Multiple Curriculum Frameworks in Early Childhood Teacher Preparation: Charting New Territory?

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ACSA BIENNIAL CURRICULUM CONFERENCE: Uncharted territory? Navigating the new Australian Curriculum
September 25-27, 2013, Darwin, NT
What does it mean to say ‘the Australian Curriculum builds on the EYLF’?

- respecting the nature of learners at particular stages in their learning lives
- recognising that there is a set of foundational dispositions, knowledge and skills that underpin future learning success
- acknowledging the diversity of starting points that learners bring to next-stage learning
- allowing teachers to connect their pedagogical practices in the first years of school to those used in prior-to-school contexts.

(ACARA & ECA, 2013, p. 15)
Early Childhood Care and Education – a brief history lesson

Early Childhood (EC) concerns the care and education of children from birth to 8 years old (UNESCO). Two separate EC ‘sectors’ have evolved.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>0-5yrs</th>
<th>5-8yrs+</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>social service</td>
<td>educational service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘carers’</td>
<td>‘teachers’</td>
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<tr>
<td>‘clients’</td>
<td>‘children and families’</td>
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<tr>
<td>tasks, safety &amp; predetermined routines</td>
<td>pedagogy (Rockel, 2009)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VET qualification required</td>
<td>HE qualifications required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>low pay, conditions &amp; status</td>
<td>higher pay, conditions &amp; status</td>
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<td>+ Different curricula, pedagogies and guiding theories</td>
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## Standards 0-5yrs vs 5-8+yrs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National Quality Standards before school</th>
<th>National Standards formal school years</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asks EC Teacher Graduates to:</td>
<td>Asks EC Teacher Graduates to:</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create responsive and respectful</td>
<td>Know their students and how they learn</td>
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<tr>
<td>relationships with children</td>
<td>Create and maintain supportive and safe</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide support and promote children’s</td>
<td>learning environments</td>
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<tr>
<td>health and safety</td>
<td>Know the content and how to teach it</td>
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<tr>
<td>Provide stimulating and safe physical</td>
<td>Plan for and implement effective teaching and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>environments</td>
<td>learning</td>
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<tr>
<td>Be qualified and experienced</td>
<td>Assess, provide feedback and report on student</td>
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<tr>
<td>Create collaborative partnerships with</td>
<td>learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>families and communities</td>
<td>Engage professionally with colleagues, parents/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provide effective leadership and service</td>
<td>carers and the community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>management.</td>
<td>Engage in professional learning</td>
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Change drivers in EC:
Brain research / Social investment

- Scientification of EC
- Critical periods for EC brain stimulation
- EC linked to long term effects on social wellbeing
- EC as a social investment

Early childhood education: it really is brain science

By ABC's Emma Alberici
Updated Mon May 14, 2012 11:03am AEST

If Australia is to truly capitalise on the Asian Century then "quality education" will be key.

That was the message from inside the budget lock up delivered by Wayne Swan who added that it was our knowledge base and service skills that would bring the export dollars flooding in from our neighbour states once China and India had built enough skyscrapers, roads, bridges and railways to slow demand for iron ore and coal.

State and federal Governments crow about the value of quality education but it's hard to remember a single policy that has appreciably lifted standards. Vast sums of cash have been hurled at schools and yet according to the OECD country
Education reform
Policy drivers

- Testing to provide ‘evidence’ (AEDI, NAPLAN)
- Standardisation seen to ensure ‘quality’ (NQF, National Curriculum, EYLF)
Preparing teachers of Indigenous children

Indigenous education gap

- Concerns about high rates of child abuse (*Little children are sacred* report)
- Indigenous attendance, achievement, retention and graduation rates compare poorly with non-Indigenous
- AEDI findings
  Over 50% remote & very remote Indigenous children are seen as developmentally vulnerable, especially when their language background is not English (Silburn et al, 2011)

Reforms to address the gap

- NT Emergency Response (NTER)- Stronger Futures
- Quality Agenda: NQF, EYLF, National Curriculum (ACARA),
- National Assessment Program (NAPLAN)
Transitioning through uncharted territory

- How do these two different curricula help/hinder professional transitions between prior to and school settings in the NT specifically?

- How can teacher education courses prepare early childhood teacher graduates to chart this gap?
1. Equip students with critical thinking skills

- Prepare students to be political activists to recognise and contest the nature and power of dominant discourses

- Enable graduates to ‘think differently’ (Foucault, 1988)
2. Unpack ‘dangerous’ assumptions* such as...

- Child development norms are universal
- Deviation from western norms always indicates risk and deficiency

Why dangerous?

- Because assumptions influence what counts as high quality practice.

Graduates need to do, make, and be the ‘quality’ required, rather than assume they know what it is and impose a universal notion of quality

*Arnold, 2004
Query the national norms with the local

‘beliefs about what makes for a healthy physical, intellectual and, especially, psychosocial development are highly variable between different societies and cultural groups and at different points in history’

Woodhead, 2005, p. 5
3. Using the gap

- ‘minding’ not ‘closing’ the gap? (Robinson, 2013)
- The Gap as ‘open space’ – productive of new ideas and new relationships
- The Gap as complex, inter-sectorial space for students not just children & families
- Reconceptualising transition space – (Lehrer, 2011 & Taylor, 2011)
References


