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Editorial: SA-eDUC Early Childhood edition - "Our Vision is our children's future"

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In February 2011, the Faculty of Education Science at the North-West University hosted the first international conference on Research, Development and Training in Early Childhood / Foundation Phase Education. The theme of the conference, "Our vision is our children's future", had five sub-topics:

A: Pre-service / in-service teacher training in diverse contexts.
B: Research-informed pedagogy, resources and teaching aid development.
C: Improving teaching and learning and learner outcomes.
D: Trends and challenges in the early years.
E: Enhancing well-being and sustainable empowering learning environments.

The articles in this edition represent the most of the subtopics.

***Evaluation of on-campus and off-campus training of Foundation phase Physical Education teachers at North-West University, Potchefstroom Campus* - Du Toit, D & Van der Merwe, N.**

The literature study for this article indicates that optimal gross motor and perceptual motor development at a young age plays an essential role in the learner's holistic development, as it forms the foundation for the cognitive, affective and physical domains of early childhood development. The new South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) stipulates that 2 hours of teaching time per week should be dedicated to Physical Education (PE) in the Foundation phase. PE has only recently been reinstated in the South African school curriculum after an absence of almost 15 years. Schools face several challenges, including current teachers who are under- and unqualified to teach PE. The urgent need for Foundation Phase teacher training in PE has led to several on-campus as well as off-campus models for Foundation Phase PE teacher training at the North-West University. The purpose of this study was to evaluate on-campus and off-campus Foundation Phase PE teacher training models, in order to improve and optimise the delivery of teachers for this critical component of Foundation Phase education.

In a quantitative research design supported by limited qualitative data, 145 stakeholders in the on-campus and off-campus teacher training models were asked to complete questionnaires. Results show that practical training of fundamental motor skills and basic sport skills, improvisation of equipment, safety measures and the organisation of PE classes were considered as components of the programmes which needed more emphasis. Recommendations further included the increased use of technology, especially DVDs and video clips which can be sent by e-mail or mobile phones.

***Taking the debate into action: Does the current Grade R practice in South Africa meet quality requirements?*- Excell, L. & Linington, V.**

Evidenced-based research has shown that the current Grade R implementation in South Africa is fraught with challenges and with what some researchers construe as a misunderstanding of the aims of Grade R education. In response to research and current heated discourse which has emanated from it, this paper poses the question "What is quality grade R practice in the South African context?" As a conceptual paper, it first explores the contested nature of Grade R and the aims that align with three informing approaches to Grade R practice. We then set out possible indicators of a quality Grade R programme in the South African context and then argue for a particular approach that could begin to realise quality Grade R practice in south Africa today.

Die verbetering van onderrig en leer met behulp van die Grootgroepstrategie in die opleiding van Grondslagfase-onderwysers - Geyer, L.P., Venter, A. & Janse van Rensburg, O.

Die spesifieke artikel fokus op metodes waarop onderwysproduktiwiteit verhoog word deur gebruik te maak van die grootgroeponderrrigstrategie in Grondslagfase-opleiding. Dit begin met ŉ uiteensetting van die kontekstuele agtergrond wêreldwyd, met spesifieke verwysing na Suid-Afrika: die terminologie van produktiwiteit in onderwys, die gebruik van die grootgroeponderrigstrategie in die onderigleerproses en die effektiewe gebruik van tegnologie in onderwys. Die boustene van hierdie strategie is die digitale boekskyf (DBS), die gebruik van eFundi as leerbestuurstelsel, die vervanging van die tradisionele lesing met kontaksessies, die implementering van interaktiewe groepwerk tussen portuurgroepe, nuwe assesseringsmetodes en die gebruik van nagraadse studente as hulpdosente in die onderrigspan. Bevindinge wat gemaak is deur middel van ŉ kwalitatiewe navorsingsvraelys aan Grondslagfase-onderwysstudente word gerapporteer.

***Die werksvervulling van die graad R-opvoeders en die beste belang van die kind: ŉ onderwysregtelike perspektief* - Rossouw, M. & van Vollenhoven, W.**

Een van die relatief onlange inisiatiewe in Vroeë Kinderontwikkeling (VKO) in Suid-Afrika is om vyfjariges in openbare laerskole te plaas. Graad R, wat na die ontvangsjaar in die skool verwys, is polities, ekonomies en opvoedkundig gemotiveerd. Deur graad R in openbare laerskole te plaas, kan gelyke ondewysgeleenthede verseker word, aangesien alle vyfjariges toegang tot graad R het kragtens die Nasionale Departement van Onderwys Witskrif 5. Deur op ŉ stewige onderwysfondament vir vyfjariges te fokus, word gehoop om leerders in die lang termyn uiteindelik tot groter opleibaarheidsmoontlikhede en beter werksgeleenthede met beter besoldiging te ontwikkel.
Die uitgangspunt in die artikel is dat, ter wille van die beste belang van die kind, die onderwyser sentraal geplaas moet word in die bereiking van die regering se ideaal van die maksimale benutting van VKO. Kwaliteitonderwys vereis kwaliteitopvoeders. Onderwysers se persepsie van hul werkslewe het egter ŉ groot invloed op hulle effektiwiteit. In ŉ studie oor die werkslewe van die Graad R-opvoeder is werksvervulling ondersoek via deelnemers se beskrywing van werksvervulling en -ervaring in hulle spesifieke werksplek. Die kernkonsepte van die studie was werksvervulling, die Graad R-opvoeder en die juridiese regulering daarvan.

***The relationship between school readiness and school performance in Grade 1 and Grade 7* - Van Zyl, E.**

The aim of the article was to determine the influence of school readiness on school performance in Grade 1 and Grade 7 with specific reference to Home Language and Numeracy. The empirical study was conducted by means of quantitative research, and specifically a longitudinal panel study. Through a purposive method of sampling, one school in the Free State Province was selected and the Aptitude Test for School Beginners (ASB) was administered to Grade R learners. A highly significant correlation between school readiness scores and Grade 1 performance was found and the conclusion was drawn that school readiness does, in fact, influence school performance in a significant way. Furthermore, a significant correlation between school performance in Grade 1 and Grade 7 was found, as well as between Home Language and Numeracy, indicating that school readiness has an indirect influence on Grade 7 performance.