

THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN UNIVERSAL AND UNIQUE CONTEXTS IN SHAPING CHILD DEVELOPMENTAL ASSESSMENT: AN EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In this lecture the revision of the Griffiths Scales of Child Development, or Griffiths III as it is now known, will be described. Additionally a suggested plan for the future or “what next” phase in the interplay between universal and unique contexts in shaping child developmental assessment specifically using the Griffiths III will be described and proposed.

Pregnancy and birth reveals the baby’s living architecture. Babies are designed to learn. development beautifully unique. Child development has been described aptly as a dynamic, moving target.

Play connects them to the real world - their real world. It has been found that children who play tend to be more imaginative, creative, flexible, adaptive, skilled and advanced in language development, more successful with school work, and more emotionally secure.

Children thrive when they have time and space to breathe, to hang out and get bored sometimes, to relax, to take risks and make mistakes, to dream and have fun on their own terms, even to fail.

The assessment of development involves a comprehensive investigation of a child’s abilities, including motor, social and cognitive abilities, by direct observation, testing and reports from caregivers. Of the various methods for assessing child development, the Griffiths Scales are among those which have been accorded world-wide recognition, especially by paediatricians and psychologists. They are not simply a screening test, for they enable a thorough, holistic, diagnosis through analysis of the developmental profile. Through periodic re-examinations of children, we can bring to light developmental trends and establish developmental baselines.

In 2010 the Association for Research in Infant and Child Development (ARICD), based in the United Kingdom, London, set up a Project Board to oversee the revision of the Griffiths Scales. This was to be done in conjunction with Hogrefe, the Publishing company responsible for the world wide distribution of the measure and a Team from what was then known as the Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University. The Griffiths III was launched in London on 06 May 2016.

There is an interplay between universal factors in child development and specific contexts and the big question currently is whether a measure such as the Griffiths III which was developed in the United Kingdom can in fact be used in another unique context such as Africa, etc.

It is clear that in order for a culturally appropriate standardized test such as the Griffiths III to be used and available in contexts other than for the one which it was developed, the solution does not lie in developing an indigenous test but rather in the adaptation of the measure.

A few suggestions to guide the adaptation of the Griffiths III for use in an African context are made.