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In the midst of hate, I found there was, within me, an invincible love. 
In the midst of tears, I found there was, within me, an invincible smile. 
In the midst of chaos, I found there was, within me, an invincible calm. 
I realized, through it all, that... 
In the midst of winter, I found there was, within me, an invincible summer. 
And that makes me happy. 
For it says that no matter how hard the world pushes against me, within me, there’s something stronger – something better, pushing right back. 
[Albert Camus, The Outsider]
Arundhati Roy also posits that pandemics are portals to a new world and a new way of doing things when she says, “Whatever it is, the coronavirus has made the mighty kneel and brought the world to a halt like nothing else could. Our minds are still racing back and forth, longing for a return to ‘normality’, trying to stitch our future to our past and refusing to acknowledge the rupture. But the rupture exists. And in the midst of this terrible despair, it offers us a chance to rethink the doomsday machine we have built for ourselves. **Nothing could be worse than a return to normality.** Historically, pandemics have forced humans to break with the past and imagine their world anew. This one is no different. It is a portal, a gateway between one world and the next. We can choose to walk through it, dragging the carcasses of our prejudice and hatred, our avarice, our data banks and dead ideas, our dead rivers and smoky skies behind us. Or we can walk through lightly, with little luggage, ready to imagine another world. And be ready to fight for it.”

The first eight months of this financial year (July 2019 – February 2020) began normally, with BRIDGE testing new technologies and digital platforms to expand its work. None of us could have predicted how lives would change because of the looming coronavirus. Summarily and definitively, the way we work, live and play changed so drastically that adjustments were critical to saving lives. What is clear is that the old ‘normal’ is gone – as it should, because it was unequal and unfair to many South African citizens. It should not be normal that most young South African children are unable to access quality early childhood education. It should not be normal for South African children to reach the end of Grade 3 without being able to read with comprehension in any language. It certainly should not be normal for almost half of South African learners to drop out of school before they reach matric.

If education is the most powerful weapon with which to change the world, provision of quality education for all is a right that is long overdue. While the challenges were huge before the pandemic, they have now been exacerbated. These challenges require more collaborative partnerships than ever before. We have shown that we can rally around a common cause to protect others: overall, the acceptance of social distancing, sanitisation and the wearing of masks has demonstrated what we can all do when we cooperate, collaborate and pull in one direction for the benefit of humanity. We have seen the benefits of using credible data openly and honestly to improve the quality of our decision making, not just as small organisations but as countries fighting an invisible enemy.

For BRIDGE, the pandemic has been a significant driver to pivot to digitalised learning and sharing, using our strategic assets of stakeholder collaboration, technology and data. BRIDGE moved all its CoPs online with great success, reaching more people than we could convening face-to-face. CoPs that would ordinarily attract about 40-60 participants attracted 80-100 participants. This inevitably meant that the methodology, the facilitation, the profile and the size of each CoP would change. While we are still making sense of these changes, they have shown the ease with which participants can adjust to using virtual meetings to collaborate and share good working practice.

Going forward, BRIDGE will be considering ways in which we can respond appropriately to the current dynamic context as well as the future needs of education stakeholders. Through our communities of practice and our programme partnerships, we will continue to promote collaboration and the sharing of expertise across different focus areas.

**Vuyiswa Ncontsa**

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER
Domain, practice and community: Etienne Wenger’s famous formulation of how these elements define the concept of a community of practice has shaped BRIDGE’s work since inception.

Over the years BRIDGE has run a number of communities of practice in different domains, or what we call ‘focus areas’. In line with the concept of a CoP life cycle, some of these are no longer in existence, and current CoPs are at different stages. Before Covid-19, we were beginning to see our CoPs as representing a range of CoP types as opposed to a single, uniform model. While high level generic outcomes are common to all CoPs, each one defines its own purpose and sets out its own specific objectives. Different facilitators have set their mark on individual CoPs; and some stakeholder profiles are more diverse than others. Clearly, not all BRIDGE CoPs were operating or evolving in the same way. Into this increasingly complex CoP landscape came Covid-19, fast-tracking BRIDGE and our CoP members into an online learning space.

The move to online CoPs resulted in changes to our CoP methodology and facilitation, and, critically, to the profile and size of each community. Ease of online access as compared to face-to-face attendance has meant that CoP events have attracted increasing numbers of new, once-off and irregular attendees, with CoP events regularly reaching from 80 to over 100 participants.

So what does this mean for BRIDGE’s core business of convening communities of practice? And what lessons have we learned from our online CoP events?
Against this context, BRIDGE has begun to interrogate if and how BRIDGE online CoPs continue to achieve their original goals. To this end, a discussion piece *Changing Perspectives on Communities of Practice* has been shared with our stakeholders. The following ‘learning questions’ are explored in the piece, which you can read here.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WEBINARS</th>
<th>WORKSHOPS</th>
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<tr>
<td>• These are usually stand-alone events.</td>
<td>• These can be stand-alone or part of a short-term series, with a clearly defined purpose and audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• A webinar is designed to be online.</td>
<td>• People work together on something, and usually have to apply skills learned.</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Its key purpose is the presentation of information on a topic by an expert to an undefined audience.</td>
<td>• There is usually an expert or trainer leading the workshop activities.</td>
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**CoP MEETINGS**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Examples of activities include</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Networking</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Developing trust between members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Forming partnerships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Co-creating products and resources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Discussing and documenting ideas and innovations in the field</td>
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Some of these activities need to be grown and developed with a core group over time, while others can happen in any one session.
Can we generalize about the kinds of outcomes we expect from CoPs?

Is there a critical mass of regular participants required for a community of practice?

Does the number of participants matter?

Does the delivery method matter?

What does it mean to be ‘engaged in practice’ in a domain?

We also need to reflect on what we have learned from running online CoP events. How have the interactive dynamics and group work activities changed? What do our attendees think of the format? BRIDGE sent out a survey to CoP members who had attended a number of the thirteen online CoP meetings (convened at both national and provincial levels) held between 1 April and 3 July 2020. The report on the survey findings What have we learned about running online CoPs during Covid-19 (July 2020) can be read here. These findings will be taken into account as we move forward into 2021, in our planning for both online and face-to-face meetings.

BRIDGE is confident that our convenings across the different focus areas still meet the general principles and outcomes which underpin the idea of communities of practice, and we see value to both face-to-face and virtual CoPs. Our CoPs, in whatever shape or form, will continue to be forums for nurturing and documenting shared practices, and for promoting collaborative activities for greater impact.
We would also like to thank all those who gave up their time and expertise to share presentations and insights at community of practice meetings. Presenters are experts in their fields, and during this period have included government representatives and officials, academics, NGO and private provider representatives, teachers, principals, and other education practitioners of various kinds.

Not all organisations or individuals who presented during this reporting period can be mentioned by name. All presentations and related discussions are, however, captured in community of practice Meeting Highlights reports, available on the BRIDGE website: we hope that members of the education community will use the BRIDGE Knowledge Hub to explore what has been discussed in their areas of interest over the past year.

We also thank our community of practice members for their continued support.

Finally, we would like to give a shout-out to our Jetstreamers Virginia Mashiane and Akani Mkansi who both spent time with us during this period as part of JET Education Services’ experiential learning programme.

Go to the Knowledge Hub on the BRIDGE website to find all our Knowledge Products and Meeting Highlights.
Our vision is one of an education community which is connected, engaged and actively working together to improve the quality of learning outcomes. Through collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and working practice, the education community can promote improved system performance to benefit learners. Our mission is to provide the platforms and develop the resources that support these goals.

BRIDGE believes that solving complex problems in education requires the views of diverse stakeholders, who all have a role to play in systemic improvements in education in South Africa. BRIDGE stakeholders include representatives from civil society, government, funders, educational practitioners, learners, teachers, principals, parents, research organisations, universities and unions.

This Annual Report covers the reporting period August 2019 to August 2020, but the financial year remains July 2019 - June 2020.
BRIDGE is recognised as an organisation that collaborates with others to deliver services, resources and products that are useful to the education community, and that can have an impact on practice.

BRIDGE’S CORE FUNCTIONS INCLUDE:
- facilitating and convening reflective engagement in communities of practice
- partnering with others in education interventions
- creating and sharing knowledge management products.

**BRIDGE CORE FUNCTIONS**

**CONVENING COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE**

- LEARNER SUPPORT
- EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
- TEACHER DEVELOPMENT

**KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT**

- SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

**CROSS-CUTTING THEMES**
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP
Effective leadership is the foundation for successful learning in schools. Principals are key agents for change in the school environment and are vital to the improvement of our nation’s schools. BRIDGE believes in the transformative power of the principal to reshape a school, and to this end supports and capacitates school principals in their instructional leadership role.

TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
Competent and motivated teachers are arguably the most important school-related factor influencing learner performance. Understanding the challenges teachers face is vital to developing and supporting an effective teaching force in our country. BRIDGE is committed to capacitating educators and works with a significant number of teachers and teacher development organisations that use our forums to reflect on practice, to learn from each other and to share solutions.

EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT
The early years of life are crucial, not only for individual health and physical development, but also for cognitive and social-emotional development. ECD is prioritised in education policy in South Africa, but its actual provision is fragmentary and functions to some extent in competitive silos. BRIDGE’s ECD communities of practice at a national level and in the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal work to understand provision and increase quality in this vital sector.

LEARNER SUPPORT
South African learners face numerous challenges, and therefore require a diverse range of support interventions. BRIDGE facilitates learner support in various ways; for example, by mapping and making information on various forms of provision and support services for learners accessible, by sharing resources and important lessons in relation to a range of topics and programmes, and by promoting collaboration between providers and funders.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES
Where ideas, topics or dynamics are relevant to a number of aspects of education, BRIDGE describes these as a cross-cutting theme. Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) is a major area of interest in which M&E approaches and tools relate to projects in any of the four focus areas. Another cross-cutting theme that has been gaining momentum across all CoPs is that of the role of literacy in education. BRIDGE has established the Early Grade Reading CoP to provide a forum for these discussions. Another example is Information Communication Technology which plays out across all BRIDGE focus areas.
# BRIDGE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE: MEETINGS

## 79 MEETINGS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CoP Category</th>
<th>Online</th>
<th>Face to Face</th>
<th>Total</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Early Childhood Development CoP (Provincial)</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>Monitoring and Evaluation CoP (Provincial)</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Post-School Access CoP (National)</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Maths and Science CoP (National)</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td><strong>Initial Teacher Education CoP</strong></td>
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<td>3</td>
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<td><strong>South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Combined CoPs</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Early Grade Reading / ECD CoP</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Maths and Science / Teacher Development CoP</strong></td>
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<td>1</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Combined Post-School Access / Teacher Development CoP</strong></td>
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Total Meetings: 79
THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT (ECD) COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

BRIDGE runs a national ECD community of practice and three provincial CoPs, in Mpumalanga (in partnership with Penreach), in the Western Cape and in KwaZulu-Natal.

THE NATIONAL ECD COP

During this period, prior to Covid-19, the national ECD CoP held three face-to-face meetings which addressed both policy and practice. An ongoing concern for CoP members is the status of the ECD workforce; the CoP considered the National Integrated ECD Policy (NIECDP) and interrogated what it prescribes in relation to human resource policies. Following on from this we held an information-sharing session focusing on labour law reforms and the scope of the National Minimum Wage Act (NMWA), the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) and the Compensation for Occupational Injuries and Diseases Act (COIDA). The recent Amendment Acts to these (2017) were explored in terms of how they impact on both practitioners and on ECD providers as employers. For many ECD providers, staff costs and minimum wage requirements are linked to compliance and registration barriers. These conversations highlight how policy can be a barrier to development in the ECD sector when it is delinked from practice and the contextual realities of the ECD workforce.

The Human Resources theme was continued in a session which focused on the need to support practitioners through mentorship and coaching. A perspective from higher education was provided through an input describing the mentorship model from North West University’s Diploma in Grade R Teaching. Other CoP members shared examples of innovations, challenges and practical interventions in mentorship and coaching. The CoP also included important sector updates about the Function Shift for ECD from the Department of Social Development (DSD) to the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

LOCKDOWN: NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL COP DISCUSSIONS

With the onset of Covid-19 both the national and provincial ECD CoPs kicked into high gear, moving meetings online and holding frequent special meetings in response to the crisis. Provincial CoP members joined in the national debates, as well as holding their own sessions. The focus was on the effect of lockdown on ECD centres, practitioners and the children they serve; subsequently common issues around the reopening process were identified and discussed. CoP member organisations were all involved in various ways in supporting and assisting ECD centres in these abnormal times, and in anticipating the impact of the changes brought about due to Covid-19 and related regulations. In addition, CoP members jointly discussed a number of submissions and reports to DSD to alert the government to some of the problems being experienced.
COLLABORATIVE ACTIVITIES

• BRIDGE is a member of the Collaboration of ECD Networks (CECDN), together with the National ECD Alliance (NECDA) and the South African Congress for ECD (SACECD). In 2019 the CECDN engaged in a number of provincial consultations to gather sector views on the Function Shift to DBE, and make recommendations to government. The report Provincial Dialogues on the ECD Function Shift: Collective ECD Civil Society Response (January 2020) was presented to government and the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) in January 2020, and can be read here.

• BRIDGE joined with Ilifa Labantwana, Nelson Mandela Foundation, NECDA, SACECD and SmartStart in commissioning a survey which helped provide evidence about challenges that the ECD workforce experienced during the lockdown. This report, titled The Plight of the ECD Workforce (April 2020) helped to advocate for support of the sector during the lockdown and can be read here. A follow-up survey has been commissioned, by the same organisations, to find out how the ECD workforce is coping now that ECD programmes and/or partial care facilities have been allowed to reopen.

• The Covid-19 CoPs contributed to a position paper on the reopening of ECD programmes and/or child care facilities. This paper was shared widely with the sector, including government departments, to assist in the preparation for the reopening process.

• All CoP member inputs and guidelines that were shared with the CoP were collected and housed in a document repository for easy access here.

THE PROVINCIAL ECD COPS

• These communities have all contributed to debates and inputs at the national level. At the same time, they have continued to pursue their own specific interest areas. The KwaZulu-Natal CoP focused on potential uses of technology in the ECD curriculum, as well as beginning to explore post-Covid-19 scenarios for ECD. The Western Cape CoP drilled down into the links between policy and practice, by considering the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework in the Birth to Four space, and the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) over a series of CoPs. A crucial meeting on the Function Shift was held by the Mpumalanga CoP in August 2019, co-facilitated by the Mpumalanga Department of Education, BRIDGE and Penreach. This CoP was geared to assist the provincial department to come up with its own strategy to implement the Function Shift, and to consider how to present this at national level.
The national Maths and Science CoP draws together a diverse group of individuals and organisations with an interest in strengthening and supporting maths and science education. Since BRIDGE’s Teacher Development focus area became cross-cutting in late 2019, the CoP has made every effort to include a teacher development component in its meetings. With the introduction of virtual meetings in response to the Covid-19 lockdown, the CoP focus has become more practical, and there has been an increase in the number of teachers participating.

• The first CoP in this reporting period was geared towards starting a discussion on an association for science educators. Professor Emeritus Marissa Rollnick of the Wits School of Education gave an overview of developments in organisations for science teachers from the late 1980s onwards, tracing the political and other causes of the challenges experienced by such organisations. The CoP also looked at what has made the Association for Mathematics Education of South Africa (AMESA) successful; the purpose, features and benefits of an association for science education practitioners; and possible ways to take such an initiative forward.

• The quality of maths teaching and learning is of enduring interest. The first session of 2020 examined key issues of maths teaching and learning in the early grades, what is missing in the way learners are being taught, and what learners need to successfully navigate maths curricula through to high school and beyond. Dr Nicky Roberts of the University of Johannesburg shared insights into ways of strengthening and improving engagement with the Foundation Phase curriculum, with a particular focus on teaching maths in African languages. This input was complemented by Andrew Barrett of OLICO Maths Education. Both speakers emphasised the importance of sense-making for maths learning, and of developing a strong number sense and understanding of number structuring as a basis for maths competence in high school.

• With the advent of Covid-19, remote teaching emerged as a key theme. This virtual CoP engaged with aspects of online learning and teaching from two different but complementary perspectives. UCT medical student Ilyaas Amien described the philosophy, development and work of Tutonic, a free online tuition service providing maths support to high school learners. Nonhlanhla Masina, of the African School for Excellence (ASE), shared lessons learnt in implementing remote teaching and learning of maths and science in a low-income community during the Covid-19 lockdown. This included using the home as an environment for learning. Both approaches emphasised the need for conceptual understanding and the value of individualised feedback.
The national Post-School Access CoP attracts participants from a range of sectors and organisations who connect over their shared interest in helping young people navigate the post-school environment.

- In a brief return to its origins in student funding, the CoP caught up on developments in Higher Education funding support with presentations on the work and impact of the *Ikusasa Student Financial Aid Programme* (ISFAP), *Study Trust* and the *Rural Education Access Programme* (REAP). A key takeaway from this session was the emphasis now being given to providing funding recipients with wrap-around academic and psychosocial support to optimise the value of the financial assistance they receive.

- The CoP took its exploration of youth entrepreneurship (begun during 2019) further in a conversation with young entrepreneur Neo Matsau, the founder of digital marketing company *Bamboo Network*, and with Nelly Mofokeng of *JA South Africa* (JASA), which offers young people opportunities to learn entrepreneurial, business and life skills through practical, experiential programmes. Some elements highlighted in the discussions were the importance of developing an entrepreneurial mindset, presenting a realistic image of entrepreneurship, and having relatable role models.
In a new development for the Post-School Access CoP, two closed sessions were held during the lockdown period. Participation was by invitation, with a maximum of 16 participants, to enable deeper engagement on specific issues. Both sessions were held virtually, and a key observation is that trust was built very quickly among participants.

- The first of these closed CoP meetings hosted a discussion on how Covid-19 was impacting entrepreneurial activity.

- The second closed session took the form of a joint Post-School Access and Teacher Development CoP involving a group of teacher interns and their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme leaders. The meeting focused on the conceptual and practical features of social-emotional learning (SEL) in the context of online group coaching.

This involved a group of young entrepreneurs and representatives of NPOs working in youth entrepreneurial development exploring the risks, challenges and opportunities arising during the pandemic, from their own perspectives and based on their individual experiences. Participants appreciated the opportunity to share and learn from one another, and the CoP led to tangible outputs in the form of collaboration and signing of MoUs among some of the participants.

![WhatsApp message sent by entrepreneur participant Tebogo Moalusi to the CoP facilitator, a few weeks after the CoP meeting](image_url)
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: PRINCIPALS CoPs

THE LOCAL PRINCIPALS COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

- Ekurhuleni South 1 Principals Community of Practice
- Ekurhuleni South 2 Principals Community of Practice
- Gauteng East 3 Principals Community of Practice
- Gauteng East 4 Principals Community of Practice
- Sedibeng East Principals Community of Practice
- Sedibeng West Principals Community of Practice

The local Principals CoPs support and capacitate school principals in their instructional leadership role, with the aim of improving school functionality and enabling productive teaching and learning. The CoPs bring together groups of principals at district level, and provide them with a platform to network, reflect, share good practices and resources, work collectively on common issues and give each other mutual support in a framework of trust.

Due to funding constraints, four of the six Principals CoPs were placed on hold at the end of June 2020. The remaining two CoPs, Sedibeng East and Ekurhuleni South 2, have been able to continue with support from the Anglo American Chairman’s Fund.

In this period the CoPs have had a strong ICT focus. As principals and their management teams developed a better grasp of DDD Dashboard navigation and began to engage with learner performance reports, it became necessary to focus on improving computer proficiency, particularly Excel skills. The CoP sessions aimed to capacitate principals in this regard, which proved beneficial as Covid-19 became a reality. The CoPs were able to build on the ICT foundation that had been laid, which made introducing principals to virtual platforms less challenging. Principals were then able to conduct virtual engagements with their teams while in lockdown, and even to impart some of these ICT skills to their team members.

THE INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION (ITE) COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

This reporting period covers the last three meetings of this CoP, which came to an end in this funding cycle in June 2020. This closed CoP included invited representatives of Higher Education Institutions only, and its small number of approximately ten to twelve participants has allowed for deep discussion as well as sharing of experiences and resources.

The October 2019 CoP looked in detail at different mentorship models for ITE students, especially in the context of Work Integrated Learning / Teaching Practice, which has been the key focus of this CoP.

The onset of Covid-19 represented a huge challenge for education faculties and their students, as they were not able to carry out their required Teaching Practice due to school closures. The final two CoPs during this period therefore focused on how different institutions were meeting this challenge. In addition, at both meetings we explored the model developed collaboratively through the JET Researcher’s Boot Camp held during lockdown. Lee Rusznyak from Wits University shared details on A model for extra-school-based teaching practicum in Covid-19 and beyond, which has been endorsed by SACE, DBE and DHET. Various universities continue to work on aspects of the model.

The ITE CoP closed its last session by sharing the wish for this CoP to continue in a revised format, with a broader base and reworked outcomes, if funding permits.
The South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition (SAESC) is BRIDGE’s longest-standing community of practice. It is made up of over 20 achievement-orientated schools that provide disadvantaged learners across South Africa with affordable access to quality education. Established in 2010, it straddles school leadership and teacher development. The Coalition provides its members with a collaborative space for personal growth and school improvement, and promotes the development, implementation and sharing of innovative and sustainable educational practices and resources.

The Axis Summit, normally the highlight of SAESC’s annual calendar, could not be held this year due to the Covid-19 pandemic. CoP meetings have continued to cover a range of topical issues, as this selection shows:

- Creative classroom techniques for teaching STEM subjects
- Applying social-emotional learning (SEL) and active listening methods
- Promoting literacy in schools and communities
- Embracing the challenges of the 4th Industrial Revolution (4IR) – practical approaches to teaching robotics and problem-solving skills
- Driving awareness of sustainable living through interdisciplinary teaching and learning
- Using Google Classroom to activate critical thinking and effective collaborative learning
- Teaching and learning under Covid-19 – using creative and innovative digital engagement to ensure no learners are left behind.

The Western Cape held one Teacher Development CoP meeting in 2019, focusing on the critical issue of trauma in schools and the need for psychosocial support. Judy Strickland, founder of Hope House Counselling, gave an overview of the impact trauma has on learners and educators, and shared a synopsis of the training she provides. There was a great deal of interest from the 25 participants at this event in taking the Western Cape Teacher Development CoP forward, and some ideas for themes and format for 2020 were discussed. However, Covid-19 interrupted these plans. In addition, the growing view that teacher development is a cross-cutting theme that can be brought into a range of other forums has prompted a re-think of this CoP.
TEACHER DEVELOPMENT AS A CROSS-CUTTING THEME

The teacher is the catalyst for developing confident and competent learners, and professional development of educators is essential for long term improvement of the education system. Because teacher development has emerged as a key topic in many of our other CoPs, we have merged our teacher development membership database with those of other CoPs. During this reporting period we held a number of joint CoPs with teacher development as a theme.

A joint session of the Maths and Science and Teacher Development CoPs explored the importance of helping learners understand the nature of scientific and mathematical knowledge, and the extent to which our curricula and textbooks are effective in putting across the essence of science and maths as subjects. The discussion confirmed the role of textbooks as key curricula resources that support and guide teachers in their practice. It also emphasised the importance of quality in textbook design, and of capacitating teachers to use textbooks effectively in the classroom.

A joint Post-School Access and Teacher Development CoP involved a group of teacher interns and their Initial Teacher Education (ITE) programme leaders. The meeting featured a demonstration of the process of social-emotional learning (SEL) in the context of online group coaching. This session affirmed both the effectiveness of the online group coaching model and the role of SEL in deepening interns’ self-knowledge and building the kinds of personal skills needed to develop fully as teachers.
THE NATIONAL M&E COP

The M&E CoP continues to have a mixed profile of new and old participants, and of M&E experts and programme implementers, who find great value in exchanging ideas and resources. In the second part of 2019 two face-to-face CoPs were held. An unusual and stimulating CoP ‘workshop’ focused on learning from evaluation failures, with participants dissecting a number of case studies. This was followed by informative and high level inputs on the links between M&E and sustainable investing.

The first M&E CoP of 2020 was held just as the lockdown was announced and at the beginning of the practice of social distancing. In response to this new reality, BRIDGE held its first fully online CoP meeting hosting 55 people who were meeting virtually from multiple locations. In spite of our inexperience at running online group work at this point, a highly interactive ‘Master Class’ on the challenges of data was held. The numbers attending this CoP have since grown to over 100 participants, showing the appetite for virtual engagement with increased participation from organisations and individuals based in the Western Cape, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal, and the North West Province. The next two online CoPs focused directly on M&E as related to the impact of Covid-19. One of these dealt with the challenges of programme monitoring with closed schools and suspended field work; offering practical advice to implementers while at the same time highlighting the importance of evidence collection during these times. The CoP also responded to changing contexts: once schools reopened and more grades returned, it became clear that those on the front line in education – learners, parents, educators and principals – were facing increasing anxiety and stress. Recognising this, many school support interventions are focusing on the psychosocial needs of their beneficiaries. The input from the Regional Psychosocial Support Initiative [REPSII] gave members an in-depth understanding of what constitutes psychosocial support, and, in particular, methods and tools to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of these efforts.

BRIDGE’s collaborative partnerships with the South African Monitoring and Evaluation Association (SAMEA), Khulisa Management Services and Tshikululu Social Investments have added a lot of value to this CoP, ensuring that the meetings are planned and facilitated according to high-level M&E content knowledge and coverage.

Source for the case studies used in the M&E workshop. (Sage Publications, 2019)
THE WESTERN CAPE M&E CoP

This CoP started in 2019 and has taken a slightly different approach to other BRIDGE CoPs, enabled in part by its smaller size. The duty of hosting and facilitating the CoP is rotated amongst CoP members, and an experiential, peer-learning approach is encouraged through a regular ‘show and tell’ segment at each CoP meeting where members can share their organisation’s M&E journey with the rest of the CoP. This gives CoP members an opportunity to hear first-hand how their peers are incorporating M&E into their daily work, and to draw on the experts in the room.

The Western Cape M&E CoP has drawn on some of the national topics, such as ‘top M&E terms’ and Theory of Change, but has drilled down more deeply into the technology focus. This CoP also responded to the Covid-19 context by focusing on how to conduct evaluations in changing and limiting circumstances.

THE EARLY GRADE READING (EGR) COMMUNITY OF PRACTICE

The EGR CoP was established in 2018 to share the work being done by various stakeholders in the literacy development space, in support of government’s national and provincial literacy strategies. During this reporting period the EGR CoP convened four times, with the last sitting being a joint CoP with the ECD CoP.

While the importance of mother-tongue education is recognised globally as one of the most effective ways of developing cognitively, socially and communally, mother-tongue or home language instruction remains a contentious subject in South African education. On 11 September 2019, the EGR CoP explored the importance of Early Grade Learner and Teacher Support Materials (LTSM) in African Languages, with particular focus on the Vula Bula Foundation Phase materials. Practitioners reflected on the phonics-based approach to teaching reading in the orthographies of South Africa’s indigenous languages, and its impact on teaching and learning.

The National M&E CoP provides a valuable opportunity for M&E Specialists, programme implementers and funders to convene in a common forum. This has been identified as one of the key strengths of the CoP, and that implementers are able to learn from M&E Specialists and other implementers, and that M&E Specialists are able to keep abreast of developments in the education sector, and the contextual issues experienced by implementers.

Our children come to schools with so many language resources and we cast them aside by focusing on narrow monolingualism. Why do we keep denigrating home languages when so many of our learners will remain in the communities in which their home language is spoken?

[Jenny Katz, Molteno]
We shouldn’t assume that communities are helpless; there is a positive response where practitioners are making a plan to get to meetings etc. This speaks to having a collaborative mind set when dealing with different communities.

“Invitations to the EGR CoP had been limited to a select database, but as a result of recommendations in the mid-term evaluation of this CoP, in 2020 invitations were extended to BRIDGE’s entire database. In line with our collaboration ethos, BRIDGE partnered with Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy to host the CoP on 22 February 2020. This CoP focused on pre-literacy skills and included an interactive session with participants. This CoP had the highest recorded number of participants for the EGR CoP since its inception in 2018.

CoP meetings then moved online due to Covid-19. The EGR and ECD CoPs held a joint virtual meeting which focused on how organisations supported caregivers during Covid-19.

The EGR CoP has enjoyed some growth in attendance. BRIDGE continues to partner with the Literacy Association of South Africa (LITASA) in the EGR CoP, and has also recently added Molteno Institute for Language and Literacy to the partnership. These partnerships are a work-in-progress that will, potentially, yield more joint initiatives and collaborative CoPs in future.
THE STANDARD BANK TUTUWA COMMUNITY FOUNDATION

The BRIDGE-Standard Bank Tutuwa Community Foundation School Leadership Programme is a five-year programme being implemented in nine primary schools in the Ekurhuleni North District of Gauteng. Now in its third year, the Programme aims to improve learning outcomes by mentoring principals on instructional leadership, convening professional learning communities (PLCs) for heads of departments (HoDs) and, ultimately, facilitating structured school peer reviews to identify and strengthen weaknesses in school management and teaching practices.

The Data Driven Districts Dashboard (DDD Dashboard) has provided an appropriate context for engaging principals and HoDs on a range of issues, as it is both a curriculum monitoring and a school functionality tool. With the aim of improving accountability and driving change in these areas, BRIDGE has built capacity to navigate the Dashboard and extract value from spreadsheets and reports by, for example, planning learner intervention support programmes for learners at risk.

A highlight of this reporting period was an initiative to support literacy acquisition. After receiving training in facilitating literacy strategies from the NGO Readucate, the BRIDGE project team held capacity building workshops to share techniques and resources with Foundation Phase teachers. Participants were very appreciative and rated the intervention highly.

Despite efforts to continue remotely, the Covid-19 lockdown ruled out most Programme activities. The mentoring of principals was an important exception, with positive engagements continuing virtually. The mentors played a sterling role in equipping their mentees to use virtual platforms, encouraging them to be more proactive in looking for solutions to suit their individual circumstances, and particularly in helping them to process the fears, uncertainties and information overload that characterised the reopening of schools. With many planned activities on hold, BRIDGE has sought other means to maintain contact and provide support.
KAGISO TRUST AND UNIVERSITY OF JOHANNESBURG: EDUCATION CONVERSATIONS

The Education Conversations consortium was established in 2012, with BRIDGE joining in 2019. The platform enables education stakeholders and society at large to engage on issues critical to education reform, and creates a space for ongoing debate through which diverse voices can be heard.

• A highlight of this period was the Education Conversations Roundtable: Exploring the Hurdles and Victories of Our Education System. This event drilled down into why our education system continues to perform so poorly, despite significant material investment by government and private stakeholders, while acknowledging that the causes are complex and multifaceted. The panel of esteemed educationists included the Department of Basic Education’s Dr Mamiki Maboya and Dr Janeli Kotze, and PILO’s (the Programme to Improve Learning Outcomes) Mary Metcalfe. Panelists identified and unpacked critical factors preventing us from overcoming the obstacles in our troubled education system, as well as suggesting creative ways of making tangible improvements.

• Another noteworthy meeting focussed on literacy as one of South Africa’s major educational challenges, as presented in the much-cited Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS). The study showed that in 2016, 78% of South African Grade 4 children in a nationally representative sample could not read for meaning in any language. Panelists explored two key thematic areas: the importance of early literacy and the role of parental involvement in literacy development; and the teaching of literacy in the classroom. Developing a reading culture must become a core focus of every classroom, while reading instruction needs to mesh with the 21st century context in which children will apply their reading skills.

• The third event of this period was held as a webinar due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which has both exposed education inequalities and catalysed action to address some of the more pressing issues such as sanitation, water availability, and food security. Discussions focussed on ways of bringing remote teaching and learning to children in poor communities where schools and homes are constrained by a lack of devices, connectivity and data. For example, WhatsApp has proved its worth as a teaching tool and as a means of developing a sense of community. At the same time, community radio, educational TV programmes and print media are still relevant in 2020 and should be utilised more. Panelist Dr Shafika Isaacs drew attention to the emerging concept of a ‘pedagogy of care’ and the importance of fostering this in our schools and communities to support all those involved: teachers, learners, and the adults who care for them.
MATTHEW Gomez SCHOOL OF LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE, CATHOLIC INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION AND THE SASOL FOUNDATION: PRINCIPALS UPFRONT

Principals Upfront is a series of public dialogues addressing the leadership role of school principals. The dialogues give principals a platform to share working practice and information about different facets of school leadership, and enable those involved in supporting school leadership to deepen their understanding of the principal's role. Three dialogues were held, covering a variety of topics:

• The relationship between mentoring and school leadership development, which explored the elements of an effective mentoring relationship, attributes of effective mentors and mentees, and challenges to mentoring in the South African school context.

• Using data to enhance learner achievement, which considered the crucial role of data in driving decision-making at school and district level, how school data is accessed, used and managed, and how these practices relate to improved learner performance.

• Unlocking technology to deliver education during Covid-19, which examined how the Gauteng Department of Education and individual schools use technology to manage education provision, communicate with stakeholders, promote remote learning and enable professional development.
NEW LEADERS FOUNDATION (NLF)

BRIDGE’s partnership with the New Leaders Foundation (NLF) to promote the use of the Data Driven Districts Dashboard (DDD Dashboard) is continuing to be productive. There has been a strong drive to encourage shared leadership by giving the School Management Team (SMT) members of all schools involved in BRIDGE-convened CoPs access to the DDD Dashboard. This was successful, with a total of 170 new users being registered. Workshops for SMT members have encouraged subject heads to focus on analysing subject data, profiling grades and learners to identify learners requiring support, and preparing the accompanying reports for team discussions. This increased focus on data has helped school leaders to develop suitable interventions and track their success.

OLD MUTUAL FOUNDATION (OMF)

The OMF King Williams Town Community of Practice for school principals ran from April to October 2019. Six meetings were convened in this period, the first being a CoP launch and group orientation. The launch was attended by Mr Themba Kojana, the Superintendent General of the Eastern Cape Department of Education. As a strong advocate of the Data Driven Districts Dashboard, he was able to highlight one of the CoP’s key intentions which was to strengthen usage of the Dashboard, and to develop data analysis and interpretation skills for improved curriculum management. The engagement encouraged school leaders to co-facilitate, which ensured that a CoP champion could be identified to lead the group after BRIDGE’s departure from the project.

OMF King Williams Town Community of Practice principals getting to grips with the DDD Dashboard
PIECCE: THE PROJECT FOR INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

PIECCE is a multi-stakeholder, collaborative project that ran from January 2017 to March 2020, funded by the European Union, the Department of Higher Education and Training, and UNICEF. Its aim is to increase access to qualifications for Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) educators working in Birth to Four, by producing a standardised Programme Framework for the ECCE Diploma and Degree at NQF Levels 6 and 7 respectively. This framework will support common understandings of ECCE educator competences, and help to align occupational and professional qualification pathways. The project, which started in 2017 and has now ended, involved eleven Higher Education Institutions and four NGOs.

BRIDGE played the critical role of tracking the process of collaboration between the members of the PIECCE consortium involved in the project, as well as knowledge management of the outputs of the project. The monitoring of the collaboration has taken place from the beginning of the project and the insights, stories and lessons learned from the collaborative processes are documented in PIECCE Output 1, Building the PIECCE Collaboration Model (January 2020). The aim of Output 1 is to share the Model widely with the ECCE sector, so that any future collaborations can draw on these lessons and use them for informed planning and implementation of collaborative undertakings.

All PIECCE outputs and related knowledge products can be found on https://piecce.co.za.

The Framework includes the following content:
1. Introduction to the Programme Framework for ECCE Initial Teacher Education
2. The South African ECCE Context and Principles for Teacher Education Programmes
3. Knowledge and Practice Standards for ECCE
4. Africanisation, Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and Belonging in ECCE Teacher Education
5. Developmental Education – an alternative approach to Academic Support
6. Pedagogies in Teacher Education for ECCE
7. Play
8. Assessment in ECCE Teacher Education
9. Work Integrated Learning (WIL)
10. Modes of Engagement
11. Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL)
THE TELKOM FOUNDATION: HIGH SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAMME

BRIDGE has been a part of Telkom's High School Support Programme (HSSP) since 2017, in a two-fold capacity. The school leadership component involved running communities of practice for principals in the Garankuwa district of Tshwane, and in the Nelson Mandela Bay district of Port Elizabeth. The knowledge management component involved convening Implementing Partner communities of practice, enabling service providers working in the programme to share experiences and mutual concerns. BRIDGE’s role came to an end in April 2020.

During this reporting period the focus in the HSSP Principals CoPs has been on promoting principals’ use of the Data Driven Districts Dashboard (DDD Dashboard). BRIDGE is in partnership with the New Leaders Foundation (NLF) which manages the DDD on behalf of the Department of Basic Education. BRIDGE staff have been trained and certificated in working with DDD users, and have built capacity in improved data analysis for effective school management in the HSSP schools.

Reflections from principals on the benefits of the HSSP Principals CoPs are shared in the Change Stories knowledge product developed by BRIDGE, along with a number of other stories on themes such as psychosocial support and ICT integration captured through the knowledge management processes.
BRIDGE FACILITATORS

- Peter Glover
- Thiru Govender
- Jeff Ilsley
- Chimwemwe Kamanga
- Lawrence Manyesa
- Hassiena Marriott
- Charles Marriott
- Cynthia Moeng
- Patsy Pillay
- Nalinee Soobramoney
- Margie Roper

PROVINCIAL CHAMPIONS

Kauthar Jacobs
Western Cape Provincial Coordinator

Carol Harington
Western Cape ECD Champion

Patsy Pillay
KwaZulu-Natal ECD Champion

Asgar Bhikoo and Maurisa Moloto
Western Cape M&E Champions

Thulile Makofane
Mpumalanga ECD Champion
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<tr>
<th>Note(s)</th>
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<td><strong>Assets</strong></td>
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<td>Non-Current Assets</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equity</td>
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<td>Retained surplus</td>
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<td><strong>Liabilities</strong></td>
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BRIDGE INNOVATION IN LEARNING ORGANISATION (NPC)
(REGISTRATION NUMBER: 2009/024836/08)
ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2020

Statement of Comprehensive Income

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<td>Operating expenses</td>
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<td>Operating surplus</td>
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<td>Other comprehensive income</td>
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<td>Total comprehensive surplus for the year</td>
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Statement of Cash Flows

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<td>Cash flows from operating activities</td>
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<td>Cash generated from (used in) operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>Interest income</td>
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<td>Net cash from operating activities</td>
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<td>Total cash at end of the year</td>
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