

Mpumalanga Early Childhood Development (ECD) Community of Practice (CoP)

Meeting Highlights 22 September 2022

Meeting held Online on Zoom.US



SCENE SETTING

Modupi Mazibuko, Mpumalanga (MP) Community of Practice (CoP) facilitator and Programme Manager at Penreach under Early Childhood Development (ECD) Continuous Professional Development, welcomed participants to the 3rd MP CoP, which provides a platform for the province to share best practices, knowledge, and exchange ideas on ECD-related matters. The CoP investigated the sustainability of ECD centres by looking into alternative ways of generating income in response to the difficulty in obtaining government subsidies.



PRESENTATION: Lyndsey Petro & Kulupa Mkindlanyana – GROW Educare Centres - The business of ECD (tools to grow your preschool)

[Click here](#) to access Lyndsey & Kulupa's full presentation

Lyndsey Petro (Head of Partnerships, driving GROW's ecosystem strategy) and Kulupa Mkindlanyana, Programme Manager, managing the ECD Business and Educational Development Support in Gauteng and Mpumalanga province, spoke about how practitioners can view their ECD centres as social enterprises addressing social problems by understanding business practices in order to run sustainable centres using the organisations five-star ECD programme.

GROW Educare Centres is a non-profit social enterprise started in 2014, with a vision to bring five star early learning to every neighbourhood in South Africa to unlock human potential, from the teacher to the child. GROW does this by equipping and connecting ECD businesses with what they need to run sustainably, while also providing quality learning for children.

What is it that GROW offers:

1. Digital tools
 - Free technology, tools and training
2. Quality education programme
 - GROW daily curriculum, classroom kit and mentoring that goes with educational toys and resources aligned with the National Curriculum Framework (NCF)
3. ECD finance

- Affordable loan financing for the Quality Education Programme to make it easily accessible to the sector. GROW has partnered with one of the financial providers in the country in order to make this possible

Lyndsey stated that it is our approach as change agents and champions for children in ECD centres that will make a difference.



Having a head for business when running an ECD centre can sometimes feel uncomfortable and tricky as we often think about the person who starts a small business as an entrepreneur.

An entrepreneur is someone who identifies a **need**,

- launches a business to **meet** those needs
- takes on **risk** and is **responsible** for the business, and
- provides **opportunity** for change and progress in economic life

ECD centre managers are entrepreneurs in that they have identified a need, by seeing children in the community who need education services, those who have child protection and nutrition issues etc. Opportunities are also provided by ECD centres by employing people and engaging the community.

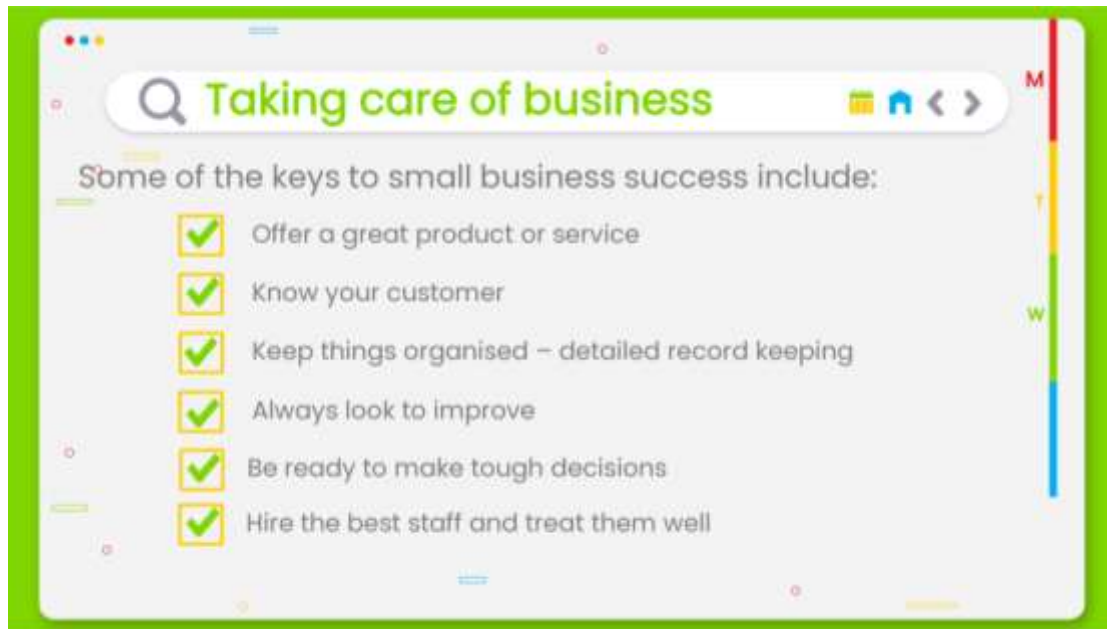
Centre managers must intentionally begin to view their centres as businesses to strive for long-term viability. This change in mind-set in turn changes the way that the sector thinks about success. Success consequently becomes more about having the appropriate child to staff ratio than it is about how many children a centre has. Employing business principles for good by combining business with social impact and considering where profit and purpose intersect with the main goal of effecting positive change.

Do business principles make sense for ECD centres? (example from GROW)

Little Angels Daycare Centre in Mpumalanga was founded with the intention of assisting the community by not charging school fees. This meant that the centre relied on government subsidy and donations for operational costs. As time went on the centre manager realised that they were not getting as many donations as they thought they would and there was also a delay in getting the subsidy. The solution was to start charging school fees, which was R150 per child. Only 20 of the 50 children enrolled paid school fees. As a result, the centre had to let go of staff, leaving one teacher to tend to 50 children.

ECD centres need to start thinking, about:

- Whether they are doing what is best for children?
- Are they able to deliver the quality and the impact that is needed? and
- Whether in the long term they can sustain decisions made, if not, then make another one.



As an ECD centre, it is critical to conduct research rather than making assumptions. To remember that people place value on quality and that it is not always about the money; but rather making a difference.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Can you see how your ECD centre functions as a small business? And are the challenges discussed relatable?

A. When looking at profit versus purpose, it appears that ECD centre managers are doing well with the purpose part, which is to nurture and support children, but quality becomes a challenge due to insufficient funding and financing. This is because quality service requires quality materials, which the

centres do not have access to. As a consequence, centre managers do not consider their centres to be small businesses at this time.

Q. Does the GROW app assist practitioners with child assessments?

A. Yes, the app has learner and teacher assessments. Learner assessments were developed with the teacher in mind and have different age groups that can be assessed coupled with activities as the environment needs to enable learning through play. Assessments are more like an observation book, with guidelines, planning and preparation to see whether a child is on track, developing or falling behind. What is interesting is that teachers can engage parents and share the progress report with them.

The teacher assessment tools help the owner to assess teachers in order to see where they are in terms of professional development and how they deliver lessons. Professional development plan trainings are also available on the app.

Q. Where does GROW Educare operate in Mpumalanga?

A. GROW has two schools in Hazyview, Mpumalanga. All communication and mentoring is done online, after purchasing the GROW quality education programme. The schools use the app and do the training too. Currently, GROW is looking for partners to collaborate with in areas where the organisation does not have presence.

ECD Managers and practitioners (experience)

Q. What are the challenges in implementing business practices or business principles in ECD centres?

A. Centres are able to charge a certain amount based on the affordability in that community, which sometimes compromises on quality as it causes limitations in terms of being innovative, and expanding to other opportunities. This affects the way in which the centres operates. There appears to be a request from DBE that ECD centres not charge a fee for their services to children and communities, which is one of the frustrations expressed by ECD managers and practitioners.



PLENARY DISCUSSION

The issue is more about sustainability over profit. It is about making those tough decisions, where centres ask themselves whether it is better to still be open in five years' time, or to have to close down because they took on too many children who could not afford fees, in turn making their centres unsustainable. This means that a centre needs to understand what their budget is, knowing whether parts of the budget would be reliant on subsidies or donations. Everything needs to be tracked to eliminate making assumptions, so the first step could be to understand exactly what their costs are. The participants expressed the need for receiving a basic understanding of business in order to transform their ECD centres to be profitable in providing quality services to children. The participants also raised concerns regarding the competition amongst themselves instead of seeing opportunity to

collaborate and cooperate with each other as one of the limiting factors in building a strong network of ECD centres within the respective communities.

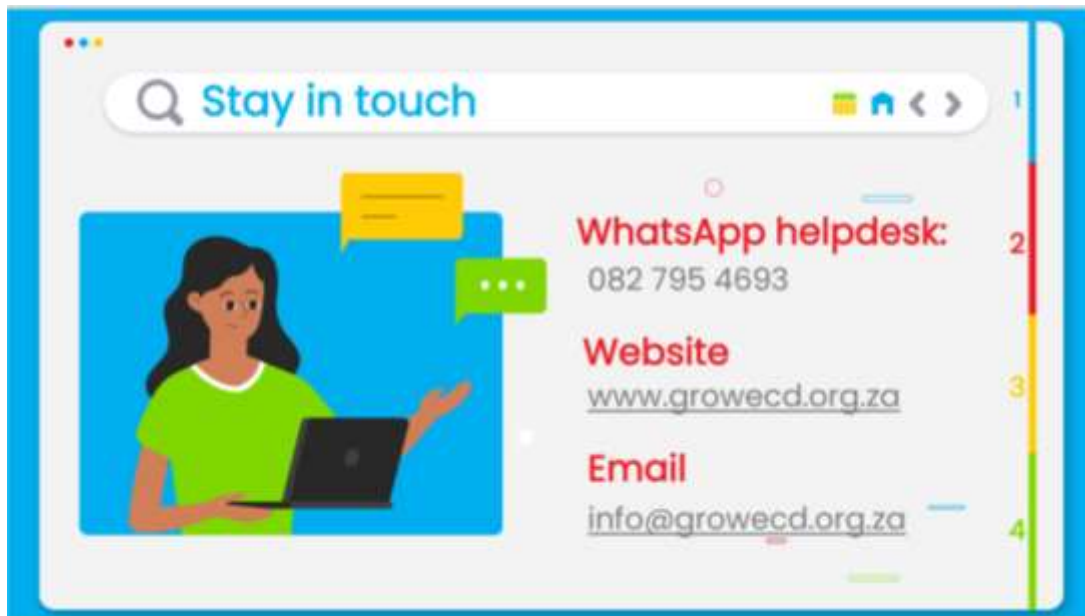


GROW has standard generic digital tools that ECD centres can use in their journey for continuous development, to improve the quality of centres and apply sustainable business principles.

- One of these tools is the mobile app for owners (giraffe) which is a one stop centre management that links the teacher (meerkat) and parent app. The app allows one to do admin, manage enrolments, take daily attendance and documents relevant to the centre like learner enrolment forms. The owner has the most access and makes sure that the teacher and parent are connected.
- Another tool is the online training centre, where teachers can develop themselves and also get ideas on how to use what they currently have while on the journey of getting the resources they need. The training centre looks at professional development in that it provides courses on budgeting, business skills, life skills and parenting skills courses in order for teachers to be able to offer quality education.
- There is also a resource centre with tools, templates, and downloads where one can get policies, tools for marketing your centre, and how to make your centre visible on Google Maps for free. These are not necessarily GROW tools, some are pulled from partners across the sector e.g. resources from Na’ibali, Book Dash etc. If you are thinking of getting registered, the app also has a checklist that is the same as the one from the Department of Basic Education (DBE) that allows one to see how they can go about getting whether it be Bronze, Silver and Gold status. It also checks how far you are in the registration process in order to prepare.
- Lastly, there is a virtual help desk that allows you to send a message with whatever help you might need regarding the app.

The idea is that these tools are practical, free, easy to access, in one place, make sense, easy to use and help practitioners do their job better.

To learn more about GROW:



To conclude, Lyndsey encouraged participants to download the app and find at least one business resource that they believe will be useful in taking those small steps toward sustainability. For any questions, contact GROW via email at info@growecd.org.za or WhatsApp the helpdesk at 082 795 4693.



UPDATES FROM BRIDGE

- BRIDGE will be hosting an Interprovincial CoP, bringing together the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and Kwa-Zulu Natal CoP. Date and time to be confirmed.
- There are also a few National ECD CoPs left for 2022.



CHECK OUT

To close off the session Thandeka reiterated that it is important that ECD centres start thinking about their sustainability as it is quite difficult for them to cope, particularly when it comes to making money because parents do not pay school fees, especially in rural communities.

Useful Resources Shared

Link to GROW app:

https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=za.org.growecd.giraffe&hl=en_ZA&gl=US

Resources shared during the CoP:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/u/0/folders/1pICm3QtPFvkC4BMJpfxH3GN0hIFZMR0d>



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

First Name	Last Name	Organisation
Abinah	Nkobane	Tfutfuka Mhaule
Andile	Lekhuleni	Sibonelo Day Care Organisation
Angel	Mashaba	Siyathuthuka Pre & Creche
Angeline		
Annah	Motshweqe	Mahube Day & Aftercare Centre
Busisiwe	Nkuna	Prettymoon Pre School
Constance	Mkhatshwa	Siphokuhle Pre-School
CS	Mathabela	Let's Hope Together Creche
Daniel Menzi	Mdluli	Penreach
Dineo	Bhembe	Penreach
Dr Pat	Moodley	DoE
Elsie	Ndhlovu	Arise Educare Project
Esther	Sithole	Penreach
Esther	Mavimbela	Vulamehlo Pre-Creche
Eunice	Ngwenya	Elizabeth Mabena Care Centre
Fikile	Nkosi	DOE
Gladys	Milazi	Tswalopelo Day Care
Gladys	Motubatse	Fundzani Pre School
Glendre	Mhlanga	Simunye

Gloria	Makhubela	Vukuzenzele Day Care Centre
Hellen	Mazibuko	Nazarene Educare
Hlengiwe	Tsotetsi	Khethukuthula C
Jabulile	Dumazile	
Katlego	Sebae	Penreach
Khosi	Nkambule	BRIDGE
Klimny	Langa	Mdumsiseni Pre Creche
Kulupa	Mkindlanyana	GROW Educare Centres
Lindeni	Nkuna	Two Multicare Centre
Lindi	Mohlale	DOE-Ehlanzeni District
Lindiwe	Lekhuleni	Lula Care Centre
Lizah	Mhaule	Siphumalanga Day Care
Lucy	Nkosi	Sitfokotile Pre-Creche
Lyndsey	Petro	GROW Educare Centres
Maria	Zitha	Inhlakanipho Pre Creche
Mary	Mabiya	Bukhonabenkosi
Melidah	Malapane	Mamaland Day Care
Mittu		
Modupi	Mazibuko	Penreach
Mpho	Mnisi	
Neo	Mokoena	Respect Pre Creche
Nhlanhla	Masilela	Penreach
Nkululeko	Nkosi	Penreach
Nobukhosi	Kgwedi	Siphosethu Pre-School & Creche
Nokuzola	Soto	Nomusa Day Care Center
Nolundi	Mkhatshwa	Siyanda Pre School
Nondumiso	Chibi	Do More Foundation
Nontobeko	Sylvia	
Nontokozo	Mabuza	Phola Pre-School
Nothando	Fakude	
Nyiko	Baloyi	Entokozweni Day Care Centre
Patricia	Mashiloane	Kidicol Pre School
Paulina	Mokoena	Isithuthukile Trust
Phumla		Smart Start
Poppy	Sigudla	Melesi Day Care & After Care

Pretty	Nkuna	Ukukhanya Edu-Care
Promise	Sindane	Sivikelekile Pre School
Prudence	Mathebula	Do More Foundation
Reboea	Mpangane	Luthando Day Care
Reginah	Maholi	Siphumelele Creche
Samson	Silombo	Phakamani Educare Centre
Sibongile	Lubisi	Sinozwelo Pre School
Sinavivian	Lubisi	Thembaletu Pre School
Sindisiwe	Mokoena	Sihlelekile Manzini Day Care
Sue	Mushwana	Penreach
Suzan	Ndlovu	Kidicol Pre School
Telling	Marule	Eyethu Day Care
Thabi	Mondlane	Mthunzini Day Care Centre
Thandeka	Rantsi	BRIDGE
Thandeka	Watia	Sibusise Educare
Thandi	Mdaka	Cotlands
Thautha	Mndawe	Mganduzweni Pre-Creche
Thembi	Mabuza	DOE
Thembisile	Manzini	Khayaletu
Thobile	Ngomane	El Shaddai DayCare
Thulile	Makofane	Penreach
Tirelo	Molobela	Penreach
Virginia	Selala	Point of Grace Centre
Zanele	Ngomane	Lustandvo Pre-School
Zodwa	Mashaba	Penreach