Froebelian work in South Africa

Tina Bruce, Stella Louis
Published online on: 01 Aug 2018

How to cite: Tina Bruce, Stella Louis. 01 Aug 2018, Froebelian work in South Africa from: The Routledge International Handbook of Froebel and Early Childhood Practice, Re-articulating Research and Policy Routledge
Accessed on: 22 Nov 2023
https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315562421-17

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.
Introduction to this chapter and links with the next

This chapter and the next are closely linked, and exemplify the flexibility that is possible within the Froebelian approach to early childhood education and beyond into adult life. In South Africa the Froebelian team continue to work in a sustained way with one community. This is entirely different from working with constantly shifting staff and with street children whose attendance is not always regular in the Kolkata context. The cultural setting of Africa is different from that in India. As readers will have seen from other chapters in this book tracing the beginnings of Froebelian education, there has always been a focus on how to be a Froebelian educator globally, and without being culturally narrow. There is commitment to developing a decolonised approach using affordable materials so that quality early childhood education is ensured and sustained (Read, 2018:1).

The Froebel Trust

From 2006–2009 Professor Ian Bruce, with a grant from Lord Joel Joffe, researched and established a course for Community Leaders in Townships, which it was decided to locate at the University of Johannesburg, developing this with the Professor of Social Work, Hanna Nel. Their first course was attended by the then Principal of the Pastoral Centre crèche, the leader of the Kliptown Youth Project (KYP) and the leader of the Skills Development Project all working in the small area of the Kliptown community. Kliptown is one of the two poorest areas of Soweto, and is an informal settler camp (formerly known as a squatters camp).

While studying on the course the Principal of Pastoral Centre invited Tina Bruce to visit her school. Visits were made during two consecutive years. There was hesitation about undertaking more formal and funded work with the community as typically there is a tendency to do so with an outcome of dependency on external funding and the purchasing of expensive equipment and buildings. From the beginning two drivers, Stembiso and his wife Sabiwile, have played an important part knowing how to keep the team safe.

Professor Maurice Craft, Chair of the Froebel Trust Education Committee and the Chief Executive, Laurence Barnes, felt it was important to have undertaken careful research before
undertaking a project, something they wished to achieve in South Africa. Hearing about the work of Ian Bruce the groundwork had been undertaken.

In 2010 the first Froebel Project visit to Kliptown Community took place with a small grant from the Froebel Trust supporting the volunteer team. The Froebel Trust continued to give an annual grant to the work until 2017. At the request of the Froebel Education Committee of the IFEI a project was developed in this community school. There were approximately 200 children – one adult with 38 ‘babies’ (between 1 year and 18 months) and classes of over 40 children to one adult in four other classes.

Stella Louis, a Froebel trained and highly experienced early childhood local authority adviser in South London with an established reputation for the quality of her work, was appointed. It is significant that the staff of the Soweto school appreciated Stella’s work with them, honouring this by giving her the Zulu name Ujabule (Happiness) at the end of an intense training period.

At this stage in the work the classrooms were operating on an entirely transmission model of curriculum and pedagogy. None of the staff were trained in early childhood education, and few had matriculation. The Froebel Trust team implemented the Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approach related to Appreciative Inquiry, to which they were introduced by Professor Nel. This begins with the assets and strengths of the community. It rejects a ‘deficit and dependency’ model of philanthropy, which looks to survival through external support.

The strengths were identified with the Principal, and through observations gathered and analysed between the Principal, Stella and Tina. In this community the children learn their home language and from an early age begin to understand and often speak at least one more of the six local languages of the Kliptown community which are Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho, Venda, Tsonga and Afrikaans. For most the home language is Zulu, Xhosa and Sesotho. In addition they begin to learn English in the Pastoral Centre by the age of 7 years. Ability with languages, music and dance are strengths. Children learn heritage dances which they perform at the age of 3 years. It is expected that children will sing in parts with adults from an early age. Complex drum rhythms in highly mathematical patterns are also a feature.

An important stage in the ABCD approach is to develop a Dream (vision) of what would be ideal, and then to Design steps towards this using the strengths of the community, and without unending dependency on unsustainable external resourcing or focus on what is lacking and deficient. The Principal’s Dream was to have a high quality early childhood curriculum and pedagogy, so that the children would receive more than loving care in this happy school. She was using a programme ‘Clever Play’, having attended a free course. It required the use of paint, wooden blocks, books, toys for fantasy play, and chanting American rhymes relating to shape and colour, none of which resources were available except for the prescribed chants. She was challenged when the FT team advocated a sustainable approach with minimal external funding support for equipment. Her staff embraced this, seizing the opportunity for training, and attracted to the principle of using sustainable material provision. It is a principle of the Froebel training that the staff experience the material they offer before trying to use the materials with the children they work with.

Parents were paid a stipend by the FT team in order that staff could have training together with Stella and Tina. This was their first experience of working as a whole team and meeting together. The training introduced Froebelian Gifts (wooden blocks) and Occupations such as stick laying, stick and pea, parquetry, drawing with chalk and slate, pin boards, peg boards, puzzles, clay, sand and water. Staff were encouraged to teach children how to help clear up, and how to organise children into small groups for these experiences. Staff embraced all the Occupations except for the sand.

Throughout the Froebel training and embedding of the practice has only provided two of the more expensive kinds of material. The first is the wooden blocks (Froebel’s Gifts). The
second is the provision of books in the local languages and in English. At this stage in the project only a few sets of wooden blocks were provided. The cost of the materials of the Occupations was small and sustainable across time. The wooden blocks, if looked after and carefully presented to children, are also a sustainable resource. We have found that the equipment of all kinds has been valued and cared for, but we were cautious at first.

Another strand of the work was storytelling. Many of the African stories are complex. The books in the classroom were for display and not for use by the children. They were all in English and of poor quality. Musical instruments were made from recycled materials for the children to use during whole class singing and dancing sessions. This triggered a long process, which took until 2014, of finding and buying books in the official languages. More is written about this later in the report. At this stage, the search for suitable books proved unachievable.

During September the Principal visited London for intense training. She stayed with Tina and Ian. She spent a day at Eastwood maintained nursery school and children’s centre (adjacent to the University of Roehampton), a day at Vanessa Maintained nursery school and children’s centre (in the London Borough of Hammersmith and Fulham), and several days at Ann Bernadt maintained nursery school and children’s centre (In Peckham, Southwark), working with the head teacher Georgie McCall who agreed to join the team having worked in Sierra Leone as a VSO volunteer as a young teacher.

In 2011, with Georgie McCall joining the team it became possible to work more intensively with the staff of children 1–2 years, and also with a focus on the children with special educational needs and disabilities. It also became possible to begin the process of setting up a vegetable garden. Stella and Tina focussed on the children from 3–6 years of age. Although the FT team worked in classrooms alongside the staff, there were also training sessions with the whole staff. Although the member of staff working with the ‘babies’ does not speak English, and does not read or write, having missed an education during the years of the struggles, it is clear that her practice and leadership qualities are a strength in the school. She was being excluded from the training, but Stella insisted that she should also attend. Gradually the status of the work with babies was increased.

Links were made with Dr. Luneta at the University of Johannesburg, School of Education and a visit to the primary school in the University grounds was part of this. The FT team gave a lecture to the 300 (Years 1–3) students training to be teachers. The Principal of the hub school and the Deputy Principal joined Stella, Georgie and Tina. The session was practical, involving students in blockplay, Occupations and storytelling. A sequence of photographs was shown demonstrating the Froebelian practice in the school. Follow up visits were arranged for staff at the school in the University grounds.

Visits were made to the early childhood setting nearby. Two traditional women led the school and they were invited to join the training. The decision was made to offer an intensive week of training in London to the Deputy Principal, who was quietly working with the staff to embed the practice. The plan was for her to visit Anne Bernadt School and Children’s Centre (CC), and also to visit Eastwood School and CC and Vanessa School and CC. The teacher in the neighbouring school was also invited to come with the deputy head of the hub school. The FT team had identified her as the key teacher in the school and daughter of one of the two Principals. At the end of their visit an action plan was made with each for follow up work in their two schools after the visit to the UK.

2012 – The work expands

The plan was to work with the two schools, using the Pastoral Centre as the hub school where the practice was further developed. However, the FT team were disappointed to find that there
was no evidence of any change in practice in the second school despite the visit to London. The staff in this second school were nevertheless invited to join the training sessions in the hub school, using parent helpers to release them. The staff of the hub school visited the Kliptown Community School and helped to arrange the materials. The decision was made to invite the younger Principal to join the group of four teachers from the hub school to an intensive training week in London, using the established pattern for the week. It was felt that this might enable her daughter to have more freedom to embed the practice, if one of the Principals of the school could see what was being discussed. It would also be helpful if she could spend the week in discussion, observing and analysing the practice seen in London with the five enthusiastic teachers from the hub school.

The FT team once again gave a practical lecture to the 300 (year 1–3) teacher education students at the University of Johannesburg. Two staff from the Pastoral Centre formed part of the team doing this. The Gifts and Occupations were demonstrated, and the story of ‘Handa’s Surprise’ was enacted. The teacher from the second school also joined the team.

The FT team with the two staff from Pastoral Centre again visited the University Primary school and visits were arranged for future visits. The University link lecturer visited the Pastoral Centre.

Although there was significant progress each year in introducing a sustained approach working with an increasing number of boxes of wooden blocks (Gifts) and Occupations, finding appropriate books, other than in English and at great expense, was proving a challenge. Eastwood School had provided a generous donation for blocks to be bought. The Edinburgh Froebel Network had given a donation for books. The situation was frustrating.

In June 2012 at the fourth Edinburgh Froebel Network Conference Making connections across time and space, Stella Louis gave a keynote presentation Froebel’s Gifts and Occupations in a South African Township kindergarten.

In October Tina Bruce and Stella Louis gave a keynote lecture about the work in South Africa at the City of Dublin Childcare Conference Inspiring Quality. This led to correspondence with the Minister who had attended the presentation.

2013 – Taking stock and refocusing

The work in the hub school had progressed. Children were engaged in messy play (water, sand, clay) on the verandas, and the babies now had a shed as a changing room. The status of the babies was now equal to that of the older children. There was a good balance of group work and whole class singing, dancing, storying and so on. The pace of the day remained an issue. First there is assembly with singing and dancing outside in the community area. Then breakfast in the classrooms takes time, and the children sleep in the afternoons. The time for education is therefore short. There is an issue that many of the oldest children (5-year-olds) do not want to sleep, and they fidget on the mats. But because children are living in shacks, with crowded conditions, for those who sleep, it is important that they can do so. The FT team felt it important to focus on the quality of the education, and the smoother transition from breakfast into the small group work that follows.

The FT team were delighted to find that children with special needs (such as Downs Syndrome) were progressing through the school with their age peers, instead of staying in the baby room. Not only this, but staff were delighted to include them. The visits to London and the careful training with Georgie in her school had brought a change of attitude which was positive for everyone.

The vegetable garden was flourishing and the caretaker took pride in being able to supply spinach, tomatoes and pumpkins to the kitchen to add to the children’s lunches. Georgie spent
time encouraging him to let the children help, but this was a step too far at this stage. Herbs were added and the apple tree was valued.

There is now a blue plastic cover over a metal frame which was an extra room for the school. It is either very hot, or very cold according to the weather. Public lavatories have been placed in the school grounds, replacing the two cess tubs (one for adults and one for children). There are two for women, two for men and two for children. These are used by about 300 people in the community, which means there is a constant trail of people from the community, the skills development project and the Youth Project entering the school garden to use them. Because there are plastic taps and flushes they are not in good repair. Ideally other lavatories would be placed elsewhere so that only the school used these.

A visit to the second school was very disappointing. This caused the necessity of major rethinking and a refocusing of the work. The decision was made to stop working formally with this school, but to welcome the staff to join the training if they wished to do so.

A positive progression in the hub school was the desire for training, but it was still proving challenging to obtain information about the best courses to link them to, or the cost of doing so. The FT team, with the Principal of the school and one teacher, once again gave a practical lecture to the 300 students (Years 1–3) taking the teacher training degree at the University. Once again the story of *Handa’s Surprise* was told.

Another challenge remained. Although we researched, we were no more successful in finding appropriate books than we had been in previous years until the summer of 2013. During the summer Tina received a message at the University of Roehampton that Dr. Carole Bloch was visiting England and would like to meet her and Shirley Maxwell. She had taken the one-term Froebel Certificate in Early Childhood Education in 1986, when Tina was Course Leader and Shirley had tutored her dissertation on early writing. Carole is now Director of PRAESA (Project for the Study of Alternative Education in South Africa), having worked with and taken on the task from the deeply respected founder, Neville Alexander, on his recent death. He spent 10 years on Robben Island. Her dissertation became the publication, ‘Chloe’s Story’. She was able to help the FT team by suggesting, ordering and delivering books in the local official languages and in English to the hub school during the next visit in 2014. These included books for babies. Arrangements were also made to work with her homework club team of about eight (Nal’ibali) based in Gauteng on the next visit (see Chapter 10). She also connected the FT team with Professor Karin Murris at the University of Cape Town, who had recently set up a PGCE in Early Childhood Education. This network of likeminded early childhood specialists has led to exciting work together, both in Kliptown and in Cape Town.

2014 – The team expands to include two students from the University of Roehampton

Shortly before our visit in March, we heard in early January that the Principal had suddenly died of a heart attack while visiting her mother in Swaziland. When we arrived, the school community was in shock. She was a community leader in the traditional way. Ian Bruce offered guidance with setting up more transparent accountancy, a system of governance and interviews to properly appoint the new Principal and Deputy.

At the inspired suggestion of Professor Maurice Craft, the University of Roehampton had agreed to sponsor two students to join the FT team to Soweto. They were carefully selected, helped in the process by the staff of the School of Education. They joined the work in the hub school, but not the work with the PRAESA HQ team and the University of Cape Town teaching of the PGCE course. Stella Louis agreed to be their ‘key person’.
The students acted as assistants to Stella and Georgie, and were able to add their observations to our daily discussions and analysing to inform the next day’s planning. They also helped the Principal to arrange her office (a garden shed) with a locked filing cabinet for documents (purchased second hand by the FT).

The FT team (Tina, Stella, Georgie and the Principal and one teacher) again gave a practical lecture to the 400 students (years 1–4) at the University of Johannesburg taking the 4-year teacher training course in early childhood education.

They also met members of the faculty of Education at a formal meeting, and were made very welcome with a sandwich lunch. The FT team (Tina, Stella, Georgie and Principal) also met the staff of the primary school in the grounds of the University for a seminar. This proved fascinating. There was debate about the value of encouraging children in pretend play, which was seen as entirely different from acting out a story from literature or folklore. A child pretending to be a robber, it was argued, might think it was really all right to rob. They might conflate the pretending with really taking on the role of robber. We realised that the play we see in the hub school is literal play: pretending to be mother carrying the baby on the back, pretending to eat, etc. We have experienced a fear and anxiety in the staff about the possibility children might show violence in their pretend play. Acting out stories in song and literature takes the children into the world of ‘not real’ in a form that does not seem to bring such anxiety on the part of the adults. It made us realise the need to respect the cultural differences here and to engage with finding ways of working together positively in this area. We decided that we need to focus on storytelling.

On the Sunday a generous offer had been made by Nel Redelinghuys to invite the staff of the school, the leader of the KYP homework team, the head of KYP, the kitchen staff etc to lunch in the garden of her home. Nel had introduced Tina and Ian to the Kliptown KYP Community leader, as a tour guide in 2006. The book *Observing Young Children* by Tina, Stella and Georgie has a chapter on the work of the FT in Soweto. The book has a dedication to Nel for her work during the years of apartheid teaching young black children in a voluntary Saturday school so that they received some early childhood education before attending statutory primary education. The Guest House where the team stay each year, thanks to the negotiations of Stella, happily allowed us to prepare the food for 30 guests in their kitchen, and to borrow crockery. A local coach in Kliptown was organised by KYP to bring the guests. The caretaker in the school, who was the vegetable gardener, asked Nel for cuttings of plants, which she gave him.

An exciting development during this visit was the arrival at the Guest House of the delivery of books in the local official languages and in English. These were taken to the school, and a session on storytelling was led by Stella Louis and Ntombe from Nal’ibali (PRAESA). Ntombe and Carole Bloch flew from Cape Town to joint train with the FT team. This was a highly successful, if exhausting experience. Five groups came together for the day: the school staff, the leader of the KYP homework club, PRAESA (Nal’ibali), the FT team. Seeing the intense pleasure of the staff in the baby room on receiving books for the babies was fulfilling. Groups of children were brought to listen to stories and to act them out.

Each year, Stella leads the training with the staff. The traditional Froebelian elements of the curriculum were introduced and deepened year on year. These included: wooden block play (the Gifts), the Occupations, play, storytelling and literature, music, song and dance and nature study.

A tradition has developed on the last day of work with the Pastoral Centre, that the children and staff wear traditional costumes and dance and sing. Each member of the FT team was given an African name. In the afternoon, the FT were, for the second year, invited to supper in a local restaurant, ‘Klippies’. It was essential to be collected and returned home with our driver Stem-biso and safety was an issue.
The decision was made to take the Principal of the hub school and the leader of the KYP homework club to Cape Town for further training with Nal’ibali HQ at PRASA working with the FT team. Stella led this training, and the Nal’ibali staff were very appreciative. They commented that it had been very helpful to see such a skilled trainer in action, working with them. Tina worked with the PGCE students, examining what Froebelian principles might look like when translated into action with Professor Karin Murris and Carole and some of her team.

In June 2014, at the International Froebel Society Conference Stella Louis and Georgie McCall gave a workshop presentation disseminating the work in Soweto.

2015 – Making progress

Sadly, a few days before the work in Soweto, Georgie suffered a close family bereavement, and so could not join the FT team. The two students, Jenny and Valeria, from the previous year, fund-raised to come again, subsidised by the generosity of the David Montefiore Trust. They became fully fledged members of the team, no longer titled students. They won the University’s Social Enterprise Award in 2014 following their first visit. Valeria had recently undertaken an FT-funded project for the Froebel Archive in the Library at the University of Roehampton (see Chapter 6).

Apart from replacing books, which wear out, the school now has little need to spend large amounts of money on classroom equipment and materials. They have embraced a sustainable approach and happily use bottle tops and other kinds of recycled materials, giving them status and presenting them attractively and carefully. One of the fascinating things for the FT team is seeing how the early (nineteenth century) kindergartens and Froebelian nursery schools in the UK made excellent use of simple, found and affordable materials. Reclaiming this is powerful in taking forward the curriculum and pedagogy on a low budget.

Again Nel Redelinghuys invited the community to her home for Sunday lunch. Once more the Guest House kindly allowed the FT team to prepare the food and even helped to cook.

Then, a gifted trainer, whose approach is very froebelian, although she had not heard of Froebel, except for meeting the Principal, worked with the three schools/crèches in ward 19 of Kliptown, paid for by the hub school. We met Dolly, owner of a new school/crèche, who is a local community leader. Staff came from the Kliptown Community school, and this was an opportunity to work with them again, and we hope it might lead to progress in practice in the school. It takes time for new ideas to embed. All in all, it was a very successful day and we invited Tiny to join our training for the rest of the week (Monday – Friday), which she welcomed.

Having observed a local trainer work with the hub school and ward 19 crèches, we invited her to join our week of Froebelian training as she implicitly worked in this way, and the decision was made to fund her to give on-going support to the teachers with embedding the Froebelian approach to curriculum and pedagogy. This signals the beginning of our gradually handing over to local training that is linked to the South African National framework of Qualifications, but in Froebelian ways.

Stella worked with Jenny, who took over leading the garden experience for the children and supported the caretaker in allowing groups of six children at a time throughout the day to visit the garden. He let them touch the plants and they learnt about the growth and life cycle of the spinach, tomatoes, sage and pumpkins. Furthermore, the pumpkins were cooked for lunch and served to the children with explanations and demonstrations. Children also drew the plants they had seen, with excellent concentration and meticulous care. This introduced another of the Froebelian Occupations. It is hoped that this pattern will continue.
Tina and Ian spent time with the Principal, supporting her in the development of finance procedures, discussing governance, and fund raising. She has very wisely reduced the number of children in the school from 250 under the previous Principal to the 130 children legally allowed and grant-funded from the Social Development Agency. There is a requirement that this is mainly spent on food. Some children attend free (about 40) and parents contribute by working in the school. The remainder pay a small fee.

Training was also discussed. The Principal has eight staff eager to undertake South African accredited training leading to qualifications. The funding from the David Montefiore Trust was used to start this process. On the last morning of the FT team’s work with the Pastoral Centre a ceremony was arranged for the staff to receive Froebel Trust Certificates of Attendance. Each certificate individually itemised the sessions attended. Some staff have attended annual training since we began work with the school. There was a procession with traditional African singing and the FT team were delighted that the cooks prepared a meal in the school. Children danced and sang (to a high standard). Staff had made a display of garden produce and traditional artefacts. The pot of rice beer was handed round and perhaps this is why the FT team were able to join in the dancing with joy towards the end.

The decision was made to invite the Principal to Cape Town to join the University training for the PGCEs and PRAESA. She appreciated the help with taking a more strategic overview. Whereas last year, at the training day which Stella led at PRAESA/Nal’ibali, she was very quiet in the way she participated, we were delighted to see that this year she targeted one of the most skilled trainers to work with, and gave an excellent critique with good analysis of their presentation. She also worked as a more equal colleague in our discussions. On the last evening she gave a spontaneous but formal speech of thanks for our work with her.

We realised that things were developing at a mushrooming pace, having previously moved slowly towards this. Tina and Ian, accompanied by the leader of the team of Primary homework club workers, visited three (the Principal was ill at the fourth) of the receiving primary schools. The home language of one was Zulu with English being taught. Another was Xhosa with English being taught. The other two schools, Florida and Firethorn use English from the start and the second language is Afrikaans. In fact, the first language of most of the teachers in these two schools is Afrikaans.

We observed the grade 1 and 2 groups in the KYP homework club after school one evening (4–6pm). Evidently most of the children attended the Pastoral Centre before starting primary school and the homework club. The homework club provides a meal and keeps children from dangerous play outside. However, there is much to do with the homework club, as the staff are not trained and most do not have matriculation. The leaders welcomed the offer of help from PRAESA to train them in storytelling. Retired Professor Yvonne Reed (Wits University, literacy in education for adults) is giving lessons in literacy and literature to the KYP team of homework club workers to help them study for matriculation. She has also worked with PRAESA, and was delighted to hear of our connection. Tina was invited to observe her teaching and found a heartening common ground of approach. There is a problem of continuity and turnover in that the homework club workers tend to leave after about a year to enter tertiary college. They are only paid a stipend.

We found ourselves networking and gathering together a number of organisations important to the development of our work. We were now working closely with the newly formed early childhood forum for Ward 19 in Kliptown and the leader of the homework team specifically for the younger children. We have kept our links with the University of Johannesburg and further developed work with the University of Cape Town with Karin Murris and Carole Bloch. The plan was to bring together all those we work with in a conference at !Khwa Ttu in 2017, either in March or in August.
We began the process of developing costings and a business plan, and spent time with the staff at !Khwa Ttu in discussion and review of conference space, and accommodation. It would have been possible to have 120 delegates (including the FT team). However, in discussion with Carole Bloch and Karin Murris and working closely with Professor Eric Atmore at The Centre for Early Childhood Development (CECD), the decision was made to organise a National South African conference in Cape Town at the River Club, Observatory, where it would be possible to have more delegates and was near to the airport. The title was *What shall we do with the children on Monday? Ensuring affordable high quality early childhood education*. This would disseminate across the nine South African provinces the Froebelian work that had been tried and tested in an informal settlement together with the work in other townships with PRAESA.

The conference resulted in 60% of lead practitioners from all over South Africa, and 40% of policy makers attending from all nine of the provinces. Professor Eric Atmore and his staff at CECD, which is, like PRAESA, part of the University of Cape Town, gave invaluable administrative support. Professor Karin Murris also gave full support and participation and a keynote lecture. There was important initial seed corn funding from the FT, and Tina Bruce gave a keynote lecture. UNICEF paid for 100 delegates to have a free place and Andre Viviers gave a keynote and the Department for Higher Education and Training DHET sent representatives from all 9 Provinces and Mmatsetshweu Ruby Motaung gave a keynote. The two-day National Conference was so successful with the practical workshops co-led by the FT team based on the Froebelian work undertaken there and delivered by staff of the school and by PRAESA that in January 2017 there followed an Orientation Course for tutors in Universities and Colleges for the DHET led by PRAESA with Tina Bruce and Stella Louis as self-funding volunteers. Funding was an issue, but a private donation from committed UK individuals enabled this to go forward.

The Froebelian work began by revisiting the lack of equipment and resources in the early Froebelian kindergartens, and developing sustainable, affordable materials suitable in the cultural context of today. There was also a central focus on training, discussion and implementing the training with support in practical classrooms. The slow cook nature of embedding Froebelian practice is referred to often in this Handbook. It requires sustained support and training in a community of practitioners committed to thoughtful, shared practice. It strives to work in a decolonised way.