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# Grade R Research Dissemination

8 August 2011

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Dissemination Report

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## Grade R Research Dissemination:

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### Final Report

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ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
BEd	Bachelor of Education
CAPS	Curriculum & Assessment Policy Statements
CECD	Centre for Early Childhood Development
CHE	Council for Higher Education
CPTD	Continuing Professional Teacher Development
DBE	Department of Basic Education
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
DoH	Department of Health
DOL	Department of Labour
DSD	Department of Social Development
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ECDI	Early Childhood Development Institute
ETDP SETA	Education, Training and Development Practice Sectoral Education and Training Authority
EU SPSP	European Union funded primary Education Sector Policy Support Programme
FET	Further Education and Training
HEI	Higher Education Institution
HEQC	Higher Education Quality Council
HEQF	Higher Education Qualifications Framework
KPACC	Kwa-Zulu Natal Advisory Committee on Children
MRTEQ	Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications
NCS	National Curriculum Statements
NELDS	National Early Learning Development Standards
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NIP	National Integrated Plan
NWU	North West University
PED	Provincial Education Department
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PoE	Portfolio of Evidence
QA	Quality Assurance
QCTO	Quality Council for Trades and Occupations
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SACE	South African Council for Educators
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SARAECE	South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education
Umalusi	Meaning 'shepherd' – quality assurance body for general education and training
UNISA	University of South Africa
WIL	Workplace Integrated Learning

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This report has been compiled from a number of online, email and face to face discussions with a range of stakeholders in the ECD sector, facilitate by Saide and funded by Zenex.

In a recent research project, funded by the Zenex Foundation, we examined the readiness for Grade R in South Africa at the level of the system, the teachers and the children in relation to what we want children to be able to do in Grade R, how we want teachers to teach and how teachers are prepared to teach.

We discovered, and reported that there was

*... substantial research that has already been done, from which relevant and comprehensive recommendations have been put forward at the level of the system and at the level of teachers.*

We made the point that many of these recommendations were corroborated by that research, but also that much of that research appeared to have gone unnoticed, important as it was. In the light of this we recommended to the Zenex Foundation that we find more public ways of disseminating not only that report, but also recommendations from other research more widely and of putting them into action.

This research dissemination process arose out of that recommendation, and has consisted of a number of conversations with most of those who participated in the original research. Most of the conversations were held in face to face provincial workshops but some inputs were contributed via email and a small number of contributions were made online.

When the discussions began we had identified the following issues as the focus for the conversations:

- Qualifications policy and the new Level 6 Diploma
- Collaboration
- Teacher / student support
- Quality assurance of ECD training
- Pre-school qualifications policy discussion focus questions

As a result of the conversations it became clear that the issues of teacher/student support and quality assurance, among others, are important principles that need to be addressed across the sector. It was noted, however, that the development of the new Level 6 Grade R Diploma, and the consideration of a Preschool Qualifications Policy provide concrete opportunities for the sector to explore and model how these principles can be enacted.

We have structured this report to cover the two pertinent areas of qualifications policy:

- The first concerns the development of a new Level 6 Diploma, and related issues of collaboration, quality assurance and teacher/student support.
- The second is about the development of a pre-school qualifications policy, and the process needed to begin that and take it forward with the sector.

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... which action has already been initiated, in the first instance through a project within the European Union funded primary Education Sector Policy Support Programme (EU SPSP) initiated by the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to 'establish a framework for the development of a qualification at level 6/7 for Grade R practitioners'<sup>1</sup>, and in the second instance through a policy initiative of the DHET.

### ***B. Ways forward***

The focus of these discussions was very much on what can be done next to take the issues forward. It is interesting to note that when pushed to action around the issues raised in the discussion, participants returned time and again to the notion of encouraging ECD forums to focus on particular issues and take them forward. In essence this is about encouraging the development and growth of communities of practice.

The term Communities of Practice is a term coined by Etienne Wenger and anthropologist Jean Lave while they were studying apprenticeship as a learning model. Wenger describes communities of practice as "groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly."<sup>2</sup> He elaborates on this:

*Three characteristics are crucial:*

***The domain:*** *A community of practice is not merely a club of friends or a network of connections between people. It has an identity defined by a shared domain of interest. Membership therefore implies a commitment to the domain, and therefore a shared competence that distinguishes members from other people.*

***The community:*** *In pursuing their interest in their domain, members engage in joint activities and discussions, help each other, and share information. They build relationships that enable them to learn from each other.*

***The practice:*** *A community of practice is not merely a community of interest ... Members of a community of practice are practitioners. They develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing recurring problems—in short a shared practice. This takes time and sustained interaction.*

Wenger emphasizes that "It is the combination of these three elements [the domain, the community and the practice] that constitutes a community of practice. And it is by developing these three elements in parallel that one cultivates such a community.

An important question remains "Who takes responsibility for collaboration?". In one of the forums it was suggested that unless collaboration is 'forced' it will not happen. This led to a conversation about finding ways to support and sustain collaboration in focused ways. The question of responsibility was answered in part by some participants talking about their involvement in existing initiatives to foster, support and sustain collaboration, such as:

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<sup>1</sup> European Union funded primary Education Sector Policy support Programme (EU SPSP): Strengthening Foundation Phase Teacher Education – Supported University Projects, DHET, pg 39.

<sup>2</sup> Etienne Wenger, Communities of practice - a brief introduction, June, 2006, from <http://www.ewenger.com/theory/index.htm>

- Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) supporting the establishment of an ECD Research Association through the European Union funded primary Education Sector Policy support Programme (EU SPSP);
- the ETDP SETA planning a Round Table discussion with ECD stakeholders during the course of 2011, and the possibility of the ETDP SETA facilitating ECD provincial forums linked to the ECD and ABET Chamber; and of course
- the Zenex Foundation supporting this research dissemination.

The question is also answered in part by acknowledging the existence of vibrant forums at national and local levels, which need to be encouraged, supported and sustained.

In the Collaboration section of this report there are suggestions for developing new forums, strengthening existing forums at national and local level, the different functions that these forums can play, who should be invited to participate in such forums, and the areas of focus for some of the discussions in these forums. Since the conversations reported on here revolve around issues raised in the original research report we feel that any further conversations should consider the suggestions made in this report, but also the recommendations made in the original Grade Research Report.

Through the report we have highlighted **'Next Steps'**. These are either related tasks/issues that we feel need to be taken up by relevant stakeholders, or they are what we consider to be particularly important actions to be considered in future work around the issues raised.

### ***C. Qualifications policy and the new Level 6 Diploma***

As background to the conversations about a new Level 6 Grade R Diploma, and indeed to the conversations about collaboration and a Preschool Qualifications Policy, the DHET presented some of their thoughts around teacher education and related issues. One of the issues related to an expanded idea about a 'teacher'. The DHET understands that it is no longer just talking about a school teacher, but has to extend this term to include pre-school, schooling and post-schooling.

The DHET also shared some of the issues that they are currently grappling with, including:

- Common definition of ECD
- Current ECD teacher education programmes are not producing the number nor the kind of teachers required for the diverse ECD schooling contexts that characterise the South African Education System.
- Teaching at ECD level considered the 'Cinderella' of teaching – status issues
- ECD teacher education in universities has a poor image and status
- ECD teacher education as a sector is fragmented, no defined community of practice, no strong networks, no research tradition
- Knowledge about involvement of NGO's and FET colleges in ECD teacher education is sketchy / fragmented.
- Concerns about quality of some programmes for ECD teachers.
- Lack of defined career pathways and opportunities for ECD teachers.
- Involvement of multiple government stakeholders (DoH, DSD, DBE, DHET)

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Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education  
Grade R Credit Diploma in Grade R Teaching as the minimum qualification that teachers will need in order to teach Grade R. The policy envisages that potential students holding a Level 4 or Level 5 Certificate or Diploma, or a matric certificate which allows access to diploma or degree studies, may present these for admission into the Grade R Diploma. The Grade R Diploma will therefore cater for new entrants into the sector, as well as existing practitioners who want /need to improve their qualifications.

### 1. The new Level 6 Diploma and current teachers

*“Could become a defining moment in the history of ECD, in terms of improving quality of training and quality of provision.”*

One of the more common responses to this question revolved around the question of teachers’ status. This relates to how teachers may feel about themselves and also about the kind of recognition they may receive if they are able to obtain a Level 6 Grade R diploma.

Participants were generally pleased that teachers will be recognised and appropriately qualified to be appointed in a public school, and they will also be entitled to full SACE membership and therefore be eligible for all benefits.

*They will be given a proper place and dignity, and will no longer be looked down on. They will feel valued because of the contribution they have made to the education sector over the years.*

There was also a feeling that this will provide teachers with opportunities to further themselves in various ways. Firstly, it was felt that it will be a blessing for those without matric who have battled through Level 4 and 5 and simply do not see themselves starting a B. Ed degree. They will be able to get a Level 6 and continue teaching a Grade R class, even if they don’t go on and get a BEd and teach in the higher grades. It is also an opportunity for others who want to further educate themselves and/or increase their job opportunities by going the BEd route. All the training invested in the development and empowerment of practitioners will be retained within the public sector. Some reiterated a concern that ‘Should they not be granted this option they would be ejected constructively out of a system which desperately needs their expertise.’

A cautionary note was sounded, however, that Grade R teachers still need to be afforded equivalent financial status, otherwise as soon as they have a BEd they will move out of Grade R into better paid positions.

A concern is still access to funding and bursaries for students. There needs to be access to bursaries for part-time Grade R Diploma and BEd studies, but also for full time studies. Making available bursaries such as the Fundza Lushaka bursary, and even financial support that enables teachers be relieved of their responsibilities while they study. Grade R practitioners are generally keen to study, but simply cannot afford to do so.

discuss financial policy issues affecting Grade R teacher status and access to qualifications, such as salaries and bursaries.

## **2. Development of a framework for a level 6 Grade R diploma**

There was general agreement that a national framework for the Grade R diploma will be helpful to guide different institutions in designing and developing programmes. While different institutions will have flexibility to offer their programmes in different and innovative ways, a national framework will help to set a standard and ensure that all the pedagogic and content needs of Grade R teachers are addressed. If such a framework existed it would be the responsibility of all teacher education providers to use and/or refer to it, even if that provider is not an HEI, and not training at Level 6.

One of the projects within the EU-funded SPSP programme of the DHET has planned to facilitate a collaborative and inclusive process to design such a framework. This provides all stakeholders with a unique opportunity to give input into a complex process to produce a high quality framework.

There are a number of issues that our conversations pointed to that we would want this process to consider. These are outlined in the following paragraphs:

### **2.1. The Grade R Diploma giving students access to a BEd**

The question of how the level 6 can be recognised as credits towards the level 7 BEd is important because it influences a number of aspects of the design of the level 6.

The policy on the Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications (MRTEQ) indicates that the Grade R Diploma can be submitted for entry into the BEd and that a maximum of 180 credits can be given towards the B.Ed. In order to do this there needs to be a suitable mix of credits for levels 5, 6 and 7. This is outlined in the requirements document, as:

Maximum total credits @ Level 5: 120

Minimum total credits @ Level 7: 60<sup>3</sup>

If the training and level of learning is appropriately pitched at level 5 and 6 then it should help to prepare learners to cope with the complexities of learning required at level 7 for the B.Ed. This will need to include the ‘fundamentals’ of academic literacy and academic support. The MRTEQ describes Fundamental Learning as “... learning to converse competently in a second official language, the ability to competently use Information and Communications Technologies, and the acquisition of academic literacies which lay the foundations for effective learning in higher education contexts.”<sup>4</sup> In the MRTEQ it is specified that fundamental learning for the Grade R Diploma should be at Level 5 to a maximum of 72 credits.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly important in the light of the issue raised in Section 1 about the Diploma potentially benefiting those Grade R teachers who do not see themselves starting a B. Ed degree. While addressing fundamental learning in the Level 6 diploma may not be the full solution to the problem, it will be no solution at all

<sup>3</sup> DHET, Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications, 2011, pg 39.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pg 8

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pg 40

this and other matters relating to target audience

For the same reason, access to the Level 7 BEd from the level 6 is not separate from the question about how students gain access to and succeed in the new Level 6 Diploma. This is because we are talking about a continuum of learning in a qualifications pathway. In the MRTEQ it is suggested that a level 4 or a level 5 will gain entry into the new Level 6 Diploma in Grade R.<sup>6</sup>

One of the challenges the Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) face is how to facilitate entry into a level 6 from anything other than matric. While level 4 is supposed to be a matric equivalent, neither it nor a level 5 are currently recognised for entry into university, other than at UNISA. Rhodes and NWU are considering ways to accommodate students who do not have a matric certificate but do have ECD level 5 certificates and who have experience. Most students will because they will be in-service. We will require some kind of process for RPL in (HEIs). In the original Grade R Research Report<sup>7</sup> it was recommended that in the process of developing a career (sic) path for ECD, consideration be given to “developing RPL processes, perhaps centralized, to facilitate easier movement through pathways.”

**Next Step:**

In the development of a framework for the Grade R Diploma include a conversation about the challenges of entry into Level 6, and learn lessons from those who are battling with this issue. Also include conversations about the development of guidelines for RPL. An additional complication is how to ensure that a unit standards-based qualification speaks to a non-unit standards-based qualification.

One of the questions raised in the discussions was “But which of level 4 or level 5 will give students entry?” Perhaps the answer is both - we need to retain the level 5 for those who want to move more slowly through the system, or who currently have a level 5 and want it recognised. Some of the credits of the level 5 can go towards credit in the level 6 because the level 6 will be made up of level 5, 6 and 7 descriptors. But a level 4 can also gain entry to the beginning of the level 6 without having to do the level 5.

Because there was general agreement that the Grade R Diploma should reflect the whole 0-9 continuum, and because students with a Level 4 or level 5 or Matric can come into the qualification, it was felt that it should provide an orientation to the ECD field by addressing the development of babies, toddlers and young children. This will allow a student to come into the Level 6 with a matric or a Level 4 without credits, or they can come with a Level 5 and get credits on the basis of an RPL process.

So ultimately the answer to gaining access to Level 6 from either Level 4 or level 5 is about whether the qualifications are cognate. This means that there needs to be a logical relationship between the qualifications, and that there are some ideas, topics, units or modules which are common or which are similar. We can see that Level 5 and 6, and Level 4 and 6, have to be cognate. Not only does it give the HEIs more confidence in

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, pg 39

<sup>7</sup> Saide, Grade R Research Report, pg 41

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entry into the programme, but it also means that the  
in achieving the level 6. This is because cognate  
qualifications need to build on one another in terms of what students learn.

### Next Step:

Attention needs to be paid to cognate qualifications in the process of designing a framework for Level 6.

A further consideration was raised concerning potential students who have a professional teaching qualification already (for Junior or Senior Primary or High School), or who are already professional nurses or social workers. It was suggested that we need a professional diploma to qualify them to teach Grade R and to work within the ECD field on a broader professional level, without starting at level 4 or 5. Some suggested that this could be the Level 6 Grade R Diploma. Others suggested a PGCE for Grade R/Foundation Phase.

### **2.2. ECD Levels 4 and 5 and the Grade R Diploma**

Many, if not most, felt strongly that the Level 5 SAQA qualification requirements do NOT adequately prepare a teacher for teaching in a Grade R class. But there were conflicting views about this – others suggested Learners with a level 5 National Diploma in ECD should be allowed two years of credit towards the level 6. Their argument is that training at Level 5 is intensive, a lot of the reception year work is covered, and the students have been exposed to a lot of in-service training.

*“The experiences of some students who have gained access to the UNISA BEd with a level 5 Diploma find that the majority of work that they do in the first year of the BEd Foundation phase is a repetition of what they have done.”*

Others, such as those who offer a Montessori qualification, feel that

*“We have been around for a long time and we have been feeding Grade 1 in public and independent schools well before the DBE introduced Grade R in schools ... and we have been doing exceptionally well. We believe our curriculum surpasses the SOs and ACs ...”*

What this illustrates is the need for the Level 5 particular needs to be revisited in the light of the new Grade R Diploma at Level 6. It was suggested that the current Level 5 could be used as a basis for the Level 5 credits in the Level 6 Diploma. This will also help HEIs to accept a level 5 as entry to the level 6.

*I strongly want to recommend that the current Level 5 Diploma unit standards should be used as a starting point for the Level 6 Diploma. This will make RPL easier, and may allow for some credits to be given towards the Level 6 from the Level 5.*

and

*... it may be possible to reduce the Level 5 qualification. Then there are more stepping stones.*

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Qualifications (ID 64649 and 64650) have not been reviewed for some time and many felt that they are in urgent need of review and replacement. Many participants were of the view that there is already a disjuncture between the Level 4 ECD Qualification (58761) and the Level 5 ECD Qualifications, citing the following areas that need consideration:

- learning assumed to be place
- unit standards which are outdated and in some cases have already been replaced. Based on the HEQF document, a Level 5 only stipulates a Higher Certificate (120 credits). A learning pathway needs to be clearly thought through with regards to pre-grade R and formal schooling to ensure articulation is clear and relevant as well in relation to current ECD qualifications offered.
- Some of the unit standards should be incorporated in Level 5 and carry other more credits in Level 6
- The Level 5 qualification does not adequately prepare matric students with the basics of setting up a classroom, daily programme, a basic understanding of early childhood development, and so on.

Another important consideration for reviewing the Level 5 qualification is the extent to which it forms part of a potential qualifications pathway for teachers teaching 0-4 year old children.

**Next Step:**

In the light of the need for such close synergy between Levels 5 and 6, consider a review of ECD Level 5 qualifications.

It is suggested that the review team for Level 5 participate in the development of the Level 6 framework so that it can be an iterative process.

There were some strong feelings about the Level 4 ECD qualifications.

*ECD 4 is the minimum requirement at present for principals at Social Development sites and the minimum qualification for a Grade R practitioner but does not equip either group properly*

and

*In level 4 the focus is on 5 year olds and younger. It is a comprehensive curriculum, but most of the reception year work is not covered.*

A further challenge with the Level 4 was identified. There was a comment that “our learners are struggling to get level 4 with the informal education experiences.” One of the biggest challenges remains that of getting adequate fundamentals. This is to prepare students for both Level 5 and Level 6.

**Next Step:**

Pick up the issue of fundamentals at Level 4 again.

There was a suggestion of instituting a national exam for ECD level 4 which will help to make level 4 equivalent to matric with a diploma exemption.

### **2.3. The make-up of the Diploma**

A number of general points were made about the approach adopted in the new Diploma. There is an understanding that different institutions will take different approaches to the teaching of young children, and that we do not necessarily want a single prescriptive approach that stifles creativity. Nonetheless, participants suggested certain broad approaches that would encourage a child- and community-friendly overall approach to the teaching of Grade R. One participant commented about helping Grade R teachers to understand and be able to work with parents and communities,

*The principals/parents/communities should be “educated” as to the purpose and function of a Grade R classroom.*

and another comment about the principles of ECD:

*The Grade R should operate on many of the ECD principles e.g. creative activity, free play, story time etc. The Grade 1-3 classrooms should be modelled on the ECD classroom and not vice versa*

There were also suggestions for how the Diploma should address Grade R on the ECD continuum, the balance between theory and practice, and more specific comments about what the content focus should be, as follows:

#### **2.3.1. Addressing Grade R**

There was unanimity that understanding the learning processes across the continuum is critical in order to understand how children develop and learn and how they should be assessed.

*The development stages of the younger learners strongly link to how learners learn in Grade R, but teachers should also be able to link to what will happen in Grade 1 and 2. Therefore the links between ECD and the Foundation Phase must be clearly discernible and defined.*

There was some questioning about the need to have a three year Diploma that focuses exclusively on one year within the Foundation Phase, particularly considering that there is general consensus that ECD covers the continuum of 0-9.

There were a number of comments supporting the idea that the Diploma should have a Grade R focus, such as

*The teaching approaches and methodologies for Grade R differ from those of the ECD phase and those of the Foundation Phase.*

and

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...the R learners and learning being transformed into a  
...the learners are being subjected prematurely into  
...formalised structured learning content and programmes in [the] Grade R.

and

*There needs to be a gradual increase in structured learning in Grade R, still with a focus on “play with a purpose” as promoted by CAPS and ensure that children’s transition to Grade 1 is well planned.*

and

*According to our research findings and experience in practice, the diploma would be most effective when focussed on Grade R exclusively for the following reasons:*

- *Optimal learning readiness was identified as a critical need in the school system.*
- *Insufficient learning readiness was identified as one of the main reasons for later drop-outs and poor academic performance.*
- *Grade R is more specialised than ECD programmes focussed on the development of the younger child (0-4years).*

During a discussion at the LEWS conference<sup>8</sup> Whitfield Green and Di Parker from the DHET clarified that this Diploma is a specific response to the existing context which requires a Level 6 to provide a bridge from Level 5 to level 7, but that in future all ECD teachers wanting to teach in the Foundation Phase (including Grade R) will be encouraged to move straight to a BEd. This is supported in a sense by the fact that there are probably a number of teachers out there who would take this qualification but not be willing or able to take the BEd. These teachers are extremely valuable in the system, and they should do what they do well.

Given the strong feelings that this Diploma should include an understanding of where children ‘are going’ in their development’, and where they are ‘coming from’, and given the qualification pathway from Level 5 into the Diploma and from the Diploma into Level 7, it is clear that the Diploma cannot focus exclusively on Grade R. There will need to be some components covering the 0-4 child and some elements covering the 6-9 (or Grade 1 – 3) child. This means that while there is some focus on teaching children of 0-4 years and 6-9 years, this Diploma is a specialisation in Grade R.

It was suggested by some that the diploma should be structured in such a way that it builds or culminates into a Grade R specialization in the final year of qualification.

The new MRTEQ outlines the weighting as follows:

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<sup>8</sup> The LEWS conference was a collaboration between the University of Johannesburg, the Department of Higher Education and Training, the Department of Basic Education, and literacy education specialists from Harvard University. The conference was held shortly after the Grade R consultative workshops took place. Some of the sessions were pertinent to this report because they provided a platform for discussion of ideas around the new Level 6 Grade R Diploma and issues of collaboration.

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credits must be focused on developing the Grade R relevant disciplinary, pedagogical and practical learning). At least 48 of these credits should be at level 5, 96C at Level 6 and 30 at level 7.<sup>9</sup>

Many people in our conversations thought that the weighting should be at least 60% for Grade R.

An interesting concern was raised from the independent schools sector:

*This is critical from a Montessori perspective as our classes span the range 3 – 6 years of age, but is not Grade R in terms of curriculum. Montessori is specifically excluded from the NCS in terms of the Rights and Responsibilities of Independent schools.*

Our understanding is that anyone can offer a Level 6 Grade R Diploma, within the framework of the qualification description.

Nonetheless, the '0-4 and 5-6 divide' remains an issue that must be addressed by the Grade R Diploma.

### **2.3.2. The balance between theoretical learning and practical learning**

The MRTEQ does not prescribe the weighting of theory and practical learning as such. Rather, it emphasises that

*“... the approach adopted in these Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications pays close attention to the various types of knowledge which underpin teachers’ practice, and encapsulates all these in the notion of integrated and applied knowledge.”*

These types of knowledge are identified as Fundamental learning, Disciplinary learning, Pedagogical learning, Practical learning, and Situational learning.

*“The principle of applied and integrated knowledge implies that the different kinds of learning ... should be integrated across courses and modules to ensure that they serve the purpose of the overall programme.”*

There was general consensus that the new Level 6 diploma should be grounded in theory and knowledge regarding child development and developmental needs of all learners within the ECD phase. To do this it should include a range of learning theories, their underpinning theoretical orientations and implications for teaching, such as:

- Students will identify and discuss contrasting perspectives of learning theories relevant to the Grade R learner.
- Students will engage critically with the learning theories using their personal learning experiences to reflect on the diverse contexts in which learning takes place in Grade R.

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<sup>9</sup> DHET, Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education Qualifications, 2011, pg 39.

learning theories to their classroom practice.

There was agreement that whether learning is in-service or not theory will have to form a solid basis for practice.

In the end there were a range of opinions on what balance is best: some suggested that there should be 30% contact sessions and 70% workplace learning, including Workplace Monitoring and Inspection, another suggested that the balance should be about 60/40, and another that one quarter of the diploma should be dedicated to theoretical learning. Another participant thought about this in relation to the credits, and suggested that over the 3 years 96 credits (or 960 notional hours) should be devoted to WIL. An instance of a college requiring 2 days practical every week was cited as an example of striking a good balance.

It is noted that this balance may be achieved in different ways, depending on the design of the programme and the mode of delivery. While this decision is left up to institutions, the sector could learn lessons from sharing creative ideas on how to implement work integrated learning, including through mentorships and partnerships.

Of course, these decisions will be relevant for non-practising students. For an in-service Level 6 programme students will be practising teachers, and their classroom practice requirements should be integrated into their daily work in the classroom.

### **2.3.3. The organisation of Workplace Integrated Learning (WIL)**

The issue of Workplace Integrated Learning (WIL) needs to be further unpacked to ensure that there is greater synergy and integration between theory, practical skills and workplace learning. It was suggested that there is a difference between mentoring and coaching. Mentoring is usually viewed as a process of guiding and supporting based on a relationship of trust and respect to achieve desired growth. Coaching, on the other hand, is often seen as a directed process of assisting the acquisition of specific knowledge, skills and values to a desired level of development. It was stressed that the mentors and coaches need to be good teachers themselves.

This distinction may be a fine one, but nonetheless, many suggested that the diploma should

*be practice based and should ensure that qualified teachers are able to facilitate optimal learning readiness in an informal manner (through play).*

In order to do this student teachers need to spend time in quality classrooms. This means that there need to be 'teaching practice schools' of best practice for students to work in, and well-trained mentors and coaches who are able to provide the necessary support and feedback on the students' practice. There were some reservations expressed about the effective implementation of this within a programme.

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.../school prepare the student for what should be  
classroom? Most of the time the teachers observe or  
work in schools which do not model best practice. The flip side is that best  
practice could be in a situation that is so removed from the teacher's experience  
that they cannot transfer the best practice to the situation that they are  
teaching in.

and

*The large proportion of the time being school-based is problematic with regard  
to monitoring and the assessment process ... Will it mean visits by the  
lecturers/facilitators? What will this mean regarding costing and how does it  
affect the development of PoE's?*

Again, there were different suggestions for how WIL can be organised, such as:

- Set tasks and assignments to do in the classroom, as formative and summative assessment requirements related to theory, including opportunities to prepare educational resources
- Clear and regular opportunities to reflect on workplace integrated tasks with mentors and other teachers, including constructive feedback on that practice
- intensive training that supports and scaffolds the workplace practice,
- Opportunities for teacher educators and other teachers to observe, monitor and evaluate workplace practice

#### **2.3.4. Theoretical orientations in programmes**

Whatever the balance, it was felt that teacher educators should encourage and model an approach that is

*experiential, interactive hands-on, creative, discovery based learning within a social context with plenty of discussion, debate and the sharing of ideas and resources (collaborative and reciprocal learning with a more-knowledgeable other, a 'specialist' to mentor and scaffold the learning process)*

There were many suggestions for the kinds of theories and approaches that should inform the Grade R Diploma. The following suggestions are in addition to, or add more detail to the suggestions that emanated from the original Grade R Research Report.

In terms of approach:

- Knowledge of different styles/approaches in education internationally (especially for this age group)
- theories of learning applied to child development in the 0-9 phase, including theories of play
- knowledge of stages in and approaches to the development of mathematical concepts

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and personality is important and should be integrated:  
Skinner, Pavlov and indigenous approaches to  
knowledge and behaviour in young children.

- Teaching and learning strategies / methods should be based on theories accommodating learning-through-play
- The programme should also provide opportunities for students for social learning, learning through reflection on effective practice and should accommodate prior knowledge and experience of students.

In the original Grade R Research Report we had recommended that the standard core content for a Grade R Diploma should include, inter alia:<sup>10</sup>

- Fundamentals at level 4 and 5 need to be more carefully considered. We believe they are critical in preparing teachers for facilitating emergent literacy and numeracy, as well as preparing teachers for their own further studies. We are aware of a pilot towards national foundational learning.
- Level 5 and 6 qualifications have to provide for literacy and academic literacy by building it into the programmes.
- Critical understanding of NELDS and NCS
- A level of language required to be a teacher, including an additional language;
- African language and second language emergent literacy instruction;
- Teacher agency, values in education;
- Community development / psycho-social support. We need to be careful here not to be unrealistic in our expectations of the role teachers can play as community development workers. The emphasis would probably be more on understanding the local context of children, and how to access support for children and parents through community networks and services.

Given the continuum on which ECD teacher education needs to happen consideration should be given to including these core competencies in 0-4 and Foundation Phase programmes too.

Also in the previous report we categorised what Grade R teachers need to know, understand and be able to do into seven categories:

- Language
- Numeracy
- Children's background and understanding the community
- Child development and learning theories, and curriculum
- Methodologies that support those frameworks and application of those methodologies
- Teacher agency, including what it means to be a teacher, the understanding of roles and the development of self-esteem.

What is recorded here from participants' suggestions in terms of content is additional to the suggestions in the original Grade R Research, so please refer to that report.

The additional suggestions in terms of content for the Diploma include:

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<sup>10</sup> Saide, Grade R Research Report, pg 43

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importance of the physical development of learners on

- Classroom management
- A sound knowledge of the Foundation Phase curriculum, including understanding of the terms used (even simple terms such as recognise, identify, compare, name, etc. are misunderstood)
- Ways of getting parents and community involved in the educational programmes, including food gardens, and cross-sectorial work with Health, Agriculture, Social Development etc.
- Development of brain
- Role of the teacher
- Administration
- Planning
- number development, spatial reasoning and measurement
- study skills and writing skills in relation to academic learning
- creative arts including dance, drama, music, visual arts
- develop cross-sector courses looking at how inter-sectorial co-operation can work to meet the needs of the child (Health, Agriculture, Social Development and Education), emphasise parent/school partnerships
- innovative approaches to the teaching and learning of maths and science concepts
- Making of resources so that teachers know how to do so and not be entirely dependent on outside sources.
- Developing anti-bias curriculum, including culturally responsive curriculum development incorporating indigenous knowledge and practice

*“Art students or music students at university have to spend hours painting or practicing a musical instrument: why not our student ECD educators?”*

*“We must understand that many of our students have a model in their minds of what 'proper' education is, and if we give them pencil-and-paper tasks (e.g. academic assignments) that just reinforces the wrong idea of what early education is (and perhaps also a 'deficit' view of child development) - because of their own experiences in their past.”*

Next Step:

In the development of a Grade R Diploma framework consider the balance between theory and practice, the organisation of WIL, approaches to Grade R and content suggested here.

## **D. Collaboration**

### **1. Fostering collaborative relationships in the sector**

It was agreed that this is a necessary, though difficult thing to do. It was suggested that if collaboration centred around purposeful discussion and was supported in various ways at a national level and provincial level, it is more likely that it would be sustained.

It was pointed out that different collaborative partnerships can serve different needs and purposes. For example, a Higher Education Institution (HEI) may be providing training, and needs assistance from an experienced NGO with field work for practical training, or an FET

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facilitate a whole programme, or an NGO might facilitate a section of a programme, or working with districts to help identify best practice schools for students to do practical work in, and so on. In this way we can share expertise and deliver better quality programmes. We were, however, cautioned that the roles and financial and other accountabilities need to be clear and fair.

At another level it was agreed generally that there are a range of national, provincial and local forums, with differing degrees of cohesion that can and should be used and strengthened. New forums can be established to serve different needs, but we should be careful not to duplicate, and we should make an effort to share and publicise discussions and activities across forums. It was stressed that as far as possible these forums should be cross-sectorial.

It was suggested in one or two instances, that it may be beneficial to have some form of coordination, either online (using existing websites or a newly created dedicated ECD site), and/or via twitter, and/or through published newsletters (such as CECD produces) and/or via email. It was noted that a big advantage of more co-ordinated collaboration would be to try and avoid the duplication of training and of materials. One of the challenges identified is that not all stakeholders in the ECD sector are familiar with online technology. For example, although we attempted to get online discussions going around this report, the response was very poor. Those who did participate had rich and interesting conversations, but it was lost to most people. Collaborating and sharing online would need to a conscious and coordinated effort.

**Next Step:**

Consider the possibility of an organisation/s or forum/s within the sector that could take responsibility for consciously and specifically coordinating the sharing of information and ideas across the sector, in various forms.

As one participant put it:

*We need to re-create a learning community amongst ECD academics, specialists, civil servants, educators and practitioners where we feel we are all working together 'for the cause'*

The forums are likely to be different in each Province, but they would nonetheless serve a valuable purpose. Some examples that were given during the conversations were:

- Durban North there are 200 Pre-Primary Schools who meet once a Term for workshops and the principals have their own forum, in South Durban Basin they are meeting in an ECD Forum (organised by Save the Children)
- In Kwa-Zulu Natal there is a 'KPACC ECD Technical Task Team' (Kwa-Zulu Natal Advisory Committee on Children) under the office of the Premier, with the aim of promoting 'cross-sectorial co-operation' and private/public partnerships (between civil society, NGO's, Training Agencies and Government departments, drawing together different sectors.

Development Institute (ECDI) is attempting to bring together, involving them in projects ranging from research to curriculum development.

## **2. Specific focus areas for collaboration**

The question was asked: “What are the main issues around which we could benefit from sector collaboration?” In general participants felt that the collaboration needs to have a specific focus, and should be action-based if it is to succeed and be sustainable. Bearing in mind that the focus will be different at different times and in different contexts, there were some ideas about what could be potential focus areas, at this point in time. These are:

- capacity building
- Quality Assurance
- Level 6 National framework
- Teacher / student support
- research & monitoring
- 0-4 qualifications policy

These ideas are unpacked in more detail in the following paragraphs.

### **2.1. Capacity building within institutions across the sector**

In addition to sharing best practice and learning from each other through collaboration and partnerships of provision, there was strong encouragement to use forums and networks for capacity building purposes through workshops, information sharing, and conferences, such as those already being facilitated by Bridge, CECD, ECDI and so on. Across the board there is already a keen interest for participants to learn from each other in a range of forums. There were even examples given of District Officials attending sessions of training to keep themselves up to date

The system of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) also needs to be more coherent and focused to ensure that relevant skills are trained and applied where necessary.

Next Step:

Feed issues raised in this report in general, and around the Grade R Diploma in particular into the CPTD system.

### **2.2. Quality Assurance of ECD training / teacher education**

Though it was acknowledged that understanding that quality and quality assurance are notoriously complex, during the conversations there were some attempts to define or unpack what we mean by quality. For example,

*Quality Assurance - Facilitate consistency and quality of provision;*

and

Systematic process which includes monitoring, checking  
and delivery/implementation of learning  
programmes to ensure that it meets necessary requirements.

Not unexpectedly a long list was generated of what people consider to be crucial for developing quality programmes, and for on-going quality assurance:

- Systematic, thorough and far quality assurance of teacher education providers
- Sound quality assurance systems
- Process for recruitment and enrolment of students
- Curriculum
- Learning material
- Qualified, experienced facilitators
- Quality learning environments
- Proper resources available
- Assessment procedures – fairness, validity, etc.
- Certification of learner achievements
- Contextual considerations
- Level / alignment / articulation
- Ability of students to practically implement their knowledge and skills within the classroom context
- Reflective practice built into courses
- On-going monitoring and evaluation of the programme
- On-going support to student teachers and newly-qualified teachers through mentoring and coaching
- Quality control site visits by specialists
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) procedures, funding and guidelines.

We need to engage in on-going conversations about what constitutes quality. It was suggested that this could be another role that the forums serve by continuing the debate about what constitutes quality, discussing and sharing ways of ensuring quality, and encouraging collaborative reflective practice to improve quality.

It was reiterated that partnerships between FET colleges and/or NGOs and/or HEIs through agreements relating to different roles in implementing different qualifications (not just the level 6), and collaboration around issues such as the new Level 6 Diploma, articulation, moderation and sharing ideas across the sector, including across approaches such as Montessori, Waldorf etc. will lead to increased quality of programmes.

Some of these quality issues are usually addressed during the design of qualifications, such as weighting of theory / practice, admission requirements and so on, while others are addressed through internal programme design Quality Assurance systems, and others through external QA bodies. But in the case of ECD because there are different QA processes across sectors collaboration is essential. This means, among other things that collaboration initiatives should include the different QA bodies i.e. HEQC, CHE, SETAs, QCTO, Umalusi, and the Department of Education. Many cases were cited of tender procedures and requirements impact

programmes. Mostly this was about not being given time and with sufficient training staff, including mentors.

It was noted that providers across the sector have to be accredited, and registered with different quality assurance bodies, such as CHE, Umalusi, and the ETDP SETA, but questions were raised about whether the processes are sufficiently rigorous. In some cases it was felt that the norms and standards of the ETDP SETA (SAQA) are good guidelines to follow, but that something more effective than a single visit by the SETA to do affirmation is needed. There were strong feelings that although we don't want each programme to be identical, the teaching and assessment and the general quality of programmes is so different that we need a more effective QA system. The same standards should consistently be applied to all providers in a fair and transparent manner. Even if qualifications are well aligned service providers still have to ensure that Level 4 qualifications prepare students effectively for Level 5 and 6.

The focus should be on creating an enabling environment for the professionalisation of the ECD field as a whole.

### **2.3. Collaboration on the development of a Level 6 Diploma**

An important area identified as needing collaborative work was the development of a national framework for the development of a Level 6 Grade R Diploma. This would not be prescriptive, but would rather provide a frame within which any quality Level 6 Diploma could be designed. This will give different institutions the freedom to put their own unique emphasis into a programme (eg. a Montessori provider), and to build in their own quality processes and systems. There were some strong feelings that the starting point for developing a framework should be having a clear understanding of what we want Grade R children to be able to do.

It was felt that collaboration on this was particularly important because of the complex nature of such a task - having to give consideration to issues such as articulation between qualifications at different levels, co-ordination across sectors, exploring different ideas and potential models for work integrated learning, finding ways of balancing theory and practice, and so on. It was felt that, however difficult, the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders such as FET Colleges, HEIs (including those who offer programmes through varied modes of delivery), NGO's, DoE and District Curriculum Advisors, and even teachers, on a continuous basis, would make the framework richer and of higher quality.

It was also suggested that we could have people who are nurses/occupational therapists/social workers and ECD "specialists" rather than just teachers/practitioners - linked together through our ECD Forums as their 'learning community', where we advocate 'best practice' and uphold the ethos of ECD and monitor and support each other. These stakeholders too, should be involved in the development of a framework for the Grade R Diploma.

It was felt that in general those consulted should include:

- DSoc Dev. and related professional experts
- HEIs, FETs, NGOs, Interested stakeholders
- Government and private sector
- Grade R specialists
- District officials
- Teachers and teaching champions

It was suggested that representatives of different sectors would need to get and give input during a developmental and iterative process, making the framework available for comment at different stages. There are a number of ways of doing this, but one suggestion was to hold an initial stakeholder workshop followed by or including road shows and public hearings. It was stressed that while this needs to be an inclusive process with broad input, specialists should be used to coordinate and finalise the framework.

It is hoped that the collaborative work around developing a framework will give consideration to the issues raised in this report, and particularly in Section C.

#### **2.4. Teacher / student support**

In principle there is general agreement that there must be support to students during and beyond their training programmes at a classroom, school and district level. As we know, however, this poses challenges in terms of capacity, in our institutions and in the provincial departments. That is why teacher/student support is an area where partnerships should be nurtured. The Foundation Phase Curriculum Advisors must be empowered to take full responsibility for the Grade R classes at public schools, but even then close collaboration between the training institutions and the district officials could strengthen the system further.

In the original Grade R Research report there were three recommendations for providing support to Grade R teachers. We discuss these in the Conclusion to this report.

A range of other strategies for providing student /teacher support were offered during the dissemination discussions. These included:

- mentoring and coaching models which involve mentors and coaches, from within the school or institution, who can monitor and evaluate students, model 'best practice', and review and reflect with the student on what he/she is learning and on strengths and challenges. It was stressed that this important role will require skilled, trained coaches and time and additional funding. Examples were given of SETA Learnerships where mentors are not paid because there is insufficient funding. With the necessary training and financial support mentoring and coaching could involve collaborative work between senior teachers, lecturers and district officials. It was suggested that we should develop a national framework for mentoring and coaching support. Systems need to be put in place to hold mentors and coaches accountable. Part of holding them accountable is building mentorship into programme delivery.

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- strategies designed into programmes irrespective of (face to face or blended / distance learning), including student guides, online support, support / study groups, tutors, etc. Students require ongoing positive encouragement and support to face and address implementation challenges;
- Coaching with regards to learning areas (mathematical literacy, language and life skills)
  - Providing opportunities for students to do their practice teaching at schools with good practice and qualified teachers. These should be carefully screened and regularly reviewed during reflection meetings with the mentors.
  - Observation of the students in the classroom as often as possible to address their specific needs. One on one feedback sessions between the class teacher and the teacher educator are often valuable.

Other forms of support can be considered as part of programme, course and materials design, such as:

- Use a modular approach to programmes, which are more flexible and accessible;
- Make the programmes 'distance (or mixed-mode) friendly' to increase access to learning opportunities;
- Offer mother tongue or bilingual courses;
- Provide support for transition to English for Level 5 and Level 6
- Produce accessible materials that can serve as self-study reference materials, which encourage reflection on practice during the programmes, and which can serve as ongoing support materials during and after studies. This should include the use of multi-media which gives students opportunities to, for example, watch, discuss and reflect on video clips of best practice.

There was some agreement that support should continue after studies are finished, including:

- through comprehensive continuous professional development programmes for teachers;
- high quality learning and teaching support materials that provide support beyond the training, and which can be used for classroom reference;
- district officials working hand in hand with HEIs and FET colleges to monitor teachers after completion of the programme and assist in professional growth;
- working portfolios which provide opportunity for teachers to expand their practice and knowledge through reflection;
- communities of practice among teachers themselves - teachers should be encouraged to observe one another's practice and to share their ideas.

### **1.5. Research**

We have already mentioned the establishment of the European Union funded primary Education Sector Policy support Programme (EU SPSP): Strengthening Foundation Phase Teacher Education, run through the DHET. At a recent project conference (LEWS, refer to page 10 of this report) a new research association was established, called the South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education (SARAECE). The stated aims of SARAECE are to:

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Forum in South Africa for the development and  
policy research in ECE.

- 3.2. facilitate cooperation and collaboration among researchers in South Africa working in the field.
- 3.3. promote links between research, practice and policy in ECE.
- 3.4. raise the visibility and status of research in ECE in South Africa.<sup>11</sup>

At the conference it was emphasised that while this is intended as an association that is based in Higher Education, it is not intended as an exclusive association. There is a recognition that many NGOs (and FETs) have contributed and will continue to contribute to the ECD research base in South Africa, and that this needs to be shared across ECD forums for the benefit of best practice in ECD.

### **1.6. Preschool qualifications policy**

In the lead up to these Grade R discussions the DHET indicated that there is an intention to develop a policy regulating qualifications in the pre-school sector as a way of professionalising the sector, and providing career pathways for people working in the sector. The department requested that we include discussions in our process as a way of launching the idea in the sector. We developed a set of questions which were included as part of the discussions in each province. It is noted that this was identified as an important area for collaboration across the sector, and the responses to the set questions are described in the next section. In any collaborative initiative we suggest that these responses be considered carefully.

## **E. Preschool Qualifications Policy**

### **1. Support for this approach**

The Draft Findings of the HSRC Teacher Qualifications Survey (TQS)<sup>12</sup>, commissioned by the DoE, were cited in the original Grade R Research Report, and provided some interesting insights into the qualification status of Grade R teachers. These findings probably also give us clues about the qualification status of teachers in the 0-4 phase of ECD.

There is general support for the development of a preschool qualifications policy and agreement that the career path for teachers of 0-4 children definitely needs to be reviewed in line with Grade R developments. There is hope that such a policy will give clear guidelines on qualifications for teachers teaching in the 0-4 phase, and will in some way bridge the artificial distinction created by placing responsibility for the 0 - 4's with the Dept of Social Development and responsibility for the 5 - 9 year olds with the Department of Basic Education.

*This is an important debate because we have a dichotomy between 'practitioners' and 'professional educators'. The 'practitioners' are supposedly falling under the Department of Social Development and the 'educators' supposedly falling under the*

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<sup>11</sup> Draft Constitution for The South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education (SARAECE), presented at the LEWS Conference at University of Johannesburg, pg 1

<sup>12</sup> Department of Education, *Draft Findings of the HSRC Teacher Qualifications Survey*, 2009

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- whereas we have some 'practitioners' who have been trained and not able to implement a child-centred interactive, play-based curriculum. We also have some 'educators' who are Junior Primary

The professionalizing of the ECD sector needs to have a policy worked out that demands inter-sectorial collaboration between the relevant Government departments, in relation to the National Integrated Plan.

*A policy is supported for the purpose of addressing requirements for all those who work with young children and it also provides a platform to ensure that the voices of children are addressed. The policy therefore needs to take cognisance of all the different contexts such as home (parents, domestic worker/nanny, tutoring, etc.), centre-based (community centre, crèche, preschool, tutoring, special schools etc.) and formal (qualifications and standards), informal/non-formal (ad hoc). There are different permutations within each context ...*

## **2. Participants in the development of a Preschool Qualifications Policy**

There was no question that this policy needs to be discussed further with all involved. It was suggested that proposals should be developed amongst a range of stakeholders and then tabled for comment.

There would be a number of issues to consider in the development of this policy, including articulation between all qualifications from Level 1-7, articulation between vocational and professional qualifications, and the ECD continuum from 0-9. Therefore it was suggested that the stakeholders involved should include:

- training institutions (NGOs, FETs, HEIs)
- DoE
- PEDs at provincial and district level
- SETAs
- Industry (teachers at ECD sites)
- Department of Social Development
- SACE
- DOL
- Existing ECD forums (national and local)

## **3. Pre-school qualifications**

Some expressed the view that pre-school qualifications should be from levels 4 – 6, with the Level 4 Qualification Practitioners teaching the Babies Group, Level 5 teachers teaching the Toddlers Group and those with Level 6 teaching Young Children and Further Groups. Some felt that this was too prescriptive, but still agreed that Levels 4 and 5 should focus on teaching children in the 0-4 phase. This would be particularly important for teachers who have Level 4 and 5 but who will not be able to advance to a Level 6.

Others disagreed, claiming that pre-school qualifications must also be at degree and postgraduate levels; in other words suggesting that we should be encouraging our

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study at Levels 6 and 7. To this end there was some discussion about having a Level 6 0-4 Diploma as well as a Level 6 Grade R Diploma. It is also an argument for having at least some specialisation in 0-4 in a Level 7 qualification.

But both of the above leave out the question of the Level 2 and 3 offerings in the FET sector. It was suggested that there needs to be a review of all the current Levels 1-5 ECD qualifications including in relation to formal schooling qualifications. In addition to the review of Level 5 discussed earlier in relation to articulation with the Level 6 Grade R Diploma, there was some consensus on the need for a review of Level 5 to begin to address the qualification pathway for teachers of children from 0-4. It was suggested that there should be a programme for teaching assistants on different levels.

### Next Step:

It is recommended that the team developing the preschool qualifications policy should also participate in some way in the development of the Level 6 framework, and vice versa, so that it can be an iterative process.

#### **4. Offering Preschool Qualifications**

There was some discussion suggesting that only HEIs should offer the Level 6 Diploma and a BEd., and that FET colleges (including those NGOs who register as FET colleges) should offer the Level 5 and below. There was agreement that regardless of whether the programme is focused on 0-4 or Foundation Phase institutions should all offer the qualifications on condition that quality is assured, the providers are accredited, that they have capacity to deliver the qualification, that students receive adequate support and that staff have at least one qualification higher than the level at which they train and are registered assessors.

In terms of the design and delivery of programmes, once again collaboration is encouraged to help to deal with the complexity of the different components including workplace learning, theory/knowledge and practical skills, quality teaching and learning, and quality management systems.

#### **5. Levers to monitor alignment of programmes to policy**

The conversations around this issue varied enormously, and it was difficult to build coherence in the summary. Nonetheless, the following levers were suggested:

- An integrated education and training model/policy. This relates to finding ways of monitoring quality across the vocational and professional 'divide'.
- A clear, collaborative RPL policy to facilitate easy movement through the qualifications pathways.
- Funding norms for 0-4 need to include:
  - bursaries for those who wish to study within the qualification path;
  - an alignment in salaries (in other words if you are properly qualified you get paid an appropriate salary, regardless of which phase you teach);
  - subsidies for community sites with appropriately qualified 0-4 teachers.
- The professionalization of those who work in ECD programmes involves getting financial support from the Government to employ people of the right level of qualification, experience and specialist understanding.

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and standards in the revised Children's Act and the support all ECD programmes through inter-sectorial collaboration (City Health, Social Development and the Department of Basic Education), and to the National Integrated Plan (NIP).

- ECD sites need provisional registration as a first step and then assistance towards getting properly registered and supported. This is about adhering to manageable developmental guidelines for registration.

### **F. Conclusion**

There appears to be general consensus on the need for the collaborative development of a framework for a Grade R Diploma, and the need for increased collaboration and deliberation on issues of delivery and quality of teacher education in ECD. There is overwhelming consensus to see the sector on a 0-9 continuum, working across sectors. This is not new. What is new is agreement on the need for an action plan to develop a preschool qualifications policy as part of this continuum, with all its attendant issues.

The feedback that we received indicated that this was a useful exercise because it brought back together groups of people who had shared some ideas on the implementation of Grade R, and gave space for some of those ideas to become more concrete and focused.

Through this process we have also managed to identify concrete steps that need to be taken in order that we move forward with action plans to ensure high quality Grade R, indeed ECD, teaching and learning. Through this report we have highlighted 'Next Steps' that should be considered for these action plans.

We highlight those 'Next Steps' here again, for purposes of emphasis:

**Next Step:**

Relevant stakeholders address and publicise financial policy issues affecting Grade R teacher status and access to qualifications, such as salaries and bursaries.

**Next Step:**

In the development of a framework for the Grade R Diploma include a conversation about the challenges of entry into Level 6, and learn lessons from those who are battling with this issue. Also include conversations about the development of guidelines for RPL. An additional complication is how to ensure that a unit standards-based qualification speaks to a non-unit standards-based qualification.

**Next Step:**

Attention needs to be paid to cognate qualifications in the process of designing a framework for Level 6.

**Next Step:**

In the light of the need for such close synergy between Levels 5 and 6, consider a review of ECD Level 5 qualifications.  
It is suggested that the review team for Level 5 participate in the development of the Level 6 framework so that it can be an iterative process.

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Pick up the issue of fundamentals at Level 4 again.

There was a suggestion of instituting a national exam for ECD level 4 which will help to make level 4 equivalent to matric with a diploma exemption.

This is similar to a project which the Department of Labour is piloting in other sectors, and could be pursued.

Next Step:

In the development of a Grade R Diploma framework consider the balance between theory and practice, the organisation of WIL, approaches to Grade R and content suggested here.

Next Step:

Consider the possibility of an organisation/s or forum/s within the sector that could take responsibility for consciously and specifically coordinating the sharing of information and ideas across the sector, in various forms.

Next Step:

Feed issues raised in this report in general, and around the Grade R Diploma in particular into the CPTD system.

Next Step:

It is recommended that the team developing the preschool qualifications policy should also participate in some way in the development of the Level 6 framework, and vice versa, so that it can be an iterative process.

The process has also allowed us to see what work has begun that will address some of the issues previously raised. In the original Grade R Research Report the following specific recommendations were put forward. They all emphasised collaborative work, and were intended to supplement and build work that had already begun.

**Recommendation One**

*Review and refine quality criteria for Grade R, ... [in order to] ... contribute to the collaborative development of national standards for a possible new Level 6 ECD qualification, incorporating Grade R ...*

**Recommendation Two**

*Develop a program outline for a Level 6 ECD qualification, making sure that it is cognate with Level 4/5 qualifications and the B Ed ...*

**Recommendation Three**

*Develop national standard quality CPTD programmes and materials on identified gap areas, including:*

- *methodologies to support teaching and learning through play*
- *the NCS and early childhood development*

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literacy instruction, including multi-lingual teaching

- *first additional language emergent literacy instruction*
- *emergent numeracy instruction*
- *teachers' language, to support professional development and for meaningful participation in the professional teaching community*
- *fundamentals*

What we can see is that **Recommendation Two** will be addressed by the agreement to collaboratively develop a framework for the Grade R Diploma. It has been stressed time and again that this needs to include giving consideration to issues such as quality, cognate programmes and standards for core knowledge and skills. To this end **Recommendation One** will be addressed, at least in part. But the issues raised in Recommendation One will also be addressed through many of the EU SPSP projects running through the DHET. We would like to reiterate the need for this work to be shared amongst all stakeholders in ECD and not just the Higher Education sector.

What is not addressed in this report to any great extent is the question of CPTD, as suggested in **Recommendation Three**. We have reiterated the need for these gap areas to be considered as core content, and we hope that the Grade R Diploma will take this into account. In addition many of the EU SPSP projects are addressing the gap areas as part of BEd programmes. Hopefully consideration can be given to how these programmes can be incorporated into a comprehensive CPTD system.

In particular, however, the last two identified gap areas in Recommendation Three, namely teachers' language and fundamentals for ECD, are still outstanding issues that need some attention.

We acknowledge that there is a host of other work being done that we don't get to hear about. But we hope that this report helps to give some focus to future discussions in existing and new forums that will contribute to the refinement and deepening of the implementation of Grade R.



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## Dissemination Report

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## from the internet

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ded opportunities for participants to contribute to the discussions via an online discussions website. Online participation was very low, possibly because this is a relatively new form of participation, particularly in the ECD sector.

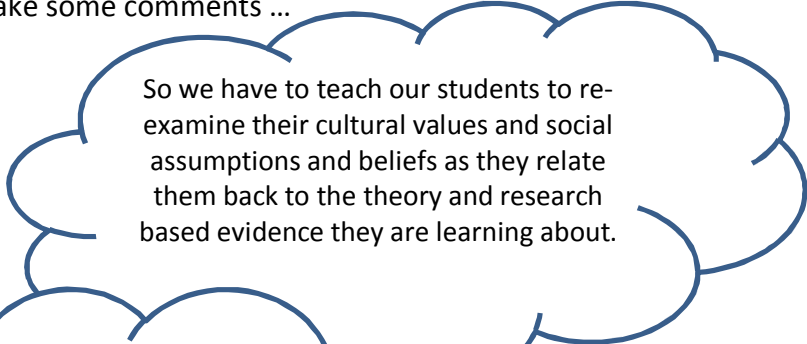
The tone of these discussions was somewhat different from the contributions that were made in the face to face workshops and via email, because they were of a more theoretical and general nature.

While we do not think these conversations were more important than any of the others, we do think that those participants who did not contribute online may be interested in reading some of the content of those conversations. We have highlighted some of them here for your interest.

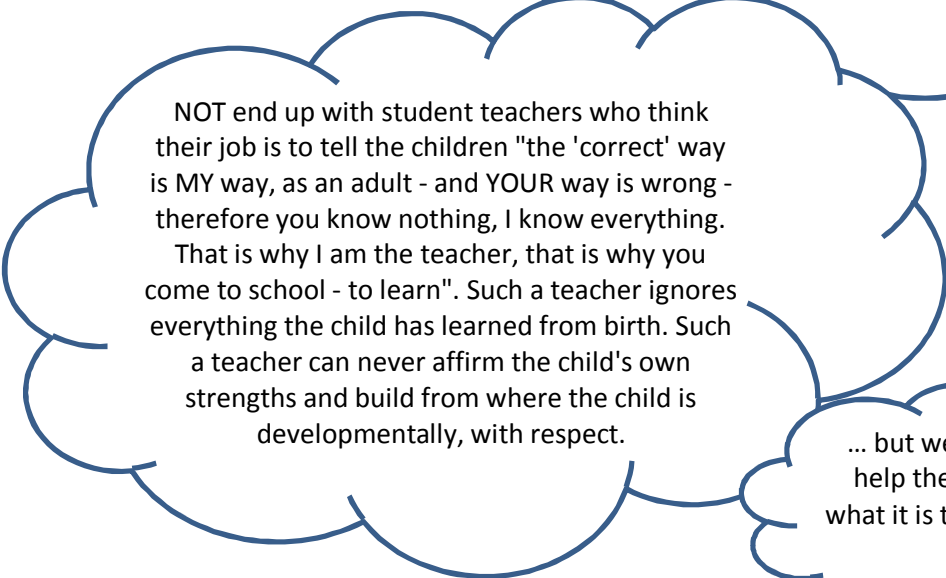
If you would like to still go and read the conversations online follow these instructions:

1. Click on this link <http://lms.saide.org.za/moodle/course/view.php?id=40>
2. Click on the 'New Account' link on the right hand side to register.
3. You will be sent a confirmatory email for security purposes.
4. Click on the link in the email to confirm your registration.
5. Once your account is confirmed you will be logged in to the Grade R Discussion site.
6. You will need a key code – type in **ECDGR**. This is case sensitive.
7. Follow the discussion guide to participate.

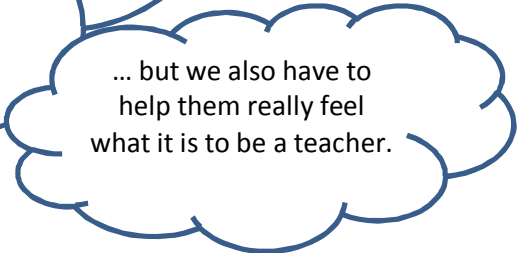
So, here are some extracts of the online conversation. Maybe this will inspire you to go online and read more, and even make some comments ...



So we have to teach our students to re-examine their cultural values and social assumptions and beliefs as they relate them back to the theory and research based evidence they are learning about.



NOT end up with student teachers who think their job is to tell the children "the 'correct' way is MY way, as an adult - and YOUR way is wrong - therefore you know nothing, I know everything. That is why I am the teacher, that is why you come to school - to learn". Such a teacher ignores everything the child has learned from birth. Such a teacher can never affirm the child's own strengths and build from where the child is developmentally, with respect.



... but we also have to help them really feel what it is to be a teacher.

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This is a quote I received on facebook recently (you will see that an important consideration for this grandmother and educator is the learning of English as a second language and access to formal education *from the age of 3* - as an issue of equity and access, of the right to a 'better education'. She speaks from her perspective. She wants the best for her grandchild and she knows what is best from her own experience. Her opinion is an important indicator of the type of problem we face. Research based evidence will not count, for her - she wants what she thinks is best. She is an educator. She is a leader within SADTU.

The Level 6 training that is being proposed needs to be able to be a force for change against huge social and cultural expectations of 'the best interests of the child'. The present curriculum places too much attention on 'outcomes' rather than the forces that shape these outcomes. And does it result in the 'outcomes' we really want - if the children's mental development is stifled with 'formal' teacher directed methods? Child-directed and teacher-directed methods are NOT mutually exclusive but tensions between these two approaches does become one of equity and access: white privileged children were encouraged to take initiative, be outspoken but black underprivileged children were encouraged to 'listen and learn' from the teacher what to do and 'be obedient'.

There is an even bigger problem when the Education Department subject advisors and Grade R teachers are not supported by the Principal or the Primary School teachers, or parents and grandparents in what they are doing. Especially when teachers are expected to adopt quantifiable 'outcomes' (the 'what' of education) without really understanding how (offering choices, follow children's interests, engage in play, focus on the strengths, **respect home language and culture** as it is important for the child's individual identity and group identity and the foundation for learning a second language.

There is a 'paradigm shift' that needs to take place through a process of reflection on action ... This depends on whether their mentor at the time of their practical teaching experience is able to do this with them (she/he also has to be a critical, reflective practitioner/educator ...

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What is needed is the affirmation of the philosophy of early childhood education as non-formal, interactive, creative, learning-through-enquiry, hands-on, involving play-based, experiential learning for both adult and child... to develop respectful educators who can be reflective practitioners and be involved in reciprocal relationships of learning with the child.

Their school does not have to be a model of 'best practice' but it can become a means to gain the tools which students can then use to become effective teachers, no matter the difficulties such as social pressures or economic constraints they may face in future.

I think the important areas in our discussion is understanding "how do young children learn" maybe it is high time we find classroom practices for young children that model reflective practices and use them for training.

The 'whole child' needs a 'whole approach'... it is not just starving minds but starving bodies, it is the planting of food gardens in every school to feed children and so the children can also participate and learn about how to grow food ... the ECD Level 6 course needs to incorporate the way Dept Health, Welfare and Social Development should be working together... and about the NATIONAL INTEGRATED PLAN, about the Ministry of Women, Children and the Disabled and the importance of monitoring and evaluation of the work that needs to be done, and working in co-operation with NGO's and Civil Society and for teachers who are paid by the Gov to realise they actually represent the Government to society ... we need to train student teachers who are also community development workers, social workers and health workers ...

You point to the fact that we don't expect enough of our children, we think they can't when actually they can. Our teacher education system should prepare teachers to provide quality teaching to that 80% of our children who are not getting the education they deserve.