ECD Quality Toolkit Pilot 2016
The ECD Quality Reflection Tool

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In recent years there has been a lot of talk about what 'quality' means in ECD. 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.

The ECD Quality Reflection Toolkit was developed to help people in the sector think about what 'good quality ECD' means in practice in different contexts. It is made up of:

1. The **ECD Quality Reflection Tool**, a self-reflection tool for practitioners

2. A set of **processes and resources** for piloting the implementation of the ECD Quality Reflection Tool.
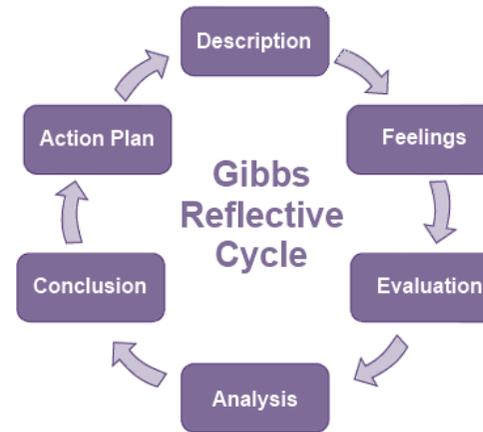
The ECD Quality Reflection Tool

This is a self-reflection tool for practitioners (teachers and principals) in the ECD sector. Self-reflection means giving serious thought to your character and actions. 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 structure through which you can examine:

- Your knowledge about your profession
- Your skills
- Your work practices and behaviours
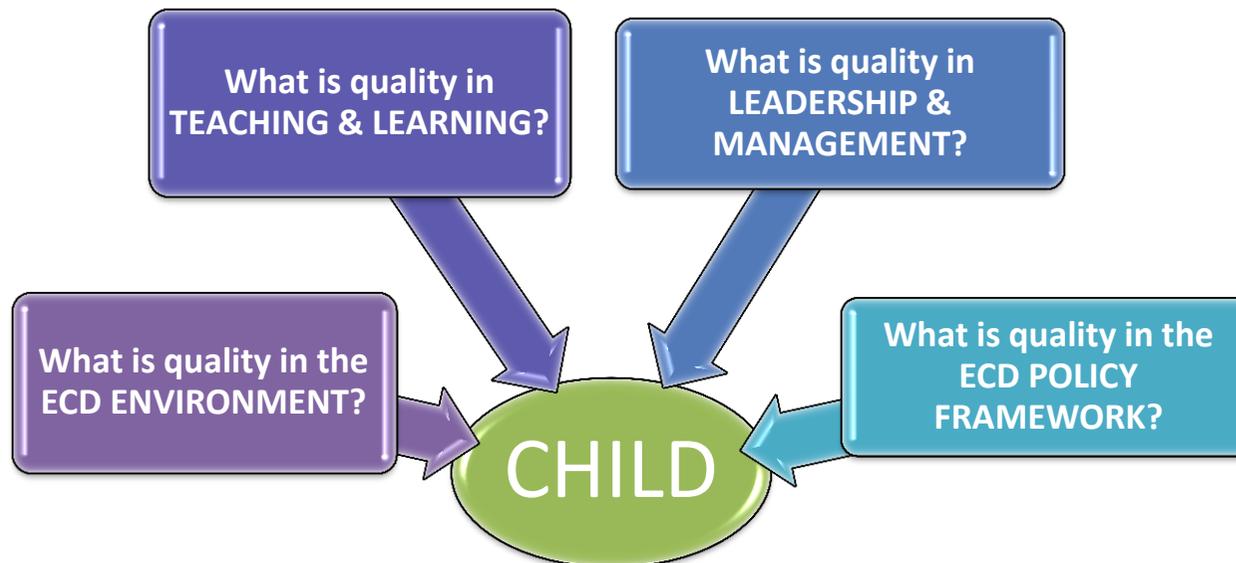- Your feelings and attitudes about your work.

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. You may be given a template to fill in, or you might keep a journal of your ideas. Many self-reflection tools follow the pattern shown here. [1].

This **ECD Quality Reflection Tool** came out of the idea that it is you, the practitioner who works with children every day, who needs to understand and share what quality means in your context. The Quality Reflection Tool is a self-reflection tool made up of a set of questions about different aspects of ECD. By answering these you can express and own **your** ideas about quality in ECD. We hope it will also guide you in identifying areas of your work where you may need to find out more information, or get help in developing your knowledge and skills.

The questions are grouped into four dimensions of quality. Each dimension has a set of questions attached to it to help you think through these aspects of quality, and what they mean in your ECD context. The four dimensions are show below.

Using the ECD Quality Reflection Tool

ECD Pilot Resource 1 explains the pilot process, which will give you an introduction to the Reflection Tool given below and how to use it. The tool is a resource for you to use on an ongoing basis over a long period of time. You will want to keep your own notebook in which you write down and add to your own answers to the reflection questions as you develop your professional ECD practice. The notes you make on the tool and in your notebooks will help you identify the areas of your practice in which you would like more support or more information. The answers and notes are for your development only, and do not need to be submitted to anyone.

This is the framework for thinking about quality in ECD.

REFLECTION TOOL: DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY IN ECD			
TEACHING & LEARNING	**LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT** [Applies to the Principal or Site Manager]	**ECD ENVIRONMENT**	**ECD POLICY FRAMEWORK**
Understanding pedagogical theory	**Instructional leadership**	**Physical**	**Policies & Procedures**
Using appropriate methodologies	**Organisational management**	**Mental & emotional**	**Support systems for practitioners**
Reflecting on attitudes, beliefs and ethics	**Support for sites**	**External** [Influence Of Parents/ Home/ Community]	**Support systems for children and for parents**
Managing oneself and managing your classroom	**Quality Assurance**	**Resources**	

The leftmost column label spanning the element rows: **ELEMENTS OF EACH DIMENSION**

Use these questions over time to guide your thinking. Write your responses and thoughts in your journal. You can use the column on the right to identify your professional development needs.

QUALITY DIMENSION: TEACHING AND LEARNING	In which areas do I need guidance or support?
UNDERSTANDING PEDAGOGICAL THEORY • What are my views on how children learn? • What theories about learning and teaching have I come across? • What does learning through play mean? Why is learning through play important? How does my practice help children learn through play? • What other ways of teaching and learning do I know about and use? • In my view, what does it mean for learning activities to be age appropriate? • What meaning does 'developmentally appropriate' have for me? • Do the activities I provide to the children support all their areas of development (physical, intellectual, emotional, social, creative and spiritual)? If not, which areas of child development are lacking or unsupported in my practice? How can I create activities to support the children's all-round development? How do I get them to develop a sense of well-being in these areas? • What do I understand by the term 'cultural relevance' for my teaching practice? • Do I understand what an integrated curriculum is? Which content areas of my integrated curriculum do I understand well? Which areas do I find difficult or need to improve my understanding of? • How do I assess children? Do I use different types of assessments, and where do I get these from? What use do I make of these assessments? With whom do I share these assessments?	

| IMPLEMENTING APPROPRIATE METHODOLOGIES | What methodologies do I use? Can I plan a daily programme? Do I get enough support? Do I know where to go for help? Why is it important to build learning on what a child already knows? In what ways can I facilitate learning through experiences and through play? What kinds of learning activities do I use in my practice (storytelling, art, drama, music ...) How do I manage my classroom (e.g. creating an environment in which it is easy to learn; maintaining order while encouraging active learning and interaction ...)? How do I link my methodologies to the children's contexts? How do I create meaningful and purposeful activities for my learners? How do I link activities to the real world? Do I know what my children's home languages are? Do I know how to greet/use phrases in the children's languages? How can I use greetings/ phrases in the children's languages in my practice? Do I know how to use children's home languages to help them learn? How do I accommodate different languages in the group? How do I communicate with children who speak a different language to the one being used at the site? What games do the children from this community/ culture play? How can I use these in my practice? Do I try to include specific cultural practices of the children where appropriate? How can I create opportunities that allow children to make choices? In what ways do I accommodate different developmental levels in my children? In what ways do I accommodate different age levels in a group of learners? How do I identify children experiencing barriers to learning? How do I accommodate the children experiencing barriers to learning? | |

	• What constructive methods do I use to discipline children?
	• How can I learn about the different values that are important to parents and children in my practice?
	• How do I greet parents/caregivers and children when they arrive at my practice?
REFLECTING ON ATTITUDES AND BELIEFS	• What are my core values and beliefs about children? How do they define my practice as an ECD practitioner?
	• How do my own beliefs influence the way I facilitate learning and play in my practice?
	• What are my attitudes and beliefs about children: for example, are they capable? curious? full of knowledge? Or do I think they know very little and need to be taught by me?
	• How can my attitude be the best resource I have in accommodating diversity?
	• What does 'culturally relevant' mean to me and my practice?
	• What is my attitude towards children experiencing barriers to learning?
	• Do I know when I create barriers to learning?
	• What do I understand by 'ethics' in my work?
MANAGING MYSELF	• Am I reliable and on time and how do I manage my time?
	• How can I find and take make use of opportunities for improving my knowledge and skills in ECD through ongoing professional development or CPTD (continuous professional teacher development)? How do I keep updated on the latest developments and trends in the ECD sector?
	• How do I develop self-awareness and self-esteem as an ECD practitioner?
	• What is an appropriate dress code in my context, and what value and importance does it have for my practice?
	• Is my cellphone switched off/on silent when I am busy with the children?

QUALITY DIMENSION: LEADERSHIP & MANAGEMENT [Applies to the Principal or Site Manager]		In which areas do I need guidance or support?
INSTRUCTIONAL LEADERSHIP	• What are the core values, mission and vision of my learning site and how are these shown in the operations and operational priorities? • How do I share the vision and mission with my staff? How do I ensure that the staff believe in, accept and implement the vision and mission? • Do I have an orientation / induction programme in place and is it regularly updated? What are the benefits of an orientation/ induction programme for my staff? (If applicable) How can I implement such a programme? How can I ensure that it is regularly updated? • How do I develop my staff's leadership skills and prepare them for future leadership? • How do I support my staff in delivering an appropriate curriculum? • How do I support my staff in addressing barriers to learning in the class? • How do I encourage my staff to share working practices and support each other? How do I encourage my staff to share good ideas and resources? • Do I listen to my staff and use their ideas when appropriate? • How do I give feedback to my staff? How can I increase the value of my feedback? • How can I ensure that I have a good working relationship with my staff? • How do I get my staff to reflect on their practice?	

	• How do I ensure that my staff gets professional development/ training which is (i) linked to policies and procedures; and (ii) fit for purpose? • How do I involve parents/ caregivers in their children's development and education? What programmes does management have in place for parent training? • How do we involve the parents/ caregivers in the activities/ programmes at the ECD centre?	
ORGANISATIONAL MANAGEMENT	• How do I manage my relationships with my stakeholders (learners, parents, school management teams, admin, HR, board, District, services, teacher, national, NGOs)? How do I communicate with them? How well is this working? Could I improve this in any way? • How do I coordinate operational planning? Who is involved in the planning? How can I improve operational planning? • How do I manage the daily programme? How well is this working? • How do I manage my financial systems? How could I improve the management of my financial systems? • How do I fund raise if I need to? How well is this working? What could I do differently? • How do I ensure sustainability of my centre/ school? What could I do differently? • How do I make sure the relevant ECD policies are in place and that I implement them? • What HR systems do I have in place? How do I appoint and evaluate my staff? How well is this working? What could I do differently? • What administrative policies and procedures, with relevant documentation, do I have in place?	
SUPPORT FOR SITES	• What support do I as principal/ owner receive to improve my own knowledge and qualifications? • Do I know what municipalities can do for me in order to ensure effective ECD Programmes and meet	

	registration/ compliance requirements? Who would I contact at the municipality?	
	• Which agencies (e.g. DSD or municipal) offices in my area can provide support and information about useful resources?	
	• Do I know what my rights as a principal / owner are? What steps can I take to protect my rights?	
	• Do I know what my rights are in terms of following alternative curriculums? E.g.: Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio.	
	• How do I encourage parents to adhere to the needs and regulations of ECD Sites, and what support systems can I draw on to make sure this happens?	
QUALITY ASSURANCE	• What do I understand by quality assurance?	
	• Do I have a quality assurance system in place to check on my organisational management? Does it work effectively? If not, where can I get help or support in implementing quality assurance?	
	• How do I know if my core values, mission and vision of my learning site are being operationalised? How do I measure this?	
ETHICS	• What are the ethical considerations that relate to leadership in ECD?	
	• What ethical considerations do I need to take into account in terms of my staff?	

QUALITY DIMENSION: ENVIRONMENT	In which areas do I need guidance or support?

| PHYSICAL | • How do I manage routines (e.g. toilet or nappy changing routines; nap time) in my environment?
 • What do I have in my physical teaching environment that will enhance teaching and learning?
 • How does my teaching environment cater for experiential play (structured & unstructured)?
 • How much space is there for learning and play? Do I manage this space well? Do I have an indoor and outdoor area?
 • How safe and secure is my teaching environment for children?   What could be dangerous, and how can I deal with this?
 • What do I know about the health of the children in my care? Do I have up to date health records for them? Do I know if children have allergies or suffer from a chronic illness?
 • Where do I go if I need information on their health? Do I know how to advise parents on simple health issues?
 • Where is the allergies list displayed in my classroom and/or kitchen area? How regularly do I update this list? Do I know what to do if something does happen?
 • How do I manage common childhood accidents and injuries? Do I have an up to date first-aid kit, and do I know how to use it? How would I manage incidents like blood spills or allergic reactions?
 • What does my evacuation plan consist of, and how often do I practise it?
 • Where are the emergency numbers displayed in my classroom? How regularly are these numbers updated?
 • Are parent/caregivers lists displayed with their correct contact numbers in each classroom including the office? How often do I update these lists?
 • Do I provide children with the right kinds of meals and snacks? Are the facilities adequate to provide | |

	healthy and hygienic meals to children? What should I do to improve these facilities?	

MENTAL & EMOTIONAL	• What message does my teaching environment send to the children? Is it a safe but challenging environment? • In what ways do I provide emotional security for children? • How do I talk and interact with children? How do I build a trusting relationship with each child? • How do I teach children to be proud of themselves and proud of their environment? • How do I involve children in making decisions about their environment?	
EXTERNAL [Influence of Parents/ Home/ Community]	• What do I know about my children's contexts? • How does the children's external environment (home and community) affect or influence my teaching practice? • In what ways do I draw on the community to enrich my environment? • What are the different stakeholders who could be involved in my school? How are different stakeholders involved in my school? How can I improve their involvement? • What can I do to encourage parents/ caregivers to bring children to ECD sites?	
RESOURCES	• What resources do I have to support teaching and learning through play? How can I achieve more with these resources? • Which of my teaching and learning resources enable me to stimulate holistic development? Do I have enough of these? • How well do my resources match to the stages of development of children in my care?	

• How can I adapt my existing resources, or get additional resources that will help me deliver quality education? In my community, where can I go to and who can I ask for resources? • Are the available toys: safe; well-maintained; and adequately used? If not, how can I make them more easily accessible, improve their condition and encourage the children to use them? • What are my views on myself as a resource for the children? In what ways can I be a resource for the children? • Which of my resources help me to cater for diversity and for children with barriers to learning? How can I adapt existing resources for these purposes? • How can I make my own affordable and lasting resources? • What curriculum do I follow and how do I know it is a quality curriculum? • Which curriculum documents do I need? Where do I keep these documents? Where do I find these documents if I do not have them?	

QUALITY DIMENSION: ECD POLICY FRAMEWORK	In which areas do I need guidance or support?
POLICIES & PROCEDURES	• Do I understand the policy and legislative context of ECD? Which areas am I unsure of? Where can I go for help? • What do I know about occupational health and safety requirements? Where can I go to get this knowledge?	

	• Can I meet all the compliance requirements? If not, what can I do to become compliant? • What do I know about the constitutional rights of children in relation to the environment?
SUPPORT FOR PRACTITIONERS	• What training have I received on the ECD National Curriculum Framework? What training have I received for CAPS (for Grade R)? • What support forum, association or Community of Practice am I connected to, or could I become connected to? • How do I recognise and share good practice with my colleagues and others in ECD? • What support do I need to understand the importance of adult learning for my own CPTD (continuous professional development)? • What support systems are available to support play (e.g. Toy libraries), or any other approach that I use? • What support and referral systems are available to me and how well do I understand them? Who do I approach if I suspect a child is being abused or neglected or has learning barriers? • What type of support do I receive from the principal? How can I build on this support? • What type of relationship do I have with other sites/ schools in order to help me track whether the children in my care are ready to transition to the next stage of education? • In what ways do I benefit from site visits by district officials? What is my role in making these site visits productive? • What do I know about what municipalities can do for me in order to ensure effective ECD Programmes, or meet registration/ compliance requirements? Who would I contact at the municipality? • Where is the nearest Education District Office? In what ways can they support me? • Where is the nearest DSD Office? In what ways can they support me?

	• Do I know what my rights as an educator are? What steps can I take to protect my rights? • Do I know what my rights are in terms of following alternative curriculums? e.g.: Waldorf, Montessori, Reggio • How can I obtain the services of translators, if necessary?	
SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN AND PARENTS	• How do I involve parents/caregivers in discussions on their children's well-being (for example, child safety, nutrition, stimulation and so on)? • What do I need to tell the children in my care about how to ask for help and who to talk to? • What methods can I use to communicate with parents/ caregivers about using resources effectively, and about which resources are age and developmentally appropriate? What do I need to tell the parents/ caregivers? • How can I transfer basic knowledge about ECD to parents and communities?	