



SOUTH AFRICAN RESEARCH ASSOCIATION
FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

ANNUAL NEWSLETTER

| DECEMBER 2024



MESSAGE FROM SARAECE'S PRESIDENT

Dear SARAECE Members and ECD Community,

The annual SARAECE newsletter provides a moment to reflect on the past year – celebrating our achievements, acknowledging our members' contributions, and considering our significance and future as South Africa's dedicated research association for early childhood education.

My first reflection centres on the value of belonging to a professional organisation like SARAECE. In a world abundant with quality international research associations, free opportunities, international networks, webinars, and instantly generated knowledge, why do individuals still commit to a specific, paid association? I think the answer lies in the deeper sense of professional belonging. Being part of a dedicated association connects us with like-minded peers, strengthens our professional identity, fosters collaboration, and amplifies our advocacy efforts. It enables us to create solutions tailored to our unique context and ensures our contributions are meaningful and impactful. In a landscape rich with challenges and opportunities, SARAECE provides a platform for purposeful belonging and collective action. Choosing SARAECE reflects a deliberate commitment to



LINDA BOSMAN

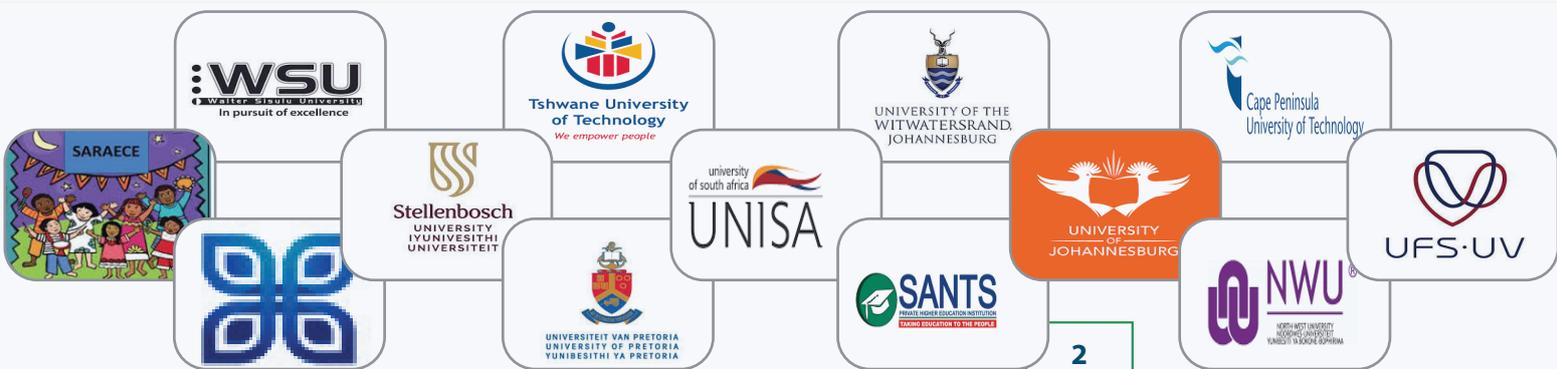
shaping the future of ECE in South Africa and beyond.

This year saw a key leadership transition with Michaela Ashley-Cooper stepping down as Deputy President in March 2024 due to personal reasons. We deeply appreciate her invaluable contributions and are pleased she remains an active and valued committee member. Dr Hannelie du Preez stepped into the Deputy President role, bringing expertise, energy, and innovation. Bridging the global North (as part of Wageningen University and Research in the Netherlands) and the global South (as a research associate at the University of Pretoria), her background in early childhood education, psychology, and learning support, coupled with her international networks, editorial experience, and publication record, make her an asset to SARAECE's leadership. We sincerely thank Hannelie for her visionary leadership and her instrumental role in

producing this newsletter. Read more about SARAECE's portfolio's on page 5.

I also wish to acknowledge the unwavering commitment of our committee members (featured on page 3) – mostly full-time academics at higher education institutions who, despite their demanding responsibilities, generously dedicate their time and expertise to SARAECE without compensation. We are fortunate to have such passionate individuals driving our vision and goals forward. Special thanks go to our office bearers: Dr Donna Hannaway, our skilled Secretary, and Dr Giulietta Harrison, our meticulous Treasurer. Their detailed reports are included on page 8 of this newsletter.

Our association with the South African Journal of Childhood Education (SAJCE) remains a treasured connection. As a leading journal, SAJCE serves as an essential platform for disseminating high-quality research that informs ECE policy and practice both locally and globally. I encourage you to read Prof Elbie Henning's message on page 9 and updates on the newly appointed editor on page 10. We warmly congratulate Prof Sarita Ramsaroop from UJ on her appointment as the new SAJCE editor and welcome her into the SARAECE community.



This year, SARAECE's Knowledge-Building Webinar (KBW) series and workshops highlighted our dedication to advancing ECE. My sincere thanks to the SARAECE team for their hard work in organising these events and to our audience for their active engagement. The 2024 KBW series focused on professionalising the ECCE workforce. Key topics included policies, professional qualifications, teaching standards, and care and education for children from birth to four years. We also celebrated women in ECE, recognising their resilience and indispensable contributions. Ayesha Carrim, KBW portfolio holder, provides further insights on this series in her update on p.11 of this newsletter. Another milestone was SARAECE's first coding and robotics workshop, led by highly skilled Dr Kayla Willemse. This initiative addressed the growing demand for coding and robotics in the Foundation Phase, aligning with significant curriculum changes. The strong turnout and positive feedback emphasised the need for such workshops. We look forward to building on this momentum!

This year marked a significant milestone with the securing of partnerships with Sesame Workshop and Care for Education. These collaborations promise to amplify our impact, foster meaningful research, and strengthen efforts to advance ECE in South Africa. Learn more about these partners and their work on pages 13 to 17 of the newsletter.

My final reflection is on our membership – the individuals who choose to associate with SARAECE. ECE in South Africa is still a developing field, with only a few academic institutions offering qualifications from birth to nine years,

alongside postgraduate studies. Despite this, SARAECE's membership continues to grow, underscoring the sector's recognition of our relevance and value. Our members, spanning diverse roles locally and internationally, highlight the importance of staying connected and informed.

The challenges facing ECE in South Africa remain stark. International benchmarks like PIRLS (2021) and TIMSS (2023), along with local assessments such as the South African Early Childhood Review (2024), the Child Gauge (2024), and Thrive by Five (2022) highlight a troubling reality: our youngest citizens are not receiving the quality education required to build strong foundations in literacy, mathematics, science, and overall well-being. These findings expose our country's struggle to meet the promises of the UN Sustainable Development Goals, particularly SDG 4.1 (equitable, quality education for all) and SDG 4.2 (early childhood care and education) as well as the African Union's vision of The Africa We Want by 2063. Achieving both these goals begins with investing in ECE – a goal that remains critically unmet in South Africa. In this context, SARAECE's role is both significant and urgent. Addressing the complexity within the ECD ecosystem demands a unified and strategic response.

In the Spotlight on Practice section of this newsletter (pages 18–28), we showcase the impactful work, publications, and achievements of our committee and members, both nationally and internationally – each contributing within their unique contexts to advance the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the African Union's Agenda 2063 vision for a peaceful, secure, and

prosperous Africa through investments in quality ECE. Among our local members, Sonja Giese's piece (page 22) spotlights the transformative work of Data Drive, which deeply examines critical developmental needs in young children. These insights equip researchers, policymakers, advocates, and academics to develop solutions uniquely tailored to South Africa's context. From the deep rural and resource-poor regions of South Africa, Julie Hay, Director of Singakwenza (page 24), showcases how innovative use of local resources can significantly enhance early childhood education while strengthening community resilience. On the international front, Bart de Clercq's contribution on measuring quality in ECD centres in Belgium (page 27) underscores that concerns about quality are universal. Ongoing efforts remain essential to improving outcomes for children in both developing and advanced nations. Chris Pascal and Tony Bertram's exploration of ethical encounters in research with children (page 26) provides valuable Western perspectives, offering inspiration and guidance for Africa-relevant applications in research and practice. These efforts exemplify our collective commitment to advancing ECE research, practice, and advocacy in South Africa and beyond, ensuring our collective voice drives meaningful change within our unique contexts. Together, we can shape a better future for all.

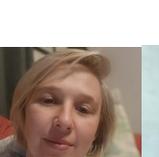
Finally, thank you for your unwavering support and dedication to SARAECE. Together, let us continue moving forward with purpose, united in our mission to create a brighter, more equitable future for all young child-citizens of the Africa we envision and strive for.



SARAECE COMMITTEE: DRIVING EXCELLENCE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION



The SARAECE committee, comprising 30 passionate members, is dedicated to advancing ECE in South Africa. With diverse expertise in ECE, programme management, research, and technology-based learning, the team addresses the needs of children from birth to nine years, focusing on areas like child participation, play-based learning, and inclusion. Committee members contribute to local and global initiatives, publish research, present at conferences, and lead impactful projects. Their involvement spans academic, non-profit, and policy spheres, working with organizations such as UNESCO and the Centre for Early Childhood Development. They also mentor postgraduate students, fostering the next generation of ECE leaders. The committee's collective experience enables them to engage meaningfully with the evolving challenges of the ECE sector. From enhancing early literacy programs to developing citizenship education frameworks and exploring innovative pedagogies, their work bridges research and practice. By integrating diverse perspectives, the team ensures that solutions are contextually relevant, culturally sensitive, and sustainable. Their commitment to evidence-based approaches drives the development of practical interventions that benefit both educators and learners across South Africa. In addition to academic contributions, the committee members are deeply involved in grassroots and policy-level efforts. They work to advocate for children's rights, enhance teacher training programs, and build partnerships with community organizations. This holistic approach reflects SARAECE's mission to be a leading voice in ECE, addressing inequalities and fostering a future where all children have access to high-quality, inclusive early education opportunities. Their dedication and innovation make SARAECE a cornerstone of progress in the sector.



A NEW CHAPTER FOR SARAECE: DRIVING PROGRESS TOGETHER

With heartfelt gratitude, we thank Michaela Ashley-Copper for her dedicated service as SARAECE Vice-President. Your commitment and contributions have left an enduring mark on our organization.



Congratulations to Ayesha Carrim on her appointment as Portfolio Holder of Professional Development and Training. Your expertise will be invaluable in advancing our mission.



We are thrilled to welcome Hannelie du Preez as the new SARAECE Vice-President. We look forward to the fresh perspectives and passion you bring to this role!

Congratulations to Andrea Pretorius on her appointment as Portfolio Holder of Digital Engagement and Online Presence. Your insights will play a key role in enhancing our online initiatives.



A warm welcome to Kayla Willemse as Portfolio Holder of Digital Engagement and Online Presence. We are excited to see your creativity elevate SARAECE's digital reach.



SARAECE is proud to announce new developments as we welcome our newly elected vice-president and celebrate the first-ever appointment of Heads of Portfolio. These leaders bring diverse expertise and a shared commitment to advancing early childhood development. Together with the office bearers and SARAECE committee, they will drive forward SARAECE's vision, ensuring impactful progress in the years to come.

At SARAECE, we are dedicated to advancing ECE in South Africa through collaboration, research, and professional growth. Our aims include providing a platform for ECE research, strengthening cooperation among researchers, practitioners, and policymakers, and bridging the gap between research, practice, and policy to prioritize the needs of young children. We support and empower those in ECE through mentorship, training, and resources, while advocating for policies that address the holistic well-being of children, including their education, health, and socio-emotional development.

To achieve these goals, we host conferences, webinars, and workshops, creating spaces for knowledge sharing and growth. Partnering with the South African Journal of Childhood Education (SAJCE) and other platforms, we disseminate research widely, using diverse communication channels to reach a global audience. We also maintain a comprehensive database of ECE research, policies, and resources to support informed decision-making.

Collaboration is at the heart of what we do. We build networks of researchers and stakeholders at regional, national, and international levels and form partnerships with other research associations. Through mentorship programs, we enhance research and publication skills, while leading advocacy projects that raise the visibility of African research and strengthen the ECE sector.

Join us in shaping a brighter future for our youngest citizens—together, we can make a difference.

A decade of making a difference, and we're far from done. Let's keep building the future together

FEB 2011

Before SARAECE's establishment, ECE in South Africa faced significant challenges. The field was fragmented, lacking a unified vision and sufficient research to guide practice and policy. Universities worked in isolation, and teacher education programs often fell short in preparing educators for the diverse and complex needs of South African classrooms. Recognizing this, a collective effort emerged to create an inclusive, research-focused association to unite the sector and drive progress.

The Birth of an Idea
In February 2011, an international ECD conference hosted by North-West University's Faculty of Education Sciences provided the spark for SARAECE. Representatives from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and delegates from universities across South Africa identified the need for a dedicated research association. The conference coincided with DHET's

“Strengthening Foundation Phase Teacher Education” project, aligning perfectly with national goals for ECE improvement.

MAY 2011

With broad support from the conference attendees, DHET convened a national workshop in May 2011, bringing together 16 representatives from education faculties. This meeting solidified the vision for SARAECE, resulting in the formation of a task team led by Dr. Ona Janse van Rensburg of North-West University.

The team was tasked with::

- Drafting a concept document and constitution for the association
- Building links with the newly established South African Journal of Childhood Education (SAJCE) for research dissemination.
- Consulting with stakeholders and refining plans at the Literacy Education Winter School (LEWS) later that year.

Membership is open to any institution or individual interested in promoting ECE through research and aligning with the Association's objectives.

Membership categories encompass the following:

- Individuals interested in ECE research.
- Educational institutions dedicated to ECE (e.g., Higher Education Institutions, Government Organisations, Non-Profit or Non-Governmental Organisations).
- Educators actively involved in ECE.
- Students pursuing under- or post-graduate studies in ECE.

TYPE OF MEMBERSHIP	FEE
Single Membership	R600
Group Membership (3 people)	R1600
Post-Graduate Student	R250
Under-Graduate Student	R150
International Member	USD35 GBP 30 Eur 30
NGO / NPO staff (3 people)	R750

“
Become a SARAECE member
www.saraece.org.za
by completing this membership form
 ”

— now is the perfect time to join and contribute!

FEB 2014

By 2011, SARAECE's founding documents were finalized, and an interim committee was elected to lead the association through its formative years. This leadership culminated in SARAECE's official launch at the national conference in February 2014.

Today, SARAECE is a cornerstone of ECE in South Africa, uniting researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to advance the field and benefit young children nationwide.

AUG 2024

In August 2024, SARAECE undertook a revision of its constitution to ensure that it remains aligned with the evolving needs of the ECE sector in SA. This revision was necessary to:

- Reflect changes in the ECE landscape, including new research priorities, policies, and practices.
- Strengthen our governance structure to better support the growing membership and scope of activities.
- Enhance our ability to collaborate effectively with national and international stakeholders.

The updated constitution positions SARAECE to continue its mission of promoting excellence in ECE research, policy, and practice while addressing the unique and dynamic challenges of the sector.

2025

Would you like to join SARAECE today and become part of a community that unites researchers, practitioners, and policymakers to advance early childhood education in South Africa?

By joining, you contribute to fulfilling our vision of benefiting young children across the nation.





GIULIETTA HARRISON

Treasurer of SARAECE

SARAECE has not had the easiest year financially and has had to think a bit 'outside the box' to generate additional funds. Traditionally the lion share of our funding originates from our membership fees (which we try to keep low to attract all kinds of members) and our conferences. In our previous conference of 2023 we did not garner sufficient funds to meet our usual targets and we have had to chase members to pay their fees. All of this is a sign of the difficult times we are living in where money for 'extras' is not always easily found.

This is the first year that we have experimented with the idea of charging a small fee for a webinar and the topic was an extremely relevant one namely 'Coding and Robotics'. As this is now part of the Grade R curriculum and due to be implemented in Grades 1 to 3, many of our teachers, lecturers, and representatives from teacher training organizations, needed to attend. We were privileged to have Dr Kayla Willemse (an expert) to share her knowledge. We backed this up further by garnering a wonderful Lego prize that would enable a lucky winner to promote principles of coding in their classrooms. This type of initiative demonstrates how the benefits of being part of SARAECE can be a two way street in that it allowed us to fill our coffers but also provided invaluable training for our members.

The oversight of our finances continues to be managed by a combination of the Treasurer, President and SANTS Financial department who assist with processing our monthly payments. This rigorous process ensures that we have peace of mind and that we are aware of all financial transactions. We would like to thank SANTS for their ongoing support of SARAECE.

As we look towards 2025, we will be hosting a conference that will allow for further financial gain and we will continue with our strategy of offering exciting webinars that can promote learning but also feed our treasury.

Finally we would urge you to become a member of SARAECE so you can benefit from everything that is on offer. If you are an existing member, please always remember to renew your membership on an annual basis. We do provide a membership certificate to mark your payment and participation in SARAECE.

Looking forward to another good year.



DONNA HANNAWAY

Secretary of SARAECE

As the Secretary of the SARAECE, I am thrilled to update you on our growing community and recent activities.

Membership Growth and Engagement: Our membership continues to flourish, now standing strong at 181 members—an inspiring testament to our collective commitment to ECE research and professional growth. Thank you to everyone who renewed or joined this year. Your support and participation are the foundation of SARAECE's mission.

Knowledge Building and Workshops: In 2024, we hosted three enriching seminars under the theme Professionalisation of the Workforce, sparking insightful discussions and shared learning. Additionally, we introduced an innovative workshop titled Building Your Own Unplugged Coding Kit and Exploring the Benefits thereof. This session will be repeated next year, offering another opportunity to explore practical tools for integrating coding concepts into early learning environments.

Looking Ahead: Stay tuned for more engaging events and activities in 2025. From our seminars to national and regional conferences, SARAECE continues to provide platforms for collaboration, knowledge exchange, and networking among researchers and practitioners.

Member Spotlight: We are always eager to celebrate the incredible work of our members. If you or a colleague have noteworthy achievements, please reach out to us for a feature in the next newsletter.

Stay Connected: Visit our website at www.saraece.org.za for membership, updates, resources, and opportunities. Your involvement keeps our community vibrant and dynamic.

Thank you for your unwavering dedication to advancing ECE research in South Africa. Together, we are shaping a brighter future for our youngest citizens.

EDITOR'S MESSAGE



ELBIE HENNING

Outgoing Editor-in-Chief SAJCE

With two special issues added to the publications in SAJCE in Volume 14, altogether 70 articles were published. When scrolling through the website, it is evident that a wide spectrum of research topics have featured in this volume.

Manuscripts that were published this year originate from many parts of the world. In 2024, several novice authors have submitted manuscripts and were willing to go through two rounds of review, with valuable help from reviewers, some of whom are advisory board members.

The editorial teams of the journal oversee the process. The team at AOSIS are responsible for every aspect of the process of a manuscript's journey from submission to publication, except for the reviews and decisions. The associate editor and the various section editors assist the Editor-in-Chief in the task of advancing scholarship of childhood education.

We were fortunate to have had two special issues published recently, with editorial by the various guest editors.

1. 'Interrogating Coloniality in South African Primary Schools,' under the expert guidance of guest editors Dr. Marcina Singh and Prof. Jonathan Jansen.

2. Mental mathematics and number sense in the early grades,' under the expert guidance of guest editors Prof. Mellony Graven, Prof. Hamsa Venkat, Dr. Corin Mathews and Dr. Lise Westaway.

The editorial of the Editor-in-Chief:

Research in childhood education: There is much to celebrate. This was also the final editorial by the outgoing editor and in the editorial Elizabeth introduces the incoming editor, Prof Sarita Ramsaroop.

A new special issue has been announced recently, inviting researchers to submit manuscripts about the theme, Advancing neurodiversity in education for equity, inclusion and employability.

The guest editors:

Manuscripts accepted for special issues by Professors Maximus Monaheng Sefotho and Veronica Dwarika are published in a 'rolling publication' model. This means that the theme of a special issue is revealed when individual manuscripts are published following peer review and acceptance.

SOUTH AFRICAN JOURNAL OF CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

The current team members and the members of the advisory board are:

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Hanrie Bezuidenhout
Hannelie du Preez
Veronica warika
Sarah Gravett
Naseema Shaik
Fikile Simelane

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Gabriel Walubita

Our journal is proud to be affiliated with SARAECE. I would like to suggest a special issue, or a review essay, about the activities of the Association since its founding.

**If you are
interested to
join the
editorial team,
please contact
Sarita Ramsaroop**



SARITA RAMSAROOP

Incoming Editor-in-Chief of SAJCE

Starting in 2025, Prof. Sarita Ramsaroop will serve as the Vice Dean of Research and Innovation in the Faculty of Education at the University of Johannesburg. Prior to this, Prof Ramsaroop served as Head of the Department of Childhood Education at the University of Johannesburg. Additionally, she will take on the role of editor-in-chief for the South African Journal of Childhood Education from January 2025. Prof. Ramsaroop's expertise lies in primary school teacher education, with a strong focus on student engagement in both coursework and fieldwork, as well as strengthening school-university partnerships. Her current research projects investigate the role of partner schools in student-teacher education, project-based learning, and mixed-reality research. On an international scale, she collaborates with universities in Helsinki and Sweden on various research initiatives.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2437-4229>



BUILDING BRIDGES OF KNOWLEDGE THROUGH WEBINARS FOR DIFFERENT AUDIENCES

This year, something remarkable happened. Across three powerful webinars, educators, researchers and policymakers came together to do more than just discuss ECE - together they envisioned a brighter, more equitable future. Ayesha Carrim, our Portfolio Head for Professional Development and Training, in collaboration with Donna Hannaway, our Secretary, successfully coordinated and hosted SARAECE's Knowledge Building Seminars (KBS) for 2024. These webinars showcased the remarkable passion, innovation, and resilience of our SARAECE community. Together, we are not merely shaping and caring for the future of ECE; we are driving a transformative movement.

KBW SERIES 1: LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR CHANGE



In August, we set the stage with a session dedicated to ECCE policies and professional qualifications. We heard from Dr. Zelda Adendorff, whose insights on systemic reform challenged us to rethink how we support and uplift educators. The panel featured Prof. Mary Clasquin-Johnson, Prof. Keshni Bipath and Dr. Susan Greyling, who brought a wealth of expertise and vision on mentorship, collaboration and reflective teaching. This session reminded us that the seeds of change are planted when we work together to build strong foundations.

KBW SERIES 2: RAISING THE BAR FOR TEACHING EXCELLENCE



October's webinar was a call to action for advancing teaching standards. Ms. Sheila Drew led the session with a compelling presentation rooted in the lived experiences of ECCE educators, highlighting the urgency for equitable, inclusive practices. Insights from the Commonwealth Colloquium on Workforce Professionalisation: Policy Ideologies and ECCE Teachers' Lived Experiences enriched the discussion. A dynamic panel, including Prof. Hasina Ebrahim, Dr. Colwyn Martin and Prof. Mary Clasquin-Johnson, offered fresh perspectives on innovation and diversity. Their thought-provoking insights challenged conventional norms, urging us to reimagine teaching as a space of boundless possibility and inclusivity. They inspired a collective vision to dream boldly and work tirelessly toward a future where every educator and learner thrives.

KBW SERIES 3: HONOURING A LEGACY, INSPIRING A FUTURE



The final webinar of the year was a heartfelt tribute to the late Dr. Leonie Van Der Westhuizen, whose groundbreaking research on authentic caring illuminated a vision of education as a flourishing garden. Her husband, Prof. Gert Van Der Westhuizen presented her work with passion and depth, exploring the metaphors of sunlight, soil and blossoms to show how every teacher and child deserves to grow in a nurturing, supportive ecosystem. A panel of educators from Dr. Leonie's study shared their reflections, adding personal and practical dimensions to the session.

Building your own unplugged coding kit and exploring the benefits thereof

15 November 2024



THE BENEFITS OF CODING AND ROBOTICS IN ECE AND FP TEACHING



Kayla Willemse

On November 15, 2024, the first coding and robotics workshop took place, presented by Dr Kayla Willemse, who was recently appointed as the co-portfolio holder for Digital Engagement and Resource Mobilisation at SARAECE.

Participants were introduced

to the process of building their own unplugged coding kits, emphasising sustainability and cross-curricular links with subjects such as African languages, life skills and mathematics. The workshop attracted a diverse group of attendees, including academics, students and teachers.

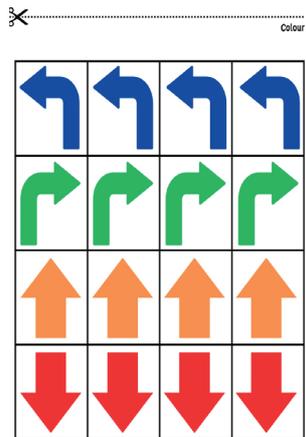
The event also featured a lucky draw with three exciting prizes.

- The first prize, an additional worksheet, was won by: Tracey Muir-Rix, SPO: Children's Services Coordinator at the Library and Information Services, Directorate of Community Services and Health.
- The second prize, a digital coding story and accompanying video, went to Sepheu Derick from Mmakadikwe Primary School in Ga-Phaahla, Limpopo.
- We are also thrilled to highlight Nonkanyiso Ndlovu, an Early Childhood Development lecturer at the Independent Institute of Education (Pty) Ltd, who attended the workshop and won the third prize: a LEGO set, generously sponsored by Brent Hutcheson from Care for Education.

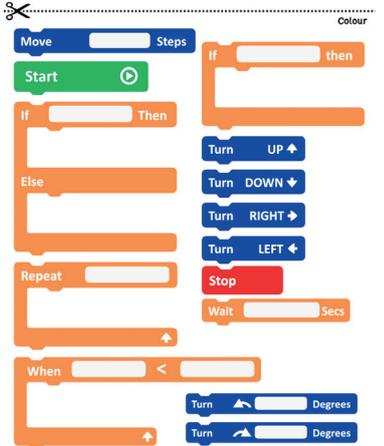
A heartfelt thank you to Brent Hutcheson and Care for Education for their invaluable support in promoting transformative education. Together, we are shaping a future filled with possibilities!



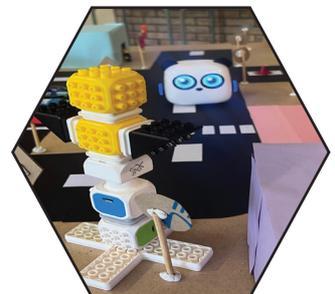
These are coding cards that the learners will use to plot their moves. If an error occurs, they need to debug the coding cards.



These are block coding cards that the learners will use to plot their moves. If an error occurs, they need to debug the coding cards.



Nonkanyiso Ndlovu



EXCITING NEW PARTNERSHIPS: SARAECE TAKES HANDS WITH...



SESAME WORKSHOP

Sesame uses the power of media, partnerships, and community engagement to prepare children for a future full of opportunity.



CARE FOR EDUCATION

Improves the lives of those in marginalised or vulnerable community, particularly children, by working with partners, providing training and resources to foster skills development and well-being,





WRITTEN BY: FATHIMA RAWAT

TRANSFORMING GENDER NORMS AND ADVANCING CHILD WELLBEING THROUGH FATHER ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Gender inequity remains a ubiquitous and pervasive global challenge that impacts many critical aspects of society. It ranks considerably high on the scale of societal problems because of its profound effect on hindering the achievement of other pertinent goals such as the alleviation of poverty, quality education and sustainable economic growth. According to the World Economic Forum's 2021 Global Gender Gap Report, if progress in this domain remains at the pace it is now, it will take 131 years to close the global gender gap (Global Gender Report, 2022,2023).

Research indicates that addressing gender inequality effectively requires tackling it from its roots to disrupt the intergenerational cycles (Njuki et al., 2022; Clancy et al., 2019.) ECD is an effective starting point as it is the time where the foundational attitudes and values about gender are first formed and reinforced (Blum et al, 2017). Gender equality is a critical component of holistic societal development, and early childhood development plays a pivotal role in shaping attitudes and behaviours that foster equality.

In this context, the involvement of fathers is pivotal. Research consistently demonstrates the positive impact that engaged fathers have on their children's cognitive, emotional, and social development (Lamb, 2010; Pleck, 2012). Their active participation, especially in the early years, fosters strong emotional bonds and teaches key life skills like empathy, responsibility, and resilience. Including fathers in early childhood initiatives ensures that children receive comprehensive support and guidance, laying the foundation for more equitable and nurturing outcomes. This aligns with the goals of Sesame Workshop International South Africa's male caregiver initiative, *Transforming gender norms and advancing child wellbeing through father engagement project*, a multi-year intervention to enhance father involvement in responsive care through play-based learning.

In 2020, the programme focused on engaging fathers in Gauteng and the Eastern Cape through "Play Imbizos," where fathers were encouraged to reconnect with their own childhood experiences while actively engaging in play with their children. Through a series of 12 workshops, the initiative reached over 400 families via 192 play-based sessions, empowering fathers to take a more active role in their children's development.

These initiatives laid the groundwork for Phase 2, which focused on leveraging mass media to challenge gender stereotypes through gender-transformative messaging and encourage fathers' active participation in caregiving and play in all aspects of early childhood development (ECD). These initiatives aim to highlight the unique contributions that all fathers, including those with different abilities, can make in the lives of their children by measuring if children who engage more frequently in guided play with male caregivers will show increased autonomy in play choices, reduced reliance on gendered stereotypes, and greater flexibility in their perceptions of activities traditionally associated with boys and girls.

Research demonstrates that when fathers are encouraged and empowered to engage in caregiving and play, it positively impacts their children's development and helps break down long-standing gender biases (Karberg, Finacharo & Van, 2019). This shift benefits not only the children but also fosters a more inclusive and supportive environment for all fathers, strengthening family bonds and promoting a more equitable approach to parenting.

The initiative's success, backed by robust qualitative and quantitative data, has allowed for the promotion of gender equity through broadcast and digital platforms. As part of this effort, 20 evidence-informed, 5-minute Takalani Sesame segments were produced and translated into five South African languages. These segments, will launch early 2025, aimed to encourage and support



Figure 1: Components of the Programme

male caregivers in engaging in secure and gender-fair play with their young children while fostering overall gender equality among children and caregivers.

At Sesame Workshop all content is evidence informed and developed through a robust and empowering research processes which includes formative testing – a process of embedding key insights from the audiences i.e. parents, caregivers as well as the promotion of child agency (Figure 1)

To further inform the social media campaign and eight 3-minute adult-facing videos, a social listening exercise titled “Online Conversations about Male Caregivers and Their Role in Recreational Play with Children in South Africa” was conducted.

The #BondThroughPlay social media campaign focused on transforming gender norms and promoting positive parenting practices in South Africa. The campaign encouraged fathers to embrace play, challenge harmful gender roles, and adopt positive parenting behaviours. Targeted social media and strategic partnerships helped position Takalani Sesame as a trusted authority in fatherhood conversations, particularly through owned platforms like Facebook and YouTube. The campaign exceeded its target and yielded 20.9 million impressions on YouTube and 11.1 million video views.

The project recently underwent an impact evaluation to assess its effectiveness and provide valuable insights. These findings will guide SWSA in refining future programming and ensuring our work continues to create meaningful and lasting change.

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“ Explore the social media campaign #BondThroughPlay to discover the importance of these impactful parenting practices ”



WRITTEN BY: LINDA SMITH

TRANSFORMING CLASSROOMS AND SUPPORTING CHILD DEVELOPMENT IN RESOURCE-CONSTRAINED ENVIRONMENTS: LEARNING THROUGH PLAY WITH SIX BRICKS

Children are born with a natural curiosity and an ability to do just the right thing in order to learn. They love to do things over and over and by doing this they become masters at their new skills. They have a strong urge to make sense of things. That is why they play.

Six Bricks is a set of six brightly coloured LEGO DUPLO bricks designed as a hands-on learning tool to promote learning through play. Activities with Six Bricks spark children's natural curiosity and interests, engaging them in interactive and practical learning experiences. The number and size of the bricks allow children to work beyond their immediate field of vision, even within limited desk space. This expands their visual scope, enhances abstract thinking, and improves peripheral vision, helping the brain to focus and maintain attention.

Play-based learning tools like Six Bricks are transforming classrooms and supporting child development in resource-constrained classrooms all over SA. Over the past five years, Care for Education has been implementing a Learning Through Play training programme, with Six Bricks, for Foundation Phase teachers in SA.

During a recent focus group discussion with some of these teachers, it was highlighted that activities with Six Bricks can be used creatively to help children move from concrete thinking to understanding abstract ideas and can be used constructively across the curriculum. Teachers reported that the use of the bricks included all children and that learners were energized during lessons.





Teachers have come together to plan lessons and to share ideas about how to integrate the Six Bricks tool into their daily teaching, and especially how to help learners who have challenges in the classroom. With these bricks readily available, learners have been able to experiment and mentally reorganize what they have learned. Talking about their Six Bricks models has enabled these children to share their discoveries and their feelings with others, developing collaborative skills and a sense of joy in learning together.

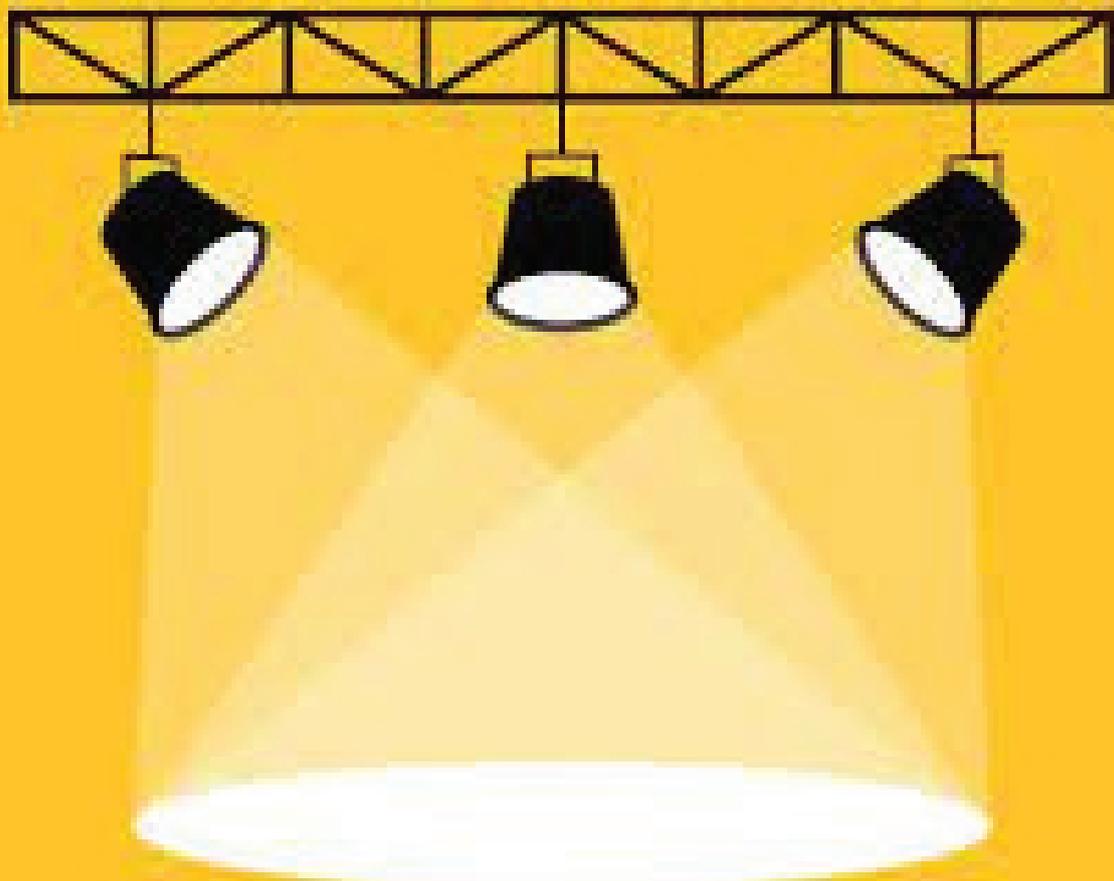
Simple patterning activities with the bricks help children make predictions, because they understand what comes next. They help children learn how to make logical connections and use reasoning skills. The ability to recognize and reproduce patterns helps to solve many math problems.

Many of the Six Bricks games and activities promote the development of working memory, cognitive flexibility, controlling of impulses, imagination, following rules and role-playing. All of these experiences and practices provide a foundation for the development of executive function. Young children depend upon their emerging executive function skills to help them remember, sequence and visualize as they learn to read and write, recall the steps in solving a math problem, concentrate and follow instructions, take part in class discussions and projects, and enter into and continue play with other children.

Activities with the Six Bricks tool has provided children with an opportunity to strengthen essential skills whilst learning through play and has enabled management of routine tasks of everyday life. Six Bricks activities encourage and inspire children to think, discover, learn and problem-solve - critical skills that we aim to nurture in the next generation.



SPOTLIGHTING OUR SARAEECE MEMBERS



Members' Research

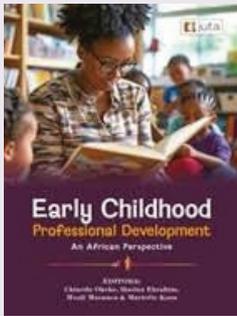
At SARAEECE, we celebrate and amplify the research efforts of our members, showcasing innovative studies that advance the field of ECE. By spotlighting cutting-edge research, we inspire evidence-based practices and foster meaningful dialogue that strengthens the educational landscape in South Africa. Together, we illuminate paths to a brighter future for our youngest learners.

Members' Practices

SARAEECE takes pride in highlighting the impactful practices of its members, offering a platform to share success stories, strategies, and real-world applications in ECE. By spotlighting DataDrive2030 and Singakwenza, we promote collaboration and inspire a culture of excellence, ensuring that transformative education practices reach every child and educator.

International Members' Research

In alignment with our vision, SARAEECE connects with the global community by spotlighting the groundbreaking research of our international members from Birmingham (UK) and Leuven (BE). By embracing diverse perspectives and fostering cross-cultural exchange, we enrich ECE practices and contribute to the global dialogue on nurturing young minds.



EARLY CHILDHOOD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT: AN AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE

This book was recently published by Juta Publishers, as a comprehensive resource for ECD teachers, offering critical knowledge and skills to navigate a rapidly changing ECD landscape in our country.



PROF CHINEDU OKEKE

The book's core premise is that ECD teachers, particularly those working in underprivileged settings, require access to high-quality professional development tools to support meaningful change and improve the early learning and care experiences of young children. It addresses the diverse learning needs of both pre- and in-service teachers, making it relevant for a wide range of individuals, from those just entering ECD to experienced ECD centre managers and other role players in the sector.

The book is edited by prominent academics in the ECD fraternity, comprising Prof Chinedu Okeke (Free State University), Prof Hasina Ebrahim (UNISA), Dr Mzoli Mncanca (UNISA), and Prof Mariëtte Koen (North-West University). Additionally, the book

benefits from the expertise of contributing authors drawn from nearly all South African universities offering education programmes.

These carefully selected authors ensured that each chapter offers a



PROF MARIËTTE KOEN

wealth of up-to-date, experience-based insights, making the book a valuable resource for the sector.

The editors describe the book as a resource that supports "the development of culturally responsive practices aligned with local realities and the broader decolonial project". Written from an African theoretical perspective, the text emphasises the importance of African values, cultures, and practices in shaping ECD, offering

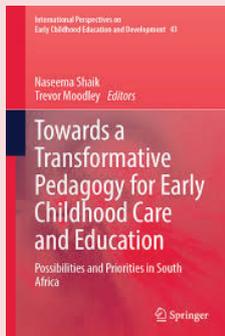
a much-needed shift in focus to African pedagogies and worldviews.

Part 1 of the 33-chapter book begins with a discussion of the theoretical foundations of ECD, followed in Part 2 by an exploration of pedagogy in the early years. Part 3 delves into child wellbeing, while Part 4 tackles management issues within ECD centres. Each chapter is designed to encourage active learning by infusing practical activities, case studies, diagrams, and reflective questions. This approach transforms the book into an interactive text and a tool for cultivating reflective, knowledgeable teachers who are equipped to navigate the complexities of ECD in diverse contexts.

This book is set to become an essential resource in the field of ECD. Its deep relevance to both theory and practice, combined with its culturally responsive approach, makes it an invaluable contribution to shaping the future of ECD in African contexts.



FLTR: MRS AYESHA CARRIM, DR THOKOZANE DYOSINI, DR MZOLI MNCANCA, PROF HASINA EBRAHIM, DR MMAKGABO SELEPE



TOWARDS A TRANSFORMATIVE PEDAGOGY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION: PRIORITIES AND POSSIBILITIES'



DR NASEEMA SHAIK



PROF TREVOR MOODLEY

Dr Naseema Shaik together with Professor Trevor Moodley have recently edited this scholarly book. It examines a broad spectrum of priorities and possibilities for transforming pedagogies in early childhood care and education in South Africa. It features a collection of insightful chapters contributed by esteemed early childhood academics from South Africa, offering diverse perspectives on the subject. In the context of a democratic South Africa, the concept of transforming pedagogical practices in ECE is of paramount importance. Despite the country having been a democracy for over thirty years, many pedagogical practices remain

entrenched in undemocratic traditions. This volume emerges from a funded research project jointly supported by the European Union and the Department of Higher Education, focused on developing a transformative pedagogy for early childhood care and education. This area has received limited attention, particularly concerning the types of pedagogies that are most relevant and the approaches used to train pre-service teachers for educating young children aged birth to four years.

Dr Shaik has also published with both her PhD students. The first publication titled *To mentor and be mentored in Gr R* was written by Mastura Jamodien Jardine, Naseema Shaik and Stanley Adendorff. Research indicates that novice teachers encounter significant challenges when transitioning from pre-service to in-service teaching. Both international and local studies highlight the difficulties faced by newly qualified teachers. This study examines the learning experiences of beginner Foundation Phase Grade R teachers, employing a qualitative design within the interpretivist paradigm. Data were gathered through semi-structured interviews and reflective journals from six Grade R teachers. The findings reveal that early-career teachers face considerable challenges, with their long-term success dependent on

how effectively they navigate these issues. The results underscore the importance of formal mentoring in supporting teacher development.

The second publication is *We grow together: A study of parent participation at an early childhood care and education centre in Lavendar Hill, Cape Town* written by Ally Connelly, Naseema Shaik and Agnes Chigona. Global research underscores the importance of parental involvement in children's education from the outset.

However, limited research in South African Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) centres explores democratic parent participation, particularly in low socio-economic areas. The findings highlighted the significance of fostering parent agency through participation, strengthening community ties, and promoting social cohesion. The open dialogue facilitated by the research empowered stakeholders and encouraged meaningful connections. Parents are eager to impact the ECCE centre and engage in their children's educational lives. Collaborative participation strengthens the community and has the potential to influence the wider area. This ongoing research aims to co-construct a democratic, iterative model of parent participation.

PUBLICATIONS BY SARAEECE MEMBERS FOR 2024

The 2024 body of work by members of the South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education (SARAEECE) highlights a rich tapestry of research focused on early childhood education in South Africa and beyond. Publications span a diverse range of topics, emphasizing the critical intersections of policy, practice, and innovation in the field. Overall, SARAEECE's 2024 publications reflect a commitment to advancing knowledge, fostering innovation, and advocating for transformative change in early childhood education.

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WRITTEN BY: SONJA GIESE

THRIVE BY FIVE: A GROUNDBREAKING LOOK AT EARLY LEARNING OUTCOMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

The matric class of 2024 have just completed their final exams, concluding a formal learning journey spanning at least 12 years. In January, they will get results that will significantly impact their future opportunities. Some of these young people will achieve results that reflect their full potential, others will not. The recent Trends in International Maths and Science Study (TIMMS) again confirms the deep disparities between learners from poor and wealthy backgrounds, and that this gap has only widened during the COVID-19 pandemic.

There are many factors contributing to under-performance amongst learners in SA, and to the very high dropout rate we see before learners even reach Grade 12. While we must tackle each of these barriers to learning, we have to remember that the road to educational success starts well before children begin formal schooling. Children's experiences in their first 5 years of life set a trajectory for young learners. Those who enter their first Grade R or Grade 1 classroom with the right learning foundations in place are more likely to cope well with the transition into school, and to perform well in school.

Recognising the critical importance of these first few years, the Department of Basic Education spearheads a national survey of preschool child outcomes - the [Thrive by Five Index](#). First conducted in 2021 with the intention to repeat

every three years, the Index provides a measure of the percentage of children attending Early Learning Programmes (ELPs) who start school with the required foundational skills. The data collection phase for the second round of this national survey has just concluded. So, while Grade 12 learners across the country were writing their final school leaving exams, a team of over 100 enumerators were conducting developmental assessments with thousands of 4-year-old children in all 9 provinces.

Over 5,200 children aged 50 to 59 months were assessed in their mother tongue using locally developed, standardised measurement tools that have been rigorously tested to ensure validity, reliability, and fairness

[\(further information on the ELOM tools is available here\)](#).

Children were sampled from more than 1,400 ELPs located within 432 Primary Sampling Units - PSUs (between 35-76 per province). In addition, at each of the ELPs, interviews were conducted with children's practitioners and principals; an observational learning programme quality assessment was done; and a site assessment of basic infrastructure was completed. Telephonic interviews were also conducted with $\pm 75\%$ of the assessed children's primary caregivers, collecting information on household socio-economic status, the child's birth weight and

gestational age, immunisation status, pregnancy risk factors, birth registration and child support grant access, maternal wellbeing, the home learning environment, child multilingualism, household hunger, sleep routines, and father involvement.

This is the largest and most comprehensive survey to date on preschool child outcomes in South Africa. The 2024 Index will provide nationally and provincially representative data on the proportion of 4-year-old children enrolled in ELPs who are On Track for their age in the following key areas of development:

- Gross Motor Development
- Fine Motor Coordination and Visual Motor Integration
- Emergent Numeracy and Mathematics
- Cognition and Executive Functioning
- Emergent Literacy and Language
- Social and Emotional Functioning
- Physical growth (height for age)

It will also deepen the understanding of child, primary caregiver, household and ELP characteristics, principal and practitioner beliefs and behaviours, and environmental factors that are associated with these key child outcomes.

Developing the ELP Sampling Frame involved creating a comprehensive list of ELPs in all selected wards (PSUs)

from various existing data sources and then verifying and expanding this list through fieldwork in the form of ELP visits. Following on from the 2021-2022 ECD Census, this listing data will provide valuable insights into the changing landscape of ELP provision.

In addition to the enrolled sample of children, an experimental sample of 280 non-enrolled children in 3 provinces was included in the study to understand barriers to ELP access and the consequences thereof for young children. These children were identified through systematic household screenings within selected wards (PSUs).

A second experimental study with a subset of participating ELPs was conducted in partnership with the South African Medical Research Council. This involved the collection of water, soil, and dust samples from 71 ELPs in Gauteng and the installation of temperature gauges within these sites over a period of 6 months. This substudy will allow us to examine the effects of heavy metal exposure and heat on children's early learning and physical growth.

The Thrive by Five Index data enables us -

- To determine the proportion of young children in South Africa who attend ELPs who are on track for their age in key areas of development; and identify which

populations of children are most at risk;

- To monitor trends in performance gaps and gains over time and across socio-economic groups;
- To explore a range of potential predictors of child outcomes;
- To track progress in the attainment of local and global development goals for young children and to hold ourselves accountable for these;
- To make evidence-based decisions at multiple levels and across various stakeholder groups.

Every ELP is geolocated allowing for merging with other existing datasets to enable researchers to explore the relationship between child outcomes and broader influences. Additionally, over 90% of the more than 4,000 interviewed primary caregivers gave consent for follow-up data generation and presenting exciting opportunities for longitudinal research.

The Index is a multi-sectoral partnership

The Index is a multi-sectoral partnership, led by the Department of Basic Education and coordinated by [DataDrive2030](#).

The Index team comprises technical experts in a range of fields including sampling and weighting, psychometrics, assessor training

and inter-rater reliability, survey technology, fieldwork management, data management and quality assurance and quantitative research methods. In the development of the survey instruments, leading local and global experts were consulted to ensure that the Index measures what matters, and that the collected data is reliable and valid.

A steering committee provides strategic oversight and includes representatives from the Departments of Basic Education, Health and Social Development, Treasury, Statistics South Africa, and the Presidency.

The FirstRand Foundation, The LEGO Foundation, This Day, and Yellowwoods are the funding partners of the Thrive by Five Index 2024.

“ Invitation to participate in a working paper series

To promote widespread use of the data for driving change, the Index 2024 dataset will be made open access by the end of 2025. For those wanting earlier access to the data, there is an opportunity to partner with DataDrive2030 on a series of working papers covering topics adjacent to our core research questions. For more information on this opportunity, please email :

Simone@datadrive2030.co.za”



WRITTEN BY: JULIE HAY

LEARNING THROUGH PLAY: SUSTAINABLE INNOVATION WITH SINGAKWENZA TOYS

Play is more than just fun; it is an essential part of a child's learning and development. Research in ECE has repeatedly demonstrated that play-based learning caters to the holistic development of a child, enhancing critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, and social skills. But how do we ensure all children, regardless of socioeconomic status, have access to the tools that foster such vital learning? For many communities, access to commercial educational toys can be cost-prohibitive, creating inequity in developmental opportunities. Singakwenza ECE – an NPO based in KwaZulu-Natal - addresses this challenge with an innovative, sustainable approach, and is redefining access to opportunities for play by crafting educational toys from household packaging to support their skills training program.

Singakwenza's Sustainable Toy Solution

Singakwenza - meaning "We can do it" in isiZulu – teaches adults how to make durable, educational toys using household packaging such as bread bags, plastic lids, and cereal boxes. This initiative not only reduces waste but also empowers communities to embrace environmentally friendly practices. By transforming everyday items into tools of discovery, Singakwenza demonstrates that impactful ECE doesn't have to come at a high financial or ecological cost.

The toys crafted by Singakwenza are designed with educational outcomes in mind. For example, a simple toy made from plastic lids and thread from a butternut pocket bag can help develop fine motor skills, eye-hand coordination, bilateral coordination and motor planning; plastic lids and cereal boxes support foundational math skills like patterns, sequencing and one-to-one correspondence; and handmade dolls and cars encourage creativity, early literacy skills and storytelling.

These toys are introduced to caregivers and educators in two ways - through hands-on Waste2Toys workshops, and through the Training and Mentorship program. These programs not only create access to learning materials but also equip adults with skills to continue supporting children's development long after the training.

The Value of Mentorship in Training

Central to Singakwenza's success is its mentorship-driven training process. Singakwenza's team engages in weekly mentorship with educators on site at their creches for around two years, which ensures that the techniques and concepts introduced during training are implemented effectively and





sustainably. By fostering long-term relationships, the organisation helps to build confidence, competence, and a deep understanding of play-based learning principles, and the positive impact that this has on the educators is coming out strongly in the research that I am undertaking as part of a Master's in Education through Stellenbosch University. In every interview I've conducted, the educators have reiterated how valuable the regular, consistent mentorship has been to the success of their learning and implementation.



Environmentally and Financially Sustainable Impact

Singakwenza's model is as much about sustainability as it is about education. By repurposing discarded materials, the organization reduces waste and highlights the value of resourcefulness. In a world grappling with climate change and resource depletion, this program shows that small, localized actions can have a broad impact.

Moreover, the financial sustainability of Singakwenza's approach ensures that even the most marginalized



communities can benefit. With no reliance on expensive materials or manufacturing processes, the model can be scaled and adapted globally.

Conclusion

Learning through play is a right, not a privilege, and Singakwenza is making this a reality for children in underserved communities. By combining innovation, environmental stewardship, and a commitment to equity, Singakwenza believes that creative solutions can address pressing challenges in ECE to ensure that every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive - all while caring for our planet.

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To find out more about:
www.singakwenza.co.za
Contact Julie Hay
 ”



ENCOURAGING ETHICAL ENCOUNTERS WITH YOUNG CHILDREN

WRITTEN BY: CHRIS PASCAL & TONY BERTRAM



Tony Bertram
Christine Pascal

Prof Christine Pascal, serving on the SARAECE Committee, is President of the European ECE Research Association (EECERA), and Director of the Centre for Research in Early Childhood (CREC), together with Prof Tony Bertram, Editor in Chief of the European Early Childhood Education Research Journal (EECERJ) contributed a piece on Encouraging Ethical Encounters with Young Children. In an era where research methodologies increasingly honor children’s voices, updates on ethics in early childhood research are crucial. This ensures that we, as academic researchers, supervisors, and students, stay informed, particularly in our South African context where we are bound by the UNCRC. This convention requires us to listen to children’s voices on all educational matters affecting them We are theferore excited about this contribution, and eagerly awaiting the Ethics Code to be published by EECERJ.

‘Ethics’, suggested Aristotle, may be understood as the personal and moral desire to do good and to act in a socially beneficial way. Given EECERA’s emphasis on ethics in our encounters and engagement with young children and those close to them through our research, what well intentioned dispositions and characteristics most accurately describe our engagements? As researchers, tutors and students, how might we explore and encourage ethical approaches to interacting with children, their families and their educators/carers, to better understand their perspectives and listen to their voices in our research.

[Some 10 years ago, in her meta-analysis of articles in 10 international and scholarly Early Years journals over a 3 year period](#), Fiona Mayne demonstrated how much research focused on young children neglects to consider ethics or even obtain the child’s consent (Mayne, 2014), let alone their ongoing assent. Being included in decisions about their lives, researching ‘with’ rather than ‘a done to approach’, seems a reasonable and ethical position for all who interact with young children. EECERA and its Journal provide a platform for sharing and discussing these ideas and considering ways in which children’s perspectives and voices can be more ethically included. This is not without tension as we diversify methods and make use of the increasing technologies available. There is even the potential for tension within our policy as the UNCRC balances an adult view through best interests (article 3) with listening directly to the children (article 12).

This year, following a decade of development of new technologies and new methods during a time of economic, political and ecological upheavals world-wide, the European ECE Research Journal has updated

its Ethical Code to include guidance on the use of innovative and developing techniques to create forums for, and to listen to, the voices of children in our research and thinking. This new revised Ethical Guidance will be published early next year in the EECER Journal and we hope will provide a practical and rigorous approach to ensure progress in realising ethical encounters with young children in our research.

To find out more visit:
<https://www.crec.co.uk/>

MEMOQ.1 STUDY: MEASUREMENT OF PEDAGOGICAL QUALITY IN FLEMISH CHILDCARE CENTRES (BELGIUM)



WRITTEN BY: BART DECLERCQ

Bart Declercq, a Wetenschappelijk Medewerker from the Expertise Centrum voor Ervaringsgericht Onderwijs at KU Leuven, shares insights from their large-scale study on measuring pedagogical quality in Flemish childcare centres. This research holds particular relevance for South Africa, where pedagogical quality in ECCE centres is also a significant concern. We hope this work inspires similar advancements in our local context.



Seven years after the baseline MeMoQ study, researchers from the University of Ghent and Leuven conducted a follow-up (MeMoQ.1), observing 304 groups (0-3 years) in Flanders and Brussels to assess the pedagogical quality of childcare.

What is MeMoQ?

MeMoQ stands for 'Measuring and Monitoring Quality (Q)'. It is a large-scale project on the pedagogical quality of Flemish childcare for babies and toddlers (0-3 years). It is commissioned by Flemish Ministry of Welfare and consist of four pillars: 1) the design of a [pedagogical framework](#), a concise vision text on quality childcare, 2) a [self-evaluation instrument](#) to improve the quality of a childcare setting, 3) a [monitoring instrument](#) for external inspection and 4) a periodic scientific study. They also gathered data on parent satisfaction and contextual factors like team composition and pedagogical support.

Key Findings

Despite challenges such as staff shortages, pedagogical quality improved in many areas compared to the baseline study.

- Well-being and emotional support: High and improved.
- Involvement: Moderate progress; children often lack sustained concentration
- Educational support: Improved for toddlers but remains low overall, with significant room to enhance development, challenges, and language promotion.
- Environment: Moderate, with some progress in layout and design but little improvement in play material quality and diversity.
- Group size and ratios: Larger groups and more children per supervisor negatively impact well-being, engagement, and educational quality.
- Interaction quality: Best during guided activities but much lower during free play and meal times.

- Family vs. group settings: No significant quality differences when group size and ratios are equal.
- Parent satisfaction: Generally high, with variability linked to ease of finding childcare and communication.

Recommendations and Relevance for South Africa

- The project's construction offers inspiration, integrating a robust underpinning framework with core values, research, the process of external inspection and a self-evaluation tool all with the same content
- The project's development, achieved through consensus with all stakeholders, serves as a valuable model for inclusive and collaborative approaches.
- The project is a succesful example of how both internal and external evaluation can be set up in a participatory, democratic and transparent way
- Because the research is underpinned by the pedagogical framework there is a move beyond quality towards meaning-making.

SIX DOMAINS

WELL-BEING
WIVOLVEMENT

EMOTIONAL SUPPORT
EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT

GROUP SOCIALISATION

ENVIRONMENT

INSTRUMENTS

LEUVEN SCALES FOR
WELBEING AND INVOLVEMENT

CLASS INFANT & CLASS TODDLER

SCALE FROM UTRECHT
UNIVERSITY

MEMOQ ENVIROMENT
RATING SCALE



The findings from the 1-measurement led to several recommendations for practice and policy. Herewith the link to the [summary report and technical reports](#) (in Dutch)



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