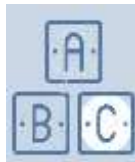


## **Mpumalanga Early Childhood Development Community of Practice**

### **Meeting Highlights 23 June 2022**

#### **SCENE SETTING**



Thandeka Rantsi, ECD Project Manager at BRIDGE and co-facilitator welcomed the civil society, ECD centre managers, practitioners, the Mpumalanga provincial Department of Education (DoE) and Ehlanzeni District personnel to the second Mpumalanga Early Childhood Development (ECD) Community of Practice (CoP) of 2022 on behalf of BRIDGE and Penreach.

Thulile Makofane, Penreach ECD Director touched on the different ECD programmes ran in the province of Mpumalanga in partnership with the DoE, DSD and other civil society organisations:

- Capacity building for ECD centres through coaching and mentoring. Capacitated centres, called Penbeams, in turn capacitate others once level 3 of this training is reached.
- Teacher development workshops for practitioners that includes seven sessions a year for five hours. These tackle different subjects that are pertinent in the ECD space.
- NQF level 4 classes accredited by the ETDPSETA.
- Community programmes to support ECD centres e.g. toy libraries with the aim of giving communities access to toys ran by volunteers.
- Part of SmartStart network, which is a national programme that facilitates learning through play using playgroups and a franchisor model.
- Partners with different stakeholders on nutrition such as 'For Africa' and the 'Do More Foundation'.
- School Readiness Initiative (SRI) working with Grade R teachers to assist them in their teaching using tablets.
- BRIDGE partnership to facilitate CoPs in the ECD space which started three years ago with support from the DSD, DBE and ECD practitioners.

Penreach also runs programmes in Primary and Secondary schools in Ehlanzeni, Nkangala and Gert Sibande District.

Thandeka took participants through a brief overview of what BRIDGE is about, she went on to say that the organisation's mandate is to run CoPs in different focus areas within education, with ECD being one of them. The whole idea of CoPs is to provide a space to share knowledge, best practice, learn from each other, avoid duplication and allow the sector to collaborate and network with one another.

The session covered an update on the function shift as it pertains to the province of Mpumalanga, focusing particularly on the Ehlanzeni district.



## PRESENTATION: Patricia Maphungela & Portia Mtshali - Ehlanzeni District

Patricia Maphungela, responsible for General Education and Training

(GET) at Ehlanzeni District gave an update on the function shift as it pertains to the province of Mpumalanga. She focused on ECD zero to four centres who facilitate play based learning in line with the national curriculum, ECD Grade R in public schools as well as those in funded Grade R community centres.

[Click here to view the full presentation](#)

### ***What is the function shift?***

The function shift is the migration of responsibilities for ECD programmes from DSD to the DBE.

As part of the process six, work streams were identified:

- Human Resource Management (HRM) including Organisational Design, Labour Relations and Change Management (affected staff, placement of staff, costing of structures, labour relations etc.)
- Infrastructure and Assets (office/ department accommodation and assets)
- Finance (shifting of funds between departments)
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT analysis and implementation etc.)
- Legal and Policy (proclamations, legislative changes and listing of departments)
- Communications (branding and naming of departments, client related change management issues)

The District of Ehlanzeni has received the function through the migration as of 1 April 2022. The presentation looked at the district profile in relation to ECD centres. It is important to note that centres are not yet categorised according to circuits and sub-circuits which is how the DoE works. Currently, the department is working with two municipalities namely: Mbombela and Nkomazi. In Mbombela there are 33 centres that qualify for conditional grant funding and 17 from Nkomazi.

There are 87 centres in Mbombela and 63 in Nkomazi, making up a total of 150 supported under equitable share. With non-centre based centres, there are two under Mbombela and one from Nkomazi which makes it a total of three. The non-centre based centres are namely Ntataise and Cotlands.

Grade R practitioners in public schools are categorised according to circuits. This helps in knowing how many practitioners there are in a circuit. The district has 145 Grade R serving practitioners who are still working towards being qualified. There are 377 practitioners who are qualified and are referred to as teachers.

Ehlanzeni has 16 Grade R community centres, which facilitate teaching and learning in grade R with 27 practitioners. All practitioners offering Grade R in the centres are qualified, have matric certificates and NQF level 4, with some having NQF level 5.

The district is saying that the sector needs to work together to assist practitioners to develop appropriate daily programmes for children of different age groups. Practitioners need to be

capacitated on the required development milestones of children. There is a challenge, especially in the foundation phase and the whole system, with learners being unable to read with meaning. The goal is to intervene as early as possible.

Activities that can be done to stimulate physical and cognitive development are still a challenge, with a huge gap in how to conduct these activities. Moreover, resources have been provided by Penreach and other partners, but practitioners still battle on how to effectively utilise those resources.

Patricia concluded her presentation by urging CoP members to continue to work together so that the sector can improve its systems through the strengthening of monitoring and support of ECD centres on the implementation of the national curriculum framework and addressing fears that are due to the function shift.

Portia Mtshali is responsible for ECD Care and Support ( ) in the Ehlanzeni district, a function which has been received by the DBE from DSD through the function shift. The mandate is to ensure that the department continues networking among stakeholders rendering services to the years' age cohort, and facilitate the registration and renewal of the ECD centres.

The department will support and monitor both the registered and the unregistered ECD centres, while rendering parental caregiver training. During the shift, only nine social workers moved to the DoE, mainly those responsible for Ehlanzeni and Nkomazi which have not yet been demarcated according to circuits. The parental caregiver training is in collaboration with RCL, which started in Nkomazi whereby 66 caregivers are being trained to roll out the programme in their communities. As far as progress made in local forums, most were no longer functioning due to COVID-19, as they could not join Zoom meetings. But since face to face meetings have started again, the local ECD forums have been revived and this is where information is disseminated regarding the function shift.

Since April 2022, up until now, service level agreements were signed, for equitable share only. Conditional grants are still awaiting attendance from the Provincial Office. Claims for the first quarter have been collected and are waiting for processing.

***Challenges experienced due to the shift:***

- Change management, people are reluctant because they still want to function in the same way that they had through when under the DSD;
- There is fear of the unknown;
- Challenges in communication; and
- Practitioners wanting to continue working with social workers that they were already in communication with.

The district is trying to break the gap whereby it communicates constantly, and disseminates relevant information.

## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

### *Registration*

**Q.** What are the processes one needs to understand when it comes to registration?

**A.** For the registration process, one needs to submit the necessary regulation forms and supporting documents. A social worker and environmental health practitioner would then inspect the facility to see whether what was filled in the form physically correlates with what is in the facility. The department is aware that they are behind with registrations, but once the process has started communication will be sent to practitioners. The number of social workers (who are responsible for verification) that have been received by the department through the migration is very little, however work is being put in for verification.

**Q.** Are NPOs that have been assisting with the partial care registration meant to continue or should they pause and wait for future directive?

**A.** A way forward is yet to be communicated on how to bridge the gap in regards to partial care registration.

**Q.** What is the process that the DoE will follow now that the function shift has happened to keep people as updated?

**A.** The department noted the challenge that most of the centres not receiving communication are unregistered and those that mushroom on a daily basis. Many ECD centres are starting on their own without notifying the relevant officials. There are local forums in place where the chairpersons are assisting the department whenever there is an unregistered ECD. The department is also trying to gather statistics on how many ECDs are unregistered. The list will help in arranging jamborees to support the registration process.

Information was communicated to centres early before and throughout the transition through stakeholder engagements and radio talk shows. The radio talk shows are still happening, as well as meetings with local forums to strengthen communication on what is happening on the ground.

### *Training*

**Q.** When the DoE trains practitioners is the level of training an NQF level 4 or NQF level 5? And how does a practitioner come to a point where they can be referred to as a teacher?

**A.** A total number of 145 practitioners are in public schools, and are working towards being qualified (NQF level 5). They are registered with the North West University, DoE is subsidising them by paying for bursaries, with a few paying for their own tuition. A Grade R practitioner obtains a professional qualification, for example, when they have obtained a Grade R diploma, NPDE or a B Ed, or any teaching diploma or degree as per SAQA prescripts. Immediately when a Grade R practitioner is qualified and has a diploma, we call them a teacher. This is all in a bid to professionalise the ECD sector. They remain teaching Grade R in public schools because that is their specialisation.

**Q.** How long does it take for non-centre based training providers to graduate practitioners in NQF level 4?

**A.** According to Ntataise, the NQF level 4 training usually takes about 18 months, but it does not mean when training is over then people will acquire their certification. There are processes that still need to be undertaken after training e.g the moderation process which in some instances involves files being taken back to practitioners for revisions. It is a matter of how proactive practitioners are in covering those gaps. With moderation, there is a verification process where files may have to be turned back for other corrections or for trainers to cover certain gaps. All the processes need to be met and covered before certificates can be issued, which comes after applications to the SETA for accreditation. It is not a process that can be covered in a short period of time.

Penreach also offers NQF level 4, over a period of a year accredited by the ETDPSETA. After completing the one-year period of training there are about six months where there is a verification and redo process to ensure that learners are all competent. Because the process also involves ETDPSETA, it means they also have to respond first, which might cause delays as ETDPSETA is also going through a lot of changes. Colleagues from Resource and Training Organisations (RTOs) know that the SETA has introduced newly developed systems which then also have an impact on the completion and the issuing of certificates. So it's mainly or entirely dependent on the parties and most importantly, the practitioners themselves making sure that all their Portfolios of Evidence (POEs) are in order and that they have submitted the required work.

**Q.** What do you come across, as an ECD practitioner, or perhaps, as a centre manager, are there any implications for you, in terms of support, what is available from the DBE?

Sizakele - The policy is that one must hire a qualified practitioner with NQF level 4 or 5, however one would find practitioners with an NQF level 4 who do not know how to handle children. Some cannot even categorise them into babies versus toddlers. Sizakele said she sometimes offers them space to do practical work, where she gets to see how they implement the theory but the theory is also limited at times. Centres find that they have to train practitioners from the ground up.

Penreach trains practitioners that are already on the field, making sure that they at least have a minimum qualification as most have joined the sector without any qualification. The aim for Penreach is to try and bridge that gap. There are instances where you find that a person does training but there is no practical work done, and if done it is very minimal. Exposure is crucial because if one is not exposed to working with children, it becomes a difficult thing to handle when they actually have to start working in an ECD centre. Practical work gives people the opportunity to work with children and if they find that it might not be their niche they then have the opportunity to pull out. When enrolling, one must be prepared to volunteer in an ECD centre if they are not already working in one. Penreach does have ECD centres that they work with where they can refer practitioners for practical training.

*I would like to advise centre managers not to appoint people who do not have love for the children because they will not offer the best service to their centres.*

## COMMENTS

ECD centre managers should also keep in mind that some people might still be acquiring their qualification and lack the knowledge and understanding. The role of RTOs is to make sure that by the time a person is qualified they understand what it is like to work with children.

Centre managers need to make a distinction between qualification and skills development, where a person could go for maybe a day or five. They cannot put the two on par and expect the same standards. Generally, NQF level 4 and 5 would take longer and the amount of information might differ as well. Managers need to take that into consideration when conducting interviews.

It is important that all ECD local forums are known to the DBE so that no one misses any updates and information as this is where information regarding the sector mostly gets disseminated.



## UPDATES FROM THE FLOOR

- Ntataise has started a caregiver learning through play programme. It aims to assist caregivers or parents in promoting parental involvement in children's learning. It focuses on parents that have children that are under seven years old.
- Penreach will be celebrating National Science week in August. Where there will be different communities coming together to share on the different activities that can be done in the ECD space around science.
- If you have a topic that you would like to be discussed at the next MP CoP, email Thandeka at [thandeka@bridge.org.za](mailto:thandeka@bridge.org.za) or Modupi at [mmazibuko@penreach.co.za](mailto:mmazibuko@penreach.co.za).



## CLOSE OUT

Thandeka closed off the meeting by thanking the DBE, RTOs and the ECD practitioners for making the time to join the CoP and asked whether they had any topics that they would like to have a discussion on in the next meeting or any other developments taking place in the ECD space worth sharing. She also announced that the next CoP will be the last one for 2022 and will be held on 22 September 2022.

## LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name & Surname	Organisation
Abinah Nkobane	Tfutfuka Mhaule
Agatha Mohlala	
Annalie Pearce	
Beauty Mohlala	
Bonga Masina	Ntataise Lowveld
Cynthia Nkosi	
Daniel Mdluli	Penreach
Guida Steyn	Ehlanzeni District

Jabulile Dumazile	
Jeffrey Nkosi	
Kerison Munyorwi	The Stars Preschool
Thembeni Khoza	
Lindokuhle Skhosana	
Lenda Ngwenyama	Inhlakanipho pre-creche
Modupi Mazibuko	Penreach
Nomathemba Mngomezulu	DoE Ehlanzeni District
Patricia Maphungela	Ehlanzeni District
Paulina Mokoena	Isithuthukile Trust
Portia Mtshali	Department of Education Ehlanzeni
Portia Ngwenya	JP ACADEMY DAY CARE CENTER
Queeneth Mkhabela	Kayise stimulation centre
Samaria Mthimunye	
Shirley Nkuna	Ntataise Lowveld
Sizakele Mbebe	FutureNow Kidz Academy
Sue Mushwana	Penreach
Susan Horst	Cslt, Singita Lowveld Trust
Thandi Mdaka	Cotlands
Thembi Mabuza	Department of Education
Thulile Makofane	Penreach
Xola Ngomane	

The CoP is reminded of BRIDGE's knowledge management role. All meetings, presentations and discussions are captured and shared on BRIDGE's Knowledge Hub, as are any other specific knowledge products relevant to ECD. [Here](#) is the link to this.