

Bridge – Community for effective practice – maths and science learner support programmes

1. First meeting: 30 November 2010

An initial meeting took place on 30 November 2010 of the Bridge community for programme implementers and key investors supporting learners in maths and science. The community aims to have an increased impact on the number of quality maths and science graduates in the country.

The meeting was facilitated by Linda Vilakazi and Nene Molefi. The objectives of this first meeting were to:

- share research;
- identify what is required to accelerate the spread of successful maths and science programme objectives;
- create a collaborative process to identify critical success factors in maths and science interventions for both pre and post Grade 12; and
- establish a community for effective practice in this area.

1.1. Research

Bridge had carried out a research process in advance of the meeting. All participants had been sent the research write-up before the meeting, while copies were given to attendees at the event. The write-up was intended to be a conversation starter and to stimulate discussion. It had identified several key themes in the field of maths and science learner support, including:

- The role of mentorship
- The challenges of monitoring and evaluation
- Learner selection and programme design
- The role of government
- Psychosocial issues
- Tertiary access

The community discussed the research report and identified key issues of concern that the community members share. It was agreed by the group that collaboration is vital and that the community would value sharing information and maximising resources, but an issue strongly articulated was the need for Department of Education involvement in the community.

1.2. Tertiary access

A presentation was made by Robert Stephens of TEN about tertiary access. The presentation focused on the lack of support for learners when applying for and accessing funding for tertiary education, the challenges of tertiary access and the need for strategic partnerships in the creation of a network of funders. The ensuing discussion touched on:

- The need for a network of bursary opportunities;
- The need for information about who is doing what, what works, what does not work, who is funding whom, real-time information, a user-friendly database, etc.;
- The issue of high-school access;
- The importance of rural development;
- The value of collaboration and collective wisdom; and
- The complementary role of the CDE forum.

1.3. Accelerating the spread of success

Discussion in small groups focused on identifying what is required to accelerate the spread of successful practice and what is needed in order to influence the wider system. Participants also considered how to engage going forward and how to utilise the Bridge resources and communication platforms.

It was agreed that this Bridge community needs to operate at both micro and macro levels and that it needs to be broken down into smaller focus groups and teams. The community emphasised that Bridge should host small group sessions on a regular basis, and also research what information should be channeled how and to whom, thus making learnings relevant and the flow of information iterative.

1.4. CoPs

Bridge's communities for effective practice were described and discussed. They have the following features:

- have defined outcomes, which are measured and tracked;
- are multi-stakeholder and provide facilitative platforms which have political and institutional buy-in;
- operate nationally, at a district level and provincially, with linkages established among those levels;
- are co-created, self-sustaining and co-owned; and

- follow a particular methodological approach and structured framework and are facilitated by trained process facilitators.

The key pieces of information collected by Bridge in its communities for effective practice are based on its outcomes, which are:

- The contribution of the community to the whole system
- The maximising of resources by the community
- The spread of effective practice within the community and its associated stakeholders (horizontal integration)
- The vertical integration of policy and practice.

It was agreed that Bridge will capture issues and provide the facilitative environment and that the community needs to meet regularly, ideally at 6 week intervals.

It was also emphasised that the group can meet virtually. Participants can register now on the Bridge Social Network (www.bridge.org.za) and Carlene Gonzo will provide any support necessary (carlene@bridge.org.za). It was stressed that it is important to have a self-sustaining, vibrant community.

1.5. Going forward

An agreement was reached at the meeting that the community should be broken down into smaller interest groups and teams, with a focus on:

- Tertiary access
- Monitoring and evaluation
- Learner selection and programme design

It was agreed that these focus groups should meet prior to the next meeting of the whole community for effective practice.

It was also agreed that community participants should contribute to the research report with additions, amendments and recommended changes. These should be mailed to barbara@bridge.org.za.

It was agreed that participants would register on and contribute content to the social network.

A follow up community for effective practice meeting will be held on 21 February 2011.

2. Focus Groups

A meeting of the tertiary access focus group took place on 18 January 2011, while a meeting for the M&E focus group took place on 4 February 2011. Those meeting to discuss learner selection and programme design will do so after the meeting of the whole community on 21 February.

2.1. Tertiary Access

In the meeting of the tertiary access focus group, the group agreed on their commitment to contributing to the success of those who enroll for tertiary education. The group agreed on the following:

- Its commitment to being a voice that creates awareness on tertiary access issues in the wider community for effective practice and amongst stakeholders.
- The presence of government is vital.
- Definitions of tertiary, access, support and success are required as a framework for the group's activities.
- Partnerships, activities and learnings that emerge from this focus group will be recorded and shared.
- The group will use the Bridge communication platforms, specifically the social network, for communication.

A set of action steps was agreed on by the group. A follow up meeting of the focus group has been set for 9 March 2011.

2.2. Monitoring and Evaluation

In the meeting of the M&E focus group, the group agreed on the following:

- The presence of government is vital.
- The group will host a quarterly colloquium on M&E. Presentations will focus on projects that group members are working on, and should involve a range of stakeholders, e.g. funders and practitioners. The colloquium will form part of the meeting of the focus group, but will be open to attendance by members of the larger community.
- SAMEA (South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association) supports, guides and strengthens the development of monitoring and evaluation as an important discipline, profession and instrument for empowerment and accountability in South Africa. It is possible that its conference in September 2011 could contain a strand focused on education,

and this will be explored by a champion of the M&E focus group. In the meantime, focus group members are encouraged to join SAMEA.

- Checklists, templates and tools will be shared among the focus group members.
- The group will use the Bridge communication platforms, specifically the social network, for communication.

2.3. Learner selection and programme design

The broad objective of the first learner selection and programme design focus group meeting will be to agree on the approach the group wishes to take, its role, and the outcomes it envisages.

3. Upcoming sessions

- 21 February 2011: Second meeting of community for effective practice on maths and science learner support programmes.

Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership & Governance

09h00-13h00

- 9 March 2011: Tertiary Access Focus Group Meeting

TEN

12h30-15h00