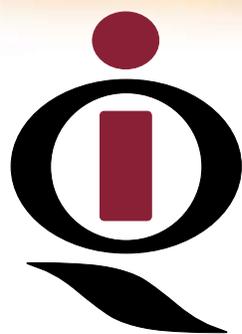


The Unit for Early Years Research and Development:  
**INVESTIGATING QUALITY  
PROJECT**



**INVESTIGATING  
QUALITY** *in*  
**Early Childhood  
Education and Care**





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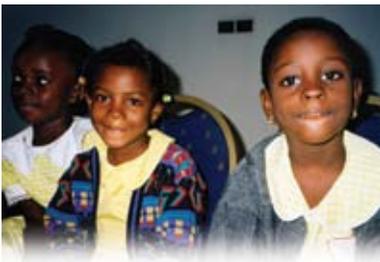


# THE UNIT FOR EARLY YEARS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

In 1992, the Unit for Early Years Research and Development (originally the Unit for Child Care Research) was founded by Dr. Alan Pence, who along with Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw, now serves as the Unit’s co-director.

The Unit is committed to innovative field-based research and professional development across a range of early years settings. Our mission is to pursue excellence and innovation in practices, professional development, higher education, and scholarly productivity. We are dedicated to advancing early learning and child care practices by recognizing that effective change requires the active participation of all sectors within society.

From its inception to the present, the Unit has worked on the “cutting edge” of early years research and development in both the Majority (“developing”) World, where most of the world’s children live, and the Minority (“developed”) World. For example, in the early 1990s, the Unit played a lead role in the development of the Canadian National Child Care Study (CNCCS)—at the time, a highly innovative contribution to Canadian child care research and policy development.



## WORKING IN THE MAJORITY WORLD

Throughout the 1990s, and continuing to 2006, the Unit was involved in the development and delivery of the First Nations Partnership Programs (FNPP), which introduced a “generative curriculum” approach to training in Early Childhood Education in First Nations partner communities. This approach was highly successful in increasing child care and services and overall capacity in the participating communities.

In 2000, the “generative curriculum” model informed the Unit’s design of the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), which has provided graduate-level ECCE/ECD training throughout Africa and the Middle East. The ECDVU has helped to create a cadre of African ECD leaders, advance African scholarship, and promote international dialogue about the culturally created nature of child development “knowledge” and of quality early years programming.



## WORKING IN THE MINORITY WORLD

Within BC, this generative, dialogic approach to early years curriculum and practice has shaped the Unit’s contributions to the development and implementation of the BC Early Learning Framework (2007–2009) and the Unit’s design and delivery of the Investigating Quality Project (2005–present). Both these initiatives are influencing early years research, policy, and practice not only in BC, but across Canada.

The Unit's Investigating Quality activities are grounded in a philosophy that developed throughout the 1990s and that is captured in two key works: *Valuing Quality in Early Childhood Services: New Approaches to Defining Quality* (Moss & Pence, 1994) and *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education: Postmodern Perspectives* (Dahlberg, Moss, & Pence, 1999; 2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.).

This philosophy, developed in part through the FNPP and related cross-cultural experiences, is also rooted in post-foundational theories and informed by early years theory and practice in Italy (Reggio Emilia), Sweden, and New Zealand. This approach continues to deepen and extend its influence, as reflected in the recent publications of Drs. Pence and Pacini-Ketchabaw and their colleagues. This philosophy also guides our ongoing work with early childhood educators, college and university instructors, policy-makers, and leaders at the local, provincial, national, and international levels.

This booklet focuses primarily on the Investigating Quality Project, within the context of our philosophy, research, and practice in the Minority and Majority Worlds. To read more about EYRD staff, including the Investigating Quality team members, see the section, "Team Members" towards the end of this booklet. You will also find an abbreviated list of key publications from the Unit over the years in the final pages of the booklet. For more information on the Unit's initiatives, visit the EYRD website at [web.uvic.ca/~eyrd/](http://web.uvic.ca/~eyrd/).

## UNIT FOR EARLY YEARS RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

### Majority World Projects

First Nations Partnership Programs  
([www.fnpp.org](http://www.fnpp.org))

Early Childhood Development  
Virtual University ([www.ecdvu.org](http://www.ecdvu.org))

African Scholars and Institutions  
Initiative

### Minority World Projects

Investigating Quality Project

Early Learning Framework  
Implementation Project

Early Years Education

Encounters with Materials





***“I am immensely satisfied with the results of the IQ Project towards my practice. It has enhanced it on so many levels—my relationship with the children, co-workers, families, and other professionals.”***

(IQ Project Participant)

***“I honestly thought I would be getting out of this field. But because of this project ... I have decided to stay and become an activist ...”***

(IQ Project Participant)

# THE INVESTIGATING QUALITY PROJECT

The Investigating Quality (IQ) Project works with early childhood educators, college and university instructors, government officials, and policy-makers to broaden and deepen discussions on quality in the early years field.

## OUR PERSPECTIVE ON QUALITY

Within North America, the primary strategy for promoting quality has long been through regulations that set minimum standards for group size, adult-child ratios, training levels of caregivers, as well as “best practices” that promote developmental outcomes, literacy, numeracy, and school readiness in young children. Quality improvement approaches have tended to focus on the development and use of measurements and instruments to determine these minimum levels of quality.

The IQ Project’s goal is to deepen and broaden this view of quality. We situate ourselves within the growing number of research approaches that see quality as emerging from diverse pedagogical, social, and cultural factors that interact within specific contexts. We believe that for quality to take on depth, meaning, and elevated possibilities, processes of engagement, discussion, and interaction—in short, local democratic processes—are critically important.

We see early childhood settings as spaces for children, families, communities, and educators to engage and interact, opening up possibilities for levels of program quality that are much more meaningful and dynamic than those achievable through a “minimum standards” approach. The work of the well-known programs in Reggio Emilia are based on such a process—as are innovative programs in Sweden, New Zealand, and other locations world-wide.

In British Columbia, researchers, policy-makers, and early years practitioners have begun developing a “made in BC” approach to quality that draws on international influences, the Unit’s philosophy, and the ongoing community dialogues that the IQ Project has generated. This contextual, interactive approach opens up to local voices, engages diversity, encourages families and community members to participate meaningfully in the lives of children, and nurtures a democratic process at the earliest age of citizenship.

## WHAT WE DO

The rest of this booklet describes the main activities of the IQ Project. These activities include international forums, learning and sharing circles for early childhood educators, the development of an Early Years Specialization, and, most recently, the launch of the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project.

To date, evaluations of the IQ project show that it has helped to create a highly skilled group of locally and regionally based early childhood educators who are motivated to reinvigorate BC's early years field. In looking to the future, we hope that the models we have developed and tested in communities across BC will be extended to the province as a whole, and that other provinces who are considering innovative approaches to quality in early years programming will wish to build on these experiences.

***“Just watching the new enthusiasm of the teacher is contagious—you cannot be there and not want to know more and get involved.”***

(Parent)



## Creating Local, Provincial, National, and International Dialogue

Following the IQ Project's launch in 2005, the Unit for Early Years Research and Development began identifying promising approaches to quality in other countries to share with BC's early years field.

### THE INTERNATIONAL FORUMS

The Unit has hosted a series of international forums at the University of Victoria. At these forums, the Unit has brought BC's early years field into contact with some of the world's most innovative and respected leaders in early childhood education, care, and development.

The forums' many internationally known guests have included: Drs. Margaret Carr and Helen May, and Wendy Lee (New Zealand); Drs. Glenda MacNaughton, Karen Martin and Jennifer Sumsion (Australia); Prof. Peter Moss and Dr. Helen Penn (U.K.); Drs. Gunilla Dahlberg, Hillevi Lenz Taguchi and Karin Alnervik (Sweden); Dr. Carla Rinaldi (Reggio Emilia, Italy); Drs. Robert Levine, Beth Swadener, Kofi Marfo and Radhika Viruru (USA); Dr. Robert Myers (Mexico); Dr. Çiğdem Kağıtçıbaşı (Turkey); and Drs. Bame Nsamenang (Cameroon) and Robert Serpell (Zambia).

The forums have placed BC at the cutting edge of early childhood education theory and practice in Canada and internationally. They have given early childhood educators, college instructors, policy-makers, and members of BC's Aboriginal community chances to engage in rich dialogue on alternative discourses about early childhood development and to generate new ideas about quality care and education.

***“This presentation brought to all of our attention how contextual child care and early learning needs to be. Not just between countries, or regions, but within centres. Each child's families and experiences are so different; the education that we provide needs to reflect this.”***

(IQ Forum Participant)

***“I feel more joy doing the work I do, knowing about these amazing committed people from around the world and the work they do.”***

(IQ Forum Participant)



## INVESTIGATING QUALITY FORUMS

International Perspectives on Indigenous Quality Early Childhood Care and Development (February 25–March 2, 2006)

Developing Policies on Quality Early Childhood Care and Development (April 26, 2006)

Pedagogical Considerations on Quality Early Learning and Child Care (August 10–11, 2006)

Building Capacity in the Early Years: Discussion and Consultation with New Zealand Leaders (June 12–13, 2007)

Early Childhood Care and Development: Perspectives from the Majority World (November 16–17, 2007)

Times for Innovation in ECE: Challenging Our Ways of Thinking About Educators' and Children's Learning (February 28–29, 2008)

Strengthening Africa's Contributions to Child Development Research (February 5, 2009)

Moving Beyond Minimum Standards: A Vision for Early Learning and Child Care (January 18–19, 2010)

International Innovations in ECE: A Canadian Forum on Early Childhood Frameworks (July 13–15, 2012)

*For more information on the forums and to learn about future events, please visit the Unit for Early Years Research and Development website ([web.uvic.ca/~eyrd/](http://web.uvic.ca/~eyrd/)).*



## Promoting Professional Development for Early Childhood Educators in BC

A major goal of the IQ Project is to promote the active engagement of early childhood educators in critical reflection and in actions that help create sustainable, innovative early childhood environments.

### LEARNING AND SHARING CIRCLES

To help achieve that goal, the Unit hosted a series of learning and sharing circles. In these circles, early childhood educators engaged in discussions and then applied what they learned in their practice settings. From 2006 to 2011, well over 100 educators from Vancouver Island, the Lower Mainland, and Central BC participated in the learning and sharing circles.

The learning circles provided early childhood educators with opportunities to work in small groups to discuss new ideas and to share their established and emerging practices. Participants also periodically attended sharing circles, which gave them the chance to come together in large groups to discuss their work in the various learning circles. At some of the sharing circles, early childhood leaders from other countries invigorated and enriched the discussions. Each learning and sharing circle was delivered by a facilitator, who assisted participants to engage in collective discussions about early childhood practices. An online space enabled educators and researchers to share ideas and materials of interest between learning and sharing circles.

***“ECE educators [can now] identify themselves as intelligent, thoughtful, reflective practitioners doing important work.”***

(IQ Learning Circle Facilitator)

## PEDAGOGICAL NARRATION

Many discussions at the learning and sharing circles focused on pedagogical narration, a practice introduced to BC through the Early Learning Framework Implementation Project and incorporated into IQ Project activities.

Pedagogical narration engages early childhood educators in observing, documenting, and critically reflecting upon children's learning. Many educators also take the opportunity to share the documentation with families and with the children themselves.

*"[Learning about pedagogical narration] has been significant for me ... I think the possibilities for creativity on the part of the caregiver could be enormous with this process, which I think will create wonderful possibilities for children."*

(IQ Project Participant)

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN PRACTICE

IQ research team members periodically visited participating educators in early years centres. These visits provided opportunities for one-on-one conversations between the educators and the researchers and supported the educators to integrate discussions from the learning and sharing circles into their everyday practice.

Evaluations of the IQ Project indicate that the learning and sharing circles have helped to create networks of revitalized early childhood educators—an outcome that has, in turn, enhanced the quality of care and education of young children and increased parents' satisfaction and engagement with their children's programs and educators.

## Creating an Education and Career Ladder for Early Childhood Educators

Until recently, few undergraduate programs were available in BC that reflected the perspectives introduced by the IQ Project.

## THE EARLY YEARS SPECIALIZATION

To address this need, the Unit for Early Years Research and Development worked with the University of Victoria's School of Child and Youth Care (SCYC) to develop the Early Years Specialization.

The Early Years Specialization allows students to critically examine the historical, theoretical, and political context of the early years field; to develop knowledge and skills in community capacity-building, early years assessment, evaluation, leadership, and advocacy; and to gain experience in early years practice settings. Having the specialization in place enhances training opportunities for early years practitioners in BC and provides a rich education and career ladder for early childhood educators.

*"This kind of exchange of ideas has been severely lacking in other professional development opportunities ... it is imperative that we move our profession forward with this kind of dialogue."*

(IQ Project Participant)

*"There is more cooperation between home and school; we talk and work together so that we do things at home that fit with projects [my son] is doing at preschool."*

(Parent)



***“I have really enjoyed this course. It has re-affirmed my beliefs about the purpose of education and our role in that. I have also been challenged by ideas such as bi-cultural curriculum and assessment.”***

(Student, Early Years Specialization, School of Child and Youth Care)

## CREATING A SEAMLESS TRANSFER TO EARLY YEARS EDUCATION AND PRACTICE

Following the launch of the Early Years Specialization in September 2006, the Unit collaborated with SCYC and ECE training institutions to create a seamless transfer to SCYC’s Bachelor of Child and Youth Care (BCYC) for educators with an ECE Diploma. Early childhood educators who transfer to the University of Victoria can now graduate with a BCYC without having to take courses that focus on knowledge and skills already acquired in their ECE diploma programs.

In addition, the Unit worked with the provincial Early Childhood Educator Registry to develop a system that allows students entering SCYC without previous ECE training (basic or post-basic) to obtain certification as early childhood educators following completion of a BCYC with an Early Years Specialization.

The introduction of the Early Years Specialization, along with enhanced opportunities for existing and aspiring early childhood educators to pursue studies at SCYC, has created a stronger cadre of students focused on the early years at the graduate level. SCYC has supported and is currently supporting several masters and doctoral students. Their work brings further understanding and leadership development to the field of early childhood education from a post-foundational perspective that engages diversity and promotes social equity.



### EARLY YEARS SPECIALIZATION COURSES

**CYC 380:** Practices for Young Children and Families—Historical and Contemporary Perspectives

**CYC 381:** Leadership, Advocacy and Policy for the Early Years

**CYC 480:** Advanced Applied Capacity-Building for the Early Years

**CYC 481:** Issues of Assessment and Evaluation with Young Children and Families

**CYC 410a:** Advanced Supervised Practicum

*The Early Years Specialization, along with the full four-year Bachelor of Child and Youth Care program, is available online.*

*For more information on the Early Years Specialization and on graduate studies, visit the School of Child and Youth Care’s website at <http://www.cyc.uvic.ca/>.*

***“I can truly say that this course has encouraged me to stretch my thinking and consider ways in which to further engage with the construction of knowledge.”***

(Student, Early Years Specialization, School of Child and Youth Care)

# Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Program

In October 2011, the Unit for Early Years Research and Development launched the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project.

## AN ONGOING PROCESS OF ACTION AND REFLECTION

This pilot project draws on the foundation created by earlier phases of the IQ Project. As in these earlier stages, participating early childhood educators attend monthly learning circles. At the learning circles, educators critically reflect on their practice through pedagogical narrations, discuss recent theoretical perspectives in the field, and learn about innovative ways to transform the early years environment and their interactions with children, families, and other educators. The educators then explore these perspectives in their centres, engaging in an ongoing, seamless process of action and reflection.

## MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN EVERYDAY PRACTICE

A new feature in the pilot project is the creation of the Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitator position. Facilitators play a role similar to that of *pedagogistas* in the centres of Reggio Emilia: immersing themselves in the centres, supporting the educators' efforts to engage with children and families in innovative, critically reflective practice, and extending the practice of the educators and the children by introducing new ideas, materials, and media, often with the assistance of an artist, or *atelierista*. The ongoing visits of the Community Facilitators provide for a richer, deeper exploration of the perspectives introduced in the IQ Project, and also create stronger links between participating educators at the community level.



## LOOKING FORWARD

The Community Early Years and Child Care Facilitators Pilot Project is a small but significant start in beginning to take the approaches modeled in the IQ Project to more BC communities. The pilot project is currently based in two communities: Victoria (Vancouver Island) and Coquitlam (Lower Mainland). In each of these locations, a Community Facilitator works with up to five early years centres. In future, we hope to extend the model to more BC communities.

# TEAM MEMBERS

**E**YRD team members work individually and collaboratively to promote leadership and local engagement in support of diversity and social equity in the early years. Some members focus primarily on early years projects in the Majority World, while others work mostly on Minority World initiatives.

Since its inception in 1992, many people have played a major role in the Unit's work. While it is not possible to name everyone who has made an important contribution, some individuals who have played key leadership roles within the Unit include: Sandra Griffin, Theresa Hunter, Lynette Jackson, Julie Holder, and Sarah Fleury. The key current team members in the Unit are listed below.



## DR. ALAN PENCE

Dr. Alan Pence is the founder and co-director of the Unit for Early Years Research and Development. He is Professor at the University of Victoria, Canada, and UNESCO Chair for Early Childhood Care, Education, and Development. He is the 2003 recipient of the International Education Leadership Award from the Canadian Bureau for International Education, the inaugural Craigdarroch Research Award for Societal Contribution from the University of Victoria (2003), and a finalist for the international World Innovation Summit for Education (WISE) award (2011). In addition to founding the Unit in 1992, he also founded the First Nations Partnership Programs (FNPP) and the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU). He has authored over 130 articles and chapters on a variety of child and education topics. His most recent books include: *Child and Youth Care: Critical Perspectives in Policy, Practice, and Pedagogy* (edited with White, 2011), *Africa's Future, Africa's Challenge: Early Childhood Care and Development in Sub-Saharan Africa* (edited with Garcia and Evans, 2008), *Beyond Quality in Early Childhood Education and Care* (with Dahlberg and Moss, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition 2007), and *Supporting Indigenous Children's Development* (with Ball, 2006).



## DR. VERONICA PACINI-KETCHABAW

Dr. Veronica Pacini-Ketchabaw is the co-director of the Unit for Early Years Research and Development and Professor, School of Child and Youth Care, University of Victoria. Dr. Pacini-Ketchabaw is the co-director of the Investigating Quality Project and the British Columbia Early Learning Framework Implementation Project. These initiatives promote the active engagement of early childhood educators in discussions and actions that can lead to the formation of sustainable and positive early learning environments in BC. She has also taken the lead at the University of Victoria, School of Child and Youth Care in developing the Early Years Specialization, offered at the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of the Bachelors degree in CYC. She has published many articles on diversity issues in early childhood in international journals. Her most recent book, *Flows, Rhythms, and Intensities of Early Childhood Education Curriculum*, written with research colleagues, was published in 2010 by Peter Lang.

## DR. ALLISON BENNER

Dr. Allison Benner has assisted the Unit with policy, research, curriculum, and communications initiatives for nearly 15 years. She has 20 years' experience as a writer, policy analyst, and communications specialist, with particular emphasis on child care and early intervention. Allison holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of Victoria. Her research focuses on first language acquisition in infants from a variety of linguistic and cultural backgrounds.



## KIRSTEN HO CHAN

Kirsten Ho Chan is the Project Manager at the Unit for Early Years Research and Development. Kirsten's work has focused on the Investigating Quality Project and the BC Early Learning Framework Implementation Project. She is the former executive director of a local non-profit organization, Restorative Justice Oak Bay, which offers alternatives to the traditional justice system and gives youth a voice in dealing with crime and dispute resolution. Kirsten is currently pursuing her PhD in Child and Youth Care at the University of Victoria, with a focus on participation in early childhood education curriculum making.



## DEBBIE BLAKELY

Debbie Blakely is the Project Administrator for the Early Childhood Development Virtual University (ECDVU), a role she has played since 2006. She is responsible for all aspects of organizational support for the delivery of ECDVU, from accounting and processing student applications, to supplying course documentation to students and arranging seminars in Africa. Debbie gains great pride from the work she does, knowing that it supports those in Africa who are truly making a difference in promoting the health and well-being of children in their countries.



## INVESTIGATING QUALITY TEAM MEMBERS, 2005–PRESENT

- Kim Atkinson (Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitator)
- Fikile Nxumalo (Community Early Learning and Child Care Facilitator)
- Vanessa Vondruska (Atelierista, Community Early Learning and Child Care Pilot Project)
- Enid Elliot (IQ Learning & Sharing Circle Facilitator)
- Alejandra Sanchez (IQ Learning & Sharing Circle Facilitator)
- Laurie Kocher (IQ Learning & Sharing Circle Facilitator)
- Sylvia Kind (IQ Learning & Sharing Circle Facilitator)
- Ahna Berikoff (IQ Learning & Sharing Circle Facilitator)



## SELECTED PUBLICATIONS

**B**elow are books and special issues of journals that relate to the Unit's work in the Minority and Majority Worlds. For a full list of our publications, please visit the Unit website at [web.uvic.ca/~eyrd/](http://web.uvic.ca/~eyrd/).

### MINORITY WORLD PUBLICATIONS

Pence, A., & White, J. (Eds.) (2011). *Child and youth care: Critical perspectives in policy, practice and pedagogy*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (Ed.). (2010). *Flows, rhythms, and intensities of early childhood education curriculum*. New York: Peter Lang.

Pence, A. (Ed.) (2008). Issues in diversity and social equity in early childhood [Special Issue]. *Contemporary Issues in Early Childhood*, 9(3).

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (2007, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). *Beyond quality in early childhood education: Languages of evaluation*. London: Routledge/Falmer Press.

Pacini-Ketchabaw, V., & Pence, A. (Eds.). (2005). *Canadian early childhood education: Broadening and deepening discussions of quality*. Ottawa, ON: Canadian Child Care Federation.

Dahlberg, G., Moss, P., & Pence, A. (1999). *Beyond quality in early childhood education: Postmodern perspectives*. London & Philadelphia: Falmer Press.

Moss, P., & Pence, P. (Eds.). (1994). *Valuing quality in early childhood services: New approaches to defining quality*. New York: Teachers College Press.

### MAJORITY WORLD PUBLICATIONS

#### International

Pence, A. (in press). Voices less heard: The importance of critical and "other" perspectives. In P. Britto, C. Super, & P. Engle (Eds.), *Handbook of early child development research and its impact on global policy*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Marfo, K., & Pence, A. (2011). Strengthening Africa's contributions to child development research [Special Section]. *Child Development Perspectives*, 5(2), 104–147.

\* Garcia, M., Pence, A., & Evans, J.L. (Eds.). (2008). *Africa's future: Africa's challenge—Early childhood care and development in Sub-Saharan Africa*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank. (\*Selected as a best notable government document for 2008 by The Library Journal.)

Pence, A., & Marfo, K. (Eds.). (2004). Capacity building for early childhood education in Africa [Special Section]. *International Journal of Educational Policy, Research and Practice*, 5(3).

#### Indigenous

Pence, A., Rodriguez, C., Greenwood, M., & Pacini-Ketchabaw, V. (Eds.). (2007). Indigenous approaches to early childhood care and education [Special Issue]. *Canadian Journal of Native Education*, 30(1).

Ball, J., & Pence, A. (2006). *Supporting Indigenous children's development*. Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.





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