



PROJECT FOR INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

## WHAT IS PIECCE?

*PIECCE is the Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education. This is a multi-sectoral teacher education project that will contribute to the professionalisation of the ECD sector through the development of a standardised framework for the training of practitioners working in Birth to Four.*

Click [here](#) to read more about PIECCE



## THE ECD QUALIFICATION CONTINUUM: ARTICULATING LEVEL 3 THROUGH TO LEVEL 7

Report on a panel discussion & conversation held at the Ntataise Network  
Conference on 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2017



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## Setting the scene

The facilitator (Rene King from Khululeka Community Development Education Centre) set the context for the discussion by noting that there are a number of policy and implementation initiatives happening in the sector at present. Organisations need to understand these in order to plan ahead.

The panel presentations provided a picture of the current qualifications landscape, with three of the panellists outlining their roles in PIECCE (Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education). An open discussion on the topic of the ECD articulation continuum in relation to qualification pathways was then held.



### Panellists

- Maswazi Tshabalala, ETDP SETA
- Mmatsetshweu Ruby Motaung, Pre-school and Schooling - TEECEP Project Manager DHET
- Giulietta Harrison, Director Centre for Social Development, Rhodes University
- Dr Hasina Ebrahim, Professor and UNESCO Co-Chair for Early Childhood, UNISA
- Dr Mary Clasquin-Johnson Department of Inclusive Education, UNISA
- Sarah McGuigan, Ntataise

## Highlights from panel inputs: the qualifications context

Sarah McGuigan gave an update on the newly registered Occupational Certificate: Early Childhood Development Practitioner, NQF Level 4, SAQA ID 97542. The current FETC Early Childhood Development Level 4 legacy qualification is being phased out, with 2019 being the date for the last intake. The ETDP SETA is at present writing materials for the new qualification and designing the Qualification Assessment Strategy.

The two qualifications are structured differently in relation to their components, and represent a move away from unit standards to modules which specify content, learning activities and assessment.

<b>Further Education and Training Early Childhood Development</b>	<b>Occupational Certificate: Early Childhood Development Practitioner</b>
Core + Fundamentals + Electives + a WIL component	Knowledge modules + Practical Skills modules + Work Experience modules, with more emphasis on workplace learning and a mentoring component.

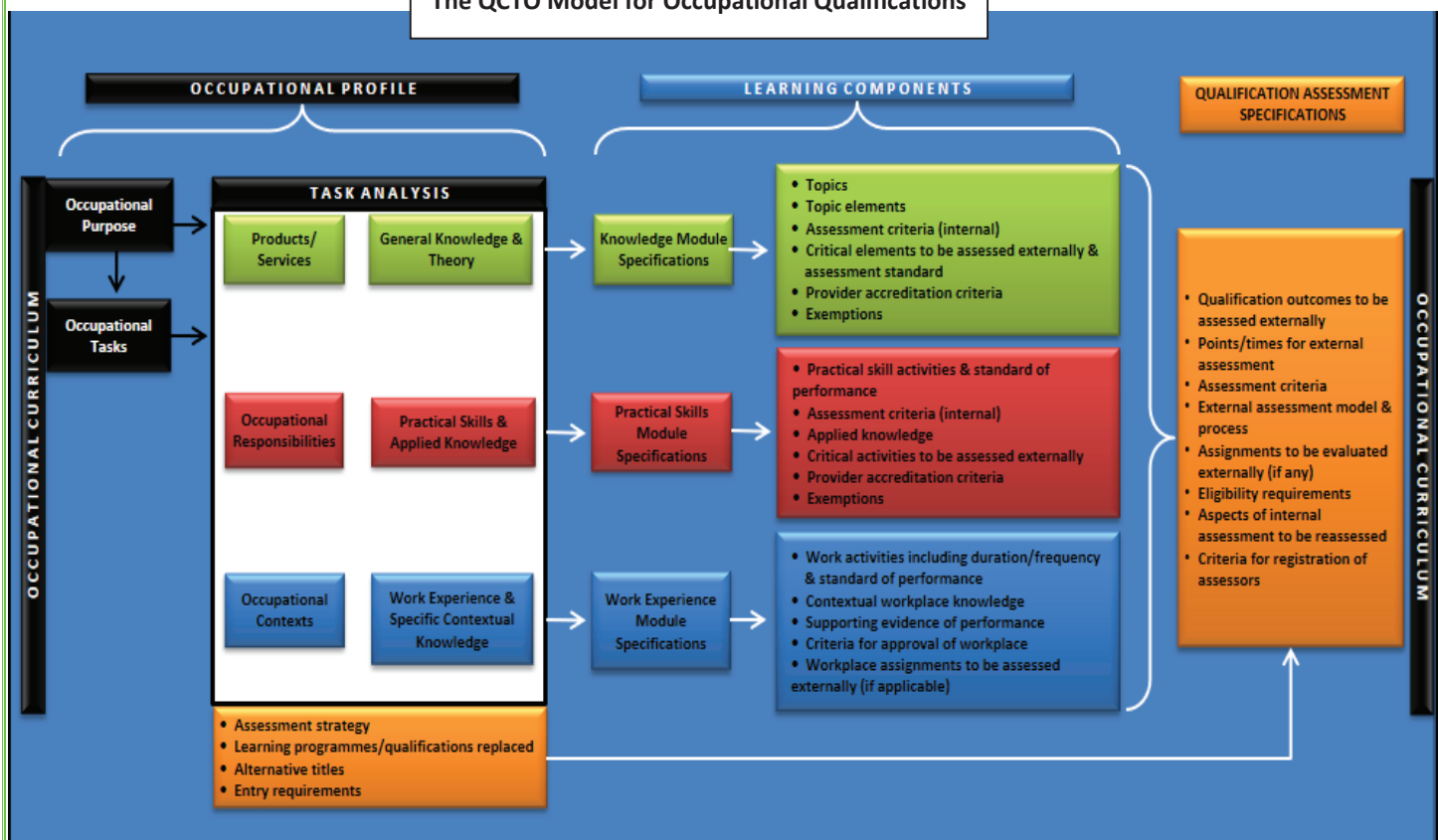
Representatives from Ntataise, the National ECD Alliance (NECDA), the BRIDGE ECD Community of Practice and the SA Congress for Early Childhood Development have been working with the ETDP SETA on a task team to address some of the concerns related to this qualification. These include issues related to the work experience component, which needs to be carried out in registered ECD centres; because of the large number of ECD centres which are not registered, this in turn raises a host of implementation problems, especially for those who are already working at an ECD site. Other concerns relate to the requirements

regarding assessment centres, and the issue of a formal summative exam. Many practitioners in the sector lack formal academic skills, and writing examinations could be challenging. The point was also made, however, that if the objective is to uplift the qualifications landscape and professionalise the field, a summative exam needs to be considered as preparation for progression into the continuum to articulate into Level 5, 6 or 7. Practitioners therefore need to be equipped with these skills. There has also been a call from the sector for an entry level qualification for a large group of practitioners who may have minimal formal schooling.

Maswazi Tshabala from the ETPD SETA commented on the debate around a Level 3 qualification. The original application was for a full Level 3 qualification, and there had been some discussion on the concept of an Assistant Practitioner qualification. The QCTO advised the ETPD SETA that this had to take the form of a Part Qualification which provides access to the NQF Level 4 'parent' qualification; the council wants to avoid a proliferation of qualifications as was the case with unit standards-based qualifications. The scoping and verification meetings for the part qualification have already been done. There is also an ongoing conversation between ETPD SETA and HEIs in relation to the Level 4 occupational qualification being used for admission to HEIs, once there is a national exam for this qualification in place. He also noted that some of the credits in the occupational qualification are pegged at NQF Level 5, which may assist with articulation with a possible Level 5 qualification.

The QCTO still needs to advise SETAs about de-registration or extensions of Level 4 legacy qualifications. The current teach-out period has been set until 2022. The QCTO is beginning the process of taking over the quality assurance functions from SETA, starting with the ETPD SETA in April 2018. Providers should not however be immediately concerned about accreditation issues, as provider accreditation (against both legacy and occupational qualifications) will be extended to 2020 as SETA licences have been extended to this date.

**The QCTO Model for Occupational Qualifications**

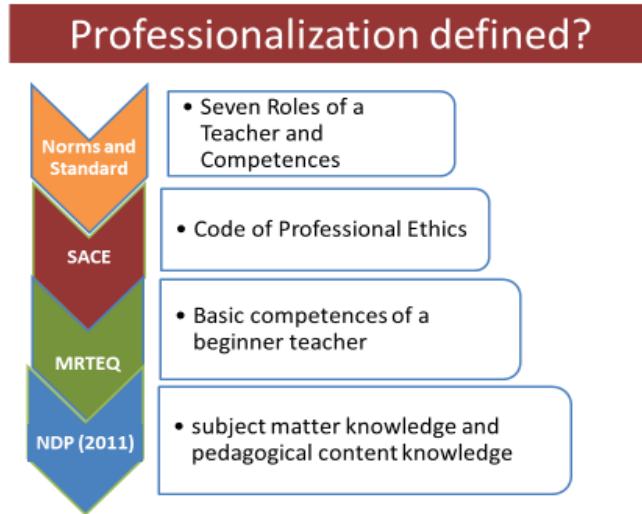


To see the Qualification, Curriculum and Assessment Specifications documents for **Occupational Certificate: Early Childhood Development Practitioner**, go to the QCTO website: <http://www.qcto.org.za/>.

Ruby Motaung from DHET then presented the policy perspective on teacher education. DHET’s mandate is to strengthen institutional capacity to produce and develop teachers, and to support and monitor implementation in the system.

The focus is on the following areas:

- Transformation
- Professionalization
- Standardisation
- Accreditation
- Improving training
- Promoting Basic Conditions of Employment
- Teacher education as part of the wider education system



DHET is partnering with the European Union in a five-year project which aims to strengthen initial teacher education. PIECCE is one element and policy tool within this project, focusing on early childhood educators. PIECCE also needs to respond to the **Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators** (Government Gazette No. 40750, 31 March 2017). This policy deals with qualification issues such as knowledge mix, credit values, minimum requirements for entry and for WIL, and so on. It also sets out in detail how the proposed new qualifications articulate with current and historical qualifications (see Appendix to the policy).

NQF Exit Level	Certificates	Degrees	Diplomas
10		Doctorate	
		Professional Doctorate	
9		Master’s	
		Professional Master’s	
8		Bachelor of Education Honours	Postgraduate Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education
7		Bachelor of Education in Early Childhood Care and Education	Advanced Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education
6	Advanced Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education		Diploma in Early Childhood Care and Education
5	Higher Certificate in Early Childhood Care and Education		

The way forward will involve articulation workshops and conversations with universities as well as TVETs, RTOs, the ETDP SETA and the QCTO. In addition, it has been recommended that ECD, as a line function, should be moved from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education. This will have a number of human resource implications for government and for practitioners themselves.

Click [here](#) to access the Policy as set out in the Government Gazette.

Click [here](#) to view the presentation on DHET policy.

## Highlights from panel inputs: PIECCE perspectives

PIECCE consortium members Hasina Ebrahim, Mary Clasquin-Johnson and Giulietta Harrison spoke to different aspects of PIECCE.

Hasina described how PIECCE is tasked with developing a programme framework to guide universities in designing their diploma (Level 6) and degree (Level 7) ECCE teacher educator programmes in Birth to Four. She noted that universities usually develop their qualifications in isolation, and PIECCE represents a new and collaborative approach. This approach includes NGOs and TVETs as well as universities, as the programme framework needs to reach down to Level 5 and below in order to take progression and articulation issues into account. She made the following points:

- PIECCE has identified three drivers for its work in teacher education: quality (is the programme good enough, will it make a difference?); inclusivity (are we taking all contexts and all of those affected into account?); and collaboration (are we working together so that a shared vision is held?).
- How do we 'soften the borders' of professionalization from entry level to advanced levels? We need to consider synergies between qualifications at different levels, portability of credits, and an understanding of the differences between initial teacher education and emerging teacher education. This refers to the different paths taken by those who have entered HE soon after leaving school, and those emerging teachers who have been in the field for a while but want to study further.
- The PIECCE programme framework will be informed by local and international research and evidence on ECD, as well as by teacher professional standards from the schooling system. We must balance the need to guard against ECCE becoming too formal and 'schoolified' with the need to link to generic professional skills.
- PIECCE outputs will be Open Education Resources, with illustrative materials available to all.

Mary gave some context to the way in which the ECD sector has grown and changed over the two decades of her involvement with ECD. In spite of being marginalised, ECD has proved to be a resilient sector. She noted that if ECD moves from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education practitioners will be eligible for teacher benefits such as medical aid and pensions, as well as the opportunity to join a teacher union: this aspect of professionalization should not be forgotten.

She talked to the importance of the training provider perspectives in qualification design, and the need to invite NGO trainers and TVET lecturers to give input into what is needed in teacher education for ECCE.

*If qualifications for ECCE educators change, those who train in-service practitioners also need to change their pedagogical practices. (Mary Clasquin-Johnson, UNISA)*

Within PIECCE Mary's focus area is Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL), which targets the current practitioner as an emerging teacher. She talked about how mature students need commitment and perseverance, and that the emphasis in RPL should be on validating their experiential knowledge in order to give them confidence and motivation to progress in their studies.

Giulietta noted that as an NGO attached to a university, Rhodes CSD has a dual perspective in terms of academic concerns and work in the trenches. She acknowledged concerns that have been expressed by NGO training providers, in that the development of a birth to four diploma and degree by HEIs will take away the work of the NGO sector. She wanted to emphasize that the diploma and the degree are not in competition with current and proposed Level 3, 4 and 5 ECD qualifications, but must be seen as part of a move to professionalise the field, including trainers of ECD practitioners. The diploma and the degree will



expand career pathway options, and cater for the different types of students who may want to explore these in the birth to four space. She noted, however, that the research done for PIECCE has illustrated some potential uptake issues. In terms of school leavers who go straight into higher education, preliminary results show that only 57% of the students surveyed showed an interest in ECCE birth to four. Areas of concern to potential students include:

- Salaries in this area: traditionally the majority of provision is sitting in impoverished contexts.
- The specialised and labour-intensive nature of birth to four care and education.

*We say it 'takes a village to raise a child', but it also takes a village to raise an ECCE practitioner. From stakeholder collaboration we are learning new lessons: that we need a new consciousness of community support; and that teacher education in ECCE needs strong levels of mentorship and with an emphasis on academic support. (Giulietta Harrison, Rhodes CSD)*

These concerns illustrate the need to locate qualifications within a broad understanding of the field and different stakeholder roles: for example, to link to the emerging human resource policies for the field, which need to address pay and professionalization; and to take health and safety issues into account, and the protocols put in place by the Department of Health.

## Key topics discussed in Q&A session

- **Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)**

There is an assumption that practitioners with only a Level 4 qualification do not provide quality, but we need to recognise that they are already professionals and take pride in their work. RPL should not just focus on setting out additional requirements to be met but on ways of recognising that some of these are already in place. In response, Mary Clasquin-Johnson noted that universities will look at the role of experiential learning and how to accredit the knowledge practitioners already have, and are beginning to consider how to recognise equivalence at Level 4. She stressed, however, that this needs to be balanced by an understanding of the demands of higher education. We don't want to set students up for failure, and the reality is that students will need some academic skills. RPL may give students **access** into a programme, but once they are there they need to progress through the programme in the same way as everyone else. These are complex issues as we don't just want to admit non-traditional students but also see them graduate. Academic support and mentorship will be vital elements in relation to the diploma and degree.

- **Practitioners with minimal formal schooling**

Several NGO participants noted that the majority of the people they work with do not qualify for entry even into a Level 4 qualification. The reality of the sector is that the majority of practitioners with little formal schooling are below NQF Level 3. In response it was noted that we still need to take into account those who do want to progress to universities, and that the target audience for the diploma in particular may include many of the ECD trainers themselves who want to improve their own professional levels. This could have a positive 'trickle down' effect on people working at

lower levels. It is also important that a common understanding of the main elements of quality ECD exists at all training levels. It is crucial that all players are familiar with the National Curriculum Framework Birth to Four, and that content gaps in the different knowledge mixes are identified. We need to harmonise the different approaches to 'knowing' and 'doing' at different levels.

- **Communication and collaboration**

Shifts such as the move to DBE from DSD, the registration of the occupational NQF Level 4 certificate and PIECCE are all changing the landscape. We need everyone's voices in these developments as well as engagement with new information by all sectors, as this is vital for future decision-making and successful implementation. From a DHET perspective there will be policy-advocacy meetings in the provinces, and platforms such as SACE and provincial departments will be used. From a PIECCE perspective, the innovative development of a collaborative approach between universities, TVETs and NGOs could give many benefits: the possibilities for partnerships to help each other in training (for example, with NGOs assisting HEIs with workplace training and WIL components) are very exciting. For information sharing, conference participants were referred to the PIECCE Facebook Page and the PIECCE page on the SARAECE website ([www.piecce.co.za](http://www.piecce.co.za)). BRIDGE as part of the PIECCE consortium will be running a PIECCE community of practice, sharing knowledge products from the project, and keeping the BRIDGE ECD CoP up to date. NGOs and TVETS should also use all their available forums to share information.

