



## Report of the meeting held with ECD

### Community of Practice

7 May 2013 – at READ Offices, 4 Handel Road, Ormonde

**Present:**

Barbara Dale-Jones	Bridge
Bertha Magoge	TREE
Dani Favis	Puku Children's Literacy Foundation
Daisy Kekana	Noah
Edward Phillips	Brain Boosters
Erica Kempken	ProServe South Africa
Gerda Brown	Sunshine Centre Association
Helmut Bertelsmann	Funda Afrika
Janine van Wyk	SOS Children's Villages
Juliana Seleti	UNICEF
Ken Maxwell	Convenor
Leonard Saul	SA Congress for ECD
Lorayne Excell	Wits
Mapula Kataka	Deutsche Bank South Africa Foundation
Mari van der Merwe	Save The Children
Nthabi Sibanda	Puo Educational Products
Pat Sullivan	Treharne Africa
Percy Moleke	National Planning Commission
Petros Lyson	Mother Touch Academy
Riette Els	READ Education Trust
Ronel Burger	Africademy
Tshego Legote	Puo Educational Products
Vanessa Mentor	Early Childhood Development Institute
Zanele Twala	Bridge

1. The facilitator welcomed everyone to the meeting and asked if all could 'check in' with thoughts about what they had reflected on since the last meeting in March, specifically in relation to this community of practice (CoP) and ECD in general. The question posed was "Why are you here today?" and some of the following comments were made:
  - Here we can learn from each other.
  - Sharing ideas is important.
  - Broadening the scope of delivery for ECD can be achieved.
  - There is an opportunity to walk shoulder to shoulder with other stakeholders.
  - It is a safe space for reflection on practice and sharing ideas.
  - Information-sharing is possible.
  - There is a possibility of seeing progress.
2. Barbara Dale-Jones (BDJ) provided the group with an overview of the work that BRIDGE does and a reminder of what a CoP does and how it works. Key points included:
  - ECD is a cross-cutting issue in education, education being the central focus for BRIDGE.
  - A BRIDGE CoP is multi-stakeholder, inclusive and has specific outcomes. BRIDGE has five generic outcomes, although an individual CoP may have outcomes above and beyond these. The five generic outcomes are:
    - The development of common purpose, peer support and trust;
    - The maximising of resources;
    - Sharing of working practice (horizontal integration);
    - Linking of policy and practice (vertical integration); and
    - Impact on the whole education system.
  - A further comment was made by the facilitator that a CoP run by BRIDGE offers a neutral space for debate where individual interests and ideas can be shared, without a competitive edge. This was viewed as an important aspect for the CoP and the point was made that it should be maintained.
3. The group was reminded that Ken Maxwell (KM), BDJ, Leonard Saul, Ntjantja Ned and Bertha Magoge were the elected representatives of the CoP who were mandated as a committee to 'get things going' from the last meeting. Ntjantja Ned was not present at this meeting, but KM reported back on behalf of the committee, as follows:
  - KM attended a research meeting at Wits where academics had shared papers, and a number of people had spoken. He made contact there with Marie-Louise Samuels, who had been a speaker and who had expressed an interest in taking forward the good work being done in ECD and linking to this CoP.
  - The recent ECD Newsflash had featured this ECD CoP, which had given rise to a lot of interest from a range of stakeholders.
  - KM and Zanele Twala (ZT) had met with Ilifa Labantwana, DG Murray and Elma Philanthropies in Cape Town on 30 April 2013. The question was posed by those in attendance was: what is the key focus of the ECD CoP? Without focus this community will simply become a talk-shop.  
KM and ZT acknowledged the importance of focus but felt that such focus would need to be determined by the ECD CoP group as the Mapping exercise evolves.  
Having recently completed a survey on NGO's that provide ECD Training Services, DG Murray and Ilifa Labantwana highlighted the importance of training ECD practitioners.

This was noted but KM and ZT felt there needs to be further engagement with stakeholders on this topic - including the ECD Institute in Gauteng. Until then it would be pre-emptive to say anything further.

A second important point discussed was how and when to assist government in 'pulling together' all departments involved in ECD namely the departments of Basic Education, Health and Social Development so to establish a central coordinated focus for action.

- BDJ then reported on a meeting she and KM had had with JET Education Services (JET) on 3 May 2013. At this meeting, Godwin Khosa, the CEO of JET, had outlined the Education Collaboration Framework and its intention to support the NDP. It is evident that there could be considerable synergy between this initiative and this ECD CoP. Accordingly, KM and BDJ wrote to Godwin Khosa to request the support and endorsement of the Education Collaboration Framework and proposed entering into a collaborative arrangement between the two bodies in order to help to build a common understanding of how to achieve the vision of the NDP with respect to ECD.
- ZT reported on the meeting held on 3 May with Marie-Louise Samuels, currently acting Chief Director for ECD in DBE. The message that ZT, KM and Leonard Saul received was that government really wants to work collaboratively. Marie-Louise Samuels shared a number of initiatives that government has embarked on including the *Zero Draft Plan for an Integrated Programme of Action for Early Childhood Development – Moving Ahead 2013 – 2018* that is now being looked at by the principal Departments involved in ECD delivery. She also spoke about the various responsibilities of the different departments and affirmed that, going forward, it would not be business as usual with the government departments operating in different silos. In recognition of that, she committed to arrange a follow-up meeting with Margot Davids from DSD and her counterpart in the Department of Health in an effort to get the three departments to work together and to endorse the Integrated Plan. This plan will guide the implementation and rollout of ECD by all role-players, she said. She also agreed that a platform for dialogue should be created with all stakeholders, and that this platform should be led by the three departments responsible for ECD implementation.

She committed to arrange a meeting between ZT, KM, Leonard Saul and the above departments to plan for this dialogue, and spoke of the need for a Technical Committee to drive the process.

The Zero Draft Plan is designed to set up a collaborative framework to do research and to develop policy, legislation, monitoring and evaluation systems, human resource requirements within government, financial requirements (for government departments), etc. over the next 1-5 years. It was agreed that the time is right to pull together all the stakeholders to discuss and implement the Integrated Action Programme.

- KM spoke about the advertisement taken out in the Sunday Times by a group of top business leaders committing to support the NDP. He has approached the leader of this group, Roger Jardine, and hopes to meet him soon.
- KM also spoke about meetings he and BRIDGE had had with Vanessa Mentor and the ECD Institute and possible liaisons.

The facilitator summarised the key points:

- Ilifa Labantwana emphasis on the need for the ECD CoP to develop focus.
- The need for CoP to develop a strategic focus.
- The desirability to work with JET and the Education Collaboration Framework.
- The importance of setting up the Technical Committee proposed by Marie-Louise Samuels.
- The role and importance of the NDP as well as the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit's (NEEDU) 2012 report: The State of Literacy Teaching and Learning in the Foundation Phase, which outlines key points for ECD.

It was agreed that BRIDGE would circulate a copy of the NEEDU report to the CoP members. It was also agreed that there has been good action carried out by the mandated committee.

The composition of the Committee was not fixed; people can be added to the committee, and people can volunteer to help the committee. PS emphasised that this is a community for action and planning. We are hearing that government is ready, she said, and she urged each of us to consider 'what I can do within my context'.

4. At this point, the Facilitator broke up those attending into Groups and asked each Group to brainstorm lists of 'Thought-Leaders' in the ECD world, questions we should be asking them, and the key areas of ECD on which the CoP should be focusing. [The details of this work are outlined in Annexure A: Strategic Partners for ECD and Key Areas for focus.]
5. Vanessa Mentor presented to the group the work of the Gauteng Department of Education's ECD Institute. She said that Gauteng is the only province in SA with an ECD Institute, and that it is not an entity or agency, but rather a unit within a department. She started her presentation with a description of the landscape in the country and then honed in on Gauteng. She outlined the six key targets in the strategy of the institute, as well as the nine steps in their planning. She said that their goal is to ensure that ECD services are integrated and to improve quality. She went on to describe the roles of the institute, its stakeholder engagement, its special needs forum, its newly-established combined forum, its verification of sites, its integrated M&E tool for ECD services that it developed with UNICEF as well as its integrated data mart. She also gave an update on projects to date, including the birth to four curriculum, facilitator manuals, etc.
6. TREE's Bertha Magoge went on to describe the state of ECD in KZN, the province in SA with the greatest number of children. She said that there are almost 3,400 sites in KZN that are registered ECD centres, but only seven are ETDP SETA accredited. Her organisation works with DSD, DBE and DoH and has developed networks in the province to try and facilitate collaboration. The ECDTT (ECD Technical Task Team, a network of all providers and role-players and co-ordinators from government departments) has been formed. There is also a national action group (NAG) that pulls together practitioners and supervisors, and there exists a cross-section of funders in the province, for example ELMA Philanthropies, Jim Joel, Ilifa Labantwana, etc. Bertha painted a picture of a sector with an imbalance in the infrastructure available, and with fewer than 1,000 qualified full-time employed across the entire ECD NPO sector nationally, which has led to an overload and burn-out. She spoke of

reduced access to funding and said that programmes are reducing in terms of size while international donors are also pulling back. There has been a general cut back on programmes. She also described a significant lack of capacity in government to monitor and supervise ECD programmes in KZN, and went on to describe places where opportunities lie, including:

- Need to increase the capacity of government departments to work together.
- Need of a core generic course for ECD support, especially for government officials so that government officials can talk the same language across the country.
- Need to offer a government alternative ECD models. Models for funding, career-pathing, the professionalising of ECD qualifications, sustainability of initiatives, marketing of services, etc.
- Development of a structured partnership with public FETs for learnerships.
- Encouragement to enterprise development for the ECD sector through the DTI.
- Look at key issues in health, education and research.
- Harness the collective voice for children. Can we be that one voice?

Bertha also spoke about a new initiative that has developed through the Ilifa Labantwana strategy. Ilifa Labantwana has provided funding for four years to ensure the co-ordination of government departments in order to ensure that the budgets in the departments are optimised. They are currently putting in place a database that enables departments in the sector to manage and track the development of children in the province. She ended by describing some local initiatives, including buddies programmes, self-help groups, etc.

7. The facilitator observed that these are two very different provinces. She said that the chances of success are greater in Gauteng because the DBE hosts the institute, whereas in KZN these services are located within DSD. She also noted that there were two funders in the room, and she formally thanked Deutsche Bank, whom she said had provided this CoP with R50,000 seed funding. She took a question about FET colleges. Vanessa Mentor said that the GDE's ECDI works with Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance, and that the MEC has allocated all forms of training to that.
8. The facilitator went on to outline three potential courses of action:
  - a. Define what our focus is.
  - b. Link to the Education Collaboration Framework.
  - c. Set up a technical committee on ECD to plan a way forward and to get feedback on the integrated ECD plan that has been prepared by the DBE.

She went on to note that there is a potential FET collaboration which has not been realised. There are also district officials who are not qualified. Lorayne Excell of Wits said that we need to realise that Grade R has become difficult as its one foot is in the foundation phase, yet it's about an ECD child needing a different curriculum and we need to foreground that. Juliana Seleti concurred, saying that the diagnostic review makes that point too, while the White Paper says birth to 9. Lorayne said that, if it is birth to 9, we need to look at how to find a common meeting place.

The facilitator asked everyone to refer back to the morning's activity (see point 4 and Annexure A) and to look at focus areas. Groups reported that they had agreed that we need to focus on access, quality and impact on the child. They also spoke about quick wins that can be put in place and the national Improvement Plan that emanated from the diagnostic review. It was agreed that this is a draft that is clear on what needs to be done. They also emphasised the importance of the Training and Recruiting of ECD Providers.

Questions asked included: Should there be a national co-ordinating structure? How do we get a technical task team from here to help the departments drive the plan? The facilitator said that, in an earlier meeting, we did a stakeholder mapping, and we asked all members to add to it.

9. A series of actions were then agreed to:
  - a. BRIDGE will recirculate the list of stakeholders and ask for further input, additions, etc.
  - b. BRIDGE's Western Cape project manager will be invited to attend the next meeting of this national CoP.
  - c. It is vitally important to make the proposed technical committee on ECD a reality and to request a presentation of Zero Draft.
  - d. Lorayne, Erica, Riette and Eddie will form a group that will look at the training of ECD providers. This group will present to the larger CoP some issues and thinking on the subject.
  - e. It was agreed that Bridge will disseminate information using its online network and will circulate a 'How-to' Guide for the online network.
  - f. BRIDGE will create a "National ECD Community of Practice" group on the online network.
  - g. BRIDGE will circulate a copy of the NEEDU report to the CoP members.
  - h. BRIDGE will circulate the day's presentations as well as contact details of those present at the meeting.
10. KM noted that missing today were VW, TSI and Liberty Life; three key bodies who potentially could help to fund this CoP. He said that the CoP immediately requires another R 200, 000. I
11. In the final check out, which involved one word check outs, people spoke of progress, hope and encouragement.
12. The next meeting is on 16 July 2013 from 10h00-15h00. Venue to be advised.

## Annexure A: Strategic Partners for ECD and Key Areas for focus

Questions	Answer	Comment
Who are the Thought Leaders in the ECD world?	UNICEF, DBE, DSD, DOH, UNISA, RHODES, POTCH, HSRC, MPC, JET, DG Murray Trust, Hollard Foundation (Yellowwoods), Elma Philanthropies, NPC, HSAC, Forum for NGOs.	Who are you currently networked with? Key focus for influence. What is your TOC/DOC: underpinned by what? Extent of your exposure, Establish trust, Common purpose/goal, Does ECD work for UNICEF?
What questions should we be asking them?	What are the key issues at the micro and macro levels, What is current best practice, What are the gaps, How do they view professionalism in the sector, How to change the current system to achieve child rights,	How do we improve early experience to ensure foundation development, ECD improvement plan. National Action Plan When? There is too much duplication of service delivery, the nicest facilities do not necessarily have best ECD model, Look at social development and Land shortages, Methods and implementation
What are the key areas that impact on the ECD sector upon which we should be focusing?	Intersectorial Collaboration, How do we improve early experience to ensure foundation development, Training, Resourcing, mentoring & coaching , More rigid supervision of SETA-accredited training providers – too many varied standards, Access and Quality & Impact on the child, Quick wins – When? What?, Reflection on National Improvement Plan, Policy direction from Government, Facilitating interaction between practitioners, Universal Access, Personnel development, Centres that are not credited.	Poverty is a huge obstacle, reach out to home based ECD, Income generation and job creation
Funding for infrastructure and staff	Key, can community & Home-based centres function effectively if staff salaries are not subsidised, Pressure needs to be put on local government to meet their responsibility for infrastructure and funding, Create awareness with parents, addressed in the National Action Plan. State bottlenecks delay funding, Still need consumables that are expensive ( paint, crayons) Use sports and recreation	Child grant used to feed a family, Best practices should be available, Need to coordinate, Money must be spent more wisely.
Training of teachers	Key, addressed in the National Action Plan. Needs to be appropriate, not loose” value” of the experience that older unqualified teachers have, Strengthening, RPL for established learners, Support centres for excellence, What role can FET centres play for ECD, Skill in interactive learning, Train without specialised training.	Need operators and practical experience progressive system, bringing new and learn from older teachers
Learner support materials and	Key, addressed in the National Action Plan, Centres of Excellence, Need to coordinate materials that can be	Get parents involved by using their skills to make

equipment	made from waste, often a learnership is used for teacher training but not for learner material, We need to find a way of providing paper. Expensive. Teacher training is funded but what about children's needs, Children learn through play but not enough educational toys	learning materials
Strengthening of support services	Key, addressed in the National Action Plan. Government should formally recognise the support services provided by NPO's, Using churches & Community structures to provide good tools, Feeding: DO Health and DOE.	Bring in all old traditional physical games and play
Reaching vulnerable children and families	Key, addressed in the National Action Plan. Practical guidance for educators on accommodating children with special needs Parents should get information on what type of games to play, food to eat etc., Not in database, Using already existing service providers, Collaborate and join forces,	Why re-invent the wheel?
Coordinating Departments' work (DBE and DSD)	Intersectorial collaboration. In KZN departments work in isolation. Use the child grant as an ECD Coordinating mechanism – state driven- includes civil society,, Health & local government, Policy direction from government still lacking	ECD Institutes should be formed per province & Nationally.
Standardise guidelines for Grade R	Conception 5 years (holistically), Quality standards for ECD, We must get technical group together to assist and enhance. NDP advocates 2 years of Grade R – pipedream. Access is being assured but quality is problematic. There must be a national curriculum.	70% of children are going to some institution for Grade R – but the quality is not the same throughout. No educational element
Standardise guidelines for Drop-In centres	We must get tech group together to assist and enhance, Need to pay adequate remuneration for ECD practitioners. NB stipend while training means trainees get more than ECD practitioners. Hence graduates go elsewhere. Need to curb child abuse and trafficking, ECD Centres seen as a place for children to go for a meal, play and get looked after when school is out.	
Build ECD home and community based initiatives	This is the future of ECD services and they need to be mentored and monitored, Use the media to broadcast best practices, better information on useful games. It takes a village to raise a child,	
Working with Home Affairs, Human Settlements, Energy/Water Affairs for basic services to the vulnerable	Key, Need to develop awareness in departments of the need to address the needs of children. It is in the best interest of municipalities to get some ECD projects going. Embrace strategically. Question – Who should provide finance? National, Provincial, Municipalities?	
Others?	Communication and awareness, trained ECD practitioners are going elsewhere because they are getting paid more from the training stipend than if they get the job thereafter. Many good organisations but working against each other. We work in silos	Many good organisations but working against each other.

#### Any other ideas?

How do we ensure quality (or improved) early experiences to the children of tomorrow! Building systemic change is important but why must young children lose out today. This body should find one central platform of information – papers, research, funding, registration forms, best practice processes and policies, Three key levels – strategic policy, training of practitioners (recruitment and retention), funding models – public and private.

