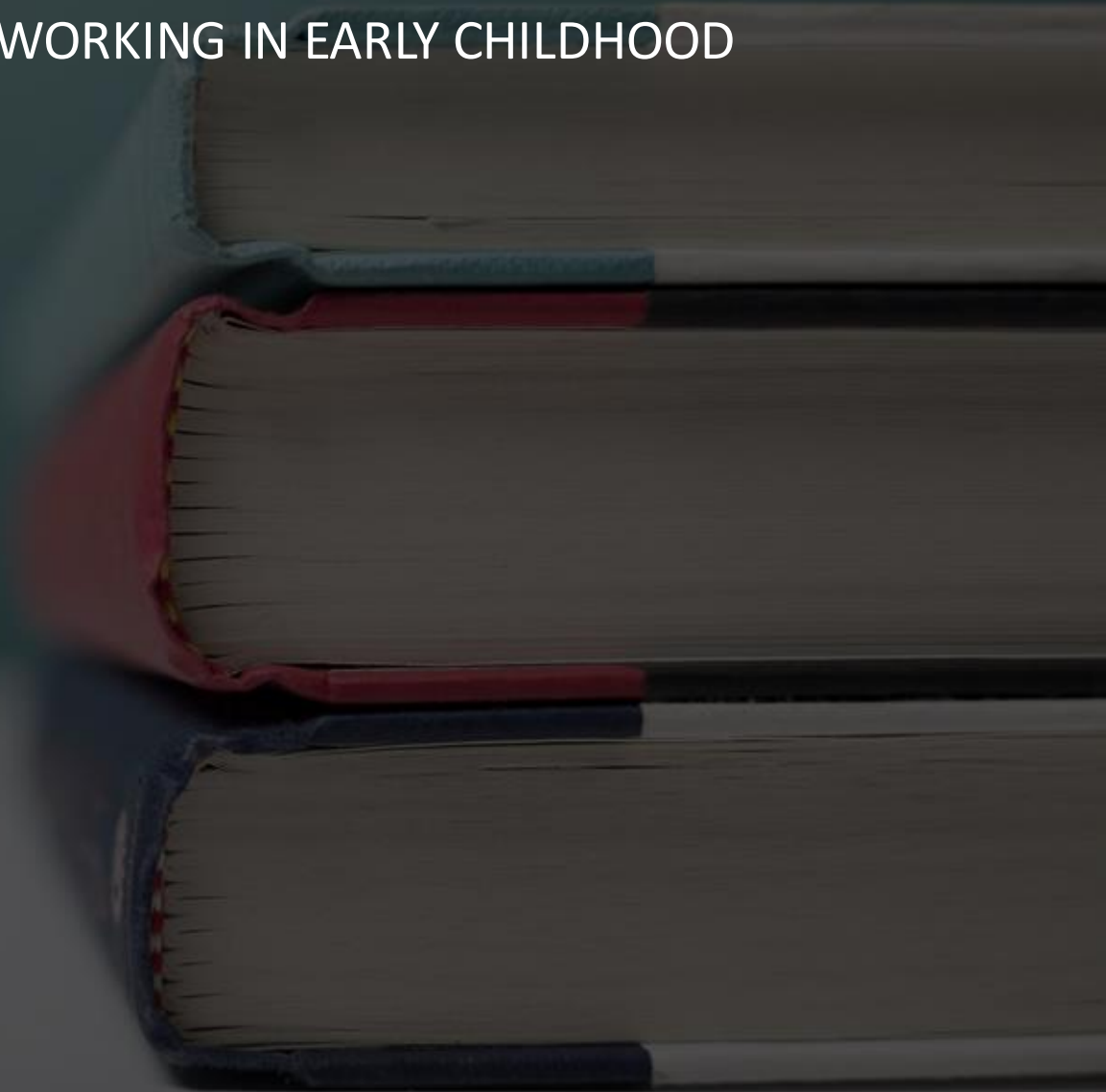


THE ROLE OF ALE IN SUPPORTING MATURE WOMEN WORKING IN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

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Definition of Terms

Adult Learners

Learners who enter post school education through alternative routes due to a break in their educational journey

ECD

Early Childhood Development

ECD Practitioners

ECD Practitioners are educators who teach young children (0-4 years) in ECD centers or school settings (Grade R)

National Qualifications Framework (NQF)

South Africa has an over-arching National Qualifications Framework that encompass all qualifications from NQF Level 1 (Grade 9) to NQF Level 10 (PhD).

Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)

The principles and processes through which the prior knowledge and skills of a person are made visible, mediated and assessed for the purposes of alternative access and admission, recognition and certification, or further learning and development (Prinsloo, 2022).

Post-School Education and Training System (PSET)

South Africa defines post-school education and training as a system for all learners who have left the formal schooling system, regardless of educational levels, rather than a post-Matric/NSC system. PSET institutions include Adult and Community Education and Training (ACET) Colleges, Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges and Higher Education institutions.

Introduction

- 2024 PhD study-access into higher education for Mature Women Students (ECD)
- 51 women, life, history interview data from eleven, participants, and four in-depth case studies
- The women participated in formal and non-formal adult education learning opportunities in order to ‘make their lives’ and build sustainable livelihoods as educators and caregivers...
- Adult Learning and Education (ALE) contributes to an ECD community of practice’ in a country with high unemployment, where many, particularly women, continue to live in poverty.

Background and Context

- **ECD practitioners face a variety of challenges.**

poor and marginalised;

live and work in harsh social and economic conditions;

have limited opportunities for professional teacher development;

experience job insecurity;

limited access to higher education.

- **Volunteers.** Access ECD programmes located in **adult education and training**.
Denied access due to their age and/or because they do not meet the admission requirements for their preferred university programmes

Background and Context

- ‘I went to the Principal and asked if I could volunteer there at the ECD centre and she allowed me to do that; and I had a friend who told me about a college offering ECD courses, learnerships, and then I went there. I was volunteering when I received this letter to say I have been accepted there - at the college’.

Ruth, 35 years old

Research Design and Methodology

- Survey: 51 ECD practitioners responded
- Life history interview: 11 participants
- Focus Group Interview: 8 participants

Research Participants

Pseudonym	Age	Marital Relationship	Children	Location
Babalwa	33	Married	3	Eersteriver
Lithemba	39	Engaged	2	Paarl
Nomha	43	Single	1	Khayelitsha
Chuleza	45	Married, filed for divorce at time of interview	3	George and Khayelitsha
Kwakhanya	35	Single	1	Khayelitsha
Surreya	46	Married	3	Heideveld
Elethu	37	Single	2	Worcester
Kungawo	38	Single	1	Mitchell's Plain
Ruth	35	Married	2	Delft
Jenna	44	Married	2	Eersteiver
Sophia	36	Married	2	Bluedowns

Research Participants

Pseudonym	Age	School and TVET Qualification	Occupational Experience	Application into Higher Education	Status of Access
Surreya	46	Grade 12 ECD Level 4 (18 months)	Foundation Phase Assistant	2 institutions over period of 3 years	Accepted through RPL; and then moved into ordinary route [4 years 8 months]
Elethu	37	Grade 12 ECD Level 4 and 5 (2.5 years)	ECD Principal ECD Teacher isiXhosa Facilitator	2 institutions over two years	Accepted through RPL in third year [6 years 6 months]
Babalwa	33	Grade 12 ECD Level 4 and 5		2 institutions over period of two years	Moved into Grade R Diploma (non RPL) [6 years]
Jenna	44	Grade 12 ECD Level 4	ECD Teacher Grade R Practitioner	3 institutions over period of three years	Accepted for RPL, currently in process [5 years 8 months]

Adult Education and Training Opportunities

- ECD Level 1
- ECD Level 4
- ECD Level 5

They had participated in short courses or had done non-formal training in their communities, such as first aid training, management skills, fetal alcohol syndrome training, and computer training.

4 accessed B.Ed (Foundation Phase) programme through RPL

'I fell in love, because yes, I [had] a baby that time, yes ... but I never thought that I will want to work with children. That's where I started to design programmes [for the children in the centre], that's where I started to help them in their activities. This is a journey that I never thought I would be on, now that I'm working here, I must bring change. There's a lot that I can do, especially now that I'm given this opportunity to be a principal'.

Elethu

'I want them to become better leaders. So, with the foundation that I give, I feel like they can be whatever they want to be in life. And with the experience, with the knowledge that I have, I want to share the knowledge. I want to share the experience with them so that they can become better leaders'. 'Yes, I'm so happy where I am right now, and I really think maybe I was supposed to be a teacher'.

Chuleza

'I want to get a job. I don't want to work in the centre. Please, I want to be in a school. People working in centres, they don't get money, or in the specific place there they must wait, or maybe they don't even get [paid]. Even if they get [paid], they get small money'.

Chuleza

'I worked for a year in 2017. Teachers went on strike for monies from October, November and December. I worked for those three months without payment. I got payment in December and January. They were supposed to open the school on the 22nd and then the Principal, said: 'We must open on the 20th for registration'. We went there and the teachers were on strike, querying their money. Then they just closed the gate and said they no longer need us'.

Lithemba

Communities of Practice

Their social learning included such things as establishing and managing ECD centres, and learning how to create sustainable learning environments for young children. Participants also made use of shared resources and tools to support early learning. Through regular interaction, participants engaged in collaborative activities, exchanged experiences and information, co-constructed knowledge, and supported one another in their learning journey.

Communities of Practice

ALE has offered meaningful support to the women at a personal level by helping them grow and develop in their knowledge, skills, and confidence. Despite the deep challenges of poverty and unemployment, they have been able to secure livelihoods. The women have enhanced their ability to support and sustain their households, and this has had a positive impact on their families and communities, and, in a small but meaningful way, contributed to economic development.

Communities of Practice

The experiences of the women involved in the study show how important ALE is in supporting the growth of knowledge, skills, and confidence of materially poor, marginalised people. It also helps in the building of livelihoods and, contributes to economic development, albeit in limited ways.

Although ALE remains on the margins, it continues to offer hope to communities and empower those excluded from mainstream social and economic development. The women's stories deepen our understanding of ALE's transformative impact.

Publications

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THANK YOU

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