

Meeting Highlights

GIBS, Illovo, Johannesburg
13 October 2016



Setting the scene

Many voices are calling for innovation to ensure that ECD service delivery is integrative, socially appropriate and dynamic. The topic ‘Innovation in Early Learning’ formed the focus of the fourth and last ECD community of practice (CoP) meeting in 2016. Participants enjoyed hearing about and discussing Saide’s African Storybook Initiative and the Innovation Edge Platform. The community’s own exciting innovation, the collaborative and organic development of the ECD Quality Reflection Tool, has culminated in the Quality Toolkit Pilot Project findings which were shared by the BRIDGE Project Team and discussed with CoP members.

Showcasing of a project: African Storybook

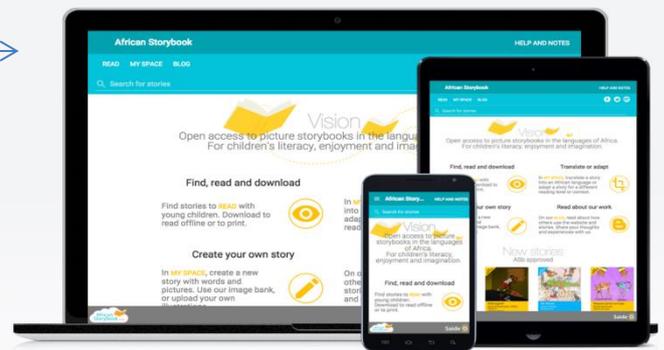


In order to spread working practice and increase coordination, each CoP meeting runs a session which provides a platform to showcase an organisation or project. In this meeting Sheila Drew of Saide shared the African Storybook Initiative which provides hundreds of openly licensed storybooks for early reading in a range of African languages. The initiative aims to address the severe shortage of contextually appropriate books for early reading in African languages, which has the greatest impact on the poorest 80% of people in African countries.

The African Storybook project is being piloted in Uganda, Kenya, South Africa, Lesotho, Ghana, Ethiopia and Zambia.

The stories can be used in a number of ways as follows:

- Find and read stories on the website and reading app**
- Translate stories**
- Adapt stories**
- Create stories using your own or existing pictures**
- Download and read offline, share and print stories**



To view the [presentation click here](#)
To access the [African Storybook Website click here](#)

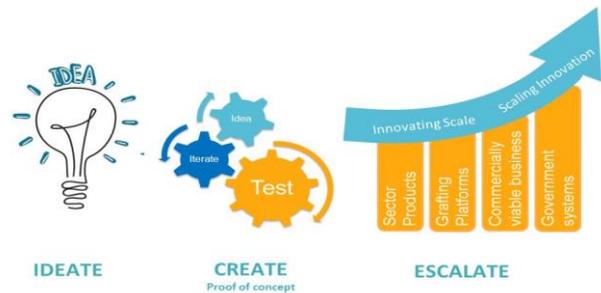
Innovation Edge: supporting innovation for early learning

Sonja Giesa, Director of the Innovation Edge, presented on the importance of innovation to inspire change for children in marginalised communities. Sonja shared the portfolio of Innovation Edge projects and discussed linkages between the ECD CoP and Innovation Edge.

Innovation has multiple definitions and may take the form of new or adapted products, services, processes or systems. Innovation in ECD is needed to break the cycle of poverty, as investment in quality ECD has positive effects socially and economically. While government and funders increasingly recognise the importance of ECD, it is important that the sector is not over formalised and allows room for the testing of innovative ideas to potentially be taken to scale.

Understanding innovation...

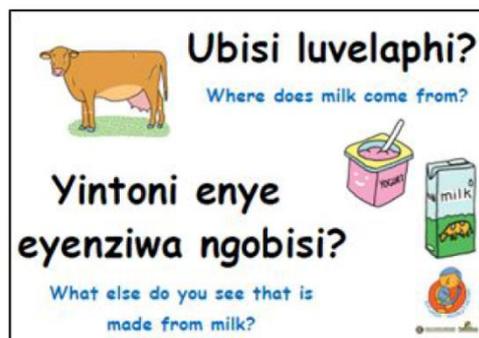
- New and potentially disruptive
- Evolutionary or Revolutionary
- Products, services, systems and delivery models for early learning
- Engages new stakeholders in promoting early learning
- Radically transforms mindsets, paradigms, social dynamics



The Innovation Edge was established in 2014 by a collaboration of funders who were interested in finding potential innovations in ECD to create ways of testing and transitioning innovative ideas to scale. Since then there has been a commitment from funders to continue the Innovation Edge platform with R 10 million leveraged for start-up projects and an additional R70 million for further investments.

The Innovation Edge generates and supports ideas through a range of platforms, including potluck sessions, web-based challenges, pitch sessions, social media and international competitions. Sonja emphasised the importance of collaboration, and particularly cross-sectoral collaboration as a means to generating and driving innovative ideas/projects. The Innovation Edge currently supports 24 startups, with 17 of these involving collaboration across traditional sectoral boundaries.

One example of an Innovation Edge supported project is Sifunda Ngokuthetha (We Learn by Talking Together). This project creatively enriches caregiver-child interactions in public spaces through the display of colourful signs with open-ended questions for caregivers to start conversations with children, as shown below.



To read more about the Innovation Edge portfolio of projects, click [here](#).

To access Sonja's presentation, click [here](#).

Sonja then described the ways in which members of the ECD CoP can link to the Innovation Edge, as follows:

- [Apply](#) for support.
- [Subscribe](#) to receive newsletters and event information.
- [Connect](#) via the Innovation Edge Blog.
- [Participate](#) in sessions to generate innovative ideas.

The ECD CoP also expressed a keen interest in linking innovation to CoP meetings in 2017 by finding creative ways of generating and sharing innovative ideas.

Key take-away: In order to come up with innovative ideas together, we need to challenge every assumption and connect unlike minds to disrupt our thinking.

Sharing findings on the ECD Quality Reflection Toolkit Pilot

One of the exciting innovations of the ECD CoP has been the collaborative development of the ECD Quality Reflection Tool which evolved from a discussion on quality in 2014. The purpose of the Tool is to help practitioners reflect on different dimensions of quality in ECD in order to estimate their own strengths and areas for improvement. In addition, the tool was designed to gather practitioners' own views on what constitutes quality ECD in their own contexts and practices. In order to test the Reflection Tool, BRIDGE and nine CoP partner organisations conducted a pilot project where the Tool was mediated in 20 contextually diverse ECD sites across 6 provinces.

In this session, the BRIDGE Project Team presented an overview of the pilot process and some of the findings in relation to the practitioners' attitudes to reflective practice, practitioners' understandings of quality, areas identified for support and the reflections by the mediators.

In keeping with the consultative nature of the project, CoP members worked in groups to brainstorm ideas around the ways in which the Reflection Tool can be used going forward and suggestions for distribution of the Tool through different platforms. These suggestions were incorporated into the final pilot report.

Pilot Aims

1. To refine/ adapt the reflection tool by testing whether the questions encourage practitioners:

- To reflect on own practice
- To estimate own areas of strengths and weakness
- To identify potential areas for change

2. To test self-reflection methodology in the ECD sector

3. To gather data on practitioner views on dimensions of quality in which they need assistance/ resources / guidance

4. To use data to inform a subsequent phase of implementation

Practitioner views on quality: Overview

The most commonly expressed view about 'quality' is that it is to do with **commitment and dedication** to the children in care. Priorities are usually determined by **context**. Most practitioners highlight the need for **training and support from government** in order to reach quality delivery.



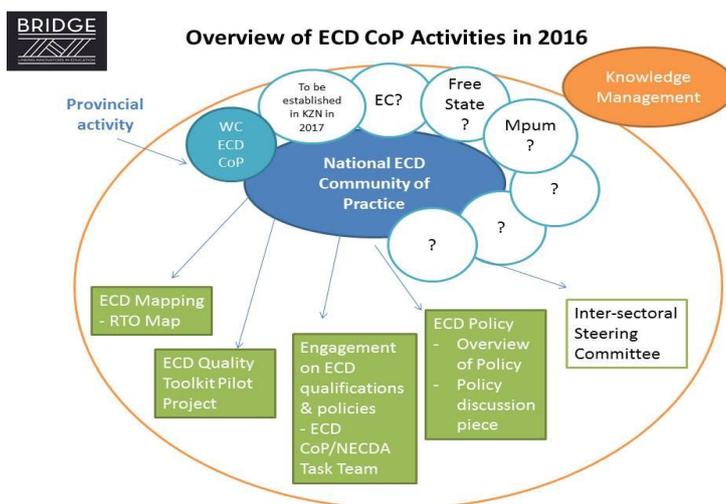
To view the full presentation, click [here](#).

Since the ECD CoP meeting, the full ECD Quality Toolkit Pilot Report has been finalised and distributed. The report covers the development, implementation and findings of the pilot project. We urge all CoP members to read the report, and to give us feedback on any aspects of the report or further thoughts that come to mind. Both the Quality Reflection Tool and the Quality Toolkit Pilot Project are in essence the creations of this community of practice.

[Check out the FULL REPORT HERE BY CLICKING HERE](#)

ECD CoP: Reflecting back on 2016 and planning for 2017

The BRIDGE methodology enables CoP members to drive the agenda for meetings based on their needs. In 2017, meetings focused on the National Integrated ECD Policy, mapping, quality and training. The diagram below provides an overview of the CoP’s activities in 2016. Members then reflected on what has worked in 2016 and ideas for 2017.



Top ECD CoP Knowledge Products in 2017
ECD RTO Map
Overview of National Integrated ECD Policy
ECD Policy Think Piece
‘A day in the life of an ECD Social Worker’
Spotlight on mothers2mothers

What has worked in 2016?

- Networking and collaboration between diverse stakeholders
- Development of ECD Quality Toolkit Pilot Project
- sharing working practice presentations and profiles
- Formation of Task Teams (mapping, quality, training)
- Partnership with government
- Provincial activity via the Western Cape ECD CoP
- Knowledge management and dissemination of information via BRIDGE platforms

Ideas for 2017

- Expand CoPs into provinces
- Think about a communication strategy for the ECD sector - get communication to the grassroots
- Take the Quality Tool forward
- Establish a collaboration/chat platform
- Discussion and debate regarding ECD methodologies
- Explore how practitioners can fit into new qualification structures
- Measure the impact of the ECD CoP

It was agreed that a portion of the first CoP meeting in 2017 will focus on discussing key content areas to focus on in 2017.

“The ECD CoP is a co-ownership between BRIDGE and CoP members. It is the members that need to drive the CoP’s agenda, actions and impacts” (Zarina Khan, ECD CoP Facilitator)

Tentative 2017 ECD CoP Meeting dates:

- 2 March 2017
- 25 May 2017
- 17 August 2017
- 25 October 2017

Please note that the national ECD CoP meetings will take place in different venues across Johannesburg. The dates and venues for the Western Cape ECD CoP meetings will be confirmed in early 2017. The expansion of CoPs into provinces will be the focus of 2017.



Meeting attendees:

Name & Surname:	Organisation:	Purpose of Organisation
Bianca Redelinghuys	Wonder Forest	Pre grade R and Grade R
Bongiwe Mbili	Wonder Forest Nursery	Child Care Service
Caroline Tuckey	Flying Children	ECD Practitioner training and mentoring
Charmaine Botha	LIPSA & EDUEXPERTS	Steering Committee Member, Training Providers, Pre-school Association
Claudine Storbeck	Hi Hopes: Wits	Centre for deaf studies
Craig Johnson	BRIDGE	Communications and support at BRIDGE
Elmarie Erasmus	Luxe College	Training in Social Services
Emmeline Bester	Britehouse	ICT Business Process application Sales
Gladys Ntabanyane	Private Capacity	Providing quality ECD education in townships
Kaley Le Mottee	BRIDGE	Convenor and knowledge management
Ken Maxwell	ECD CoP	ECD CoP
Keshni Bipath	University of Pretoria	Develop new programme for teachers Birth-4
Lauren le Roux	Philile Foundation	ECD Education
Lauren Stretch	NECTA	Network of ECD Organisations
Lucy Thornton	FHI360CDS	Capacity development for NGOs
Magdelize Janse van Vuuren	Play Learn Win	Curriculum and ECD Workshops and Training
Mealang van Heerden	Cotlands	NGO
MELANIE ESTERHUIZEN	Department of Health	Provision of Mental Health Services to all age groups
Melissa King	BRIDGE	Knowledge Management
Patti Hanley	DIEPSLOOT PRESCHOOLS PROJECT	Facilitating ECD township schools
Precious Msimango	Joint Aid Management	Nutrition feeding Programme
Rebecca Wakeford	Midlands Community College	ECD training
Sello Chilwane	JAM	Nutrition feeding Programme
Sheila Drew	Saide	Distance Education Support
Sophia de Beer	ECDD for GDE	Gauteng Govt support for ECD
Silvia de Jager	Topsy Foundation	Support services to OVCs, particularly in ECD
sizakele Mphatsoe	Kagiso Trust	Community Development
Sonja Giese	Innovation Edge	Support for innovation for early care and education
Tom Parry	Instill Education	Teacher Training
Tsaky Mathabe	Braamfischer primary school	Primary School
Vuyiswa Ncontsa	BRIDGE	CEO, Convening & Knowledge Management
Yvonne Van Wyk	Hurly Curly Preschool	Pre-school
Zarina Khan	BRIDGE Facilitator	Facilitator
Zukiswa Ncukana	Thaba Information and Resources	Research