Context:
Introduction of early years provision for children aged 4-6 in Government schools in Ethiopia. Only 5.2% of the 9 million children aged 4-6 in Ethiopia enrolled in ECEC (2010-2011)
Lack of qualified teacher educators, teachers, classrooms and resources to meet this new demand
Universal Primary Education for all almost achieved, attention shifting to Early Care and Education (ECCE) in the post 2015 Sustainable Development Goals
Aim: to improve the quality of the provision for Zero Grade children in government schools in Nek’emte through the professional development of key stakeholders

Funding:
British Foreign Schools Society
Exeter Ethiopia Link
Jephcott Trust
Plymouth University

Project team:
2 teacher educators from Nek’emte College of Teacher Education
3 teachers from local government schools
1 teacher from local private kindergarten
1 Education Project Manager
1 lecturer in Early Childhood Studies from Plymouth University

Methodology:
Action Research including an Appreciative Enquiry Approach

Cycle One 2013-14:
1. Sharing of values, beliefs and attitudes about ECEC within the Project Team
2. Identification of local priorities for ECEC through
   a. visits to local zero grade classes
   b. discussions with teachers, head-teachers and parents
   c. evaluations of observations of local zero grade practice
3. Planning and delivery of workshops for local zero grade teachers
4. Provision of locally-sourced, cost-effective, sustainable resources
5. Identification of changes following workshops through
   a. Follow-up visits to local zero grade classes to observe practice
   b. Support for zero grade teachers from Project Team members
6. Formative evaluation of Cycle One

Cycle Two 2014-15: Repeat steps 2-6

Theoretical perspectives
Postcolonial theory/Critical Literacy
Learning to unlearn
Learning to listen
Learning to learn
Learning to reach out

Kapoor (2004) stresses that this involves us in having to ‘retrace the itinerary of our prejudices and learning habits…… stopping oneself from always wanting to correct, teach, theorise, develop, colonise, appropriate, use, record, inscribe, enlighten’ (p 641-642).

Questions/Areas of interest:
How do Ethiopian education professionals envisage Early Childhood Education in Nek’emte?
What is the current provision for children aged 4-6 in Nekemte?
What are the strengths and limitations of the current provision?
How can provision be improved?
How can one develop and support mutually beneficial Majority/Minority World knowledge exchange and/or research collaborations in an ethical and sustainable way?

Evaluation of Cycle One identifies that significant progress towards improving the quality of the provision for Zero Grade children in government schools in Nek’emte is being made, e.g.
Economic: affordable early years education for 500+ children in 10 government schools, sustained by the local community through training and sharing of expertise
Social: culturally appropriate priorities established for early years education, responsive to the needs of the local community, with a focus on basic literacy and numeracy skills
Environment: low-cost, locally available, sustainable resources produced within the community to support early literacy and mathematics

Challenges of collaborative projects:
• Addressing issues of power, status and voice: ‘whiteness’
• Meeting the expectations of funding bodies
• Sustaining funding over time
• Promoting the research capacities of Ethiopian colleagues
• Maintaining effective communication at a distance

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References and further reading
Andreotti & de Souza (2008). “Learning to Read the World Through Other Eyes: An open access online study programme focusing on engagements with indigenous perceptions of global issues.” CESGU, Global Education and University of Kent (eds.). Derby, UK: Global Education