



## Setting the scene

John Gilmour as facilitator set the scene for this meeting by asking everyone to reflect on the question: “What assumption would you like to challenge in relation to teacher education?”. Here is a sample of responses, questioning some key assumptions that are made:

- That teachers don’t need further support once they have graduated.
- That ‘in-service training’ on curriculum updates provides sufficient support.
- That the emphasis should be on teacher training at the higher levels rather than lower down the schooling system.
- That teachers are easily able to link theory and practice.
- That teachers can deal with a whole range issues they may face in the classroom, including psycho-social problems.
- That teachers themselves don’t face some of the same psycho-social challenges as those faced by their learners.
- That it is acceptable to have varying quality standards across institutions that deliver initial teacher education.
- That we can continue to do the same things in teacher education and expect different outcomes.
- That an organisation such as the South African Council for Educators (SACE) is not required.
- That we understand what is meant by quality in teacher education.
- That increasing spending on the whole system while spending less per child is desirable.



## Feedback on the Teacher Internship Collaboration

Nigel Richard of the Global Teachers Institute, gave some context to newcomers at the CoP on the evolution of this collaboration. It began in the Western Cape where a group of organisations involved in developing in-school ‘internships’ for education students began to share ideas. The national pre-service community of practice evolved from this group and was officially set up in 2015; more recently an action team has carried on the work outside the CoP, focusing on possible funding models and school-based models of initial teacher training.

In school-based internships student teachers are paired with experienced teachers and placed in schools during their studies towards a BEd or PGCE qualification through distance learning. This ‘embedded’ approach supports praxis, and means that by the time these teachers qualify over the four years of their Bachelor of Education they have been supported in an actual school context and have both teaching and ‘school’ experience as well as theoretical knowledge. Nigel noted that the concept of combining study

through distance education with on-site practice is gaining traction, and various models (including ideas supported by the Department of Basic Education) have been developing in different contexts.

The sharing of ideas and approaches so far has been very useful, in that different organisations often focus on different elements of this approach: this means that insight into how different aspects can be done strengthen the whole for all those involved. The next steps will involve going beyond simply sharing documents or setting up specific partnerships, but could focus on co-creating collaborative work, or engaging in collaborative fund raising. Currently there is growth and new organisations are coming on board.



### Discussion points

- Examples of organisations currently involved include the Global Teachers Institute, the Independent Schools Association of South Africa, the Khanyisa-Inanda Community Project, GTI, ISASA, Thandulwazi (which emerged from St Thithian's College), Realema (which emerged from St John's College), Save the Children, and others. There are over 400 interns in about 60 schools.
- It is interesting to note that many of these organisations have grown out of schools which offered a context for student practice and student internships.
- The long term vision is also that every functioning school is actually providing an opportunity for these schools to develop new teachers. Our schooling landscape should include the idea of 'teaching schools' and professional practice schools, of which there are a few examples already.
- The vision of the collaborative forum is based on the growing belief that this approach is the best approach to quality teacher education, and that scaling this up is the way to go.
- Universities are clearly struggling with the practical component of teacher education. They need to find a 'gear shift' to link theory and practice. John noted the concept of teaching practice as 'clinical practice' (as in medical training) combined with scholarship as embraced by Stanford University in the US as a useful model. The standard model in our higher education institutions is 80% theory and 20% 'practical work'; in addition, the nature, quality and effectiveness of that 20% is questionable. For example, in many cases students have such a brief encounter with the schools that they don't commit emotionally; or lesson assessment (with useful feedback) may only happen once or twice during teaching practice. The internship model represents a shift in relation to learning and assessment in a real context.
- This collaboration should take into account teacher demand and supply – an issue that has been problematic for DBE in terms of gathering in accurate data about teachers and teaching posts. There are various interventions happening through DBE, Funza Lushaka and RESEP to improve data supply so that more accurate projections can be made, and planning can match needs.
- The issue of teachers teaching subjects they are not qualified to teach is also linked to teacher supply. It is very unfair to both teachers and learners to throw teachers into the deep end where they are not familiar with subject matter content; but it should also be noted that we need to teach teachers skills that would enable them to access and mediate unfamiliar knowledge.

**“When a school embraces the idea that it is a place for producing new teachers, this becomes a transformational lever; it moves schools away from that idea that they ‘must attract the best teachers’ towards a more systemic and global goal view of ‘producing the best teachers’.” CoP member**

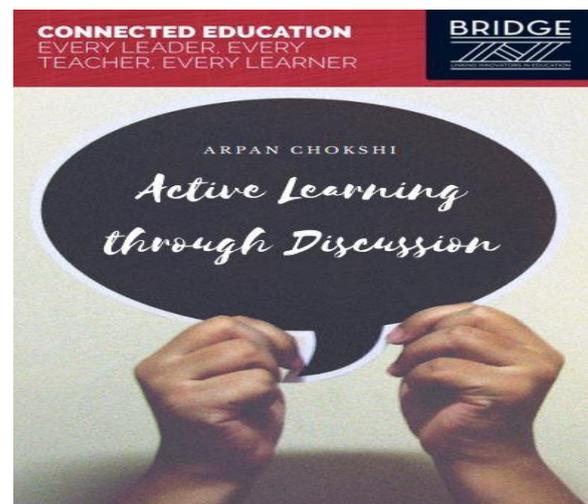
- Finally, we should be mindful of the continent as a whole. Implications and consequences of the growth of generic ‘for profit’ schools across the continent, and the impact this might have on quality teacher development, need to be considered and debated.

## AXIS Summit 2018 (Nigel Richard [GTI])

This annual event is held by GTI in partnership with BRIDGE, and serves as an opportunity to bring pre-service and in-service teachers together. It is not a conference but an active and participatory event, modelling active learning and collaborative engagement between many different voices. This year’s theme is ABC – Aspire, Build and Collaborate.

We need to consider our own ‘theories of change’ as drivers of all the work we are doing. How will our actions trigger systemic change in order to improve teacher education, and thus schooling as a whole? The AXIS summit can serve as a cradle for these kinds of reflections.

The summit will be held at the Wits School of Education from 10 to 12 July 2018. For more information visit [www.globalteachers.org](http://www.globalteachers.org).



## Impact of the Pre-Service Cop

Hassiena Marriott, as project manager for Teacher Development at BRIDGE, noted that we are planning to produce a knowledge product that captures all the major learnings from this community of practice over the past two and a half years. However, while we have all the presentations and Meeting Highlights to compile into a resource, we would like to delve more deeply into any further connections or actions (either at a personal or an organisational level) that have been the result of interactions at the CoP. To this end, we will be talking individually to core CoP members. To kick start this process, she asked those present who have been regular participants to reflect briefly on what they have learnt from the CoP.

- **John Gilmour:**

Discussions in this CoP have contributed to my slow awakening to thinking about thinking – metacognition – and in particular to the ways in which we think about teaching and about teacher education. This CoP has awakened two levels of thinking for me. One level is understanding the professional journey of teachers, from their initial development through pre-service education, to understanding the importance of induction, and then considering their growth and leadership development.

*“I love that we bring what we have and who we are into these CoP meetings – this is key to helping us connect and collaborate in all our work with teachers.” John Gilmour*

The other level is refining our understanding of this journey by learning to ask the right questions to shape our thinking, rather than just providing standard answers; this CoP has enabled us to surface some of these questions. It's been an amazing cross-cutting space, including government, funders, universities, schools and providers. There has been some anxiety around producing concrete results from this CoP, but we understand that outcomes aren't always directly attributional. We've developed a focus on process rather than outcomes, and the idea of questioning our assumptions and views about teacher education is part of this process. I feel I have a contribution to make in this space as one who's lived it, and as one who is trying to make space for others to live it.

▪ **Melissa King:**

I'm approaching this reflection on impact from a different perspective, from my role as a knowledge manager for BRIDGE and from the point of view of understanding how collaboration evolves. This CoP has been particularly interesting because of the way it grew from a Western Cape group to a national consultative and networking CoP, and the ways in which further work has been taken forward into concrete action. When I think of the impact of the CoP, I think of it as an illustrative example of a CoP that has gone from concept to action. Ideas generated by this CoP have also been fed into other BRIDGE communities of practice, and vice versa; this strengthens its cross-cutting effect. We might highlight this process as a journey that can be modelled for other CoPs.

▪ **Zondani Zimba:**

I am currently working on an induction programme (an EU funded project) in collaboration with the South African government. This project acknowledges that the content of curriculum in universities is not the same across universities. Our organisation is looking to address this in relation to inclusive education. It's a pilot study that aims to inform universities about the practice teaching aspect of initial teacher education, and how to develop this to address inclusive education and implement better induction processes. District officials play a major role in supporting schools, but there are many issues related to how they support teachers. This CoP has helped me to reflect on how to assist new teachers in schools, and how to help district officials understand how they can better support teachers on an ongoing basis. This space offers some ideas on how they can do this better.

▪ **Theo Buccoli:**

Attending this CoP meeting has helped me to link into some of the issues faced by the ECD CoP, which I attend regularly. This CoP has highlighted issues relating to teacher training and qualifications pathways for ECD practitioners; today I am reminded about how important it is to get input from a range of different stakeholders around the table.

▪ **Nigel Richard:**

It's encouraging to hear from Melissa that we're ensuring the CoP moves from concept to action. It's encouraging to hear that everyone is moving from an open invitation to share, to working groups, to action. We've always had some anxiety about the results produced by this CoP, juggling the idea of 'output' with the CoP being a sharing space. We're unlocking this now in terms of the work around our teacher education and internship models, which is geared towards results; however, I think it's important to retain a balance in that we maintain a reflective space which is open and sharing without necessarily feeling there needs to be an output.

**"This CoP is like an engine room where I come to revitalise the connections and linkages I make with ideas and with others outside of it." Nigel Richard**

- **Vuyiswa Ncontsa**

I feel it is important that core participants such as Gerrit Coetzee from DBE, Judy Tate from Inanda Seminary, and Nqabakazi Mathe from Save the Children (as well as founding members such as John and Nigel) take part in structured interviews. Their insights would inform the extent to which the lessons learned by the CoP could contribute to the integrated strategic framework for the professional pathway. The Save the Children project, for example, started at a provincial level working with districts and the DBE, focusing on recruiting and selecting, and then evolved into a much deeper programme for student teachers. The connections between different pieces of the jigsaw which informed this growth may not have happened without this CoP, and showing these relationships would be really important for CoP members.

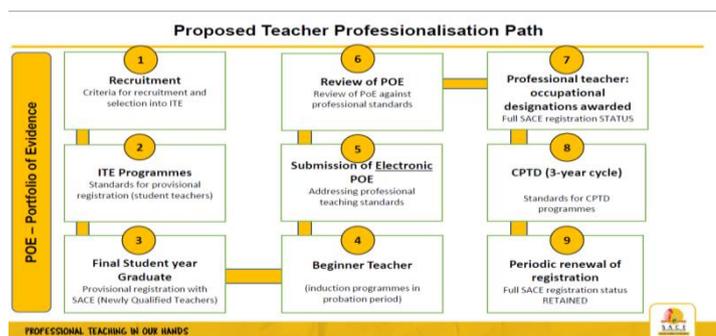
These reflections on impact generated further discussion: one brief reflection on knowledge management which is summarised below, and a longer discussion on the role of the South African Council for Educators (SACE).

### A reflection on knowledge management

- We need to become ‘metacognitive’ about knowledge management of shared information in general. Simply sharing information is not sufficient: it needs to be distilled in such a way that it can be interrogated and serve as a prompt for action. A good example is the simple hook that exists in the phrase ‘de-front your classroom’ – behind this sits a whole methodology of reframing the way in which teaching and learning happens in a classroom. What can make knowledge sharing ‘go viral’ and prompt real paradigm change?
- Knowledge management can be described as having three levels. Level 1 is simple distribution: for example, disseminating a policy document, or a presentation, in its original form. Level 2 is distilling, summarising, collating and reshaping shared information so that it is more accessible, or useful, or so that links between different resources can be made. This is what most of BRIDGE’s knowledge products in the form of Tools and Resources aim to do. Level 3 might address the point made above: that is, distilling core questions or issues so that they prompt action and real change. What form does knowledge management take to achieve this aim?
- Perhaps we need to consider the role of public dialogues in relation to achieving this form of knowledge management; how can the AXIS summit address these types of questions?

### The role of SACE in teacher professionalization and development

Vanencia Chiloane and Harold Tlomatsana from SACE commented that many of the issues raised in the discussion relate to the current deliberations of SACE around professionalization of teachers, which in turn links to its legislated mandate to respond to the policies of the Department of Basic Education. The SADEC document outlining a regional framework for teacher standards and competencies is out for comment, and SACE is continuing to work on its own mandate and



processes for Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) through points accumulation. This is also linked to the accreditation of providers and/or the endorsement of specific programmes through which educators can claim points. BRIDGE itself is in discussion with SACE around linking points to participation in communities of practice, and the use of some of our resources. It was noted in discussion that programme endorsement and points accumulation must not be seen only as a compliance issue, or as a punitive mechanism; the ideal of professionalization is linked to intrinsic motivation rather than extrinsic demands. SACE colleagues stressed that, while SACE will carry out site verification processes and ensure accountability in the profession, it also sees its role as developmental and affirming.

Vanencia then shared some details of SACE's approach through a presentation outlining the different elements of SACE's approach. The presentation includes a summary overview of the proposed standards, of which there are ten standards falling within three domains: Professional Engagement, Professional Knowledge and Professional Practice. The slide below illustrates the teacher professionalization path.

To see Vanencia's presentation click [here](#).

## **New developments and implications for the Pre-service CoP**

Vuyiswa Ncontsa, BRIDGE CEO shared her thoughts on the change of direction of this CoP. BRIDGE has long reflected on ways of sharing some of the collaboration processes of the schools in the Extraordinary Schools Coalition (SAESC) with public schools, in support of closing the gap in performance between these sectors. Coalition schools have had wonderful outcomes from interventions such as the peer review processes and the instruments used for these. Through the Tutuwa Foundation grant awarded to BRIDGE, we are currently working on a pilot project with a group of schools whose principals have been part of BRIDGE's Principals CoP for the past five years. Working with principals and heads of department in schools that have already experienced some of the benefits of CoPs, opens opportunities to use some of the lessons learned from Coalition schools. This also creates potential opportunities for collaboration between highly functional Coalition schools and public schools: consider the concept of 'creative abrasion', which is based on the premise that friction does not have to be negative but also generates energy that creates new contexts for sharing and learning. Harnessing the Coalition peer review process is a chance to engage differently with processes such as IQMS that are implemented in public schools.

Reflecting on the pre-service community of practice, Vuyiswa noted that this CoP has the potential to reinvent itself. It has achieved many of its intended outcomes and learned many lessons. A BRIDGE funder is willing to fund an Initial Teacher Education (ITE) community of practice, convening this as a forum that centrally includes universities. The main focus of this CoP would be the teaching practice element of ITE: this is clearly recognised as a challenge even with contact universities, and especially so with a distance education model. UNISA as the major provider of distance education ITE is clearly a key player in this regard, as is North West University. 'Teacher producers' in this community of practice have already worked with UNISA in relation to their teacher intern models. LEAP schools and other Coalition and pre-service CoP members have already done a lot of thinking on teaching practice and mentorship in ITE. This is a key opportunity for this CoP to reshape itself as a CoP that focuses on teaching practice within ITE, and to move from a project basis to systems thinking. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is poised to support this work based on experience and expertise, and to bring in the university voices to share in and strengthen thinking around how teaching practice can be done differently.



### Discussion points

- John noted that this is a decision-making point for this CoP. We need to think of better ways to collaborate with universities so that approaches to teaching practice and teacher education in general can be supported in moving towards producing better teachers.
- It is vital that this work needs to be related to the Teaching Practice Summit currently being conducted by DBE and DHET.
- The distance education learning model has been the focus of this CoP; note that 60% of teachers qualifying come through UNISA, which is why we have already engaged with UNISA. But we should not forget the other 40% of teachers, for whom the teaching practice component is also a challenge and an inadequate preparation for the real world.
- John expressed the view that in many teaching practice experiences the host schools focus on compliance rather than professionalization. Compliance is vertically driven according to hierarchy, while professionalization is linked to horizontal accountability and real sharing between peers. We need to develop this understanding in schools (as both student practice sites and in general) so that collegial support does not become simply a box ticking exercise. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) do not appear to teach teachers the value of horizontal accountability. Are there ways to build this into teaching practice?
- We also need to recognise that we have not yet had a strong ‘artificial intelligence’ conversation, and truly explored ways in which to create the new adaptive teacher. This is the responsibility of HEIs, who need to go beyond simply teaching skills and focus on how teachers can become generators, not just users and consumers, of knowledge and resources.
- We also need to consider the issue of context – are we training teachers to deal with large multilingual classes in which a number of factors outside of the classroom impact on teaching and learning. Teaching practice needs to be done in different contexts.
- Teacher education should include the term ‘design’, in that teaching should be process-focused rather than product-focused. Rather than being given a lot of theory, teacher education should focus on how teachers can be responsive to context and have the ability to ‘design’ their lessons according to various scenarios.



### Some closing comments:

“I feel that we are at a crossroads in teacher education: these conversations show that it is not ‘business as usual’.”

“We have all understood the challenges for a long time; now we need to look at solutions.”

“We must have conversations with those who think differently to us.”

“I need to let go of my assumptions and engage with others rather than just commentate.”

“The most effective source of knowledge comes from working on the ground.”