

# Deconstructing the South African National Curriculum Framework: to what extent are UDL principles incorporated into the curriculum to ensure it is differentiated for children with disabilities?

Zinhle Sibiya and Alecia Samuels

## Introduction

- Vulnerable children and those with disabilities are not likely to have access to **Early Childhood Development (ECD)** programmes, and the curriculum is not sufficiently adapted for them to participate.
- The **South African National Curriculum Framework (NCF)** is a framework that seeks to honour the diversity of young children and their capabilities while recognising the need for every child to participate equally.
- It is important to explore whether the NCF provides equal opportunities for all children from birth to four years, including those with diverse educational needs.
- **Universal Design for Learning (UDL)** is a framework aimed at delivering flexible approaches to teaching and learning by addressing the diversity of all learners through a flexible curriculum that supports access, participation, and progress for all learners within the classroom context.



## Methods

- A comprehensive qualitative content analysis of the English version of the South African NCF for children from birth to four years was conducted in order to understand the extent to which children with disabilities are mentioned and included in this curriculum document.
- A combination of qualitative content analysis approach and thematic analysis was adopted to explore the research aims.

There is a substantial gap where the NCF needs to explicitly detail how ECD practitioners could successfully ensure that all learners, including learners with disabilities, benefit from the curriculum in all its components.

## Results

- A variety of terms were used to explicitly and implicitly refer to children with disabilities in different sections of the South African NCF [Table 1].
- All three principles of UDL were incorporated into the NCF to some extent but this was inconsistent across the principles.
- The most common UDL principle that was coded related to **multiple means of expression**.
- There were too many **missed opportunities** where UDL principles could have been incorporated, particularly with respect to **multiple means of representation**.

Table 1: Terms relating to disability as coded in the curriculum.

Explicit search terms	Frequency
Disability/ disabilities	3/20
Children with disabilities	9
Specific disabilities/ impairments	5
Special needs	12
Disorder/s	4
Delay or developmental delays	14
Barriers to learning	5
Inclusive/inclusion and inclusivity	3

Figure 1: Frequency of terms related to disability



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