ENSURING AFFORDABLE QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:
What will we DO with the children on Monday?

CONFERENCE REPORT
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16–17 MARCH 2017
CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA
CONFERENCE REPORT
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KEY UNDERSTANDINGS

- Play and learning are fundamentally linked; play-based activities and experiences should be a central feature to planned learning activities for children. (This does NOT include prescribed activities which use worksheets, templates, colouring-in and adult-drawn outlines.)

- Children are actors and directors of their own learning at the same time as they are also deeply social. This means they need to feel a sense of belonging. They must come to know that adults who work with them are helpful and respond to their ideas, thoughts and feelings, and encourage them to enjoy each other’s ideas and thoughts and to respect each other’s feelings.

- Emotions are central to holistic learning and underlie intellectual endeavour throughout life. Thus, the emotional climate should be considered when planning learning experiences. Raw emotion can be overwhelming, but if children are given appropriate help at the right time, they develop thoughtful feelings that empower the development of their learning.

- Experiences, knowledge and different learning areas are inter-related.

- Linking the curriculum with the everyday context and existing knowledge of children is crucial for learning success.

- Paying attention to the learning process is key to facilitating long-term learning outcomes.

- Learning and teaching materials/objects used in classrooms and outdoors do not need to be expensive. Recycled and affordable tools can be used effectively to facilitate purposeful and meaningful learning.

PARTICIPANT RESPONSES

- Participants were positive about the intentions, focus and content of the conference, and expressed an amazing appetite for this learning, demonstrated by a much larger attendance than initially planned for. There was full participation in the hands-on workshop processes, culminating in joyful song and dance in the closing session.

- The question and answer sessions buzzed with engaged dialogue. Opportunities to share ideas among participants and presenters were embraced by many.

- Feedback from participants was positive with participants calling for a follow-up conference because many felt that this was the beginning of profound engagement and learning.

- In one-on-one conversations, participants said that many of the activities and ideas that had been learned could be used beyond the specified birth to 4 years and that they felt they would be better equipped returning to school after this conference.

- From some of the discussions, it seems that many people are concerned with the level of competency of many ECD educators.

- Many educators need to be better supported through taking part in workshops such as these, as well as getting other support from staff members to ensure that children receive the high quality education they deserve.
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SUMMARY

The intention of this working conference, which focused on enabling affordable, high quality learning for young children, was to impact on understandings and practice.

The dissemination of the South African National Curriculum Framework for children aged Birth to Four requires educationalists working in early childhood from crèches to universities to engage with and interpret its contents to ensure appropriate learning experiences for all babies and young children in South Africa.

Thus while discussions and workshops were strongly rooted in theory and research, the idea was to demonstrate and inspire educators, academics and policy makers toward quality learning and teaching through the use of creative, cost effective, play-based, tried and tested experiences and innovations. Even the conference bags were made from offcuts of material by a local community sewing organisation, underlining the theme of the conference of affordable quality. With roots in the teachings of Friedrich Froebel, the inventor of “kindergarten” education, and wings in the many different socio-cultural and linguistic communities across South Africa, the key message was that all children are primed to learn. Learning is innate to children who come into learning environments with their prior knowledge and experience. Creating stimulating educative environments can be done in cost-effective ways using stories, play, found objectives, recycled and low-cost resources like blocks, sand, clay and water.

INTRODUCTION

“What will we do with the children on Monday?” is a crucial question that should be asked by those who work with young children. A shared sense of urgency about the need to explore how to meet the challenges this question offers in the diverse settings of South Africa led to this creative collaboration between PRAESA, the Froebel Trust, UNICEF, the Department of Higher Education and Training and the Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD). The aim was to demonstrate and discuss innovative, imaginative and creative ways to stimulate high quality early childhood learning.

The resultant two-day conference at the Observatory River Club Conference Centre, Cape Town, offered many opportunities for participants to observe, experience, discuss, analyse and act to help ensure the implementation of an inclusive and transformative curriculum in early childhood education environments. More than 180 people attended the conference, which brought together a wide range of early childhood “doers”, including policy makers, training institution representatives, early learning teachers, municipal ECD staff and academics, from every province in South Africa.

Five workshops ran concurrently during each workshop-scheduled timeslot, which gave every participant the opportunity to attend all five workshops over the two-day period. The workshops deliberated on the following areas in Early Childhood Education:

- Observing Children and Schemas (facilitated by Stella Louis and Mandisa Nakani)
- Storytelling and Early Literacy (facilitated by Sara Stanley and Nolubabalo Mbotshwa)
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Emergent Writing (facilitated by Carole Bloch)

Gifts and Occupations: Exploring Mathematics (facilitated by Tina Bruce, Xoliswa Ndhove and Magdeline Mdladla)

Nature (facilitated by Georgie McCall and Peter Hadebe)

Talks were given by André Viviers (UNICEF), Mmatsetshweu Ruby Motaung (DHET), Tina Bruce (The Froebel Trust) and Karin Murris (University of Cape Town), and Carole Bloch (PRAESA) facilitated proceedings. Feedback sessions after each workshop were planned with good time for audience participation. These were initiated through the reflections of Ntombizanele Mahobe (Nal’ibali) and Brinthia Daewood (ELRU).

SETTING THE TONE: CREATING THE ETHOS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD LEARNING

The tone for the hands-on workshop approach was set by André Viviers, early childhood education specialist from UNICEF, in his opening talk (read and listen) and the keynote address, “10 Transglobal Principles of Early Childhood Education”, (see and listen) by Tina Bruce, renowned Froebelian early childhood educationalist and honorary visiting professor at the Early Childhood Research Centre, University of Roehampton, London.

Viviers said that we need to understand HOW children learn and what learning is; “being able to recite the alphabet does not mean that learning has taken place.” He talked about one of the major obstacles to practical learning solutions being what he termed “the policy police” and noted the damage caused by the current system of outcomes-based education. Teachers often struggle to focus on real learning because of policy pressures to produce results.

Viviers discussed the importance of homegrown role models in South Africa and drew on a theme that emerged often throughout the conference: the importance of play in childhood development. “Playing is learning,” he said.

Bruce emphasised the quest for affordable, quality education as a global imperative. She illustrated her presentation with photographs of the kind of daily programme activities that take place in a preschool centre in Kliptown, Soweto, where she and colleagues, Stella Louis and Georgie McCall, have been collaborating with staff for several years.

Our approach should be to celebrate the life of young children and to work with them and their families with joy, said Bruce. She emphasised the significance of emotion in all that we do, taking up neuroscientist Antonio Damasio’s phrase that “thoughtful feelings” need to be considered when planning learning for children.

She stressed that learning should be constructed from what children CAN do and what they already know. They should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own holistic learning, forging links between different types of knowledge, for example the connections between art, nature, maths and science. She listed the following underlying principles of early childhood education:

- Children need a moral framework, not just raw knowledge.
- The best way to prepare children for their adult life is to give them what they need as children.
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- Adults need to know how to assess what children have learnt without the use of tests.
- Begin with what children can do, not what they can’t.
- There are times when children are especially able to learn particular things. It is the adult’s role to observe and act on these teachable moments.
- Children need open-ended material and conversation.
- Children need to learn in their mother tongues.
- Give children verbal tools to express their frustrations.
- Offer children language – tools for expression – without expecting them to use it or react to it immediately.
- Children need to be given responsibility and autonomy.
- Teachers mustn’t impose theory on to play where it’s not appropriate.
- Rich experiences with affordable materials indoors and with nature encourage children to represent their experiences symbolically.

WORKSHOP EXPERIENCES

The meeting included a series of hands-on creative workshops, which were based in the principle of early childhood education presented by Tina Bruce. They were intended to offer all participants, irrespective of whether they were practitioners or policy makers, a practical experience of the kinds of regular opportunities babies and young children require to meet their learning potential.

How learning happens — observing children and schemas: Stella Louis and Mandisa Nakani

LEARNING FOCUS:
How children learn through doing; repeatedly! Educators must therefore observe what they do and link the curriculum as well as activities for learning and teaching with what babies and young children already know and can do (listen).

This workshop emphasised that even though the curriculum changes every few years, the way children learn does not, and so this is where the focus should lie – i.e. (on the process) rather than what is laid out in the curriculum (the outcome). There is global consensus that children learn through play, through first-hand experience and through repetition. Additionally, sensory development is crucial to learning. The senses are the medium through which babies and children have experiences. However, often some senses are “favoured” over others, for example, there are often many activities/play that incorporate the sense of touch, but the sense of hearing is often neglected. Hearing is used to allow children to listen, talk and read because they are able to differentiate one sound from another. This is turn means that babies and young children need meaningful materials, nature and people who show them affection so that their senses are stimulated to help them develop and learn.

Children also need to be in the presence of adults who will support and extend their play and communication, which is vital for the learning process. As adults observe, they can become more aware of the patterns of learning, or schemas their babies and young children are exploring. This better equips them to know what materials and activities to offer next which will continue to interest children and enhance learning.

In the workshop, some suggested activities were a treasure basket, which should be filled with natural materials (safe for babies) that can be collected at no cost. These materials can
be played with by the baby and stimulate the senses. For toddlers, the basket should include items that can be put inside other objects, things that can be scattered and make noise. To support the schemas, an adult should sit close by and observe the baby or toddler, while giving encouragement and affection. Help extend the child’s play but do not take over. How an adult should respond will depend on the child and the observed schemas. Children should be encouraged to help clean up afterwards.

**LEARNING INNOVATION:**
Observing babies and children closely should be viewed as central to understanding what learning is taking place and what to offer next. Close observation tends to reveal repeated actions or schemas, which provide practitioners with clues to support learning and development in relevant ways for young learners (listen). Through activities and support which encourage exploration through ‘doing’ and using all of the senses, children learn become imaginative and creative as they problem solve and investigate.

**Storytelling and early literacy: Sara Stanley and Nolubabalo Mbotshwa**

**LEARNING FOCUS:**
How play, collective visualisation and related creative activities can draw children into the imaginative world of stories and build their thinking, concept formation, language and vocabulary skills.

Participants listened to a story, The Three Billy Goats Gruff, and then brainstormed ways of re-creating a part of the story using supplied recycled materials (see). Together, the group created two “real-life worlds” that had been described in the storybook. The activity was tackled with enthusiasm, smiles and laughter illustrating how versatile and engaging the approach can be to mentor adults into the story-play world of young children.

**LEARNING INNOVATION:**
The recreation of mini-story worlds stimulates thinking, imagination, comprehension and vocabulary. Transforming settings into enjoyable, personally meaningful and accessible educational spaces, both indoors and outdoors motivates young children to compose and represent stories which they use to drive their learning. While engaged in personally meaningful play activities, children explore and practice concepts, uses and mechanics of print.

**Emergent writing: Carole Bloch**

**LEARNING FOCUS:**
How (1) all learning is based on the way our brains function; it is helpful to understand and act on the implications of brain research for education; (2) the way babies and young children learn all aspects of language in holistic ways has curriculum related implications for learning to write (and read); (3) emotional connection, and the use of stories, play and symbols, enhance young children’s development as imaginative and competent reader-writers.

This workshop (see and listen) addressed the way in which many educators in South Africa teach initial reading and writing as separate, technical, skills with serious consequences for literacy outcomes in our country. Appreciating how biology underlies human behaviour, and that our brains are structured to predict and have “inbuilt” emotional systems that guide how cognition functions, allows us to plan...
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and implement appropriately to enhance young children’s learning. The way our brains use prediction to make sense of all information, together with our need to bond, play and discover, leads early literacy learning to flourish in language and print-rich, stress-free, interesting, and engaged social environments. These conditions are similar to those in which babies learn to listen and speak because all language learning happens best with regular personally meaningful activities occurring in a social context. Appropriate curriculum approaches give opportunities for thinking, problem solving, and play, and focus on the relationship between positive emotion and motivation for learning meaningfully. When adults role-model writing like they role-model speaking for young children, children’s desire to imitate and try for themselves is stimulated.

Given the importance of language and story-rich environments for early learning, the shortage of mother-tongue-based bilingual approaches to early literacy in South Africa continues to be a serious concern. Nevertheless practitioners and children can and should create an abundance of regular and relevant print themselves.

**LEARNING INNOVATION:**

New for many in the workshop was the idea that children can be producers of their own mother-tongue reading materials. Mother-tongue reading and writing happens when adults encourage and support children to tell, illustrate, and write their own stories in languages they understand. A cycle of emergent writing evolves as children compose their own texts using invented spellings and as family members and teachers scribe stories with them. These can be collected and shared as part of classroom or home storybook collections.

**Gifts and occupations — exploring mathematics: Tina Bruce, Xoliswa Ndho and Magdeline Mdlada**

**LEARNING FOCUS:**

Making enjoyable and fascinating the beauty and function of mathematics into meaningful and worthwhile experiences. How regular, thoughtful preparation and use of inexpensive materials allows young children to thrive as curious learners.

Friedrich Froebel developed what he termed ‘gifts and occupations’, which were terms used as materials and activities in play. They are linked to everyday life and introduce children to play experiences and activities that develop their mathematical brain using concrete, affordable materials. This develops the understanding that mathematics is everywhere. Learning is experiential; giving children the opportunity to play with concrete objects can facilitate the development of mathematical language, concepts and abstract reasoning.

Adults should support this play-based learning, forging links with children between the everyday, nature, science and maths. Through sensitive observation of children at play, caregivers and teachers can identify “teachable moments” to intervene, with the intention of deepening or expanding learning through appropriate questions, discussion, assistance or peer-to-peer sharing.

A collection of demonstration tables in the workshop held a variety of mathematical play activities which made use of materials that had been upcycled or reused, the most expensive of which were wooden blocks and a collection of spheres, cubes and cylinders. The blocks form part of the Friedrich Froebel equipment referred to as Gifts and Occupations, which are open-ended resources that facilitate the acquisition of mathematical skills through spontaneous and
guided play. Other inexpensive materials are included like clay, sand and water that can be transformed into different shapes and used by children in making objects, sewing, folding paper, painting etc. Songs were also demonstrated as a tool to expose children to the language and concept of maths, building their mathematical vocabulary in a play-based way. The emphasis is that play can be deeply serious because it leads children to their highest form of learning when they are deeply engaged and focused and fulfilled. Therapists also know that play heals pain.

LEARNING INNOVATION:
Pre-structured toys are expensive and have constrained and narrow ways of being used. Educationally worthwhile and open-ended materials are usually low cost or no-cost. They encourage gross and fine motor skills at the same time as children play creatively and imaginatively and learn to think and problem solve, as well as socialise and concentrate.

Nature: Georgie McCall and Peter Hadebe

LEARNING FOCUS:
How children learn through nature. Educators should use concrete experiences to develop the concepts defined in the curriculum, rather than teaching the concepts as abstract and removed from the world of the child.

This workshop stressed the importance of linking curriculum and teaching to real life experiences. With a focus on the outdoors, the presenters – an educator and a school gardener – illustrated in a unique way the importance of nature in the development of young minds and the development of scientific knowledge. A large focus of the discussion was on how to create opportunities to investigate nature in everyday life, even in an urban setting. This could be done by creating a garden space, whether it is a large vegetable garden or even just small containers with plants in them that can be kept inside the classroom. Having any type of garden creates exposure for children to nature, how it works and how it contributes to our everyday lives.

During the workshop, several tables were set up with a variety of low-cost activities that could be completed in a classroom to help children learn about science and nature. These included how to make a flower press; a rain gauge; a sundial and examining nature with a magnifying glass. All the activities used recycled materials.

LEARNING INNOVATION:
How to make use of low-technology, inexpensive materials that can be used to help children explore and understand the natural world in a tangible way. Being outside and learning about nature and the environment is fundamental and centrally important and not an optional addition to early childhood education.

In all of the workshops, the emphasis was on how the simple activities demonstrated, described and discussed are profound. They address the early learning development areas laid out in the national curriculum, such as wellbeing, identity, communication, learning through the senses, creativity, imagination and play, as well as mathematics and knowledge and understanding of the world.

Read more on the workshops in the blogs by participants Rujeko Moyo and Ivan Kiley.
Mmatsetshweu Ruby Motaung, representing the Department of Higher Education and Training, confirmed the importance of the practical approach taken at the conference and welcomed the coming together of delegates representing different parts of the early childhood education spectrum. She noted that it is one thing to develop policies but it is their implementation that is key to success. She remarked on the positive energy that the conference generated and expressed a sense of hope and excitement for moving forward into transformed early childhood practice.

Eric Atmore from the Centre for Early Childhood Development emphasised the fact that the conference comprised 40% policy makers and 60% lead practitioners and said this was unusual and heartening.

Karin Murris of the University of Cape Town provided a reflective window on the conference workshops (see and listen). She used a multi-modal approach to capture many of the participants busy in workshops practically and in discussion. This offered a moment of reflection for participants on their engagement in the sessions. She applauded the emphasis on taking steps to ensure appropriate and practical implementation of the national curriculum framework.

The participants agreed in discussion that we need to come together at the many levels of advocacy, policy, funding, training and implementation to address several challenges. Two of particular relevance for implementing a successful birth-to-four curriculum are:

- How do we ensure open-ended, intimate and nurturing experiences for all babies and young children when there are often impossibly high child to adult ratios?

The need to try out innovative ways of involving family and community members in interesting interactions that are informally structured and intimate; and the urgency for government and all other players to collaborate at intervening to address this issue at their various levels.

- What will support more adults in early childhood education to offer the curricular conditions that provide children informally structured opportunities to explore and play with materials and people?

More practice-oriented opportunities which help to answer what, how, why and when things should be done: creating many digital communities and sharing widely a selection of multimodal demonstrations of appropriate practices in different settings, languages and on different curricular themes, offering hands-on, on-site courses that allow adults to explore practice more intensely, establishing demonstration sites where appropriate practice takes place and can be observed and explored.
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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>08:00</td>
<td>Arrival Tea/ Coffee &amp; Registration</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:30</td>
<td>Welcome Remarks by Andre Viviers, UNICEF, Mamatsetshweu Ruffy Motaung, DHET, Carole Bloch, Praesa &amp; Eric Atmore, CECED</td>
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<tr>
<td>10:15</td>
<td>Keynote by Tina Bruce, The Froebel Trust</td>
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**THURSDAY, 16 MARCH 2017**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Green Group: Story telling &amp; early literacy (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Red Group: Gifts &amp; occupations - foundations of mathematics (Zambesi Room)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Yellow Group: Nature (Kel Room)</td>
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<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Blue Group: Observation &amp; schemas (Berg Room)</td>
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<tr>
<td>11:00 - 12:00</td>
<td>Purple Group: Emergent writing (Zambesi Room)</td>
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<td>12:00 - 12:30</td>
<td>Plenary Feedback - Questions &amp; Answers Opened by Unathi Mutywaya, ELRU (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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<td>12:30 - 1:30</td>
<td>Lunch (Orange Room)</td>
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**1:30 - 2:30**

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<td>1:30 - 2:30</td>
<td>Green Group: Story telling &amp; early literacy (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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**2:30 - 3:30**

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<td>2:30 - 3:30</td>
<td>Blue Group: Story telling &amp; early literacy (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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<td>2:30 - 3:30</td>
<td>Yellow Group: Emergent writing (Zambesi Room)</td>
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**3:30 - 4:00**

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<tr>
<td>3:30 - 4:00</td>
<td>Mid Afternoon Tea/ Coffee Networking (Orange Room)</td>
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**4:00 - 4:45**

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<tr>
<td>4:00 - 4:45</td>
<td>Plenary Feedback - Questions &amp; Answers Opened by Ntombizane Mahobe, Nal'bauli (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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**4:45 - 5:30**

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<tr>
<td>4:45 - 5:30</td>
<td>Birth &amp; Materials Interactive Display to be confirmed</td>
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<td>5:30pm</td>
<td>Drinks &amp; Braai</td>
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**FRIDAY, 17 MARCH 2017**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>09:00</td>
<td>Welcome (Congo Room)</td>
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<tr>
<td>09:10 - 10:10</td>
<td>Yellow Group: Story telling &amp; early literacy (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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<td>09:10 - 10:10</td>
<td>Blue Group: Gifts &amp; occupations - foundations of mathematics (Zambesi Room)</td>
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**10:10 - 10:45**

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<td>10:10 - 10:45</td>
<td>Red Group: Observation &amp; schemas (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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**11:45 - 12:30**

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<tr>
<td>11:45 - 12:30</td>
<td>Plenary Feedback - Questions &amp; Answers Opened by Brinetha Dawood, ELRU (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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**12:30 - 1:30**

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<tr>
<td>12:30 - 1:30</td>
<td>Lunch (Orange Room)</td>
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**1:30 - 1:50**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1:30 - 1:50</td>
<td>Workshop Reflection by Karin Murris, University of Cape Town (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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**1:50 - 2:30**

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<th>Time</th>
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<tr>
<td>1:50 - 2:30</td>
<td>Way Forward - Conference Closure by Carole Bloch, Praesa (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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**2:30 - 2:45**

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<tr>
<td>2:30 - 2:45</td>
<td>Vote of Thanks by Eric Atmore, CECED (Congo Plenary Room)</td>
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ENSURING AFFORDABLE QUALITY IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION: WHAT WILL WE DO WITH THE CHILDREN ON MONDAY?

FACILITATOR BIOGRAPHIES

Carole Bloch (PhD) is an early literacy and multilingual education specialist in African settings. She has helped to introduce and support holistic and potentially transformational approaches to teaching reading and writing in early childhood informal and formal settings since 1992, when she began working with the Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa (PRAESA). With a focus on normalising the use of all children’s home languages for reading and writing, she has facilitated early literacy training, research and multilingual storybook development in South Africa and other African countries, to enhance all children’s opportunities for literacy learning. In 2012, she conceptualised the multilingual literacy approach for and co-initiated the Nal’ibali Reading for Enjoyment Campaign, with the DG Murray Trust, and led its start up phase.

Professor Tina Bruce is an internationally recognised Froebel trained teacher from London, advising on early childhood education in countries including Egypt, China, New Zealand and the US as well as the UK. Her books, aimed at practitioners, those who train them and policy makers, have sold over a quarter of a million copies. She is passionate about the importance of integrating theory and practice. For the last eight years she has been working with the principal, staff and 120 children from one to six years of age at the Pastoral Care Centre Pre-School and Crèche in Kliptown informal settlement in Soweto. Together they have used the Asset Based Community Development Approach (ABCD) in relation to the school’s early childhood curriculum and pedagogy.

Peter Hadebe is the caretaker and organises the maintenance and vegetable and fruit garden in the Pastoral Care Centre Pre-School and Crèche in Kliptown, Soweto. He works with teachers to bring small groups of children to the garden, which is based next to the outside play area, and gives them experience of growing plants and flowers.

London-based Stella Louis is a trainer with international experience and recognition. She works with a variety of early childhood settings and is a trainer for several local authorities. She has written early childhood books and has worked with Tina Bruce for the last eight years in Kliptown, Soweto. She is particularly interested in observation and its part in developing learning, especially through children’s schemas.

Nolubabalo Mbotshwa is an early childhood language and literacy mentor at PRAESA who supports Storyplay in crèches and Grade R classes. She has several years of experience...
working with children and young people in various capacities, including counselling and as an assistant teacher.

Georgie McCall has been Principal of a respected local authority nursery school and children’s centre in Peckham (London, UK), which is home to many families of African heritage. She has been part of the team working for the last eight years with Tina Bruce in the school community in Kliptown, Soweto.

Magdeline Mdladla is Principal of the Pastoral Care Centre Pre-School and Crèche in Kliptown. She has, with her staff, worked closely with the team from London, UK, so that the early childhood curriculum and pedagogy in the school are developed in ways which are culturally appropriate and contextually relevant. She is supporting her staff in determined efforts of study for South African qualifications. The funding for the school is from the Social Development Grant only.

Karin Murris (PhD) is Professor of Education at the University of Cape Town. Grounded in philosophy as an academic discipline, her research interests are early childhood education, school ethics and critical pedagogies. She is programme convener of the PGCE Foundation phase and principal investigator of the NRF Decolonising Early Childhood Discourses project. She is co-editor of the Routledge International Handbook of Philosophy for Children (2017).

Mandisa Nakani has many years of experience working with infants up to two years of age in the Pastoral Care Centre Pre-School and Crèche in Kliptown. She creates a secure and affectionate atmosphere in which these young children are encouraged to think and be themselves.

Xoliswa Nhove is a teacher in the Pastoral Care Centre Pre-School and Crèche. She has transformed her classroom so that children work in small groups as well as a whole class. She is in her third year of studies for a diploma at a local Lyceum College, which is part of the Registered National Framework Qualifications.

Sara Stanley has spent almost 30 years in the Foundation Stage classroom as a teacher, foundation phase leader and teacher educator. Since 2013, Sara has been involved in early childhood projects for the development of literacy and imaginative Storyplay with PRAESA. She is a guest lecturer at UCT and a research associate and collaborator in the NRF project Decolonising Early Childhood Discourses which uses examples of her practice as research data. Sara volunteers in the refugee camps of northern France where she has created play spaces for young children.