the *National Curriculum Framework for children birth to four years* (NCF).

Importantly, reflecting our high standards of publishing, every chapter is enriched by national and global research relevant to the learning and development of children during early childhood. In keeping with our ethical requirements, the text was subjected to a double-blind peer review by two international scholars. Both reviewers commended the author team for developing a comprehensive and skillfully crafted text that is both innovative and deep in its treatment of early years knowledge.

This book is the *first of its kind*, written primarily by South African specialists and introducing and disseminating the concept of 'thinking teachers' to lead future advancements in the early childhood sector. Pearson South Africa is therefore proud to endorse this creative educational resource that makes a significant contribution to the enhancement of the learning and development of South Africa's young children.

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List of acronyms

ACTPSA	A Chance to Play Southern Africa
AEPS	Assessment, Evaluation and Programming System
ANA	Annual National Assessment
APGAR	appearance, pulse, grimace response, activity, respiration
AREA	Africa Reggio Emilia Alliance
CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements
CoPS	communities of practice
COR	child observation record
UNCRC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSTL	Care and Support in Teaching and Learning
DAP	developmentally appropriate practice
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoE	Department of Education
DoH	Department of Health
DSD	Department of Social Development
DPO	disabled people's organisation
ECCD	early childhood care and development
ECD	early childhood development
ECE	early childhood education
ECEC	early child education and care
ELDA	Early Learning and Development Area
ELDS	Early Learning Development Standards
ELOM	Early Learning Outcomes Measures
IA	Instructional Assessment
IBT	international benchmark test
ICT	information and communications technology
IDELA	International Development and Early Learning Assessment
IEP	individual educational plan
IPPA	Inclusive Pedagogical Approach in Action
ISP	individual support plan
ITE	initial teacher education
KDI	key developmental indicator
KUW	knowledge and understanding of the world
LAD	language acquisition device
NAEYC	National Association for the Education of Young Children
NCF	South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four
NDP	National Development Plan
NECDA	National Early Childhood Development Alliance
NELDS	National Early Learning and Development Standards (for Children Birth to Four Years)

NGO	non-government organisation
NIECDP	National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy
NPO	non-profit organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEDS	Parents' Evaluation of Developmental Status
PIECEC	Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education
PMRPL	Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development
QPT	Quality Professional Teacher
SACMEQ	Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SIAS	Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support
STEM	science, technology, engineering and mathematics
TA	transdisciplinary approach
TIMSS	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UG	universal grammar
UNGEI	United Nations Girls Education Initiative
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organization
ZPD	zone of proximal development

Changing perspectives: Being and becoming thinking teachers

Hasina Ebrahim, Manjula Waniganayake, Donna Hannaway and
Matshediso Modise

Introduction

Early childhood education (ECE) is changing rapidly in South Africa and globally. These changes have emerged through both positive and negative developments in the field (Haslip & Gullo, 2018). On the upside, in 2008, the South African government identified early childhood development (ECD) as a national apex priority. This resulted in ECD being prioritised in the national programme of action (Department of Social Development (DSD) & Economic Policy Research Unit (EPRI), 2014). Additionally, there is increasing evidence indicating the importance of considering the cultural context of child development, commitments to professionalisation of the ECE workforce, the adoption of a national curriculum framework and early learning standards, research pointing to the arenas for critical action, expanded policymaking initiatives and advocacy towards placing ECE on South Africa's national agenda.

On the downside, there are several issues that warrant change. There is a significant number of un- and under-qualified personnel in the ECE workforce. This affects the quality of practice in working with babies, toddlers, and nursery children, including those with special needs (Human Sciences Research Council & DSD, 2010). Another concern relates to the overuse of the school readiness approach with its emphasis on skills development in early literacy and mathematics. This continues to challenge the survival of holistic development and play-based approaches that support learning in ECE settings. The uncritical use of decontextualised 'best practice' also continues to undermine the realities of young children's daily lives in South Africa.

In light of the above, there is a need for urgent attention to the education, care and development of young children from birth to four years. They are the primary focus of our book. This must be understood not only in terms of the challenges described above, but also in the context of the lingering discriminatory effects of the apartheid past (Ebrahim, 2010). Bearing this in mind, ECE needs to be framed by a social justice agenda which affords the youngest citizenry experiences of equality of opportunities for equality of outcomes in a maturing democracy. At the practice level, the responsibility for this national agenda lies in the hands of teachers of children who are in their early years. Ebrahim, Mantlana, Excell, Martin, Bipath and Makwetu (2017) have drawn attention to challenges these teachers have experienced in this arena, namely, the lack of job security and poor conditions of employment, fragmentary initial (preservice) training and professional development, lack of a career path, and a lack of knowledge and skills for practice with and for children from birth to four years.

The changing demographics in South Africa require responsive practices. In 2016, the general household survey showed that there were close to 7.2 million children from birth

to six years in the country (Statistics South Africa, 2016). These children live in a variety of family types and cultural and linguistic circumstances. The differences influence how children develop and how their potential for learning is nurtured. When children enter ECE settings, it is expected that they will be received in a way that respects all that they bring with them. Early years teachers have to embrace the fact that working with young children is complex, dynamic and challenging (Institute of Medicine & National Research Council, 2015). This work demands that they think critically as well as act intentionally and ethically to create inclusive learning environments for quality experiences.

This book, *Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment: A Handbook on Early Childhood Education in South Africa*, deliberately targets university-qualified early years teachers or those aspiring to such a qualification. This is because there is global recognition that well-qualified teachers can and do make a difference in the provisioning of quality early childhood programmes. According to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) (2017 p. 86), for instance, there is research indicating the following:

- Evidence from the literature shows that the initial training level and length of service of staff are positively associated with the overall quality of ECE.
- High staff qualifications also result in a more stimulating environment and high-quality pedagogical practices, which boost children's well-being and learning outcomes.

The book has therefore been developed taking into account the need for transforming the initial education of teachers of children in their early years in South Africa. Through its carefully structured content, it creates learning opportunities that allow for a knowledgeable and thoughtful response to working with and for young children within their local community context. The highly-valued philosophy of being and becoming a thinking teacher (as depicted in Figure 1.3) forms a golden thread that runs directly and indirectly through all the chapters of this book.

Locating the book within early childhood teacher education and related policies in South Africa

Initial teacher education (ITE) (preservice education) for aspiring teachers of children from birth to four years is fragmentary (Ebrahim et al., 2017). This can be attributed to how systems for early childhood have been arranged in South Africa. Education, Social Development and Health are the key departments that have their own responses to the professional development of the workforce. The lead department for ECE services has been the Department of Social Development (DSD). From 2019, however, a functional shift of ECE from the DSD to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) was effected. This was required to better meet the developmental and early learning needs of children from birth to four years. This move is also in keeping with global trends where there is increasing recognition of the importance of ECE for all children and its investment value for nation building.

With regard to the workforce, The National Integrated ECD Policy has identified eight categories of workers (DSD & United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), 2015). One of these categories is the educator workforce that has a focus on ECE. Currently, this workforce is deployed largely in ECE centres and, to a limited extent, in playgroups, home-visiting programmes, parenting programmes, toy libraries and mobile

preschools. Many of these workers are yet to achieve the professional qualifications in ECE necessary to optimise children’s development and early learning potential in prior to school settings.

The shift towards the professionalisation of the ECE workforce calls for a rethinking of ITE for the early years sector. Harrison (2017) and colleagues conducted a baseline study to ascertain the state of play in teacher education for birth to four years to inform the way forward. The findings show that early childhood qualifications reside in both the non-governmental and state sectors. The concept of reflective practice featured as an important arena of action for ITE students and teacher educators. The development of a robust mentoring system and community of practice attached to these ITE courses in the early years was viewed as critical to improving the quality of professional practice experiences.

The policies reviewed pointed towards developing a competency-based approach in ITE courses. Such an approach can be detrimental to the professionalism in the early years sector. However, a competency-based approach is part of a continuing dialogue in a new community of practice dedicated to teacher education in the early years in South Africa. The challenge is to guard against rigid technical top-down applications and to enable the development of thinking teachers who are capable, competent and confident in leading effective practice in ECE settings across the country.

In light of these considerations, this book is informed by learnings from a variety of national policies, which were influential in developing the chapters in this book. These policies are presented in sectoral strands in Figure 1.1.

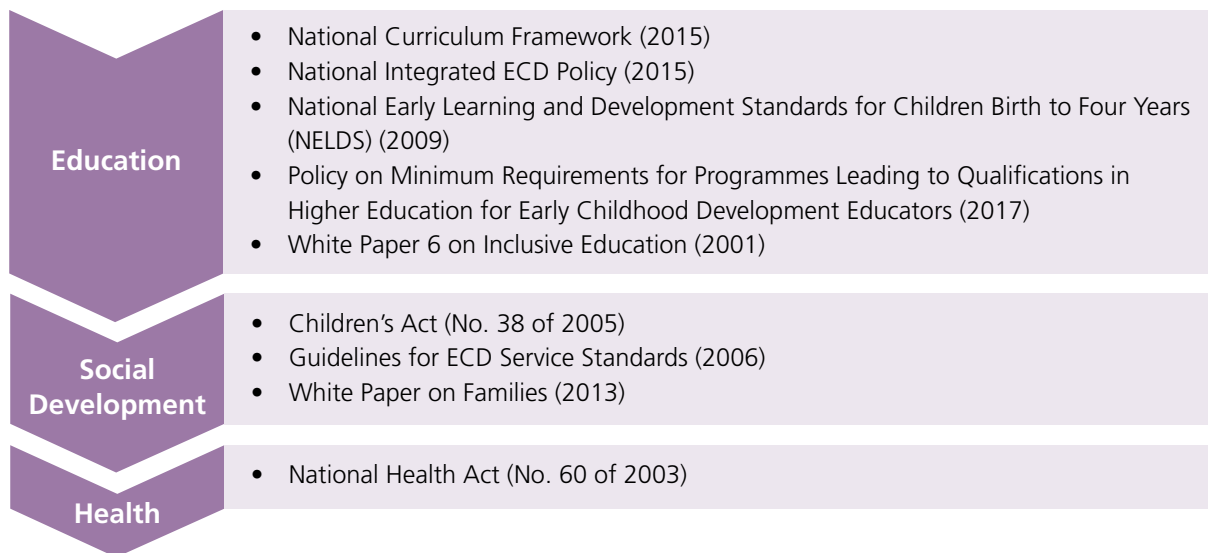


Figure 1.1 Policies informing ITE for birth to four in South Africa

There are certain key messages that come from each of the policies identified above. Ebrahim et al., (2017) argue that these messages offer entry points for mapping teaching qualifications, professional development opportunities, and more broadly, initial preparation of early years teachers. In Figure 1.2, the messages are arranged in four themes.

Children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in early childhood are competent people. • Holistic child development and learning must be the focus of all early childhood programmes. • Children's rights must be respected and all actions must be in the best interests of children.
Teachers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early years teachers are lifelong learners and need to be developed as (critically) reflective practitioners. • Quality early care and learning supported by responsive pedagogies, including play, must be addressed. • Equity, diversity and inclusion must be addressed.
Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parents, families and members of the community must be recognised, respected and encouraged to work as partners.
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interprofessional and multisectoral partnerships are important.

Figure 1.2 Thematic messages from South African policies for teacher education

One of the influential policies guiding ITE in the early years is the *Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators* (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). It has created new directions for the early childhood field by outlining the knowledge and skills mix. This has contributed to the development of knowledge and practice standards (Ebrahim et al., 2017). Ten standards were developed by an early childhood community of practice in the Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (PIECCE), which was dedicated to the professionalisation of the sector. These standards made explicit what early years teachers should know and be able to do in qualifications such as the diploma and the degree in ECE. There is a need to reinterpret the knowledge and practice standards, and also to guard against a technical adherence to the standards, which can comprise the development of thinking teachers (see Table 1.1. for how the chapters in this book respond to the new knowledge and practice standards).

Curriculum, Pedagogy and Assessment: A Handbook on Early Childhood Education in South Africa is in tune with the new developments for ITE for the early years in the following ways:

- It contests the traditional advice for teachers that involves following approaches developed from ideas of universal best practice. This book allows for the engagement with the 'what', 'how' and 'why' of issues surrounding curriculum, pedagogy and assessment, with sensitivity to South African and African realities.
- It presents an approach informed by research evidence, scholarly ideas and underpinnings of African thought, to build knowledge, skills and professional dispositions in early years teachers.
- It comprises learning opportunities that are student-centred and allow for critical thinking and reflection. This pushes back against the development of technical teachers who position themselves as deliverers of the *National Early Learning and Development Standards* (NELDS) (Department of Basic Education & UNICEF, 2009) and the Early

Learning and Development Areas (ELDAs) embedded in the *National Curriculum Framework* (Department of Basic Education, 2015).

- The chapters of this book have been developed to bridge the divide between policy and practice, and to develop teachers who are both knowledgeable about the policies related to early childhood, but also thoughtful in how to use them in guiding their practice in their settings.
- As noted previously, the book complements the new knowledge and practice standards that are informed by the *Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators* (Department of Higher Education and Training, 2017). Table 1.1 shows the links between the standards and the chapters in this book. The responses formulated in this book are viewed as transformative and critical to informing the design and delivery of high quality programmes for children in contemporary early childhood settings.

Table 1.1 Knowledge and practice standards for the diploma and the degree in ECE

Knowledge and practice standards outcomes <i>The completion of a section enables the student to demonstrate:</i>		Chapters in this book
Curriculum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed knowledge of the link between curriculum and quality in the early years 	Chapter 1: Changing perspectives: Being and becoming thinking teachers Chapter 3: Supporting quality early childhood education through curriculum
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • detailed knowledge of theories, philosophies, principles and definitions of curricula and different types of curricula in the early years 	Chapter 1: Changing perspectives: Being and becoming thinking teachers Chapter 2: Definition, theories and principles of early childhood curriculum Chapter 4: Curriculum types in early childhood education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • analysis of the <i>South African National Curriculum Framework</i> for holistic development of young children 	Chapter 5: The South African National Curriculum Framework
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • synthesis of the ELDAs of the <i>National Curriculum Framework</i> to support integration and holistic development of young children in context 	Chapter 5: The South African National Curriculum Framework Chapter 6: ELDA 1: Well-being Chapter 7: ELDA 2: Identity and belonging Chapter 8: ELDA 3: Communication Chapter 9: ELDA 4: Exploring mathematics Chapter 10: ELDA 5: Creativity Chapter 11: ELDA 6: Knowledge and understanding of the world Chapter 12: Language development and multilingualism

Knowledge and practice standards outcomes <i>The completion of a section enables the student to demonstrate:</i>		Chapters in this book
Pedagogy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an understanding of the link between curriculum and pedagogy which is transformative 	Chapter 13: Approaching pedagogical practice in early childhood education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> recognition and interpretation of pedagogical theories that influence early years practice 	Chapter 13: Approaching pedagogical practice in early childhood education Chapter 16: Understanding relational pedagogy Chapter 17: Understanding participatory pedagogy in early years education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> detailed knowledge of the concept of transformative pedagogy for learning and teaching with play as foundational 	Chapter 13: Approaching pedagogical practice in early childhood education Chapter 14: Understanding children's play as pedagogy Chapter 15: Learning environments in early childhood education Chapter 16: Understanding relational pedagogy Chapter 17: Understanding participatory pedagogy in early years education
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engagement with learning opportunities for a transformative pedagogy for teaching and learning 	Chapter 13: Approaching pedagogical practice in early childhood education Chapter 16: Understanding relational pedagogy Chapter 17: Understanding participatory pedagogy in early years education Chapter 22: Promoting child autonomy through guided learning
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> application of planning and implementing a transformative pedagogical approach for young children (activities, learning environment, schedules, routines, transitions, working with parents and families regularly) 	Chapter 13: Approaching pedagogical practice in early childhood education Chapter 18: Collaborating with families to achieve meaningful pedagogical practice Chapter 19: Promoting inclusive pedagogies by embracing cultural and linguistic diversity Chapter 20: Infant and toddler pedagogical practice Chapter 21: Planning for pedagogical enhancement: Daily programmes, routines and transitions Chapter 22: Promoting child autonomy through guided learning

Knowledge and practice standards outcomes <i>The completion of a section enables the student to demonstrate:</i>		Chapters in this book
Assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> detailed knowledge of pedagogy, assessment and the link between the two 	Chapter 23: Approaching assessment in the early years Chapter 24: Assessment planning supporting a child-oriented and purposeful approach
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of effective assessment principles and practices 	Chapter 24: Assessment planning supporting a child-oriented and purposeful approach Chapter 25: Effective assessment using well-being and involvement Chapter 26: Child observation and early identification of children at risk Chapter 27: Responsive use of assessment data in pedagogical documentation Chapter 28: Listening to, learning from and sharing assessment with parents and families Chapter 29: Working with support services to assess children's learning and development Chapter 30: Child outcomes testing using standardised tests and international benchmarks in the early years
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> application of appropriate methods, procedures and techniques for child observation and identification of young children at risk 	Chapter 24: Assessment planning supporting a child-oriented and purposeful approach Chapter 25: Effective assessment using well-being and involvement Chapter 26: Child observation and early identification of children at risk Chapter 27: Responsive use of assessment data in pedagogical documentation Chapter 29: Working with support services to assess children's learning and development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> collation of information (documentation) and application of solutions based on evidence to be a responsive and ethical assessor accountable to different stakeholders 	Chapter 27: Responsive use of assessment data in pedagogical documentation Chapter 28: Listening to, learning from and sharing assessment with parents and families Chapter 29: Working with support services to assess children's learning and development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> critical evaluation of local and international tools and procedures for testing children in the early years 	Chapter 30: Child outcomes testing using standardised tests and international benchmarks in the early years

Influences of Africanisation and implications for practice

In this book, Africanisation is viewed as an important focus for shaping culturally responsive teacher education in the early years. This focus is included to prevent the common response of using only the traditional dominant knowledge bases from western perspectives (Ebrahim, 2012) in the initial preparation of early years teachers. Western perspectives are not ignored. They are, however, viewed as one possibility offering insight into who children are, how they should be educated and what early years teachers should know and be able to do. The African context is rich in knowledge and practices that need to be affirmed in teacher professional development programmes. In this book, an attempt is made at decoloniality of knowledge. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013 p. 15) describes this as “a process of enabling liberatory thought and practices that invite possibilities of other knowledges and worlds”. The book offers African as well as other perspectives to enhance the capacity building of thinking teachers in ECE.

One of the issues that the authors grappled with was defining the concept of Africanisation. It is acknowledged that this concept is open to mis/interpretation and that there are no definitive or cut-and-dried descriptions of what the term means and how it can be applied in ECE contexts. In light of this, we examined a variety of definitions. Louw (2010), for example, perceives Africanisation as a way of transcending or surpassing individual identities and of seeking commonality, as well as a way of recognising and embracing our differences. In so doing, Louw argues that we might be able to connect with the broader African experience and establish curricula that bind us together. Msila and Gumbo (2016), see Africanisation as the orientation of persons, institutions, products, processes and ideas towards a creative and constructive way of imagining Africa and its contexts. This perspective takes into account the past, present, and future of African realities and African potential, in ways that are serious, conscious and deliberate. Makgoba (1997) emphasises culture and identity, noting that Africanisation is a process of inclusion, and highlighting the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a global community. Nsamenang (2010), in attempting to reconstruct indigenous patterns of ECE in African cultures, makes the point that both parents and children are agents of cultural knowledge and skills that must be accessed for mapping early childhood programmes.

In this book, the author team supports the idea of valuing identity development, cultural differences informed by African realities, situated experiences, and complexities of differences and commonalities that bind those in ECE together. Africa has its own indigenous knowledge but it is also part of a globalising world. The notion of connectedness resonates very well with the importance of relationality in the early years. This is captured in the African concept of *ubuntu*, which is unpacked as *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu* – ‘a person is a person through other people’. Ubuntu affirms one’s humanity by recognising the humanity of others and by establishing humane relations with them. In light of these considerations, and the need to bring about change in ECE, the author team understood their task as enabling early years teachers to:

- embrace children and their families in all their diversities
- promote interactions and relationships aimed at creating a sense of belonging
- engage with difference as a strength and not a fault that needs to be corrected
- value children’s and adults’ agency or their capacity to act

- position themselves as intentional teachers who make deliberate efforts to engage with children, parents, families and community members who have valuable contributions to make in ECE
- use opportunities for self-guided and critical reflection to advance their thoughts and actions in the best interests of children.

Through careful content selection, activity design, reflections and spotlight on practice, this book affords the early years teacher the opportunity to become knowledgeable and skilled in responsive practices that are inclusive, intentional and ethical. Table 1.2. provides the key focus areas of this book in three African languages, and shows some examples of the traditional and contemporary links that have implications for early childhood ITE.

Table 1.2 Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment: linkages and application

Key terms	Key terms in three African languages			Examples of broad traditional perspectives	Broad definition applicable in today's early childhood settings
Curriculum	Setswana	IsiZulu	Northern Sotho	Everyday practices applying indigenous knowledge systems, for example, relationships built on an <i>ubuntu</i> philosophy	Curriculum as a process in which interactions and relationships help children and their families to feel a sense of belonging and to engage in ECE activities
	Lenaneo tsamaiso ya tsa thuto/ Lenaneothuto	Uhlelo lokufunda/ lwezifundo	Lenaneothuto		
Pedagogy	Mokgwa/tsela ya go ruta	Indlela yokufundisa/ Ukufundisa	Thuto	Motivational life skills like proverbs, wise sayings, singing, storytelling, imitation	Using a variety of pedagogical techniques that are culturally responsive to allow children to connect with their identity and sense of belonging
Assessment	Tshekatsheko ya bokgoni le kgolo	Isivivinyo	Kelo	Cultural markers are used to track children's growth, development and learning	Developing indicators that show sensitivity to the realities of the context in which children and families live their daily lives

Research influences on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment for the early years in South Africa

The chapters in this book have been enriched by theoretical insights and research-based evidence both from local research conducted in South Africa, and from elsewhere in the world. In writing this book, the authors made every effort to find relevant literature and scope their writing within the prevailing understandings derived from their readings. Our aim was to explore the underlying connections between the elements of theory, research, practice and policy, by bringing to life meaningful examples, ideas and suggestions that would be of interest to early years teachers working in contemporary settings.

At an international level, research on early childhood curriculum, pedagogy and assessment matters is relatively small in number and scale, making it difficult to compare findings across nations, apart from noting global trends. An analysis of global trends across the 34 countries who are members of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) indicates that national policy embedded in curriculum frameworks is providing consistency in early childhood service provision and plays a pivotal role in delivering high quality programmes (OECD, 2017). It appears that “almost all OECD countries have a curriculum or learning standards from age three until compulsory schooling” (p. 35). Among the key challenges connected with these documents are issues of “defining goals and content” and curriculum implementation and evaluation (ibid). Of particular interest are two areas highlighted by the OECD (2017) regarding curriculum content:

- the lack of suitably qualified staff “with the necessary skills to provide optimal learning support and emotional support for young children’s intellectual growth, particularly in the curriculum areas of science, mathematics and numeracy” (Howes, Burchinal, Pianta, Bryant, et al., 2008 p. 132)
- the decreasing attention to social science while simultaneously promoting content areas of ICT, ethics and citizenship, and foreign languages.

The issue of having a qualified workforce continues to feature as a challenge to quality early years programmes. In South Africa, the *National Report on the Audit of Early Childhood Centres* (DSD & EPRI, 2014) found that staff in ECE settings were mostly female and black African. The findings showed that over 35% of the heads of ECE settings and 40% of the practitioners did not complete Grade 12, which is part of the further education and training band. Staff that had supervisory roles tended to be more specialised in early childhood. An estimated 43% of ECE settings heads and 30% of practitioners had specialisation certificates at different levels. Diplomas and degrees were rare among ECE staff.

Pedagogically, the OECD (2017) reports that the separation between education and care services is decreasing with government administration in most countries moving into a Ministry of Education. This is evident in South Africa. Recent trends indicating growing numbers of children from birth to three years being placed in ECE settings for longer hours suggest an increasing awareness of the importance of understanding the “learning capacities of infants/toddlers and older children, and ... a need for care and wellbeing throughout education” (OECD, 2017 p. 127). Both globally and locally within South Africa, it is also difficult to identify rigorous research focusing on early years pedagogy (although some is available, for example, Westbrook, Durrani, Brown, Orr, Pryor, Boddy & Salvi, 2013). In part, this may be a reflection of the lack of understanding and use of the concept of ‘pedagogy’ in

countries outside Europe. The heavy reliance on western perspectives of play-based curricula and pedagogy also impacts everyday pedagogical practice. There is, therefore, an urgent call for empirical research investigating pedagogical issues of relevance to South Africa that can be used to inform improvements and innovations in local early years settings.

With increasing access and participation rates in early years settings, governments are also keen to keep track of children's learning outcomes through formal assessments. However, the OECD (2017) continues to note the challenges of establishing rigorous monitoring and data collection systems. Instead of relying primarily on test based quantitative data, there appears to be a shift towards accepting qualitative data in measuring interactive domains such as child-staff engagement and communication between staff and parents. In South Africa, the Early Learning Outcome Measure (ELOM) is providing data on programme effectiveness. These data are being used to develop improvement plans. More work needs to be done to develop indicators and data collection systems for robust evidence on development and learning for children from birth to four years of age.

Conceptualisation of the 'thinking teacher'

For the purposes of this book, we conceptualise the evolution of the 'thinking teacher' through three phases. A consideration of the career trajectory of an early years teacher can be traced back to the work of the esteemed American scholar, Lilian Katz (1995), who presented a five-tiered hierarchy that indicates growth and maturity with increasing experience over time. Understanding career advancement as a developmental process is therefore not new. Importantly, however, experience in working with children or spending time working in the early childhood sector is not a sufficient indicator of strengthening the professional capabilities of a teacher. For those seeking transformation that makes a difference in improving children's learning and development, it is necessary to have a commitment to continuous professional learning and development, as well as an openness to change and engagement in critical thinking.

This book is for early years teachers who have an enquiring mindset and are interested in questioning, discovery, and imagining possibilities. By adopting a traditional developmental approach, our aim is to scaffold the skills and knowledge you acquired before and during your time at university studying to become an early years teacher, and to guide your progression as a thinking teacher. Our model also builds on your existing understanding by intentionally encouraging you to reach out broadly as well as dig deeply into analysing early childhood matters. This approach enables you to profile your evolving professional growth by cultivating your capacity for reflection through the three phases that are depicted in Figure 1.3.

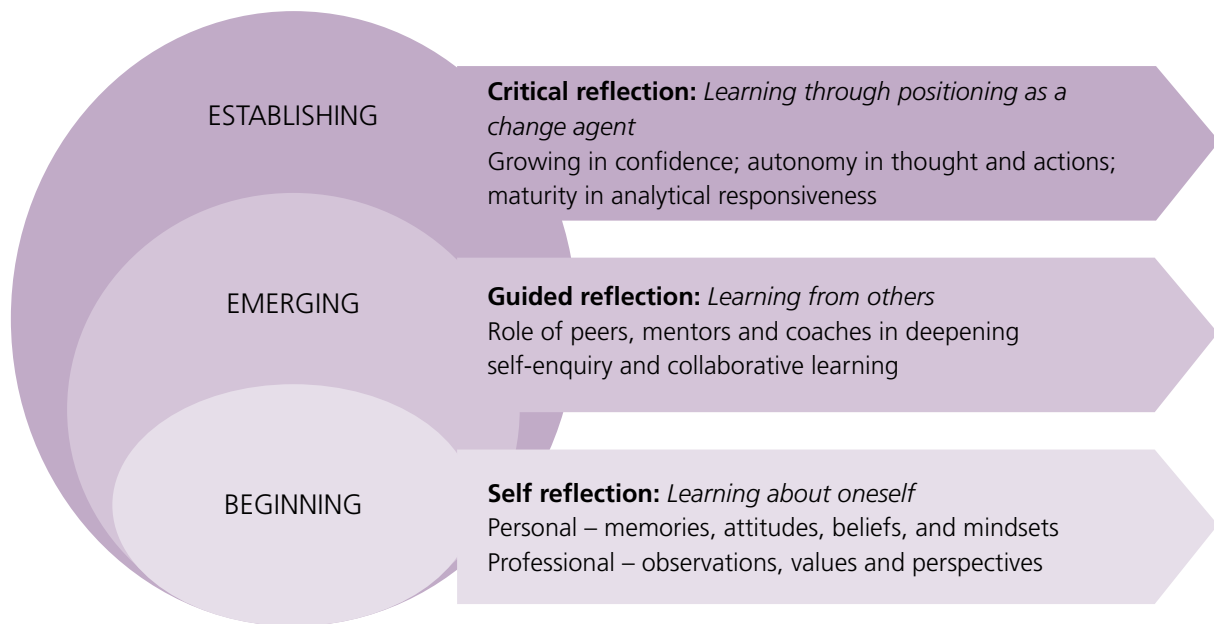


Figure 1.3 Professional growth of the early years ‘thinking teacher’

Phase 1: Beginning – self reflection

Our model begins by acknowledging where you are by inviting you to examine your own story of personal initiation into the early childhood profession using self-reflection. This entry point emphasises learning about the self. There are various tools available online and in professional literature for teachers to use in conducting self-reflection about their professional work. We provide some ideas here to get you started or that you can build on as appropriate.

- Firstly, we recommend the importance of documenting your beliefs and values about your professional work as an early years teacher. Writing about these aspects can be both factual (for example, noting people, places, events, etc.) and emotional (for example, noting feelings, attitudes, passion, etc.). What is important to you can be captured in a few words or bullet points to begin with, and then shaped into a vision or philosophy statement over time.
- Secondly, think of your heroes, or key people and role models who have influenced your interest in becoming an early years teacher. How did they influence you? What have you learned from them? Document your early and recent memories of teaching and education through relevant people, places and experiences.
- Thirdly, consider different experiences that have been important in stimulating your interest, or motivating you to become a teacher. These experiences may have nothing to do with teaching, for example, working in a hotel and learning to make beds quickly and efficiently and creating aesthetically pleasing rooms that are welcoming to guests from diverse countries. In passing on these skills to co-workers at the hotel, you may have realised that you are quite good at teaching others. Likewise, setting the environment for children’s learning is something that teachers do, and when done purposefully to promote specific learning outcomes, you can be clear about assessing in a systematic way the learning that did or did not occur.

These self-reflections are personal and confidential and do not need to be shared with anyone else unless you want to do this. Documentation of your experiences over time as noted above enables you to identify, collate and analyse trends and themes that have shaped your

professional practice. This information can provide an effective platform for thinking about your career direction as well as enhance your work as an early years teacher when planning programmes for children and families in ECE settings.

Phase 2: Emerging – guided reflection

Research shows that reflective practice is most effective when combined with skillful guidance and support (Raban, Waniganayake, Nolan, Deans, Brown & Ure, 2007). Guided reflection is an emerging phase where learning from others is the focus. Guided reflection can be done on a one-to-one basis with a mentor or a coach, or in a group of two or more people with similar interests. Be sure to understand that a mentor can be someone who has a broad understanding of professional matters and career development. A coach, on the other hand, can target a specific aspect that you want to discuss and develop, and will work with you for a defined period of time. Both mentors and coaches do not necessarily have to be experienced early years teachers, and can come from other disciplines or professions. Knowing the reasons for having a mentor and/or coach is important in getting the best outcome from these interactions.

Guided reflection can also be achieved by participating in a group. We recommend that in doing this, it is important that you identify your personal objectives first, and ensure that these fit with the group goals. It may be necessary to modify these along the way, as learning from others can be an enriching process. Speaking about your ideas with a group can give you new perspectives, as well as clarifying or sharpening the focus of what you had originally wanted to do. It is also highly recommended that the period of involvement in a group is not limited to a one-off workshop or online forum. Research indicates that professional learning that is sustained through participation in a group for six to twelve months or more can be far more productive (Hadley, Waniganayake & Shepherd, 2015).

Phase 3: Establishing – critical reflection

As your thinking capabilities strengthen, you will see the evolution of your interest in and capacity to delve into topics, issues, theories, practice and policy at a deeper level. This is when you move from ‘what’ questions to ‘why’ questions, as you want to know the assumptions, values and justifications for or reasons underpinning the explanations being provided. As a critically thinking teacher, you will want to question the silences in a discussion and the silent voices around the table. Who is present/absent and why? Who is benefiting by being there, or whose interests dominate the dialogue? As an individual, you may ask yourself questions such as: What am I afraid of? Did I push the boundaries of my comfort zone sufficiently in understanding the issues being discussed? Why not, or what is it that stopped me from taking a risk or intervening?

Why is critical reflection important or necessary?

ECE settings represent one of the most highly-regulated workplaces throughout the world. This is usually explained in terms of the need to ensure the safety and well-being of young children, a vulnerable population requiring protection. In most countries, those who employ early childhood staff are expected to comply with state-controlled regulations and laws. In turn, these requirements shape the professional roles and responsibilities of early years teachers. This does not mean blindly following rules and standards. Rather, it is expected that as competent, well-prepared professionals, early years teachers enjoy the responsibilities of leading their teams in ECE settings by setting high standards. This work covers the various

aspects of influencing the centre's curriculum, determining the pedagogical approach in implementing early childhood programmes, and assessing children's learning outcomes.

Other professionals such as lawyers, doctors, engineers and accountants, who have also achieved university-based initial training, enjoy the freedom of retaining control over their professional decision-making. This could lead us to ask why early years teachers cannot have agency in their professional practice. Unfortunately, poor public status, low wages and inadequate employment conditions in the early childhood sector have been reinforced by standardisation of practice. All of this contributes to the erosion of early childhood teacher "professional autonomy and authority over pedagogical decision-making" (Waniganayake & Sims, 2018 p. 234). These authors also argue that "effective change can come about through critical reflection, including deep engagement in interrogating one's values, attitudes and practice, and collaborating with peers to develop a shared understanding of strategic directions for the future" (p. 244). In this way, engagement in critical reflection can enable teachers to contribute to innovation and reform in the early childhood sector in a personal and local context as well as across the profession more broadly. As documentation enables critical reflection in diverse ways, whether sustained over short or long periods, we recommend maintaining a professional journal capturing authentic, practice-based examples to interrogate yourself or with others. How much or how little of this journal you share and explore with children, parents and professional peers is your choice.

How to use this book

Connecting theory to policy and to practice

It is taken for granted that all teachers put time and effort into thinking through their plans in terms of the design, content and outcomes they are aiming to achieve in promoting children's learning and developmental outcomes. Globally, national curriculum policy reinforces the importance of purposeful preparation and intentional teaching. For example, in *Belonging, being and becoming: The early years learning framework for Australia* (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2009), intentional teaching is one of the principles underpinning the play-based pedagogy of early childhood centres. This means that teachers "actively promote interactions that foster high-level thinking skills" (p. 15), as well as "intentionally scaffold children's understandings" (p. 35).

Completing a university-based early childhood degree qualification should allow most teachers to achieve the skills and knowledge necessary for understanding the meaning of being and becoming a reflective teacher/practitioner. This capacity to think about your everyday work as a teacher by asking questions, for instance, about underlying assumptions, and explaining the rationale for your approach, is a necessary first step in effective teaching practice. However, is this sufficient?

Being able to engage in thoughtful, purposeful and deliberate thinking is not the same as being critically reflective. To be critically reflective, there must be an explicit focus on "uncovering, and challenging, the power dynamics that frame practice, and uncovering and challenging hegemonic assumptions (those assumptions we embrace as being in our best interests when in fact they are working against us)" (Brookfield, 2009 p. 293). This requires teachers to dig deep, carefully exploring the undercurrents of power at work incorporating contradictions and tensions in the relationships between those involved in the decision-making

in their ECE settings. Engaging in critical reflection openly and honestly takes courage. This is a leadership characteristic, and it is often, therefore, regarded as the responsibility of pedagogical leaders (Waniganayake, Cheeseman, Fenech, Hadley & Shepherd, 2017). The content in this book will help to guide this learning. Dream big as you translate these big ideas into realistic goals and targets to achieve specific plans within the context of your employment as a teacher.

Structure and contents

This book comprises 30 chapters, written by a total of 24 authors, with the majority (84%) based in South Africa, and four based overseas, in Australia and Belgium. This is the first scholarly text of this kind written primarily by South African authors, for South African teacher education students completing either a degree or diploma in ECE. The book draws strength as a scholarly text from three sources:

- **Africanisation:** This book has been contextualised and theoretically grounded upon an understanding of the Africanisation of education, from decolonisation to transformation, as applied to ECE and ITE.
- **Thinking teachers:** This is not a recipe book. Underpinned by research-based evidence, we invite teacher education students and tertiary educators to reflect critically on the content being presented to them. In this way, this publication promotes the development of quality teachers as agents capable of creativity, innovation and leadership in harnessing the best outcomes for young children during their early childhood years.
- **Edited and reviewed:** The chapters have been systematically edited throughout the drafting and formatting period. The full manuscript was also blind reviewed by two esteemed ECE scholars – one based in Africa, and the other from Australia.

Each chapter provides a contextualisation of the focus topic and its relevance for early childhood teachers. The content presented aims to address questions such as: What do we know about this focus topic/area of study within ECE settings in South Africa? How do our children learn this, and what roles do our teachers play in promoting a better understanding of this topic/area? What does research say about this topic/area? From an African and a global perspective, what challenges or difficulties will teachers encounter about teaching and learning about this topic/area?

Our aim has been to structure the content of this book in such a way that it engages the readers in a stimulating way, enables increasing competence, and evokes shifts in thinking leading to transformative practice for early years teachers. Written by authors with a mix of experiences and expertise in writing scholarly texts, this book is held together as a single entity by common features being consistently used throughout the chapters. Each chapter begins by identifying learning objectives and key concepts. The **Chapter learning objectives** reflect the aims the authors wanted to achieve in writing the chapter, and give readers a flavour of what is covered in the chapter. These objectives succinctly identify the abilities and skills the reader is expected to develop by reading and reflecting on the content covered in the chapter. The **Key concepts** highlighted in the chapter are defined briefly to reinforce the importance of the key ideas or knowledge addressed. These terms have also been collated in the glossary towards the end of the book.

Callout boxes provide helpful hints or brief explanations to enhance understanding along the way. A number of **For reflection and action** tasks presented in each chapter invite readers to pause, think and analyse their own experiences in light of what they have just read. It is anticipated that these activities will facilitate both self-reflection and, when used with

peers, a mentor or a coach, will provide useful points of reference for guided reflection as well as critical reflection. In this way, the level of engagement and type of reflection that occurs is left in the hands of the readers to manage.

With a view to connecting theory with practice in authentic ways, we have included **Spotlight on practice profiles** of early years practitioners based in a variety of urban and rural communities in South Africa. These case studies expose readers to situations and scenarios in ECE settings in diverse contexts. They aim to equip readers with the skills and knowledge to deal with situations they may encounter when employed as early years teachers. These narratives are either fictitious or based upon actual cases, for which permission has been granted. The profiles enable readers to apply their newly-acquired theoretical concepts to real-world situations in ECE settings in South Africa.

There is a **Chapter summary** at the end of each chapter, reiterating key ideas and concepts covered. This is a useful study device for readers to reflect on what they have read and understood. Readers may benefit from documenting key messages gained and their relevance for advancing their own professional understanding. An annotated list of two or three **Further reading** references relevant to each chapter is provided, to facilitate additional reading and learning. These references can include books, peer-reviewed journal articles, key policy reports and book chapters. Additionally, each chapter also identifies two or three **Helpful resources**, which are often online resources such as podcasts, YouTube clips or websites, to encourage broader learning beyond the content covered in this book.

Overall, three value-added aspects of this book set it apart as an accredited text endorsed by universities offering initial teacher education courses and qualifications for early years teachers in South Africa:

- **Alignment with national ECE policy:** Authors were asked to and supported in referring to South African national policies on early childhood education, including, but not limited to, the *National Curriculum Framework* (Department of Basic Education, 2015) and the *National Early Learning and Development Standards* (NELDS) (Department of Basic Education & UNICEF, 2009).
- **Systematic focus on curriculum, pedagogy and assessment:** These are the three key areas of South Africa's early childhood ITE courses at present. Chapters were commissioned to address these topics, and were written by authors with professional experience and research expertise in these areas.
- **Research-based evidence:** Throughout the book, we refer to relevant research to demonstrate the importance of connecting theory with practice. This supports the perspective that ECE is grounded in science – a knowledge base of accumulating research literature sourced from local and international studies.

The future of ECE is dependent on how well we do our work as thinking teachers today. Imaginative thinking by reflecting within and outside the current contexts and engaging in transformational action is necessary now, in order to frame future possibilities. This is our challenge today. In reading this text, join us in our shared vision to stay informed, in order to consciously foster a profession of intelligent, creative, and compassionate teachers who will continue to place children at the centre of their practice. This book is our contribution towards achieving this goal.

Chapter references

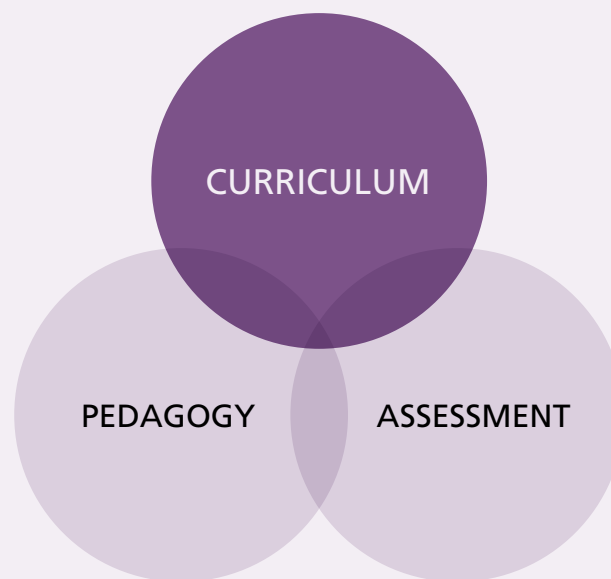
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PART 1

Curriculum in early childhood education

Editor Part 1: Hasina Ebrahim



The provision of a curriculum for children in their early years is a fairly new development outside the global north. In low and middle income countries, the shift of ECE from the private domain of the family to public service provision has created a greater focus on curricula (frameworks) to guide teaching, learning and caring. How best to do this is negotiated contextually and is contested. The chapters in Part 1 are sensitive to this.

In the diagram above, curriculum is placed above pedagogy and assessment as it provides the goals that early years teachers must focus on when facilitating learning and when finding evidence of learning. However, the relationship between these elements is not straightforward. This book therefore strives to develop the thinking teacher who can engage with curriculum in its many facets and complexities.

There are 11 chapters focusing on the curriculum in this part of the book. They are written by an author team who have different experiences in the field of early childhood. This diversity has brought about a rich array of perspectives and conversations on content selection and structure. Part 1 begins with Chapter 2, in which **Hasina Ebrahim** presents an orientation and discussion on definitions, principles and theories that are relevant to curriculum in the early years. In Chapter 3, **Giulietta Harrison** engages with the contested nature of quality in ECE. She provides critical insights into supporting quality ECE through

curriculum experiences and the actions of a quality professional. **Donna Hannaway** outlines the different types of curricula that inform ECE in the South African context in Chapter 4. She unpacks each curriculum model to illustrate the components of driving development and learning in the early years. **Hasina Ebrahim** and **Ramashego Mphahlele** unpack the *South African National Curriculum Framework* (NCF) in terms of its design features and approaches in Chapter 5, and describe its implications for planning.

The next six chapters are dedicated to the Early Learning and Development Areas (ELDAs) of the NCF. Each chapter pays attention to the key issues, definitions, research, curricular aims and support through play-based and other approaches. In Chapter 6, **Margaret Irvine** provides an understanding of the key ELDA 1, namely, well-being. Taking into account its importance for children if they are to survive and thrive, well-being is discussed in terms of its application to young children and arenas for action. **Hasina Ebrahim**, **Xoliswa Magxala** and **Faith Hlungulu** address ELDA 2, identity and belonging, in Chapter 7. They provide perspectives on a variety of issues relating to the self, others and dealing with difference. The next two chapters focus on the academic strand of the curriculum. **Margaret Irvine**, in Chapter 8, addresses ELDA 3, communication. She discusses early literacy and advocates for attention to be paid to more affirming models that take into account how children become literate in early childhood. In Chapter 9, **Makie Kortjass** addresses ELDA 4, exploring mathematics. She explains concepts and approaches that are key for quality early mathematical experiences. Chapter 10 focuses on ELDA 5, creativity, where **Margaret Irvine** emphasises the dimensions of creativity for the early years. This is especially significant, since creativity is sidelined in favour of delivering school readiness outcomes. In Chapter 11, **Linda Bosman** tackles the different aspects related to ELDA 6, knowledge and understanding of the world. She explores ways of addressing science, technology, engineering, history, geography and citizenship in the early years. Part 1 on curriculum ends with Chapter 12, in which **Veronica Kgabo** extends ELDA 3 through a deeper look at language development and multilingualism in the early years.