

Indigenous and International Inspirations:

Indigenous Early Childhood Care and Education (IECCE) Curriculum Framework for Africa

- Principles informing the IECCE Framework:**
- Child’s best interest
 - Contextually and culturally relevant pedagogy
 - Use of mother tongue, local, and home languages as medium of instruction
 - Resources from the local environment
 - Generative content
- Hopes for the IECCE Framework project:**
- A “good start in life” for African children
 - Inculcate cultural values, norms and mores of the society
 - Effective parental and community engagement
 - Recognition of diverse local languages

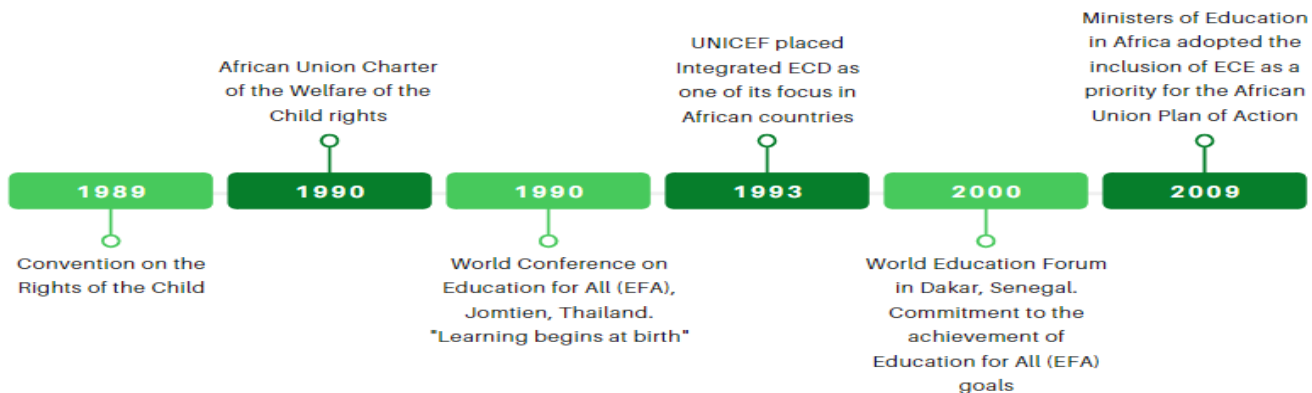
Introduction:

Dr. [Esther Oduolowu](#) is a Professor in Early Childhood Education in the Department of Teacher Education at the University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Her research focuses on early childhood curriculum, policy development, and capacity-building. Oduolowu has three decades of experience teaching and researching in tertiary institutions.

In the presentation, [available here](#), Oduolowu highlights how education in Africa is a collective responsibility. It aims to equip children with living and learning skills that support them as contributing members of their community (Nsamenang, 2004; Oduolowu, 2000). An underlying principle is that intergenerational kin have a sacred responsibility to nurture and bring up the child with appropriate cultural knowledge, mother tongue, and social, moral and spiritual values. The Indigenous Early Childhood Care and Education (IECCE) Curriculum Framework for Africa was a collaborative effort between UNESCO-IICBA and scholars from six African countries to inscribe strength-based values into curricular form.

History of development:

Numerous international events over the past 30 years raised the profile of ECEC, including its importance for governments and international organizations in Africa, and set the stage for the UNESCO-IICBA curriculum project. A few highlights are provided in the timeline:



This snapshot hints at a larger era of policy development and curriculum review in many African countries. Despite the progress made, there remain challenges. Too often curricula are imported from the Global North rather than being rooted in local culture and local language.

1. UNESCO’s Institute for Capacity-Building in Africa (IICBA) takes as its mandate educational capacity development, including professional teacher development in ECE. In 2007, the 6 African countries originally involved were the Republic of Congo, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Lesotho, Nigeria and South Africa. The project expanded to also include other countries.

Hopes for the project:

The purpose of the IECCE Framework is to foreground relevant cultural knowledge, skills, values, languages, and practices that originate in Africa. This is imperative if African children are to maintain and strengthen their cultural identity, which is one of their fundamental rights. It recognizes children, teachers, caregivers, parents, siblings, peers, grandparents, and elders as key contributors to children's education and well-being through 7 interconnected modules:

- | | |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1- The Young Child | 5- Play and Learning |
| 2- The Child with Additional Needs | 6- The Caregiver |
| 3- Family and Community | 7- Assessment and Research |
| 4- Needs and Rights of the Child | |

Challenges to change:

In Nigeria, the two main challenges for IECCE Framework implementation have been (1) funding to scale-up, and (2) top-level recognition of Indigenous knowledges as meritorious. Government partners received the framework with interest, but also hesitation as there was already a national ECEC curriculum designed by international experts. Oduolowu facilitated a compromise whereby elements of the IECCE Framework could be infused into the pre-existing curriculum and postsecondary teacher education programs.

A futur dream :

We desire wide implementation support from regional, national, and local governments and organizations involved in ECE in Africa. Indigenous ways of knowing, caring, learning, and being in community would be valued above imported knowledge and decontextualized practices. Local researchers would be supported to collaborate and document the curriculum as a living document; for example, the work of two of Oduolowu's graduate students, [Peter K. Olowe](#) and [Idowu O. Majebi](#).

[Access all references](#)

Inspirations for Pan-Canadian ECEC systems:

The [Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care \(IELCC\) Framework](#) is the joint effort of the Government of Canada and Indigenous peoples to collectively engage the developmental, cultural, and linguistic needs of First Nations, Metis, and Inuit children, providing a living document for high quality, culturally responsive ECEC.

Bringing the IELCC Framework (Canada) and the IECCE Framework (Africa) into conversation would be generative and affirm our broad support for Indigenous ways of living, caring, and learning. Both frameworks speak of creating holistic programs that prioritize children's rights, advocate for accessible and flexible services, and support culturally rooted and collaboratively generated programs that actively involve family and community.

Recently, the Liberal government announced nearly \$30 billion over 5 years for a national child care program. How has Indigenous led and developed ECEC figured into the promises and pledges for a national child care plan? How might the *IELCC Framework* guide us movin forward? Can the IELCC framework be infused into provincial/territorial curriculum frameworks? What would a decolonizing approach to ECEC look like in Canada?

Prepared from Esther Oduolowu's presentation by Emily Ashton, Esther Maeers, & Alexandre Paquette for

SKETCHING NARRATIVES OF MOVEMENT TOWARDS COMPREHENSIVE AND COMPETENT EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATIONAL SYSTEMS ACROSS CANADA.

[View presentation](#)

To cite research brief: Oduolowu, E., Ashton, E., Maaers, E. & Paquette, A. (2021). *Indigenous and international inspirations: Indigenous early childhood care and education (IECCE) curriculum framework for Africa*.

<https://ecenarratives.opened.ca/indigenous-and-international-narratives/>

