



## National Early Childhood Development Community of Practice

### Meeting Highlights

Sci-bono Discovery Centre, Johannesburg  
2 March 2017



#### Setting the scene

BRIDGE's National ECD Community of Practice (CoP) showcases collaboration through the gathering of diverse stakeholders who are collectively working towards improving the ECD sector. The topic 'play, learning and strategy' formed the focus of the first CoP meeting in 2017. Participants enjoyed hearing about Play Africa and the CareUp application; two innovative initiatives that are increasing children's access to play and literacy development. The community also got in touch with their youthful sides by experiencing the ECD exhibition at Sci-Bono Discovery Centre. In order to map the way forward for the CoP, participants worked in groups to explore the ways in which the CoP's shared contribution will continue to strengthen the ECD sector.

#### Showcasing of an Organisation: Play Africa

In order to spread working practice, each CoP meeting runs a session which provides a platform to showcase an organisation or project. BRIDGE's Sibongile Khumalo interviewed Founder and CEO of Play Africa, Gretchen Wilson-Prangley on Play Africa's purpose, reach, activities and lessons learnt.



[Play Africa website](#)

[Play Africa presentation](#)

"Partnerships are critical and through this CoP I have managed to strengthen my work by engaging with many different stakeholders" (Gretchen Wilson-Prangley)

**Q:** Tell us about Play Africa in terms of its vision, reach, target and process...

**A:** Play Africa seeks to pioneer inclusive public learning spaces in South Africa by bringing new ways of playing to children (1-10 years) and families. Our vision is to drive access to play, discovery and dreaming to create engaged citizens. This is important because in South Africa where poverty and marginalisation is rife, there is a lack of safe play areas. In addition, some parents and educators are struggling with exhaustion, are overworked and many struggle with a lack of employment etc. Play Africa is in phase 1 of our plan and we currently offer limited programmes at various sites and communities. So far we have targeted approximately 40 locations in inner cities and have worked with more than 200 ECD Caregivers.

**We have formed partnerships with municipalities, social workers, ECD organisations such as TREE, Africa Tikkun etc. Through these partnerships we have served nearly 3000 people in only one year.**

**Q:** Is the programme contextualised for different areas and is it culturally responsive?

**A:** Play Africa is exploring ways in which experiences can be tailored for different communities. The use of existing data, observation tools and dialogue helps us to respond to gaps. We continuously explore ways of encouraging communities to ‘innovate in action’ to ensure that we are responsive.

**Q:** How can the CoP plug into what you are doing?

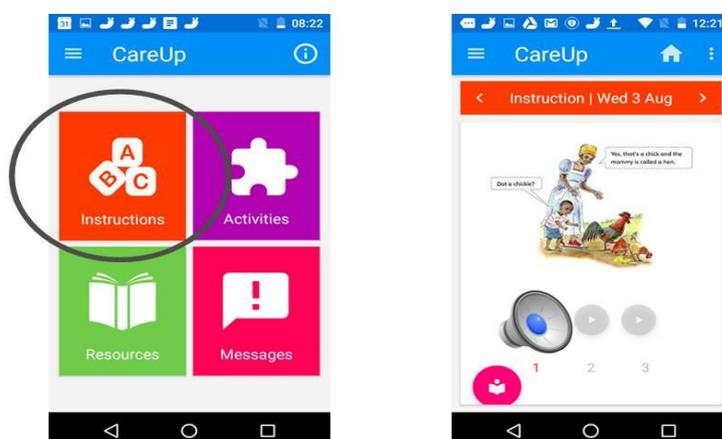
**A:** We will continue to draw on expertise and ideas from the CoP. As I’ve mentioned, we need partners to access communities across South Africa to take the work to scale. The use of technology to drive access is another route which Play Africa is interested in exploring.

## **The Reach Trust: CareUp**

‘Innovation in ECD’ is an ongoing theme for the CoP wherein the community finds ways of integrating and sharing innovative practices. In line with this, Andrew Rudge of the Reach Trust shared an overview of CareUp, a free mobile application targeted at practitioners and parents of 4 to 5 year old children (pre-R). The Reach Trust enables access through the development of innovative and cost-effective mobile solutions.

Andrew began his presentation by demonstrating the current state of the education system, and specifically highlighted some of [Nic Spaul’s research on the national reading crisis](#). This illustrated that learning to read is a continuum and literacy foundations should be put in place at a very young age. In order to improve access to literacy development, the Reach Trust developed CareUp targeted at empowering practitioners and parents in low literacy environments. CareUp provides a 15-week “mini-curriculum” that uses images and audio files (available in isiXhosa, Afrikaans and English) to help expose children to literacy foundations.

Available on Android and Mobi



[CareUp presentation](#)

[Download CareUp](#)

[The Reach Trust website](#)

CareUp was piloted in the Western Cape and evaluated by independent evaluators. Interesting findings emerged from the evaluation. The feedback from parents and practitioners was “overwhelmingly positive”. Other observations from the pilot illustrated a shift in parent awareness of ECD, increased reading, improved teaching practice and improved practitioner and parent interaction.

**Key take-away: technology has the potential to improve access to and reach of early learning. It is however crucial that online content is context-specific, empowering and brings in local and indigenous knowledge and practice. Partnerships with government and experienced organisations can help in this regard.**

CoP members noted that such an application could also be beneficial to Grade R Maths teachers and Foundation Phase Teachers. They also highlighted that access to training content could be improved through the use of mobile applications. A recent example of this is Play SA which is a free online in-service training programme on play-based learning for ECD Practitioners: <https://playsa.org/>.

### **Experiencing the ECD Exhibition at Sci-Bono Discovery Centre**

Sci-Bono is a science centre that offers innovative and dynamic learning experiences that contribute to building South Africa’s science, maths, engineering and technology capacity. Due to Sci-Bono’s recognition of the importance of building strong foundations in the early years, they have created a space for young children’s (0-9 yrs.) scientific curiosity and knowledge through experimental learning.

In keeping with the CoP’s theme of play and learning, members enjoyed the opportunity to experience the ECD Exhibition.



## Plotting the way forward for the ECD CoP...

The ECD CoP has reached the point where it is making a significant contribution to the ECD sector. Since its inception in 2013 the CoP has grown from a core group of 20 ECD stakeholders to approximately 500 diverse stakeholders represented on its database. Members of the CoP have formed working groups to undertake tasks such as: commenting on ECD Policies, mapping, engaging government via the ECD Inter-sectoral Forum and developing the ECD Quality Reflection Tool. The CoP continues to gain momentum through ongoing sharing, networking and collaborating. It is however important to reflect and plan to ensure that the CoP's shared contribution will continue to strengthen the ECD sector going forward.

Through a rotating world café style format, members engaged in groups to work through these questions:

1. When will this CoP ultimately be successful?
2. What is happening outside this CoP – in your own organisation and in the sector?
3. Are there different interest groups in this CoP and how do we accommodate these?
4. How can this CoP broaden its reach or influence? What are practical strategies?



A summary of some of the next steps that emerged as priorities are as follows:

- The ECD CoP Reference Group will meet to discuss the group work notes and propose a way forward.
  - Key point to consider: how do we accommodate different interest groups where some CoP members may primarily be interested in policy and strategic issues, and some primarily interested in practice and implementation issues?
- Create an ECD CoP brochure outlining the CoP's achievements, purpose, reach, goals and processes.
- Develop an ECD CoP communication strategy to ensure the widespread dissemination of knowledge.
- Continue to establish provincial ECD CoPs and explore opportunities to link to local ECD Forums.
- Develop a strategy for engagement with government.
- Explore live feeds during meetings and online platform to host member profiles.

The detailed group work notes are available on request from [kaley@bridge.org.za](mailto:kaley@bridge.org.za).

## Exciting developments:



PIECCE is a project that aims to professionalise the sector by developing a common framework for the training of ECD practitioners working in the Birth to Four phase. The specific aim of the project is to develop Standardised Programme Frameworks for the ECCE Diploma and BEd at Level 6 & 7. The drivers for PIECCE are quality, inclusion and collaboration, which will run through the project processes and outputs. The project is a collaboration led by UNISA, Saide, Centre for Social Development at Rhodes University and BRIDGE. The consulting partners on the project are TREE, Ntataise, False Bay College and East Cape Midlands College. At the request of the Department of Higher Education (DHET), the consortium was also extended to include 9 Higher Education Institutions. Since this is a collaborative and inclusive project, there will be a number of ways in which CoP members and the sector more widely can provide input into the project.

### Establishment of a provincial ECD CoP in KZN



In order to promote improved co-ordination and sharing at both national and provincial levels and to reduce travel costs, BRIDGE will be establishing an ECD CoP in KwaZulu Natal (KZN), to be championed by CoP member and Director of New Beginnings Training and Development, Patsy Pillay. The CoP will link to the national ECD CoP with the purpose of providing a platform for ECD stakeholders to network, share and collaborate in the province. The first KZN CoP meeting will take place on 24 April 2017 in Durban.

### Engagement with the ETDP SETA and QCTO re: Level 4 ECD Occupational Qualification

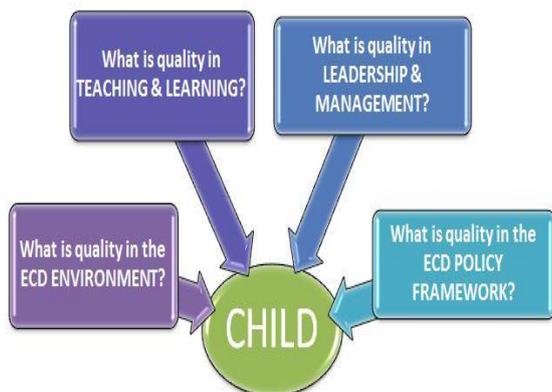
The ECD CoP, National ECD Alliance, SA ECD Congress and Ntataise Network have formed a Task Team to engage with the ETDP SETA and QCTO regarding the implementation of the 'Occupational Certificate: ECD Practitioner, NQF Level 4'. The Task Team was formed because of Maswazi Tshabalala's (QCTO) acknowledgement, at an ECD CoP meeting, of the unique challenges that the ECD sector poses and his request to consult the sector in relation to some of the issues pertaining to the implementation of the qualification and specifically the criteria for workplace approval. In November 2017, the Task Team sent a written submission to the ETDP SETA and QCTO outlining some of the issues and proposed solutions.

More recently, the ETDP SETA hosted a profiling meeting for the development of a Level 3 part-qualification on 14 March 2017 where some of the same issues regarding workplace approval were raised. The Task Team will continue to engage with the ETDP SETA and QCTO.

*The submission is available on request.*

## Update on ECD Quality Toolkit post-pilot phase

The CoP's debate on 'what is quality in ECD' culminated in the pilot of a Reflection Tool on quality for practitioners, which was [piloted](#) last year. At the last 2016 CoP meeting members put forward a number of suggestions for taking the Tool forward, and BRIDGE has been considering these. To this end:



- BRIDGE will be producing a short and visual brochure on the pilot, which will give a high level overview of the pilot findings and views on quality. We will also produce case studies to illustrate interesting findings and stories from the pilot.
- We are planning and costing the review of the approach, format and layout of the Quality Reflection Tool and any supporting guidelines, with a view to getting funding for the process of finalising and designing the Tool as a resource. This planning includes ways of bringing the CoP into its dissemination and tracking its use.

The meeting concluded with reflections from some CoP members on the meeting.

When I come to the ECD CoP I feel like I am part of a family. It feels like we are fighting the same fight and I thank you all"

"As a Practitioner studying, I found this meeting very helpful"

"I have used the BRIDGE Knowledge Hub to find useful ECD tools and resources. Thanks to BRIDGE."

**The next National ECD Community of Practice meeting will take place on 24<sup>th</sup> May 2017.**

## Meeting attendees:

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Organisation:</b>
Adele Mooi	
Andrew Rudge	The Reach Trust
Anuschka Mouton	Topsy
Benter Okelo	BRIDGE
Binny Mokoena	Luxe training college
Charlene Liefie Zwane	Shalom Kidz Art and Computer ECD
Charmaine Botha	LIPSA and Eduexperts
Cindy Williams	Little People Pre-school
Claire Gledhill	Ntataise
Clara Madzinga	mother2mother
Colleen Larkin	Midlands Community College
Colleen Walter	Safe and Sound Learning Association
Deirdre Caulwell	ASHA Trust
Dimakatso Sedite	mothers2mothers
Dipuo Lekhethe	Katlehong Early Learning Resource Unit
Douglas Chirwa	School
Elson Mkhoma	RF Foundation
Futhi Mbongwe	Play Africa Group
Giuliana Bland	JJF/OMT
Gloria Tshusa	Masibulele ECD
Gretchen Wilson-Prangley	Play Africa
Hassiena Marriott	BRIDGE
Innecentia	Sci-Bono Discovery Centre
Jade Trueman	Department of Social Development
Jonas Motlounge	Morojaneng Primary
Kaley Le Mottee	BRIDGE
Lennox Taora	BrainBoosters
Linda Alberts	Save the Children SA
Lisa Januario	ECD Upliftment Projects and Consulting
Lorayne Excell	Wits
Maria Monama	Katlehong Early Learning Resource Unit
Mario Compagnoni	Mosaic Connections
Mary - Ann	Sci-Bono Discovery Centre
Matshepo Nkuna	DSD - Benoni
Kennedy Maxwell	CoP co-founder/member
Melissa King	BRIDGE

<b>Modupi Mazibuko</b>	Lesedi Education Association
<b>Monica Stach</b>	Cotlands
<b>Mosime Motswane</b>	Nyasha projects
<b>Nakedi Lelosa</b>	Gauteng Department of Education
<b>Natalie Adao Gross</b>	South African Montessori Association
<b>Patsy Pillay</b>	New Beginnings Training
<b>Rantsope 'Rex' Meshack Molefe</b>	Motheo Training Institute Trust
<b>Riette Els</b>	READ Educ Trust
<b>Sarah Lubala</b>	BRIDGE
<b>Sibongile Khumalo</b>	BRIDGE
<b>Silvia De Jager</b>	Topsy Foundation
<b>Sinkameng Mowedi</b>	Social Development
<b>Sithembiso Nhlapo</b>	Nal'ibali Trust
<b>Sizakele Mphatsoe Mphatsoe</b>	Kagiso trust
<b>Solani Mirriam Mazibuko</b>	Orlando Children's Home
<b>Sophia De Beer</b>	Independent
<b>Terry Morgan</b>	Thusanang Trust
<b>Thembi Mabasa</b>	Khulanolwazi
<b>Thembi Phala</b>	UNISA
<b>Theresa Tigere</b>	HUMANA PEOPLE TO PEOPLE IN SA
<b>Theresia Mbucane</b>	DSD - Benoni
<b>Tsaky Mathabe</b>	Braam Fischer primary school
<b>Valerie Kunene</b>	Vulingqondo
<b>Wondra Pretorius</b>	Read Education Trust
<b>Yvette Godwin</b>	Charterhouse
<b>Zarina Khan</b>	Facilitator