ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool
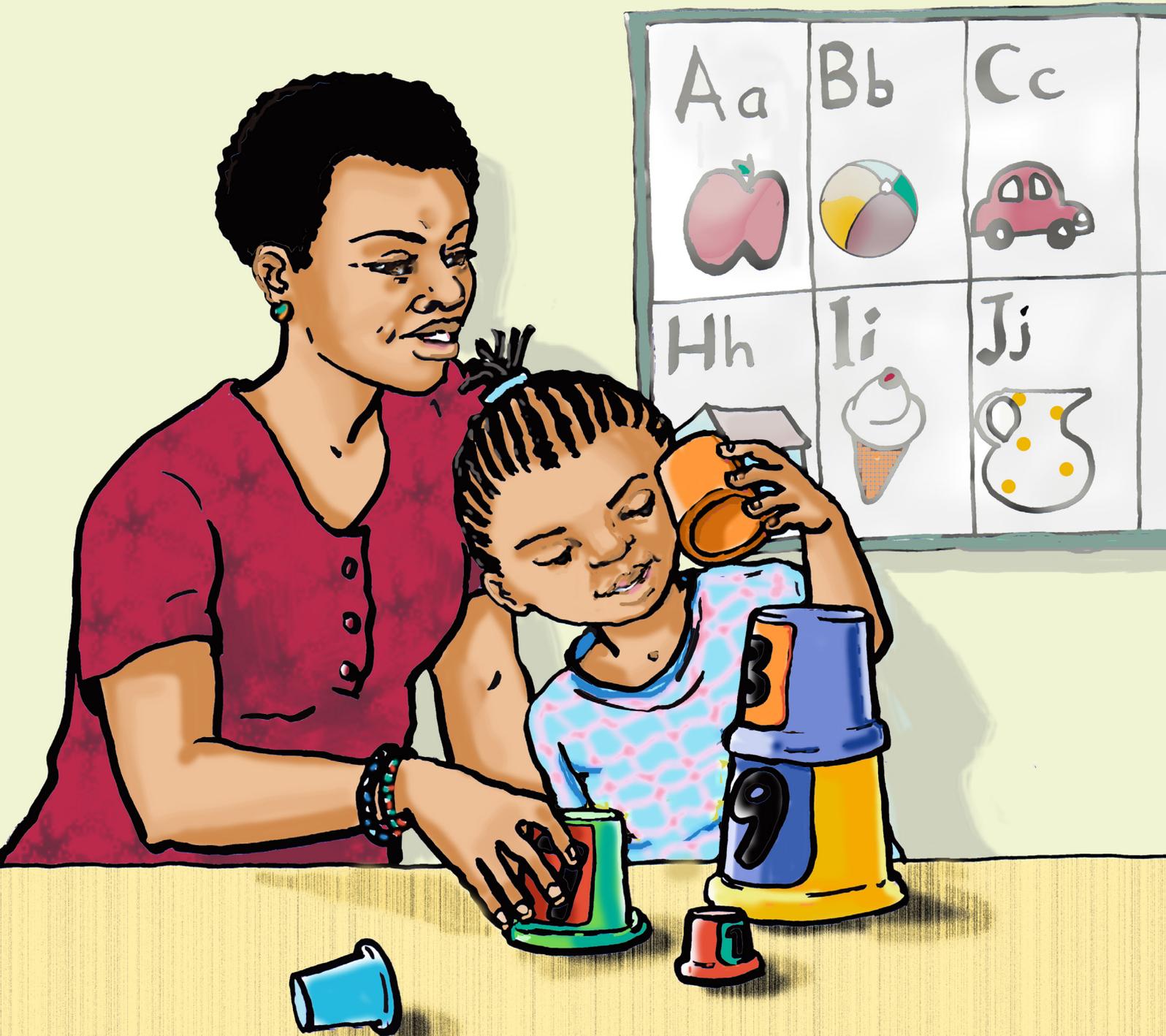
This is the story of a collaboration which grew out of a discussion on the question 'What is quality in ECD?', held at a BRIDGE National ECD Community of Practice meeting in 2015. Over the next few years, ideas about what constitutes quality in ECD, and what practitioners think about quality in their work contexts, were fed into the development of the ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool. The tool was piloted in 2016, and the recommendations from the pilot helped shape it in its current form.

FILE CONTENTS

This is your file, to write in and to use as a place to build up resources for your own professional development. This is what you will find in the different sections.

Part 1: INTRODUCTION	The introduction explains what self-reflection is, and how to use this Quality Reflection Tool. It also gives you a dictionary of common terms.
Part 2: ECD QUALITY AREAS	This is where you will keep notes of your own reflections. You are given guidelines on what quality might mean in different aspects of ECD care and teaching. These 'reflection questions' will help you to think about what you know and do in your own work.
Section A: Teaching and Learning	
Section B: ECD Environment	
Section C: ECD Policy Framework	
Section D: Leadership and Management	
Part 3: PLANNING and RESOURCES	This section helps you plan for your own growth and professional development, and provides some resources which you can build up.
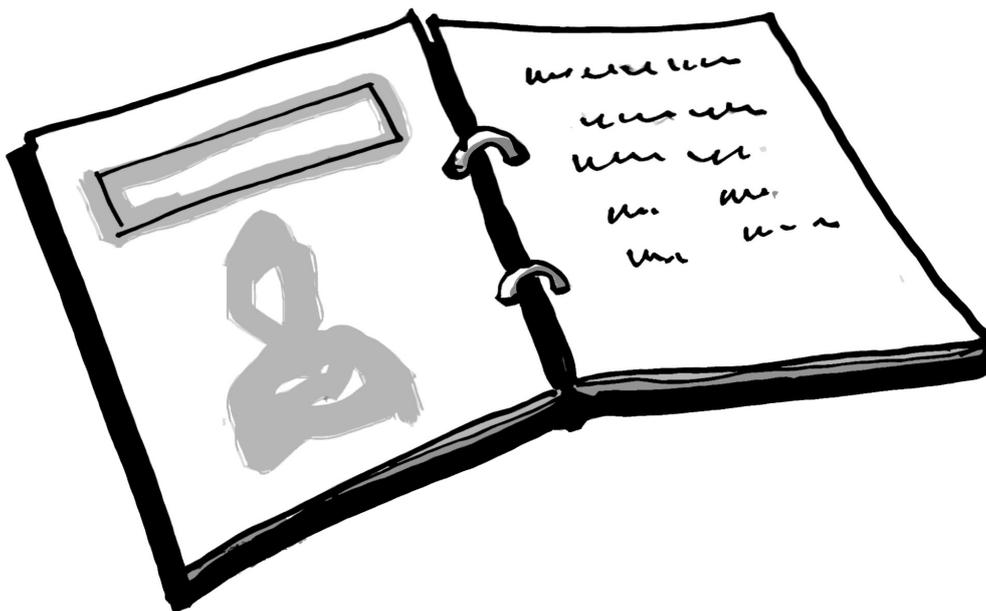
PART 1: INTRODUCTION

What is the ECD Quality Reflection Tool?

We often talk about what 'quality' means in Early Childhood Development (ECD). How do we know when what we do in ECD is valuable and up to standard? One reason why it is so hard to answer the question **"What is quality ECD provision in practice?"** is because ECD happens in so many different contexts and situations.

This ECD Quality Reflection Tool gives you, the practitioner who works with children every day, a way of thinking about what 'quality ECD' means in your context.

What is a self-reflection tool?

Self-reflection means giving serious thought to the way you do things. In your professional life a self-reflection tool is something that helps you think about your work experience in an aware and critical way. It gives you a way in which you can examine:

> **Your knowledge about your profession**

> **Your skills**

> **Your work practices and behaviours**

> **Your feelings and attitudes about your work**

Looking back over your own experiences and considering what you know (or don't know) about your work helps you find ways in which you can develop your professional practice. You get a deeper understanding of your strengths, and you can plan to improve on areas of weakness.

Self-reflection tools take many forms. Many of them use questions to help you focus on an aspect of your working life. Many self-reflection tools follow the pattern below[1].

Gibbs Reflective Cycle

Description → Feelings → Evaluation → Analysis → Conclusion → Action Plan

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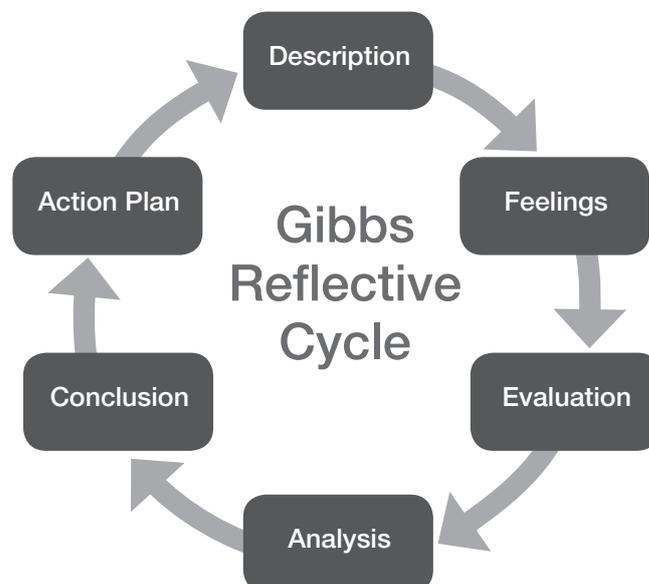
1   Graham Gibbs Reflective Cycle 1988.

Using the Reflection Tool: Areas of Quality in ECD

The Quality Reflection Tool is made up of a set of questions about different aspects or areas of ECD. By answering these questions, you can develop and express your own ideas about quality in ECD.

Reflection Tool: Four Areas of Quality in ECD							
A:	TEACHING & LEARNING	B:	ECD ENVIRONMENT	C:	ECD POLICY FRAMEWORK	D:	LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT*

* Section D is for ECD site or centre managers, or school principals. But you can use this section even if you are not a manager or a principal, if you want to think about your own leadership qualities.

In **Part 2** of your file, each Quality Area has a separate section, set out as follows:

A	Title of Section [e.g. Section A: Teaching and Learning]	
1	What is [this section]?	You will find a brief description of this area and what it is about, and an explanation of any specialist vocabulary or terminology.
2	My Reflections	In this part you will find: > Reflection Questions on the topic > Some ideas to help you think about this topic > Space to write down your own experiences, views and thoughts on the topic and your own practice. You can add extra pages into the file as you need to.
3	Looking at my strengths and weaknesses	You can use the answers you have given to the reflection questions to help you think about your own strengths and weaknesses in this area. There are also some ideas about where you might find support.

Reflecting on these four different areas of quality will guide you in identifying aspects of your work where you may need to find out more information, or get help in developing your knowledge and skills. After the four sections, there is a **Part 3** to your file: here you will find a simple planning tool for your professional development, and some information on where to find some resources. You can build this section of your file up further yourself.

This file is your resource. You can fill it in when and how you want to, and in whatever order you want to. You may find that you go back to different sections over a period of time, and add in new thoughts or ideas.

Remember that you might be able to use this file as a portfolio of evidence for entry into study programmes, to get professional development points, or for employment.

Quality Tool Illustrations

In your file these icons are used:

	## Quick Picks You will see this when the main points of the section are summarised for you.
	## Terminology You will see this when specialist words used in education studies are explained.
	## Your Reflection Partner Your partner looks like this. She will sometimes point things out to you about using this tool.
	The drawings in your file show things happening in an ECD centre, or illustrate ECD ideas. These pictures might show something different to your context: for example, the children may be a different age, or your classroom setup may be different. You can use these pictures to help you think about how these activities might look in your workplace, or how these ideas fit your work.

Terminology

Here you will find:

A Glossary of Terms	**Terminology** is vocabulary associated with a field of study, profession, or activity. Knowing the terminology is an important part of being able to work in a given profession. In education as a field of study a lot of specialist vocabulary is used. We have chosen some of the main terms used, and given explanations of these. This is known as a '**Glossary of Terms**'.
A list of acronyms	An acronym is a word formed from the initial letters of a name. An example would be SARS for the South African Revenue Service. For some shortened names, we say each of the initial letters. An example is ECD for Early Childhood Development, or ECCE for Early Childhood Care and Education.

 Here are some examples for your Glossary of Terms:

Assessment	Making decisions about whether a learner meets the required standards. This is based on getting evidence (for example, by observing their actions or their work) of the learner's performance, and then making a judgement on this evidence.
Articulation	Ways in which learners can progress and move within and across different qualifications and between the world of learning and the world of work.

Barriers to learning	Anything that stands in the way of a child being able to learn. Learning barriers can be within the child, such as a loss of sight or hearing, or influences from outside such as hunger, abuse, over-crowded classes or a lack of resources.
Classroom management	Using methods and techniques that keep the class of learners organised, interested and focused during lessons. Good classroom management helps to make sure that learning takes place, and discourages disruptive behaviour.
Certificate	A certificate shows that you have satisfied certain requirements that prove a specific level of knowledge and/or competence. Nationally recognised certificates are qualifications registered on the NQF. Not all training or learning leads to a qualification or certificate registered on the NQF. Some training providers issue their own certificates to people who complete their courses.
Community of practice (CoP)	A group of people with a common interest who cooperate with each other over a period of time to share ideas and experiences, find solutions to problems and develop new knowledge and ways of doing things.
Competence	This is about being able to perform certain actions to the required standard. Competence is also about understanding what we are doing when we perform these actions and why we are doing them, learning from what we are doing, and being able to adapt our actions to changes in our circumstances.
Context	This means the conditions that form the setting for an event or situation. 'Context' is anything in the environment that affects the way children learn. It could mean the socio-economic environment (such as the type of community in which the ECD centre operates), or it could refer to the cultural influences on the children.
Continuing professional development (CPD)	This is about continuously improving your skills and knowledge, and keeping up to date with developments in your area of work.
Curriculum	The what, when and how of the learning and assessment activities which lead to learners achieving the learning outcomes for a period of learning, for a course, or for a qualification.
Curriculum implementation	'Curriculum implementation' means putting into practice what is described in the curriculum by means of teaching plans and learning activities.
Environment	When we talk about the environment of an ECD classroom, we mean the physical, mental, emotional and social conditions that affect the quality of teaching and learning in that classroom. These include the indoor and outdoor space and resources; how activities are organised; the expectations and influence of parents and the community; and especially the practitioner's attitude and behaviour towards the children.
Ethics	Ethics is about telling the difference between right and wrong, just and unjust. Ethics is a set of moral guidelines for how you treat others and how you act.
Instructional leadership	This is what principals provide to make sure that quality teaching and learning takes place: it includes managing the curriculum, monitoring lesson plans, allocating resources and developing teachers.
Inclusive education	'Inclusive education' means that all children have the right to feel welcome in a supportive educational environment. ECD centres should be supported to be able to deal with the needs of all children, including those who require extra help because of barriers to learning such as disability or cultural differences.

Learning programme	A description of the learning materials combined with the methodology by which learners can achieve the outcomes for a qualification.
Learning styles	Different ways of learning work better for different people. Some people are visual learners, which means they learn best if information is given through pictures, graphs, videos, diagrams, maps and so on. Auditory learners learn through listening and speaking (discussions, repetition, verbal memory aids) and kinaesthetic learners through hands-on activities (building models, performing experiments). This is why good teachers use a variety of different learning activities and ways of presenting information.
Learning strategies	Ways of working with information that enable learners to learn successfully in the classroom or when studying, such as different ways of summarising, mapping, recalling and using information in individual, pair and group activities.
Lifelong learning	This is about having a positive attitude to learning and using a variety of ways to keep on increasing our knowledge and understanding of the world around us. Lifelong learning helps us keep up with new developments and opens up opportunities in our working and personal lives.
Methodology	The practices, methods and techniques that teachers use to help children learn; the methodology that teachers use is usually based on their beliefs about how children learn, the curriculum requirements, the subject or content they are teaching, and the needs of their learners.
NQF Levels	The levels of the National Qualification Framework (NQF) are like the steps on a ladder. There are 10 levels. The learning you achieve, and what you are expected to be able do with the learning becomes more complicated as you go up the NQF Levels from 1 to 10. Learners should be able to move up the NQF Levels in a learning or career pathway. (See 'NQF' and 'SAQA' in the list of acronyms.)
Pedagogy	In education studies the term 'pedagogy' is used to describe the area of study which deals with the theory and ideas about teaching, and the practical ways in which these ideas get used. It also deals with how different approaches affect the way children learn.
Qualification	When you get a qualification, it usually means that you have successfully completed a course of study or training programme. Occupational or professional qualifications mean that you have done the training or study that makes you 'qualified' *to do* something, like a particular job or profession. Usually the educational, professional, or examining body concerned issues you a certificate to prove that you have that qualification, and keeps a record of this. (See 'NQF' and 'SAQA' in the list of acronyms.)
Quality Assurance	This means making sure that the design of a learning programme, the delivery of the programme (the teaching and learning activities), and the assessment is of good quality, and meets the standard required by the curriculum or qualification.
Recognition of prior learning (RPL)	This is a way of getting recognition for what you have learnt through experience or other types of study. The most common reasons for applying for RPL are to gain access to further learning or to be exempted (excused) from parts of courses.
Resources	In education contexts, the term 'resources' describes equipment and materials used for teaching and learning. In ECD this includes toys and other play equipment (factory or self-made), creative materials, books, puzzles, musical instruments, etc. For ECD practitioners, the term includes the curriculum, policies, checklists, useful information, and people and organisations that can be called on for help.
Skill	Skills are the abilities that enable us to perform tasks in our working or personal lives at a competent (capable) level.

Standards	Standards are descriptions of the criteria (principles) that we use to make judgements about the quality of things.
Theory	By 'theory' we mean the knowledge that we need in order to do our jobs properly. For an ECD practitioner this includes understanding how children grow, develop and learn, and how to provide the conditions that enable them to do this optimally.
Values	Values are the things that are important for you and guide the way you live and work. They are related to morals, which are based on principles and are influenced by social, religious and cultural norms and practices.

Here are some examples for your list of acronyms:

CAPS	Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements Describes teaching and assessment requirements for each grade and subject in South African public schools.
DBE	Department of Basic Education The government department responsible for providing, overseeing and administering primary and secondary education, including adult literacy programmes.
DSD	Department of Social Development The government department responsible for providing social development, protection, and welfare services to the public.
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education Care and education for children of pre-school age.
ECD	Early Childhood Development Early childhood development is an umbrella term that applies to the processes by which children from birth to at least nine years grow and thrive, physically, mentally, emotionally, spiritually, morally and socially.
ELDA	Early Learning and Development Area This refers to six organisers relevant to children: Well-being; Identity and Belonging; Communication; Exploring Mathematics; Creativity; Knowledge; and Understanding of the World.
NCF	The South African National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four

NELDS	National Early Learning Development Standards
	This set of early learning standards describes desired results, indicators and competencies of expected learning achievements for young children in each particular age range. It suggests appropriate activities that adults can initiate to enhance early learning development.
NQF	The National Qualifications Framework
	The NQF is a way of organising qualifications so that our education and training system makes sense. The framework makes it easier to see which qualifications could build on other qualifications, or which qualifications have some parts in common.
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
	SAQA is in charge of the NQF. It has set up standards for qualifications and registers qualifications on the NQF (if they meet the standards for quality).
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
	The QCTO is responsible for overseeing education and training that is directly linked to work and careers. It is responsible for assuring the quality of occupational qualifications.

Add in your own vocabulary as you come across useful words.

PART 2 SECTION A: TEACHING AND LEARNING

1. What is Teaching and Learning?

This area is the heart of your work in ECD. When we talk about 'teaching and learning', we talk about how you teach – that is, your methods and activities. In what ways do you share knowledge with your learners? What kinds of things do you do to help them learn? Activities might be listening, talking, playing, drawing, singing and so on. Teaching and learning also deals with the practical skills you use to manage your groups or classes, and keep track of their progress.

Teaching and learning also includes your own attitudes and beliefs about children and how they learn. We therefore need to think about the different ways in which children learn. There are many teaching and learning methods you can use, as long as these suit the aims you want to achieve.

These pictures show two different teaching methods. In the first the teacher is using an interactive method, sitting with the children and getting them to take turns to respond to what she is reading. The second shows a more formal method, where the children are doing specific activities at a desk, such as drawing or jigsaw puzzles. The first method is more informal and based on talking, while the other uses play in a structured way.

Quick Picks

Teaching and learning includes:

> Methods

> Curriculum

> Daily learning or activity schedule

> Children's learning styles

> Your practical skills

> Your attitudes and beliefs

Terminology

In education studies, the term 'pedagogy' is used to describe the area of study which deals with the theory and ideas about teaching, and the practical ways in which these ideas get used. It also deals with how different approaches affect the way children learn.

2. My reflections on teaching and learning

2.1 Reflecting on how I plan and organise my teaching, and how I behave with my groups or classes

Here are some questions on the different ways in which children learn and how you can encourage learning. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? Reflection Question: What are my views on how children learn? How do I encourage learning in young children?

Think about ….

> Learning from adults, and learning from other children
> Learning through using the body (sensory-motor): hearing, seeing, talking, touching, smelling, tasting, feeling, moving
> Learning through finding things out
> Learning through music, dancing, singing, playing …

? Reflection Question: What do I think about learning through play, and how do I help this to happen?

Think about ….

> Playing indoors and outdoors; playing alone or with others
> Choosing or being organised
> Games and other resources

? Reflection Question: What other methods or activities do I use? What kinds of activities do we do?

Think about ….

> Telling, showing, asking
> Daily programmes, routines or ring time
> Doing things as a whole group, or a small group, or alone

Sensory-motor learning

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

Here are some questions dealing with different areas and stages of development, and ways in which you can manage these in your teaching. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? Reflection Question: How do I deal with different developmental areas, such as physical, intellectual, emotional and social development? How do I create a sense of well-being in these areas?

Think about ….

> Different types of activities for different areas; bringing these together as well (integrated early learning)
> Having different learning corners
> Getting children to feel safe
> Getting a child to be curious and inquisitive
> Making sure activities are suitable for the age or stage of your children

? Reflection Question: How do I manage a group of children who might be at different ages and different stages of development?

Think about ….

> Changing the environment, changing the programme
> Using different activities or toys for different groups

? Reflection Question: What do I do if I see children have learning difficulties? Am I always aware of these children?

Think about ….

> Knowing the signs of learning difficulties in any of the developmental areas
> Observing and recording difficulties
> Referring children in need for further help

Cognitive (Reasoning & Logical Thinking)

Language (Oral & Written skill)

Physical (Use of Big & Small Muscle)

Socio-Emotional (Manage Emotions & Interaction with Others)
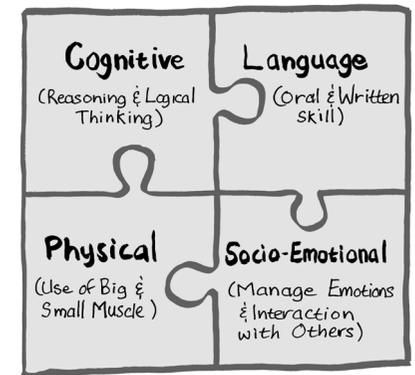
An example of how developmental areas can be described

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

BRIDGE

Here are some questions dealing with talking and listening to children to help them become more confident. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

How do you talk to the children in your care?

? Reflection Question: How do I talk to the children in my care, and get them to talk to me? How do we communicate if the children can't talk?

Think about ....

> Asking questions, giving children time to think about answers, listening to them
> Encouraging respect
> Being aware of speech or hearing difficulties

? Reflection Question: What do I do if there are different languages spoken in my group of children?

Think about ....

> Using visual examples, signing and gesturing
> Getting help from parents, other teachers, or children

? Reflection Question: How do I help children develop confidence and a good sense of self?

Think about ....

> Praising, respecting and listening to each other
> Letting children express themselves and make their own decisions
> Letting children make mistakes, dealing with their mistakes

"The way we talk to our children becomes their inner voice."
Peggy O' Mara

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

Here are some questions about your understanding of the overall learning programme (the curriculum) suggested for children from birth to four, and how to measure the progress of your children. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? Reflection Question: What do I know about the ECD curriculum?

? Reflection Question: How do I assess the children in my site?

'Curriculum in Birth to 4 is all about the experiences the child will have in different settings.'
(NCF p 26)

Think about ….

> Planning, daily programme, activities, resources
> Learning activities for different developmental areas, and different stages
> Resources for learning

Think about ….

> Observing, recording, reporting
> Formative assessment (ongoing assessment to support programme review)
> Tracking progress
> Using and sharing assessment information: with parents, referring children to others

'Assessment in an ECD centre is a continuous and planned process of gathering information about the development and learning of all children.'
(NCF p 29)

1. Well Being (The Key ELDA)	2. Identity and Belonging	3. Communication	4. Exploring Mathematics	5. Creativity	6. Knowledge and Understanding of the world

These are the six Early Learning and Development Areas given in the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), Birth to Four (2015)

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

2. My reflections on teaching and learning

2.2 Reflecting on my own values, attitudes and beliefs

Here are some questions about how your view of the world affects your teaching. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? Reflection Question: How do my own values and beliefs affect my work as an ECD practitioner?

Think about ….

> Different religions and cultural practices in your class or group
> Accepting differences, and encouraging children to do so
> Interacting with parents and community
> Values such as honesty, tolerance, integrity and so on

? Reflection Question: How do my attitudes and beliefs about children and what they can do or learn affect my work?

Think about ….

> Children making choices, being independent, doing things for themselves
> Discipline and rule making, respecting others

? Reflection Question: What ethical issues do I think are most important for an ECD practitioner?

Think about ….

> Care ethic and the best interests of the children
> Right and wrong ways of behaving at work; work ethic
> Commitment, confidentiality, punctuality, working with others

A Z Terminology

Values are the things that are important for you and guide the way you live and work. They are related to morals, which are based on principles and are influenced by social, religious and cultural norms and practices.

Ethics is about telling the difference between right and wrong, just and unjust. Ethics is a set of moral guidelines for how you treat others and how you act.

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

3. Teaching and Learning: Looking at my strengths and weaknesses

As you continue to fill in the Reflection Tool, you will be able to see where you are confident in your work, or where you would like to know more about teaching and learning theories and practice. Use this section to help plan your own professional development. In Part 3 of the Tool you will find some resources and a planning tool.

Reflection Questions	Write your thoughts here ….
Name one area of teaching and learning that you feel really confident about.	
Name one thing about learning theories and teaching methods that you would most like help with.	
Name one thing about learning theories and teaching methods that you would most like to know more about.	
Name one thing about values, attitudes and beliefs that you would most like help with.	
What are my views about my own professional development? How do I improve my knowledge and skills?	**Think about: sharing ideas with other practitioners; who you get support from; keeping up to date; taking part in ECD forums.**

PART 2 SECTION B: ECD ENVIRONMENT

1. What is the ECD environment?

When we talk about the 'environment' of an ECD site or classroom, we mean the physical, mental, emotional and social conditions in which the children develop and learn.

By physical conditions, we mean the indoor and outdoor space and the resources that are available for activities and play.

By mental, emotional and social conditions, we mean things that influence how the children think, feel and behave. These are things like having simple rules and routines that help them feel safe while they play and learn, and that encourage them to try new things.

The environment is also affected by your own attitudes and beliefs about children and how they learn, and by the attitudes, beliefs and expectations of parents and the community. ECD practitioners work hard to create an environment that gives every child the opportunities they need to develop and learn. The environment needs to be stimulating for the children, meaning that it is interesting and exciting for them.

Quick Picks

The ECD environment includes:

> Physical, mental, emotional and social conditions

> Safety and security

> Stimulation and resources

> Routines, activities, play

> Cultural influences

The picture on the left shows children in an outdoor play environment. The one on the right shows the types of resources used by an ECD centre.

Terminology

In education contexts, the term 'resources' describes equipment and materials used for teaching and learning. In ECD this includes toys and other play equipment (bought or self-made), creative materials, books, puzzles, musical instruments, etc. For practitioners, the term includes things that help them in their work: curriculum, policies, checklists, useful information and people who can be called on for help.

2. My reflections on the ECD environment I work in

2.1 Reflecting on how I use my classroom or site and resources

Here are some questions about using your space and resources to provide a good environment for teaching and learning. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

> Think about using everyday things to make toys, such as plastic bottles, wool, and cardboard boxes.

? **Reflection Question:** Do I have a good teaching environment that stimulates children?

Think about ….

> The physical, mental, emotional and social environment I provide
> Indoor and outdoor areas
> Safety and security
> Simple and consistent rules
> Reasonable boundaries
> Cultural relevance
> Encouraging children to explore, be curious, ask questions, experiment, not give up easily
> A balanced, flexible daily programme
> Providing for different needs, ages and stages of development
> Giving every child opportunities to develop and learn

? **Reflection Question:** What resources do I have in my classroom and my environment?

Think about ….

> Resources that I am already using (do they support all areas of development, are there enough, what is their condition?)
> Making good use of my space (organised for activities, laid out to encourage independence)
> Making good use of available toys and equipment (set up to encourage play, easy to reach, rotated for variety, using in different ways)
> Appropriate for different needs, ages and stages of development

? **Reflection Question:** Where do I get resources from? Are there other ways to get resources?

Think about ….

> Contributions from parents and community
> Educational toy providers, funders, DBE, toy libraries, municipal libraries
> Making my own resources from recycled materials, 'fixing up' used equipment, asking others to help
> Indigenous toys and resources
> Adapting toys and equipment for different ages or purposes
> Other resources I could draw on to enrich my environment

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

Here are some questions dealing with making an emotionally safe but challenging environment where all the children can develop and learn. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

Reflection Question: How do I create a caring environment where children can develop and learn?

Reflection Question: How do I make sure my teaching environment is safe?

Reflection Question: Do I know what to do and who to contact in an emergency?

Think about ….

> The message my teaching environment sends to the children
> Giving children a sense of security (creating routines, managing changes between activities)
> Building a trusting relationship with each child
> Allowing children to make and correct mistakes
> Free choice and appropriate boundaries
> Respect
> Solving conflict

Think about ….

> What could be dangerous and what I can do to deal with it
> Keeping the site clean and hygienic
> Toilet facilities
> Safety practices for my context and age-group
> Keeping toys and equipment in good condition
> Checking regularly and fixing damaged or unsafe equipment
> Indoor and outdoor safety
> Food safety
> Teaching children how to play safely and reminding them of this
> Supervising the children
> Recording problems and attending to them

Think about ….

> Having up-to-date emergency services information
> Calling emergency services
> Working together with staff and other people (e.g. parents or emergency services) in an emergency
> First aid knowledge, equipment and rules
> Practising safety rules with children
> Recording accidents and informing parents

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

2. My reflections on the ECD environment I work in

2.2 Reflecting on the community environment in which I work

Here are some questions dealing with the ways in which children's home lives and communities affect your teaching practice, and how you can draw caregivers and community members in to provide support. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

> What organisations are there in your community that will help you raise awareness about the importance of ECD?

? **Reflection Question:** How do I involve caregivers and other community members in children's learning and development?

? **Reflection Question:** How does a child's home and community environment affect my teaching practice?

? **Reflection Question:** How can I share basic knowledge about ECD with parents and communities?

Think about ….

> Recording caregivers' details
> Communicating by sms, notes, notices, meetings, conversations
> Discussing activities and learning
> Sharing easy-to-understand reports
> Obtaining input from caregivers
> Show and tell for caregivers
> Other community members who could be involved with my site or school
> Ways of reaching out to other community members (sharing information about the needs, asking for help, finding the right kinds of help)

Think about ….

> Knowing each child's home background
> Providing appropriate activities for each child
> How socio-economic conditions in the community affect the children and their families
> Ways of 'working around' the socio-economic conditions

Think about ….

> Putting up posters, handing out brochures
> Communicating with parents by sms
> Conversations with parents
> School meetings
> Speaking, putting up displays, handing out information at community gatherings

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

3. My ECD Environment: Looking at my strengths and weaknesses

As you continue to fill in the Reflection Tool, you will be able to see where you are confident about creating a good ECD environment, or where you would like to know more about how you can create a good environment. Use this section to help plan how to improve your environment. In Part 3 of the Tool you will find some resources and a planning tool.

Reflection Questions	Write your thoughts here ….
Name one thing about your environment (internal and external) that you feel really confident about.	
Name one thing about your environment (internal and external) that you would most like help with.	
Name one thing about creating a good ECD environment that you would most like to know more about.	
What are my views about my environment (internal and external)? How do I improve my environment?	**Think about: sharing ideas with other practitioners; who you get support from; taking part in ECD forums.**

PART 2 SECTION C: ECD POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

1. What are policies and procedures in ECD?

NATIONAL INTEGRATED EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT POLICY 2015

social development
Department
Social Development
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

unicef
unite for children

THE SOUTH AFRICAN NATIONAL CURRICULUM FRAMEWORK
FOR CHILDREN FROM BIRTH TO FOUR

ABRIDGED VERSION

basic education
Department
Basic Education
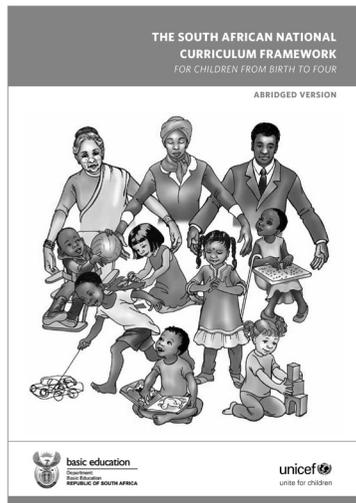REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

unicef
unite for children

A policy is a set of ideas or plans that has been agreed to by a group of people, such as those in a government or in an organisation. Governments develop policies to guide their decisions about what to do in areas such as the economy or education. Government policies usually include things like principles (such as inclusive education), how and where money is to be spent, and how a system will be run.

National policy in ECD deals with things like support for children and parents, support for ECD centres, and training and qualifications for ECD practitioners. ECD in South Africa is guided by several important policy and guideline documents:

> **The National Integrated ECD Policy of 2015** sets out the ways in which government will support ECD through services and resources. It says which government departments are involved and how provision will work.

> **The National Curriculum Framework (NCF) Birth to Four of 2015** sets out the ways in which babies, toddlers and young children can be developed, and gives ideas for teaching and learning activities.

> **The Road to Health** booklets for parents or caregivers deal with things like nutrition in the early years, the vaccinations that children need, and developmental milestones for babies and young children.

Schools and ECD centres usually have their own policies and procedures for things like hiring practitioners or contacting parents or guardians in an emergency. The procedures would set out the steps that need to be taken.

One of the things a centre needs to do to become registered is to develop its internal policies, with the procedures or steps needed to carry them out. Some unregistered centres, or home-based centres, might not have some of the required policies in place.

Terminology

An 'inclusive education' policy means that all children have the right to feel welcome in a supportive educational environment. ECD centres should be supported to be able to deal with the needs of all children, including those who require extra help because of barriers to learning such as disability or cultural differences.

2. My reflections on policies and procedures for ECD

2.1 Reflecting on how knowing about national ECD policy can help me

Here are some questions to help you think about your understanding of ECD policy. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

Reflection Question: What national ECD policies have I heard about, or read? How do these apply to my work?

Think about ….

Different types of information in policies, such as:

> nutrition
> health
> support services
> the importance of play

Reflection Question: What do I know about the support I (or my centre) can get from local or district government offices?

Think about ….

> The different government departments I may need to deal with, such as Department of Social Development, Department of Health, or Department of Basic Education
> How social workers or district officials can help me
> The local offices in my area, and the types of resources or information they provide

Reflection Question: Do I know where to go to get help with particular problems?

Think about ….

> Identifying children with special needs and knowing where to refer them
> Knowing what to do if I see signs of hunger or abuse
> Advising parents
> Getting support when community problems such as drugs or violence affect children

Knowing where to go for support

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

2.   My reflections on policies and procedures for ECD

2.2   Reflecting on what I know about policies and procedures at my site

Here are some questions dealing with internal policies and procedures at your site or centre. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? **Reflection Question:** Do I know what written policies and procedures exist in my workplace? Do I know what they say?

? **Reflection Question:** Do I know what my centre's policy is for communicating with others?

Think about ….

> Your employment contract, if you have one
> Health, safety and emergency procedures
> Contact lists and the reasons for these
> Maintenance and cleanliness
> Any other policies or procedures that your centre may have
> Any other policies or procedures your centre does not have, but ought to have

Think about ….

> Communicating with parents and guardians
> What kinds of information or reporting needs to be confidential (that is, kept private)
> Communicating with government officials
> Communicating with the community
> Communicating with colleagues or my principal
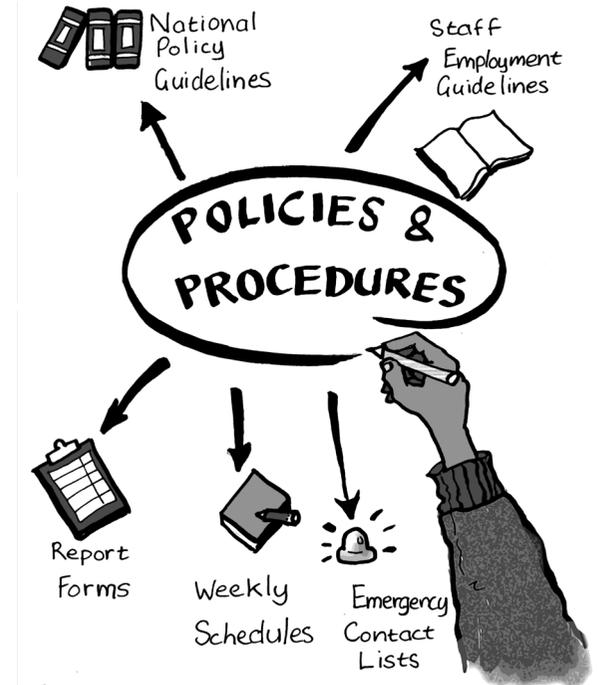
Examples of policies and procedures you might find at an ECD centre

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

2.   My reflections on policies and procedures for ECD

2.3   Reflecting on how policies affect my own professional development

Here are some questions about career paths and professional development in ECD. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your own professional situation. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

Have you thought about where you are going in your profession? Do you want to carry on working with the children, would you like to train others to do so, or would you like to work at government level helping the sector?

Reflection Question: What studies or training have I done that help me in my work as an ECD practitioner?

Think about ….

> My own levels of formal education

> Any courses, training programmes or qualifications I have done that relate to education or ECD

> Any further qualifications I would like to achieve

Reflection Question: Do I know what study opportunities or career paths exist in ECD? How do I get this information?

Think about ….

> Joining an ECD Forum, practitioner network or community of practice to become better informed

> Asking for information from a training provider

> Looking online, for example on the website of the Education, Training and Development Practices (ETDP) SETA: www.etdpseta.org.za

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

3.   Policies and procedures for ECD: Looking at my strengths and weaknesses

As you continue to fill in the Reflection Tool, you will be able to see where you are confident in your work, or where you would like to know more about issues related to national policies, or internal policies and procedures. Use this section to help plan your own professional development. In Part 3 of the Tool you will find some resources and a planning tool.

| Reflection Questions	Write your thoughts here ….
Name one aspect of policies and procedures that you feel really confident about.	
Name one thing about policies and procedures in general that you would most like help with.	
Name one thing about national ECD Policy, or about your centre's own internal policies and procedures, that you would most like to know more about.	
What are my views about my own professional development? How do I improve my knowledge and skills?	**Think about:** sharing ideas with other practitioners; who you get support from; keeping up to date; taking part in ECD forums.

PART 2 SECTION D: LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

1. What is Leadership and Management in ECD?

The principal or manager of an ECD centre plays many roles. The two most important responsibilities are instructional leadership and organisational management.

By 'instructional leadership' we mean giving direction and providing support on things that directly affect the quality of teaching and the children's learning and development. This begins with communicating a clear vision and goals to staff. It also means developing and supporting staff, guiding curriculum implementation, monitoring teaching and learning activities, and making sure there are resources to promote children's learning and development.

By 'organisational management' we mean planning and guiding the processes and day-to-day operations that keep the ECD site running smoothly so that quality teaching and learning can take place. These include such things as the money coming in and going out, the working conditions of staff, office activities and meeting government requirements. It also includes making sure that everything at the centre is kept clean and in good working order.
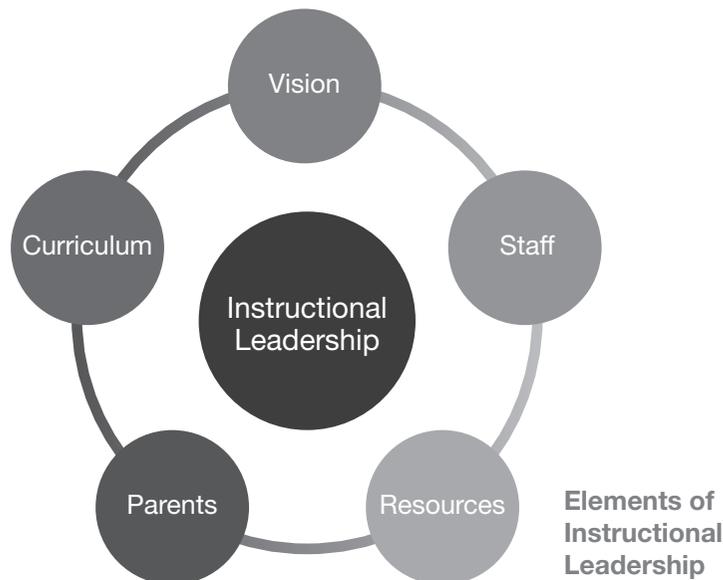
Another important responsibility is building and managing relationships with stakeholders: these are the people who are relevant or important to the ECD centre, its staff and the children, such as parents, community members and government officials. In the case of parents, it is important to tell them about ECD and involve them in their children's development. District officials and community members may be able to provide assistance in the form of information, training, services and resources.

Elements of Instructional Leadership

Vision · Staff · Resources · Parents · Curriculum · Instructional Leadership

2. My reflections on my roles

2.1 Reflecting on how I lead my staff

Here are some questions about providing instructional leadership to your staff. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? **Reflection Question:** What are the core values of my site?

Think about ….

> The values that are important to me
> What a 'quality ECD service' means to me
> What our site/ programme is achieving now (impact on children, staff and parents)
> What I see our site/ programme achieving in the future, and how we can bring this about
> What our vision and mission statement says, and how I feel about this (or if we don't have one, what I would like it to say)

? **Reflection Question:** How do I share the core values with my staff and make sure that they implement them?

Think about ….

> Different ways to share the core values with my staff and encourage them to adopt these values (role modelling, communicating, holding regular meetings, encouraging participation, working together as a team)
> Ways of inspiring and motivating my staff
> Ways of making sure my staff know what is expected of them
> Encouraging my staff to share their ideas about how to achieve the vision

Values are the things that are important for you and guide the way you live and work. They are related to morals, which are based on principles and are influenced by social, religious and cultural norms and practices.

A Z **Terminology**

A 'vision and mission statement' describes an organisation's purpose, goals and values. The vision statement is inspirational and creates a mental picture of what the organisation wants to achieve in the future. The mission statement is more practical and describes what the organisation does now, and how it intends to achieve that future position.

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

Here are some questions dealing with how to identify and obtain the support you need to develop your site and your staff. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

Reflection Question: How do I know what kinds of support my staff need, and how do I provide this support?

Think about ….

> Getting to know my staff and their needs
> My staff's strengths and weaknesses
> Ways of giving my staff on-going guidance and support (mentoring)
> How to encourage my staff to share good practice and ideas
> How to make time to talk to my staff (individually and together)
> The kinds of staff training available (relevant courses/workshops/conferences)
> What I need to consider when I plan staff training
> My way of implementing training: how well it works and if there is anything else I can do

Reflection Question: How do I ensure that my staff gets professional development?

Think about ….

> Opportunities for professional development in my area, that we could join or set up (meeting regularly with other sites or centres to share ideas, inviting people to come and talk to us)
> Other ways of providing my staff with professional development
> Ways of keeping up-to-date with developments in ECD
> Ways of motivating my staff to make the most of opportunities to develop themselves
> Using this Reflection Tool with my staff to discuss ways of improving quality at the centre, and ways in which they can use it by themselves for professional development

Reflection Question: Where do I go for support in implementing the ECD programme, and in improving my own leadership skills?

Think about ….

> What we need support with, and the kinds of support that we need
> Networks that I am part of and can use to access support
> Other networks that I could join
> How to establish relationships with other organisations that provide support (NGOs, government departments)
> Kinds of support available from NGOs and government (funding, information e.g. on regulatory issues, resources, training) and how to access it
> Other organisations or individuals I could invite to assist with programme delivery
> Ways of developing my own leadership and management skills (courses, talks etc.)

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

Here are some more questions on the topic of developing your staff, this time dealing with giving feedback and encouraging your staff to support each other by sharing practice. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? Reflection Question: How do I give feedback to my staff?

Think about ....

> My relationships with my staff, and how trusting these relationships are

> Whether I need to build more trust, and how to do this

> My communication channels with my staff, and whether I need to improve these

> How to show my staff that I respect their ideas and contributions

> Making sure that my feedback to staff is constructive (helpful, positive)

> Ways of encouraging my staff to accept and act on the feedback I give them

> My openness to receiving feedback from my staff

? Reflection Question: How do I encourage my staff to share practices with others?

Think about ....

How to help each staff member to:

> Act as a role model for sharing practice

> Show respect for other people's contributions, ideas, examples

> Share thoughts or ideas that may have come up through using this Reflection Tool

How I can:

> Create opportunities for sharing (working together, holding regular meetings, allocating time for communication)

> Find ways of giving practical support to develop ideas further

Working together and sharing ideas

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

2.2   Reflecting on how I manage site operations

Here are some questions dealing with managing day-to-day operations to make sure you provide quality ECD. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

? **Reflection Question:** How do I manage my operations? (e.g. scheduling, financial systems, sustainability, human resources)

Think about ….

The resources and systems that I need to run the site smoothly – whether we have them and how well they work:

> Planning systems

> Recording systems

> Supervision schedules

> Site policies

> Management procedures

> Office and filing systems

> Site maintenance systems

> Staff management systems

> Financial control systems

? **Reflection Question:** What quality assurance system do I have in place?

Think about ….

> The resources and systems we need to make sure we provide quality ECD services:

- copies of site policies

- procedures and processes

- registration certification

> Implementation of site policies

> Using correct site procedures and processes

> Compliance with relevant regulations and requirements

> Doing regular safety checks and equipment maintenance

> Having an open door policy for parents

> Making sure that staff know about the quality assurance system, and how to use it properly
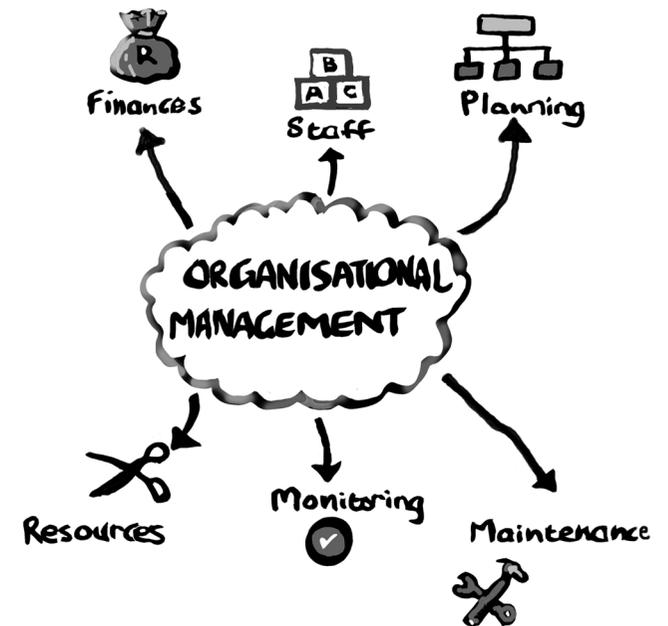
Elements of Organisational Management

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

2.3   Reflecting on how I lead through managing relationships

Here are some questions about managing relationships with stakeholders, involving parents in their children's development, and dealing with ethical issues in ECD. You do not need to write answers to each question, they are just here to help you reflect on your practice. Use these ideas to help you write your own thoughts down.

Reflection Question: How do I manage relationships with my stakeholders (parents, community, district officials)?

Think about ....

> My networking relationships with my stakeholders, and whether I need to improve these
> Ways of establishing good networking relationships
> Ways of increasing my stakeholder networks
> Whether I have relationships of trust with my stakeholders
> Whether I need to develop more trust, and how I can do this
> The channels I use to communicate with stakeholders, and how well they work
> Improving communication with my stakeholders

Reflection Question: How do I involve parents in their children's development and education?

Think about ....

> The methods I use to share information with parents, how well they work and what else I could do
> My manner of communicating with parents:
  • Speaking honestly and respectfully
  • Discussing issues in a sensitive manner
  • Listening to parental concerns
> Ways of encouraging parents to become more involved with their children's development and the ECD site

Talking to parents

Reflection Question: What are the ethical issues for leaders in ECD?

Think about ....

> Providing quality services
> Providing adequate working conditions for my staff
> The cost of ECD services
> Managing the centre's finances properly
> Relationships with parents
> Dealing with sensitive issues
> Making sure that my staff carry out their duties properly

Writing my thoughts and experiences [add extra pages to your file as needed]

3.   Leadership and Management: Looking at my strengths and weaknesses

Reflection Questions	Write your thoughts here ….
Name one area of leadership that you feel really confident about.	
Name one thing about leadership that you would most like help with.	
Name one thing about leadership that you would most like to know more about.	
Name one area of management that you feel really confident about.	
Name one thing about managing site operations that you would most like help with.	
Name one thing about managing site operations that you would most like to know more about.	
What are my views about my own professional development as a leader and manager? How do I improve my knowledge and skills?	Think about: sharing ideas with other practitioners; who you get support from; taking part in ECD forums.

PART 3: PLANNING and RESOURCES

Aim

This section will help you plan for your own growth and professional development, and provides some resources which you can build on.

Setting Goals

An important part of personal and professional growth is knowing what goals you want to achieve. A goal is an idea of a future change that you want to see in your life: it may be to do with improving your professional skills and practices, or it might be something more personal. Sometimes it is hard to set realistic and achievable goals, and then people get discouraged if they can't see any progress towards their goals. But small steps towards a change or an improvement are just as important as big leaps.

> "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step."
> – Lao Tzu

In this section you will find some tips and guidelines to help you identify your goals, and to help you plan for their achievement. One technique often used for these purposes is the SMART technique for goal setting.

S	**SPECIFIC**	This means that your goal is something real that you can name and describe. It is not a collection of vague ideas.
M	**MEASURABLE**	You will be able to 'measure' your progress; that is, you can identify signs along the way towards your goal.
A	**ATTAINABLE**	Your goal is realistic; it is something that you can achieve if you commit time and energy to it.
R	**RELEVANT**	Your goal has value and meaning in your own personal and professional life and context.
T	**TIME-BOUND**	There is a time frame to this goal: it is not something that just stretches out forever into the future.

Getting started

Here is a simple template to help you get started in choosing a goal. Look back at the strengths and weaknesses you have identified in Part 2 to help you decide on your goals.

CHOOSING A GOAL		
Give four important goals you want to achieve. Remember these could be personal or professional.	1.	
	2.	
	3.	
	4.	
Which one is the most important to you?		
What makes you want to achieve this goal? What will drive you towards it?		
Do you want to give yourself a reward when you have achieved this goal? What will it be?		
What will you choose to start doing or stop doing to help you achieve this goal?	START DOING (for example, what new actions or habits will help you get to your goal?)	STOP DOING (for example, what do you do in relation to this goal that is not helpful?)

Planning

Here is a template that helps you plan for achieving your goal, by making you think about what you need to do to get there. You can use it as it is, or add to it and adapt it to suit the goal you have chosen.

> Everything that is worth anything has a price. To achieve something you haven't had before will cost you – in time, in effort, and (possibly) in money. Decide what you want and be ready to invest in yourself.

| PLANNING TOOL FOR ACHIEVING A GOAL	
Describe your goal in one sentence.	
What do you need to learn (skills and knowledge) to achieve this goal?	
What information do you need to get?	
Where are you going to get it from?	

What other help or support do you need and where will you get it?	
What resources will you need and where will you get these?	
How will you know that you are making progress?	
How will you know if things aren't working and you need to change how you are approaching this?	
Goal achieved! How will you reward yourself?	

Now you can use the same process you have followed to choose and work towards a different goal in your personal or professional life.

Thinking about core skills

There are a number of general skills which have been identified as important for workplace competence in any profession. Here is one way of describing these core skills.

Basic Skills	Thinking Skills
CORE SKILLS	
People Skills	Personal Qualities
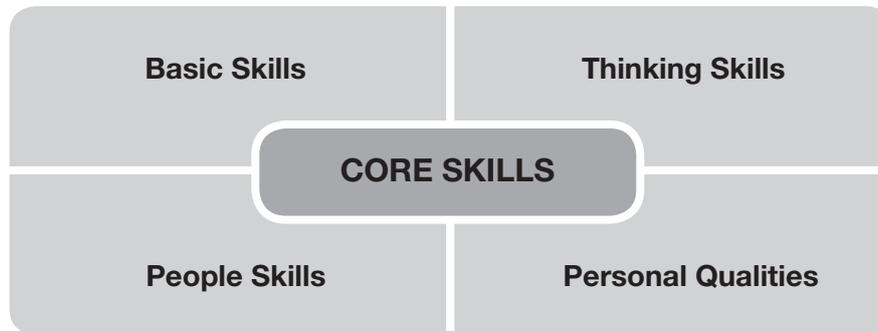
We have provided a brief summary of these skills for you to consider. Thinking about how these relate to your own professional practice could help you in your planning towards achieving your goals.

Remember that you can add in to any of these categories if you want to, and that there are many more examples than those given here.

CORE SKILLS	SKILL AREAS	EXAMPLES
Basic Skills	Reading	I can find information that I need and read it with understanding.
	Writing	I can communicate ideas and information clearly in writing.
	Speaking and listening	I make sure that I have correctly understood what others say, and I can get my own ideas across clearly to others.
	Mathematical literacy	I can use numbers and figures for everyday purposes.
	Technology skills	I can use most workplace technologies. I can use computers and other devices to find, communicate and present information.
Thinking Skills	Visualisation and creative thinking	I can understand the 'big picture' in which my workplace exists. I can use resources, information and ideas in creative ways in my workplace.
	Problem solving	I can recognise problems, understand why they happen, think of solutions, and evaluate and revise my solutions.
	Decision making	I can look at the advantages and disadvantages of certain actions, and plan how to deal with these.

People Skills	Working with others	I can work easily with other people, contribute to a group, and motivate and support others.
	Communication skills	I understand how to talk to and listen to others in ways that are appropriate to the person and to the situation.
	Social skills	I can show friendliness and interest in others, understand cultural diversity and show respect for the feelings, beliefs and practices of others.
Personal Attributes	Ethics and values	I believe in honesty in my dealings in life, and responsibility in my work.
	Self-management	I understand my own strengths and weaknesses. I manage my time efficiently and don't put things off.
	Attitudes	I am willing to learn new things.

Resources

As a professional educator, you will find it useful if you build up a set of resources that can help you in your work. Knowing about these resources, and how to use them, could also help you if you were claiming Continuing Professional Development points at any stage in your career.

You should have details of your **local social development office** and **local clinic or hospital** on hand, and can add them to this file.

The resources listed here need access to the internet. The list below can serve as the start of your own resources file. It gives the websites where you will find policy documents and other useful resources.

Policy and Guideline Documents

1. The National Integrated ECD Policy 2015: www.dsd.gov.za

2. The National Curriculum Framework Birth to Four 2015: www.education.gov.za

3. Road to Health Cards: https://roadtohealth.co.za

4. Education White Paper 6: Special Needs Education: Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (Department of Education, 2001): www.education.gov.za

5. Children's Act 38 of 2005: http://www.justice.gov.za

Useful websites and resources

1. Municipalities of South Africa: https://municipalities.co.za

2. Nutrition Guidelines for ECD programmes: www.ilifalabantwana.co.za

3. Inclusive Education South Africa: www.included.org.za

4. South African Council for Social Service Professions (SACSSP): www.sacssp.co.za

5. South African Council of Educators: www.sace.org.za

6. Ilifa Toolkit: Procuring Resources for ECD Centres: www.ilifalabantwana.co.za

7. Overview of the National Integrated ECD Policy 2015: www.bridge.org.za

You can also find a lot of useful tools and resources, policy summaries and interesting presentations about ECD on the BRIDGE website. Go to www.bridge.org.za and click on KNOWLDEGE HUB, then VIEW KNOWLEDGE HUB on the drop down menu. Once you are there you can click on ECD under Focus Area, or click on the National ECD Community of Practice to take you to these ECD resources.