

A comparative analysis of Frog Street curriculum frameworks and instructional approaches across early childhood education systems in six continents

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ABSTRACT

This comparative study examines the alignment of the Frog Street early childhood curriculum with national curriculum frameworks and instructional approaches from three countries in each of six continents: North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania. Using qualitative document analysis and thematic coding, the research highlights similarities and differences in curriculum design, pedagogical strategies, and cultural contexts. Findings indicate that while Frog Street reflects global best practices in whole-child, play-based learning, effective international adaptation requires contextualization to local language, cultural values, and teacher autonomy. The study contributes to the discourse on global curriculum transferability and the need for culturally responsive pedagogy.

Keywords: Early childhood education, Frog Street, curriculum frameworks, comparative education, global education

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INTRODUCTION

Globally, early childhood education (ECE) is increasingly recognized as a foundational pillar for promoting equitable lifelong learning and socio-economic development (Murray et al., 2019; Urban et al., 2022). Research highlights that high-quality ECE improves school readiness, social-emotional development, and later academic achievement, particularly for children from disadvantaged backgrounds (Melhuish et al., 2021). As such, countries have invested in developing curriculum frameworks that integrate evidence-based pedagogies with culturally relevant practices (Heikka et al., 2019).

The Frog Street Pre-K curriculum, widely adopted in the United States, exemplifies a commercial, structured early learning program designed to align with state and Head Start standards. It emphasizes whole-child development through integrated domains, including language and literacy, social-emotional skills, STEM, and family engagement, delivered through daily thematic lesson plans and teacher-guided activities (Frog Street, 2023). Recent research

suggests that such comprehensive curricula can support instructional consistency and positive outcomes when combined with strong teacher professional development (Wasik et al., 2020).

However, comparative education research shows that curriculum transferability across diverse contexts remains complex and nuanced (Urban et al., 2022). Studies argue that simply importing ECE models without adaptation often overlooks local cultural values, language needs, and pedagogical traditions (Tesar, 2019; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2023). For example, emergent curriculum approaches such as Reggio Emilia (Italy) or TeWhāriki (New Zealand) are built on principles of child agency, teacher autonomy, and deep community involvement, which can contrast with more scripted, standardized programs (Cherrington & Thornton, 2023).

Moreover, global trends in ECE policy increasingly highlight the importance of culturally sustaining pedagogy, indigenous perspectives, and multilingual practices (Tesar, 2019; Kilderry et al., 2023). This underscores the need for curriculum developers and policymakers to balance structure and flexibility to ensure cultural responsiveness and contextual relevance (Urban et al., 2022).

Statement of the problem

This paper seeks to analyze how the Frog Street curriculum framework aligns with or diverges from national ECE frameworks and instructional approaches across three countries in each of six continents. By mapping similarities and differences in curriculum structure, pedagogical principles, and cultural fit, this comparative study contributes to the discourse on how commercial curricula can be adapted for meaningful, equitable early childhood learning globally.

METHODOLOGY

The study used a qualitative comparative case study design that included looking at documents and getting expert opinions. When looking at similarities and differences across a number of settings, a comparative case study design is the best choice (Yin, 2018). The study looked at how the Frog Street Pre-K curriculum fits with national early childhood education (ECE) frameworks and teaching methods from 18 countries in North America, South America, Europe, Africa, Asia, and Oceania.

This design makes it possible to look closely at the cultural and contextual factors that affect how a curriculum is implemented and how well it can be used in other places (Urban et al., 2022). It uses both secondary data analysis and input from stakeholders to make it more reliable.

The study was conducted remotely using publicly available policy documents, curriculum guides, and relevant peer-reviewed research on early childhood education. Eighteen countries were purposively selected to represent diverse cultural, socio-economic, and policy contexts across six continents. For North America, the comparison focused on the United States, where the Frog Street curriculum originates, alongside Canada (Ontario) and Jamaica. In South America, Brazil, Chile, and Colombia were included to reflect varied approaches within the region. The European contexts examined were the United Kingdom, Finland, and Italy, each known for distinct early childhood philosophies such as the EYFS, play-based Nordic models, and the Reggio Emilia approach. For Africa, the study considered South Africa, Kenya, and Ghana, which demonstrate different ways of integrating cultural relevance and community

involvement into ECE frameworks. In Asia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Japan were selected to illustrate structured, values-based, and routine-oriented systems, respectively. Finally, in Oceania, Australia, New Zealand, and Papua New Guinea were included to highlight diverse practices ranging from Australia's EYLF to New Zealand's TeWhāriki and Papua New Guinea's community-centered ECE approach.

In this study, the primary respondents were the official early childhood education policy documents, curriculum frameworks, and published research articles from the selected countries. As the research relied mainly on qualitative document analysis, these materials served as the main source of data for comparing curriculum structures, instructional approaches, and cultural contexts. To strengthen the validity and trustworthiness of the findings, the study also included an expert validation process. This involved consulting early childhood educators and curriculum developers who were familiar with the Frog Street curriculum, as well as local ECE practitioners and policy experts representing at least one country per continent. These experts were identified through professional networks and scholarly communities. Their feedback focused on verifying the interpretation of the curriculum content, ensuring cultural accuracy, and confirming the relevance of the comparative analysis within their specific contexts.

Data were analyzed through thematic coding and comparative synthesis. First, the researcher organized the documents and coded them according to pre-defined dimensions inspired by established approaches to qualitative document analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Next, thematic analysis was used to identify recurring patterns and notable contrasts in how each framework conceptualizes whole-child development, balances teacher-directed and child-initiated learning, and integrates local culture and community practices (Braun & Clarke, 2019). A comparative matrix was then developed to present key similarities and differences in a clear, systematic way. Expert feedback was incorporated during this phase to ensure the cultural accuracy and relevance of interpretations. This iterative process allowed the study to produce insights that may inform curriculum developers, educators, and policymakers interested in adapting the Frog Street curriculum to diverse global contexts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this comparative analysis reveal key similarities and differences in how the Frog Street Pre-K curriculum aligns with early childhood education frameworks across various countries and regions.

The Frog Street curriculum in the United States is a good example of a highly structured curriculum framework that includes scripted, thematic units that are in line with Head Start and state standards. Frog Street (2023) says that its teaching style includes detailed lessons led by teachers and play activities at centers that help children grow as a whole. This structured approach is meant to make sure that it is used the same way in different classrooms. This can be especially helpful when teachers are not as well-prepared. On the other hand, Ontario's **How Does Learning Happen?** framework in Canada is based on an emergent, inquiry-based model that puts relationships, a sense of belonging, and being open to children's ideas and cultural identities first (Government of Ontario, 2014). Its teaching style gives teachers a lot of freedom to work with kids and families to build the curriculum together, making sure that learning is relevant and meaningful in the cultural context of the area. The National Early Childhood Curriculum in Jamaica, on the other hand, stresses community involvement and culturally appropriate play, with a strong focus on early language development and the use of local stories

and songs that reflect Jamaican culture (ECC, 2014). This model, which is based on the community, helps with implementation by getting families and communities involved as partners in the learning process. These three contexts have different goals: Frog Street wants to help kids get ready for school by consistently delivering standards-based content; Ontario's framework focuses on helping kids develop their sense of identity, agency, and well-being; and Jamaica's approach wants to strengthen cultural identity and community ties while also helping kids learn and grow cognitively and linguistically. The overall effect shows that curriculum frameworks and teaching methods must be in line with cultural contexts and the realities of implementation in order to get real results. Frog Street's structured design can help with consistent delivery and measurable academic gains, but its effectiveness outside the U.S. may depend on changing its materials and methods to support more flexible, culturally responsive teaching, like in Canada and Jamaica.

In South America, early childhood education frameworks show that there are different priorities when it comes to balancing structure with cultural responsiveness. This affects how a commercial curriculum like Frog Street might be changed. The National Curriculum Guidelines for Early Childhood Education in Brazil stress learning that is inclusive, play-based, and based on the child's social and cultural reality. The curriculum framework encourages teachers to include local traditions, stories, and family practices in daily lessons (Campos et al., 2011). This method is flexible and child-centered when it comes to teaching. It encourages kids to ask questions instead of following strict lesson plans. The Bases Curriculares de la Educación Parvularia in Chile also uses a holistic, rights-based approach that values diversity and encourages children's independence through exploration and social-emotional learning (MINEDUC, 2018). Its teaching style combines clear learning goals with a lot of freedom for teachers to adapt to different situations, which lets them use the cultural backgrounds of their students. The De Cero a Siempre policy in Colombia makes early childhood a priority across sectors by bringing together health, nutrition, and education into one framework (Bernal & Camacho, 2018). Responsive caregiving and community involvement are important parts of the teaching here, and local cultural knowledge is very important. Implementation in these countries usually depends on getting the community involved and working with families to make sure that learning is relevant to the children's lives. The goals are not only to help young children develop their language and thinking skills, but also to help them feel included in society, develop their cultural identity, and improve their health, especially in communities that don't get enough help. These frameworks show that while a structured curriculum like Frog Street could make lessons more consistent in places where teachers have different levels of training, it would need to be carefully adapted to respect the local languages, family traditions, and community voices that are important to early learning in Brazil, Chile, and Colombia. Without this, there is a chance that the curriculum content won't connect with the rich and varied cultural contexts that South American ECE frameworks try to keep alive.

The National Curriculum Framework for Children from Birth to Four in South Africa encourages a play-based approach that focuses on social justice, whole-person development, and inclusion. It also encourages people to learn from everyday situations, stories, and traditional knowledge (Department of Basic Education, 2015). It teaches values by encouraging teachers to be flexible, families to be involved, and students to use their home languages, which helps them keep their cultural identity. In Kenya, the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) also focuses on early literacy, numeracy, and life skills through a play-based, integrated approach that

emphasizes hands-on, experiential learning that relates to the children's experiences in their communities (NACOSTI, 2020). Teachers are told to change the activities to fit the needs of their students. This means finding a balance between giving kids direction and letting them explore on their own. The Kindergarten Curriculum Guide for Ghana also stresses learning through play, stories, and songs a lot. This helps to deeply embed cultural values and local languages into everyday life (GES, 2019). In these cases, working with families and communities is very important, and the extended family and community elders are seen as important co-educators. The goals are not just to be ready to learn in primary school, but also to be healthy both socially and emotionally and to feel like you belong to a culture. The results of these frameworks show that Frog Street's clear structure and themed resources could help teachers who don't have a lot of resources or who haven't had enough training. But the scripted English-language format would need a lot of work to make sure it respects local languages, community knowledge, and teaching that is flexible and culturally appropriate. If lessons aren't set in a meaningful way, they might ignore indigenous ways of knowing and make it harder for the community to get involved. Both of these things are important for successful early childhood education in many African settings.

The Early Years Foundation Stage (EYFS) in the UK is a set of rules that outlines clear learning goals but also encourages flexible, play-based approaches and practitioner judgment to meet the needs of each child (DfE, 2021). The way it teaches strikes a balance between giving kids direction and letting them lead activities. Teachers must adapt the lessons to each child's developmental stage and cultural background. The National Core Curriculum for ECEC in Finland is based on Nordic ideas of trusting teachers and giving children control over their own learning. It puts a lot of emphasis on outdoor play, exploration, and learning that happens naturally (Karila&Nummenmaa, 2021). Teachers use this flexible framework to create learning environments that encourage curiosity and active participation, and that are deeply connected to the culture and community where the students live. The Reggio Emilia approach from Italy is another example of an emerging, culturally embedded curriculum framework that focuses on project-based learning, documentation, and working closely with families and communities (Edwards et al., 2012). Its teaching style doesn't use set lesson plans. Instead, it sees the curriculum as being built by kids, teachers, and families together, which lets it show the cultural values and identity of each community. In many European settings, implementation depends on highly trained teachers who have the freedom to change curriculum goals to fit the needs of each child and the local situation. The goals are not just about getting kids ready for school; they also include fostering creativity, democratic participation, and cultural identity. These frameworks show that Frog Street's structured design could help less experienced teachers or places that want clear consistency, but its scripted format might not work well with the strong focus on teacher agency and emergent learning in Europe. To be useful, any changes to Frog Street in Europe would need to be very flexible, allow for co-construction, and be able to adapt to the cultures of the communities where they are used. This is because the EYFS, Nordic traditions, and Reggio Emilia philosophy all have strong educational values.

The Nurturing Early Learners framework in Singapore lays out a well-structured curriculum that balances planned learning outcomes with intentional play and inquiry. Teachers act as facilitators, adapting activities to meet the needs of students from different cultures and languages (MOE, 2013). Its teaching style mixes guided lessons with chances for kids to explore on their own, which is similar to Frog Street's structured thematic units in some ways. But the local focus on bilingualism and multiculturalism would mean that the context would need to be changed. The Kindergarten Curriculum Guide in the Philippines stresses the importance of

values education and using the child's native language as the medium of instruction (DepEd, 2016). It also stresses holistic development through play-based and child-centered learning. Teachers are supposed to connect lessons to kids' family life and the community around them, which shows how important local languages and indigenous knowledge are to their culture. The Youchien curriculum framework in Japan focuses on group-centered learning and social harmony through daily routines and cooperative play. Teachers focus on moral development and community ties instead of just academic content (MEXT, 2018). In these situations, implementation often means working closely with family members while following cultural rules about discipline, respect, and interdependence. The goals are not just to get kids ready for school; they also include building moral character, bringing people together, and keeping cultural traditions alive. The overall effect shows that Frog Street's focus on whole-child development and structured resources could help with planning in large or poorly funded classrooms. However, its scripted, English-language lessons would need to be carefully changed to fit Asia's focus on local languages, group learning, and values-based education. If this isn't done, there is a chance of cultural mismatch that could make it harder for kids to get involved and make the curriculum less relevant in different Asian communities.

The Early Years Learning Framework (EYLF) in Australia is based on the ideas of belonging, being, and becoming. It sees play as the main way for kids to learn and values the different cultural backgrounds of kids (DEEWR, 2022). Its teaching style encourages teachers to create flexible, play-based learning experiences that are relevant to the community and its values. This gives teachers a lot of freedom in how they interpret curriculum goals. The well-known TeWhāriki framework from New Zealand goes even further by recognizing the Māori as tangata whenua (people of the land) and weaving Māori perspectives into its strands of well-being, belonging, contribution, communication, and exploration (MoE, 2017). Its emergent curriculum approach depends on teachers learning alongside their students. It also encourages families and communities to work together to create learning that reflects both Māori and other cultural identities. Papua New Guinea's ECE framework, on the other hand, focuses on teaching in the community and in the local language. It stresses the importance of passing down local knowledge, stories, and customs as important parts of early learning (Lynch & Pankratz, 2018). In these situations, strong ties to families, elders, and local communities are very important for making sure that learning is meaningful and culturally relevant. The goals are not only to improve thinking skills, but also to help people form their own identities, keep their cultures alive, and make their communities better. The overall effect shows that Frog Street's structured, resource-rich program could be very helpful in places where there isn't enough teacher training or materials. However, the way it teaches English would need a lot of changes. To make sure that the curriculum is in line with Oceania's flexible, emergent, and culturally grounded teaching methods, it would need to be co-designed with local teachers, respect Indigenous languages, and give teachers the freedom to respond to children's interests and community stories. Without this, the curriculum could undermine the cultural integrity and participatory spirit that frameworks like TeWhāriki and the EYLF promote.

CONCLUSION

This comparison shows that the Frog Street curriculum's structured, comprehensive design fits well with global goals for holistic child development. However, how well it works in different international settings depends on how well it fits with local curriculum frameworks, teaching methods, and cultural values. There is a clear pattern across all six continents: countries with strong emergent or culturally embedded frameworks, like Finland, Italy, New Zealand, or Ghana, put a lot of emphasis on teacher freedom, community involvement, and the co-construction of knowledge that reflects kids' real-life experiences and cultural identities (Urban et al., 2022; Murray et al., 2019). In these situations, lessons that are strictly scripted may limit teachers' freedom and the ability to listen to what kids have to say. On the other hand, systems that already mix structured academic outcomes with child-led exploration, like Singapore or some parts of the U.S., can use Frog Street's clear thematic units and resources to make planning and consistency better, especially when teacher training is different (Wasik et al., 2020). The results, on the other hand, show that meaningful curriculum transferability needs careful adaptation. To avoid cultural disconnection, materials need to be translated or changed to include local languages, indigenous stories, and family knowledge (Kilderry et al., 2023; Pacini-Ketchabaw & Pence, 2023). Ongoing professional development is also necessary for implementation to work. This gives teachers the power to balance fidelity and flexibility so they can respond to children's interests and community needs in real time. So, policymakers and curriculum developers should work with local teachers and families to come up with adaptation frameworks instead of using solutions that work for everyone. Future research should look at real-life examples of how commercial curricula like Frog Street are adapted to different cultures and how these changes affect children's learning, identity development, and family involvement in different situations. In the end, this study confirms that a truly fair and useful early childhood curriculum is one that can mix evidence-based structure with the wide range of cultural and teaching styles that are found in early learning communities around the world.

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