

Convergence of multiple perspectives on achieving optimal early childhood environments for development and learning for children under 3

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Background		Context	Outcome	
<p>Existing measures of quality in early childhood education and care (ECE):</p> <p>Are research-based instruments used in sample studies that rely on highly trained 'reliable' observers (e.g., CLASS, ECERS/ITERS, SSTEW)</p> <p>Are administrative tools used by government in populations that rely on systematic processes of external review (e.g., OFSTED, ACECQA, QRIS)</p> <p>Generate an overall rating of program quality at the level of a group or classroom of children, or the centre as a whole</p> <p>Separate ECE program quality from measures of children's learning and development</p> <p>Focus primarily on ECE programs for children aged 3 to 5 years</p>		<p>Internationally Sustainable Development Goals Goal 4. Target 4.1 By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care, and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education</p> <p>Australia Informed by Australia's National Quality Framework for ECE <i>Belonging, Being and Becoming: the Early Years Learning Framework</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instrument comprises 5 domains: Identity, belonging, sense of self, family and culture; Connectedness with others; Wellbeing; Constructing knowledge and understandings; Communication <p>National Quality Standards requirements for regular assessment of children's learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The instrument is designed to provide a new way for educators to create meaningful documentation of the children's experiences encompassing both the process of learning (including joy, engagement and initiative) and the achievement of specific learning 	<p>ORICL: Observing, Reflecting, and Improving Children's Learning</p> <p>DOMAIN 1: Identity, belonging, sense of self, family and culture ID19 <u>This child</u> is confident in communicating his/her feelings and need for assistance to adults and or peers (e.g. gazes at educators, reaches out for objects, asks for assistance) ID21 When this child communicates their feelings and/or need for assistance, <u>educators</u> respond sensitively and appropriately, affirming the child's feelings and supporting the child's agency by scaffolding rather than 'doing it for' the child.</p> <p>DOMAIN 2. Connectedness with others CON03 <u>This child</u> approaches and joins in when a group of children is forming or interacting around a meal table, an educator or an activity (e.g., playful interactions at meal table, reading with educator, sand play, climbing, pretend play CON12 When this child is working together with educators in routine care activities, <u>educators</u> anticipate this child's uniqueness and individuality (e.g. match timing and actions to child's preferred way of doing things).</p> <p>DOMAIN 3A: Emotional Wellbeing EM17 This child's key triggers for becoming distressed (e.g. separation from parent, tiredness, change in routine) are well known and attended to by the <u>educators</u>.</p> <p>3B: Physical Wellbeing PH12 When educators invite this child to join in or engage in active fine motor play (hand or finger movement), <u>this child</u> participates.</p>	
<p>BUT...</p> <p>...do not include the perceptions of educators, who know the children best and whose interactions with children are the key to achieving quality (Early et al., 2007; Mashburn et al., 2008)</p> <p>...ratings are tied to administrative standards with little flexibility to accommodate or acknowledge cultural or philosophical differences in pedagogical practice (Fenech et al., 2012)</p> <p>...assume that quality within a room or centre affects all children equally</p> <p>...children's learning is holistic and occurs through interacting with and responding to the ECE program (i.e., its quality)</p> <p>...result in a lack of tools for supporting educators working with children under 3 years</p>			<p>Process</p> <p>Delphi Panel of under-3s ECE stakeholders and experts 2017 - Stage 1: Face-to-face meeting with 28 participants from across Australia, including Practitioners working with children under 3 ECE service provider managers and practice leaders (not-for-profit organisations, Council-managed services) Government policymakers Under 3s consultants and research academics Representatives from ECE organisations (Indigenous children's services, Family support)</p> <p>2018 - Stage 2: Follow up online survey with 28 participants</p> <p>Responses from the ECE sector (Delphi workshop and online survey) Endorsements of the purpose and need for the tool, its relevance for research, and potential value for improving educational practice to optimise children's learning and wellbeing.</p> <p><i>"Having a tool specifically for these [very young] children may have side benefits in increasing educators' perceptions of the competent learner from birth, and in doing so also change the way they understand their role.</i></p> <p><i>"The flow-on effects are immense because of the ability to gather reliable data earlier than AEDC (age 5) that reflects learning from birth-three. I'm very excited about this because it can feed into the National Framework to inform and improve practices across a range of sectors, including and beyond the EC sector."</i></p> <p><i>"This tool has huge positive implications that will help all adults recognise and value very young children's learning and development."</i></p>	<p>DOMAIN 4: Constructing knowledge and understandings CK01 <u>This child's efforts</u> to engage with their environment (e.g., toy, materials, activities, educators, peers) show <i>involvement and enthusiasm</i> (e.g. uses non-verbal and verbal behaviours to initiate their own participation in learning experiences, and asks for help when needed; shows a willingness to pursue their own ideas; takes responsibility for their own learning).</p> <p>DOMAIN 5: Communication CO01 When this child initiates communication with educators (e.g. looks into their eyes, points or gestures, vocalises or babbles or talks or uses signs, moves closer or reaches, shows object, directs expression of emotion), <u>educators</u> listen and respond in ways that acknowledge and encourage this child's efforts and ideas (e.g. repeat or extend child's words/thoughts back to child; describe child's actions in words).</p>
Aims			Next steps: Phase 2 and 3 of implementing the ORICL	
<p>To develop a new instrument for educators working with children under 3 years of age to assess and reflect on the quality of children's experiences that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> builds on existing instruments; complements the Early Years Learning Framework for Australia; acknowledges the unique experience of each child within the wider context of their learning space; identifies the unique contextual factors that support and/or limit the development, learning, and wellbeing of individual children; is acceptable to and sustainable within the early childhood sector. <p>To co-produce a systematic, robustly designed approach to build educator capacity to observe, document, reflect on, and improve the quality of learning and interaction that very young children experience in ECE settings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-designed with the ECE sector at both the inception stage and through the process of item development, review and testing. 			<p>Phase 1: Co-development of tool Community consultation Delphi process to develop and review prototype tool – ORICL</p> <p>Phase 2: Testing and Validation phase Phase 2, stage 1: pilot-test with educators working in centre and home-based ECE to further refine ORICL Phase 2, stage 2: Multi-site field test of ORICL in 3 states with educators and parents</p> <p>Phase 3: Development of resources Co-design of ORICL resource materials and professional development with collaborating industry partners and educators</p>	
			References	
			<p>Early et al., (2007) Teachers' education, classroom quality, and young children's academic skills: results from seven studies of preschool programs. Child Development 78(2): 558-80. Fenech et al. (2012). A critical analysis of the 'national quality framework': Mobilising for a vision for children beyond minimum standards. Australasian Journal of Early Childhood 37(4): 5-14. Mashburn et al., (2008). Measures of classroom quality in prekindergarten and children's development of academic, language, and social skills. Child Development 79(3):732-49.</p>	