



MP Koen, M Neethling, S Esterhuizen, B Taylor

Title: Using recycled art materials to enhance the holistic well-being of children in the early years

Since the adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals (United Nations 2015), there has been increasing recognition of the fact that quality education for sustainability (SDG4) is an important means of addressing challenges that could hamper the holistic well-being of children in the early years. Not only has the COVID-19 pandemic served to place on hold the holistic well-being of hundreds of millions of young children in South Africa indefinitely but ECD centres have been closed, thereby moreover placing children in the early years at risk of forfeiting a holistic education. According to Prof Eric Atmore (director of the Centre for Early Childhood Development), nearly 2.3 South African children have been housebound and the responsibility has been placed on parents or caregivers to stimulate the inseparable physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual domains. This paper is an exploration of a collaborative effort between an ECD research team from North-West University and Singakwenza (a non-profit ECD organisation). Using a participatory action-learning and action-research approach (PALAR), the researchers in question explored the holistic learning and development of young children in three Bafenyi ECCE centres during lockdown. A collaborative workshop focused on the importance of arts-based play and on how to use home-made educational toys made from recycled material to stimulate the holistic well-being of young children. The findings suggest that recycled art materials could be used to provide young children with experiences to develop their basic values, attitudes and skills and to shape behaviours designed to preserve the environment and to create more sustainable futures.

Keywords: young children, holistic, well-being, arts-based play, recycling