

Western Cape Early Childhood Development (ECD) Community of Practice (CoP)

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS 25 August 2022

Meeting held Online on Zoom.US



SCENE SETTING

Kayin Scholtz, DG Murray Trust (DGMT ECD Resource Hub Manager), facilitated the 3rd and final Western Cape Early Childhood Development (ECD) Community of Practice (CoP) for 2022. The CoP focused on Human Resource Development (HRD) and how to leverage the ETDP SETA; it also looked at DGMT's evolving resource hub and Data Innovators' Impact Board, as technology tools make up part of key resources for HRD.



PRESENTATION: Shakira Maharaj, SETA opportunities

Shakira Maharaj, Director for Systems Design and Development at Ilifa Labantwana, discussed some of the research that was completed at the end of 2021 by Ilifa Labantwana, led by Doctor Jessica Ronaasen, on some key questions surrounding the Education training and Development Sector Education and Training Authority (ETDP SETA) and how it can be leveraged in support of the ECD sector. The research looked at the current state of SETA funding for ECD, the policy framework for grant allocations, particularly discretionary grants, and how policy advocates for sector support, as well as the gaps in existing policy and documentation.

*To access
Shakira's full
presentation,
[click here](#)*

Shakira gave a snapshot of the sector, dating back to the 2014 audit, where over 40% of practitioners and assistant practitioners had an education level below grade 12 (ECD Audit, 2014) and over half of ECD practitioners in fully registered centres had no ECD certificate (51%). She also reflected on the recent ECD census data, which identified over 42,000 programmes, 60% of which are unregistered. It was found that out of nearly 200 000 practitioners almost 50% did not have an NQF level 4 and close to 22% had no relevant qualification at all. However, this does not mean that the sector is ineffective.



According to the Thrive by Five Index out of all children accessing early learning programmes, a minority are thriving

by the age of five.

The ECD audit also revealed that the sector is not particularly young, with the majority of practitioners being between the ages of 30 and 40. The sector as a whole has a high turnover rate and low levels of

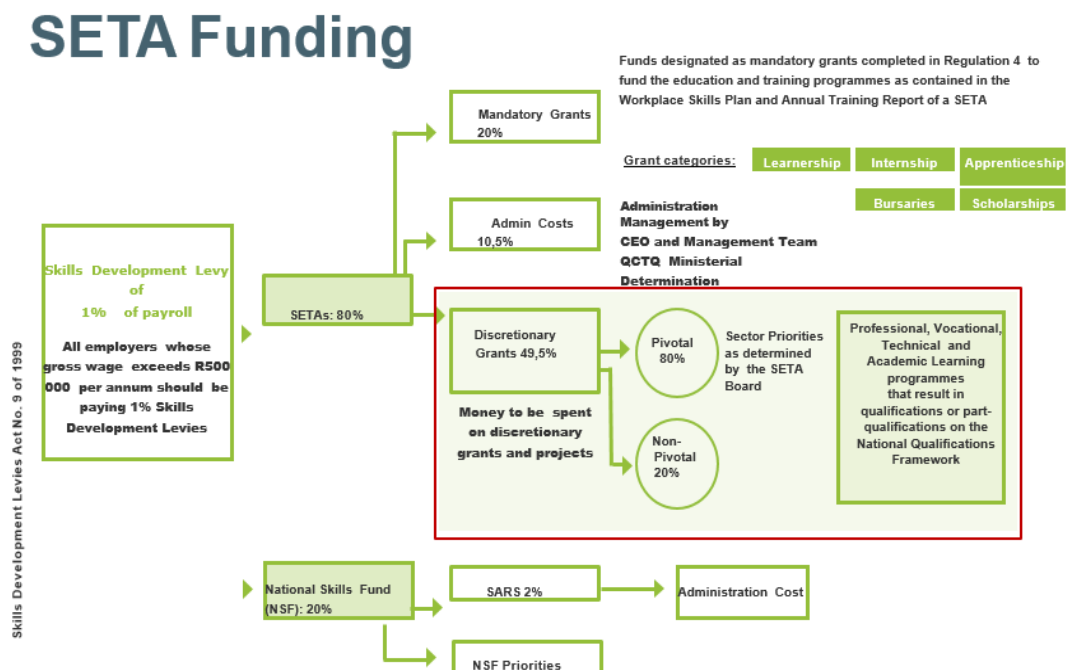
remuneration. As a result, there is little incentive for practitioners, particularly those who work with low-income children, to enrol in high-level NQF qualifications.

As a result, emphasis in the short term should be placed on strengthening the delivery of qualifications below level 4 and considering the role of short skills programmes (accredited and unaccredited). This is to accommodate those without formal qualifications, because it is unlikely that there will be enough accredited curricula and trainers in the short term to upskill the existing sector in the way that is required. This is important to include in the picture of how the sector intends to improve skills.

According to Shakira, research shows that service training and continuing professional development make a difference in terms of child outcomes. The principle of leveraging experience also appears to be important. Whilst the sector is vulnerable and income poor, the SETA could add value where the state already provides wage support, such as Community Works Programmes (CWP).

According to the SETA's sector skills plan (SSP) and policies, the mandate is to collect and distribute the skills development levy. The SSP is consistent with the SETA's five-year strategic plan, which outlines high-level goals and strategic objectives. The SSP is tasked with auditing the sector's needs, with the SETA's priority investment areas determined by analysing demand and supply. This is an important area for the sector to engage with the SETA and the SETA's research chair who develops the skills plan to ensure that it is appropriate and rooted in the context of the sector's needs.

The following slide is how the SETA's funding moves starting from the collection of the Skills Development Levy:



Regarding SETA funding the SETA renders discretionary grants into two categories:

- One bucket being for pivotal programmes. These are professional, vocational, technical, and academic learning programmes that lead to NQF qualifications or part-qualifications.
- The other is non-pivotal programme funding and these help fulfil the SETA's mandate. They do not always have to result in a formal or partial qualification.

Non-pivotal grant funding can be used for other purposes such as career workshops and imbizos. The discretionary grant appears to have a broad scope, as long as it supports the priorities outlined in the SSP and the strategic plan which is at the discretion of the SETA Chair.

Channels for engagement:

The ETDP SETA chambers are sub-sectors of the broader SETA and are constituted by chamber committees who are made up of key industry players. The ETDP SETA's ECD and Youth Chamber are critical for sector consultation and for influencing areas like the SSP.

Sector forums and networks must clearly understand the SSP, so that they may effectively apply for accreditation and funding in line with its objectives. Networks can be capacitated and funded to support and train their constituents to apply for accreditation and funding.

The SETA is in a complex position in relation to the ECD sector, as the sector is made up of tiny enterprises and NPO's. The SETA, like many government agencies and departments, lack the numerous mechanisms required to engage with such informality and diversity. As a result, thinking about the mechanisms that could be used to assist the SETA in engaging with the sector, such as forums that already exist, like NECDA, need to be considered.



PRESENTATION: Monica Stach, ETDP SETA challenges and opportunities

To access Monica's full presentation, [click here](#)

Monica Stach, Chairperson of the National Early Childhood Development Alliance (NECDA) shared some viewpoints from NECDA around the ETDP SETA with CoP participants. NECDA is a national network of about 115 ECD resource and training organisations (RTOs) represented across all provinces in the country. The RTOs offer accredited qualifications and non-accredited skills training programmes for ECD practitioners.

According to Monica, NECDA is looking for a collaborative and consultative partnership with the SETA. This is because resource and training providers have very limited access and communication to critical information, as well as opportunities to contribute to the ECD sector skills plan.

The organisation wants to clarify the critical role that the RTOs should play in the development of ECD skills and offer recommendations on how it can be a major player in the landscape. NECDA believes

that the sector should rally around three important elements in relation to conversations with the SETA:

1. Career pathing, specifically for those that are not necessarily going to obtain a qualification.
2. An agile credentialing system including, the articulation of qualifications, to figure out how short courses would eventually articulate into a qualification.
3. The recognition of prior learning (RPL).

The organisation is busy readying itself to create a subcommittee that can start working on these structures, by inviting experts to help get position papers in place and champion important issues in the sector.

Monica asserts that the ECD sector SSP appears to be a foreign concept that does not represent the entire ECD workforce. It is therefore critical that the sector broaden its thinking about who should be included in the ECD workforce skills development plan. The sector must be aware that professionalisation through qualifications is not the only path to skill development.

If NECDA is to create an agile credentialing system for the cohort of ECD practitioners who will never obtain the ECD level four qualification, it would be a curriculum curated by NEDCA and possibly endorsed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE), South African Council of Educators (SACE), or Universities. This is critical because the vast majority of children are sitting in environments where they are served by practitioners who may never obtain a qualification-which is an opportunity to improve quality.

The members represented by NECDA have the expertise to support skills development, and can and should form part of the cohort of stakeholders who develop continued professional courses that think through how to support work integrated learning (WIL), through the network's and forums that already exist. It is a great opportunity to ensure that quality integrated learning happens as the organisation is moving towards launching the QCTO qualification, leveraging the ability to do on site mentoring and support.

There are still challenges if you are a service provider, with having to upload records on the National Learner Record Database because there is uncertainty around who is responsible for it between the South Africans Quality Authority's (SAQA), the ETDP SETA and service providers. What is certain is that there are no accurate statistics on qualified ECD practitioners, with many NECDA members contesting the number's currently being presented. This is a big body of work if the sector wants to have adequate HR planning for the future and another area of collaboration with the SETA and the sector.

The SSP should be widely consulted on, and financial resources made available to strengthen the capacity of curriculum developers, facilitators, and workplace mentors who provide ECD workforce training. To do justice to training and skill development within the ECD sector, NECDA is looking at those responsible for providing training, with some capacity building mechanism. Part of the strategic

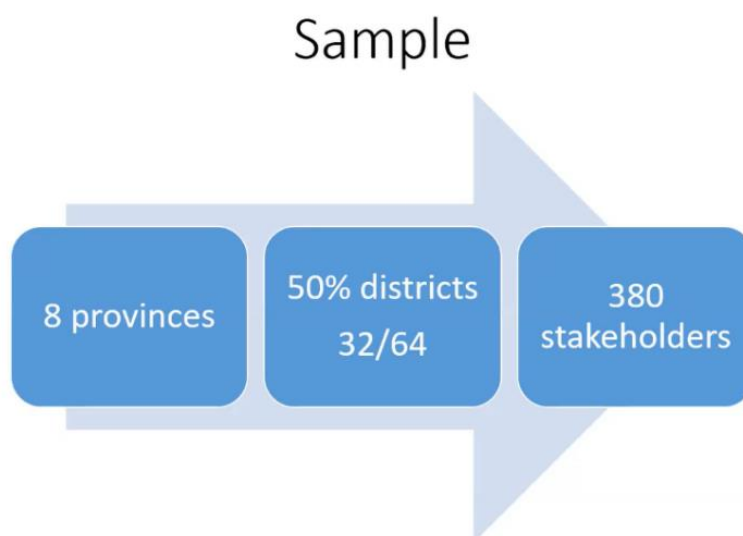
plans for NECDA is to also launch a skills audit, where the organisation can understand what the needs of the sector are, which hopefully can feed into the ECD sector skills plan for 2023.

Because training providers and those working in the sector recognise the value of online learning, the ETDP SETA ECD SSP should prepare training providers to provide quality online learning as a mechanism to bridge the digital divide exacerbated by Covid-19. This is another scope and opportunity that the SETA should investigate and incorporate into the SSP. Lastly, unlocking funding from the ETDP SETA to finance skills development of the ECD workforce is a critical issue various stakeholders need to collectively champion and lobby for.



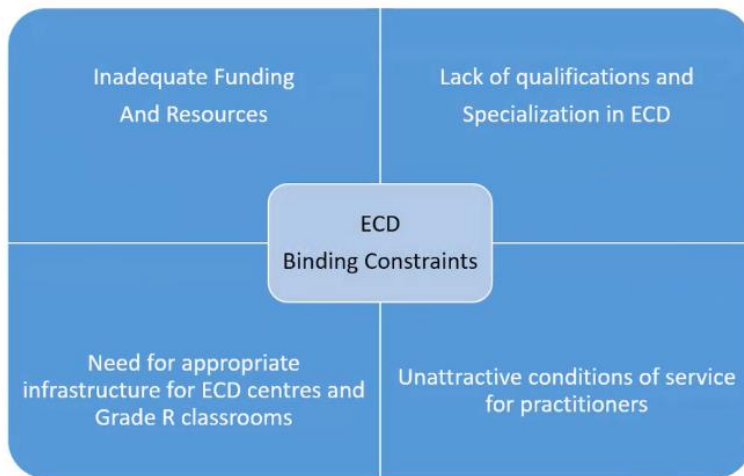
PRESENTATION: Rosemary Wildsmith-Cromarty, ETDP SETA Chair findings and recommendations from 2015 to 2018

Professor Rosemary Wildsmith-Cromarty spoke about her experiences as an ex-ETDP SETA chair from 2015 to 2018. At the time, the goal for the SETA was to identify critical skills that were in short supply for the SSP. The emphasis was on; developing the capacity of postgraduate students (master's students and PhD students), developing collaborations between the government, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), RTOs, higher education institutions (HEIs), and teachers/practitioners. This would be achieved by reaching out to stakeholders, conducting research, and ensuring quality in ECCE studies, literacy, and science education.



Gauteng was the only province that the SETA Chair did not get to cover in the research. The sample included national, provincial and regional government, local municipalities, and then drilled down to ECD centres, practitioners, social workers and anybody involved in ECD within the districts covered.

Binding Constraints



The results corresponded with the binding constraints in education coined by Servaas van der Berg from the Research policy unit at the University of Stellenbosch.

What was found in terms of educational affordances was that there was very little access to early stimulation and socialisation. Coupled by a bad practitioner to child ratio, where ECD centres had far too many children with quality not uniformly provided. To this day, many

practitioners and ECD centres throughout the country are child minders and not child stimulators.

Government officials (DBE & DSD) lack adequate resources to conduct monitoring and evaluation for much needed centre support. NGOs are attempting to fill this gap as they are the ones delivering services and reaching the people that the sector needs to reach, but their efforts are small scale, with some operating across provinces. The WC has the greatest vitality in terms of NGO support for ECD and the best collaborative models.

NGO intervention: ECD Ecosystem

Non- Centre-based

- Home visiting programme focusing on the first 1000 days for mothers and children 0 – 2 yrs. It is called the Family Community Motivator Programme (ELRU)
- Early Learning Playgroups (ELP) programme for children 3 – 5 yrs (Cotlands & Lima). Employees of the Department of Cooperative Governance are trained as facilitators by NGOs
- Multi-media campaign for parent and caregiver education in ECD using radio, billboards & mobiles (Ilifa Labantwana)

Centre-based

- Centre enrichment through training of practitioners and facilitators, provision of resources, running leadership and financial management courses for centre owners and managers (Ntataise; Grassroots)
- Running parenting programmes focused on early cognitive stimulation (True North)
- Establishing ECD hubs in communities as meeting places for ELPs and mobile toy libraries, training spaces for ECD practitioners, home visitors and playgroup facilitators (Ntataise; Cotlands)

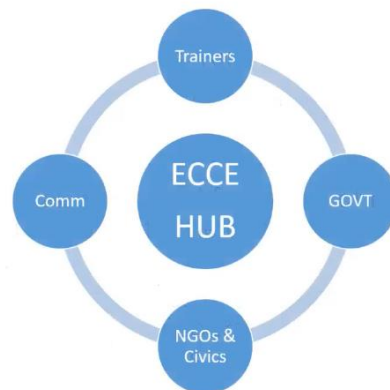
ECD centres at this point in the country need to be contextually based, with NGOs and RTO's working together in both the centre and non-centre based contexts.

Recommendations:

- Stakeholders need to build systems from the bottom up collaboratively
- NGOs and communities need government support to help them work together to build a contextually relevant sector and localised ECD services for their communities

- Government support is also required for teams of mobile ECD facilitators and practitioners who take ECD to communities in the form of early learning playgroups.
- The sector needs a comprehensive database of accredited training providers with the following information: Type of course, duration, frequency, cost, articulation of qualifications, mode of delivery and location. This needs to be audited continuously.

A collaborative, systems-oriented model



The snippet on the left is what the collaborative systems-oriented model would look like, where community colleges will be a great help in facilitating training in local areas and community ECD forums etc. with the

government(particularly local government) involved throughout the system.



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. Which SETA does 1st Aid now sit?

A. The HWSETA and the Department of Labour (Jessica Ronnasen)

Q. What defines a network?

A. The SETA seems to liken the idea to what the trade unions have done successfully in being able to combine and coordinate multiple organisations and businesses under one trade umbrella. They call them constituencies, where forums or gatherings of organisations tend to be the preferred way of engaging with a sector. It is however going to take an organised strategy in order to get enough attention for the SETA to be able to fund and support this idea.

Q. What is the experience with the SETA in the Western Cape? Are they active?

A. The SETA funding in the Western Cape is all channelled through the TVET colleges, which is another challenge as the government tends to see TVET colleges as proper training providers for ECD qualifications. Even though it is the NGO's who provide what is critically important for quality, which is the ongoing monitoring and support at site level.

Q. Where are there curricular gaps because it seems a lot of the gaps are in terms of being accredited as a training provider?

A. NECDA produced a set of QCTO material, which is aligned to the QCTO qualification for ECD practitioners with the goal of getting members accredited. Organisations such as NECDA can play a vital role in the capacitation of its members to actually get accreditation. Once the sector has settled on an HR strategy, the DBE should take the lead and galvanize everything into a costed and comprehensive plan and various stakeholders in determining what role they can play. However, an

interesting exercise such as an audit will be required to fill the curricular gaps. The mechanism that is missing is who will endorse the start of a pathway below level 4.

Q. How real is the opportunity of community colleges, because on paper, there should be many of them? And they should be the ones offering below level 4 training, but in practice, it doesn't seem like they are very active. Is that true or not true?

A. Reports that are uncomfortable for government to take up get lost. Regarding community colleges, the SETA had commissioned Sandra Bland to do some research for at least two years, but there is no clear indication on what happened to her report.



COMMENTS

'The ETDP SETA does not attract a lot of funding; a lot of skills development levies are supposed to come from government who don't pay and not many businesses contribute to the SETAs either. The sector needs collaborative or stakeholders involved in developing an ECD HR strategy and plan that everybody commits to including the SETA, because trying with the SETA's alone is not enough and calls for a unified sector. And one of the reasons why the SETA has been able to play off the various stakeholders for so many years is because of the fragmentation and division within the sector.'	'We urgently need another audit of ECD RTOs; their capacity; areas of work; what training and support they are offering, which was last done in 2013 for Ilifa Labantwana.'	'In 2018, the DBE put together an HR strategy for ECD, but don't know how operationalised that is. It does seem that the DBE may be an appropriate stakeholder and seem to have a seat on the ETDP SETA board and in a sense can leverage the SETA. Having an ECD HR strategy with DBE buy in will be a helpful galvanizing document. Building from the existing strategy may be a helpful starting point.'	'It seems that some of the criteria that level four qualifications have are exclusionary, having to pass high level English or numeracy assessments seems to exclude a large number of people from graduating.'
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PRESENTATION: Kayin Scholtz, DGMT ECD Resource Hub opportunities for resourcing the ECD sector

To access Kayin's full presentation, [click here](#)

Kayin Scholtz, the facilitator of the WC ECD CoP, in his capacity as DGMT's ECD Resource Hub Manager took participants through the early thinking around what the ECD resource hub which the organisation is working on can and potentially might do. The session looked at getting input and suggestions from CoP participants.

To give some context on the consequences of the lack of resourcing, Kayin noted that a huge proportion of ELPs are unregistered and even more unsubsidized, with majority subsidised primarily

by caregiver fees. The mean fee per child in 2021 was up R509, which varies dramatically, with ELPs that serve the poorest quintiles charging around R200 to R300, whereas those serving wealthier quintiles charge over R1000 a month per child. This is a sign of broader South African inequality, with the majority of the effects of inequality felt by the poorest children. The Thrive by Five Index has highlighted that quintiles one to three have children with worse outcomes than children from quintile five.

ECD Practitioners have a wide variety of RTOs across the country which have significant information on registration, establishing ECD programmes, policies, procedures, financial management, how to provide quality ELPs, training programmes for learning practitioners, mentoring, as well as support for infrastructure development, and sometimes the distribution of early learning materials. However, this information is not necessarily globally available. Furthermore, provinces aren't always able to communicate with their target audience, this is seen with the function shift, where there has been a series of provincial dialogues, but a lot of rumour's from the ECD sector with practitioners not fully understanding what the consequences of the function shift are.

Using the ECD resource hub, DGMT seeks to expand the reach of RTOs in order to share existing resources with practitioners where resources have been gathered and appropriately developed for the target audience. Part of that would be potentially establishing provincial WhatsApp groups for ECD principals particularly as WhatsApp groups can be quite difficult to manage. And similarly, an SMS mailing list for practitioners. The organisation is aware that not everyone has access to a smartphone, internet and WhatsApp. Therefore, an SMS list, which shares information in bite sized chunks periodically throughout the year is something to look at in parallel with a minimum package that contains what is needed to successfully run a programme distributed by ECD forums. This package might contain reading materials and some toys as a starting point.

Many organisations have been working on similar things, so the hub would be drawing on existing knowledge on what would eventually be included in the minimum package.

DGMT is still in the early stages of what they would like to achieve with the resource hub and are seeking answers to the following questions:

- What resources and gaps for early learning programmes do you perceive in your work where you feel resource distribution is working especially well?
- Are there areas of work where you feel resource distribution is working especially well that we can learn from?
- Are there any opportunities to improve information or material resource distribution for early learning practitioners?
- What would be the things that you think would be worth investing in?



PLENARY DISCUSSION

CoP participant Pam Picken shared on a partnership between the Do More Foundation and NECDA that is working well called ‘repurpose for purpose’. The partnership was started by Innovation Edge alongside Barrows, where white space from advertising boards is used to print cognitive early learning materials that address, particularly the weak areas exposed by ELOM results. The cognitive early learning materials are printed free of charge, and distributed through NECDA members who then incorporate them into their training and support provision given to early learning programmes. The initiative is not a programme as and of itself, but goes into home learning and programmes, play groups, toy libraries or ECD centres. It is a partnership with business using business inventory, distribution and the NGO sector. The capacity for the business to print enough of these materials is a challenge thus far, but a strategy to get more printing companies involved is underway.

Another participant noted that principals and facilities in early childhood education are struggling with funding applications and require financial assistance. There are numerous issues with registering ECD facilities, and it appears that the process will continue indefinitely as it is now with the DBE. With the most important consideration being how to upskill principals to complete an application.

According to Thandeka Rantsi, there is a better opportunity of gaining access to ECD programmes through ECD forums tied to RTOs. BRIDGE has particularly struggled with reaching ECD practitioners and this has gotten worse through COVID as CoPs have gone online. What might help the sector is if there was some kind of database of ECD forums with someone overlooking it and updating it religiously, specifically information on chairpersons and deputy chairs of ECD forums, as they are the main points of access.

If anyone has any additional suggestions on the ECD resource hub, they can contact Kayin Scholtz at Kayin@dgmt.co.za.



SHOWCASE: Ayanda Mtanyana, Data Innovators Impact Board

To access Ayanda's full presentation, [click here](#)

Ayanda Mtanya the Co-founder and CEO of Data Innovators presented on a platform called the Impact Board, which is a solution primarily to support education interventions, tracking the work around digital development support as well as direct support. The presentation was to get feedback and initial thoughts from participants around the relevance of the tool in their context.

Data Innovators is an organisation that primarily works in the development sector from ECD all the way to youth and apprenticeship development programmes with the intention of helping create positive futures by pushing data boundaries. The organisation uses innovative evidence-based approaches to help organisations maximise the social impact of their programmes with solutions that help to take advantage of the opportunities that exist around data and technology. This is done

through developing fit for purpose digital data solutions that can make data more accessible for decision making either at the point of implementation or in monitoring and evaluation.

One of the lessons learned by the organisation while working on the ground with practitioners and participating in several school and teacher development efforts with implementing organisations and grant makers is that there is a significant challenge with evidence, which is due to a lack of credible evidence required to speak on the contributions that a specific programme is making.

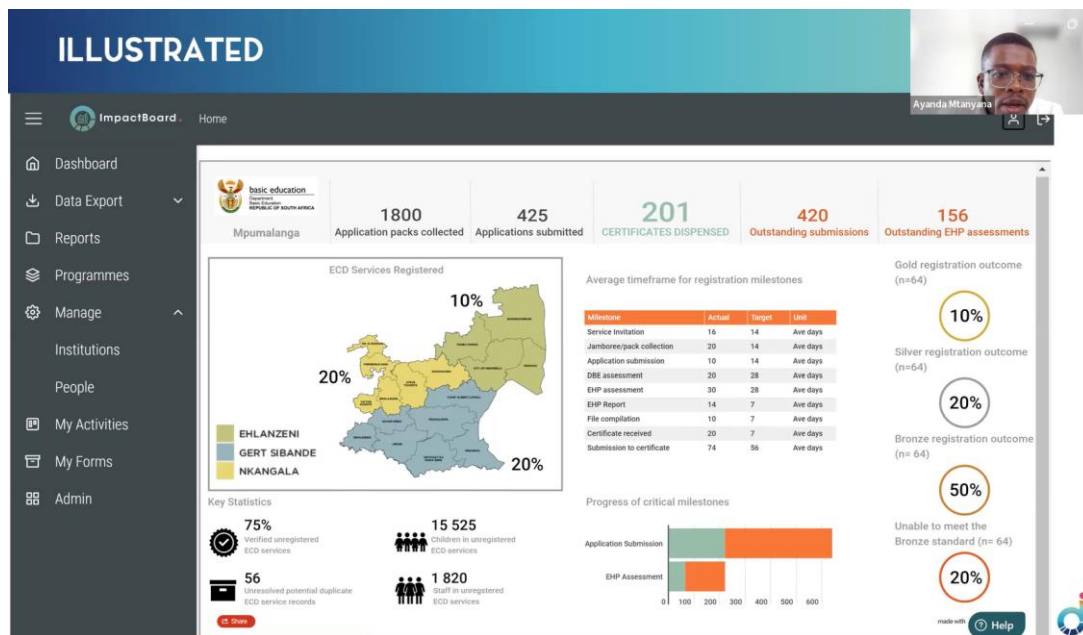
The biggest challenge is to consolidate information with ease so that time may be spent engaging content opposed to putting it together when it needs to be reported for stakeholder engagement. Practitioners also struggle to leverage data to improve what is happening on the ground, creating bottlenecks that are hindering implementation.

The Impact Board is about leveraging information to shift practice, influence the implementation of any given programme in order to maximise impact. Over the years, Data Innovators has tested and piloted paper based instruments, XL bass instrument and other mechanisms, and found that even though the context might be different, the needs of different organisations from a reporting perspective and implementation are not that different. The building blocks are quite similar, as data needs to be collected, stored and analysed. It needs to be reported and engaged, which follows the principles for digital development. Essentially, it is about the ability to design a system that can be reusable and customisable to meet requirements of many different stakeholders without having to reinvent the wheel, but building on what already exists.

The Impact Board helps bring together pieces that are relevant for having information, using it and making it accessible. It is a solution that allows organisations to use one app as a space to collect data, pulling data from other sources that exist and being able to leverage other dash boarding tools where data already exists. This results in centralised information which tells a comprehensive story of efforts to reflect what is transpiring from an implementation perspective whilst also generating results to help influence implementation.

Because of the context in which the sector operates where sometimes there's low connectivity, the solution allows one to capture information offline, sync it so that different stakeholders are able to deal with it no matter where they are geographically.

The Impact Board reduces the burden around tracking. Depending on a certain organisation, modules can be switched on and used to support that specific organisation's needs. The aim is to get key information from the dashboard at a glance.



Example of what the Impact Board looks like

The platform can report on programmes and upload those sitting on other document repositories. This is so that at any point in time, reports and documents that are related to specific work are accessible in one place. The platform has a ‘programmes area’ that defines your work and activities where an organisation can upload their theory of change, and capture indicators that need to be met by having them tracked and reported on. This allows organisations to plan interventions accordingly.

The ‘form section’, captures and sets up any forms for data collection and reporting on any information that needs to be tracked and collected to name but a few functionalities of the platform.

Ayanda believes the platform might be of immense value to organisations that are primarily supporting training effort, whether they are providing accredited and non-accredited programmes. He closed off the session by asking participants how they think the Impact Board might be useful in their context?



QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Q. How does the app compare with some of the other apps that are available, for example the one that is currently under construction by DGMT, the Grow app, True north and so many others?

A. The need that the Impact Board is addressing is really around the organisations that are supporting ECD, ELPs, as well as schools to reflect on whether their support or interventions are making the intended difference. The other applications seem to help practitioners with access to information, plan their programmes and be able to set up stimulating programmes for children, and at the same time be able to do some of the administration around the ELPs.

The app ECD connect, which DGMT has been investing in, and the Grow app are resources essentially for practitioners, which do some data collection, which could go into a database, but don't necessarily have that reporting feature built in.

Q. Who was the app (Impact Board) commissioned for?

A. The dashboard used was not commissioned by government or any organisation. It was created as a dummy of what might be relevant to the sector, particularly what a dashboard would mean in the context of registration. It is a tool that developers and partners with organisations can use to report on their programmes.

For broader context, Data Innovators have supported Vangasali, as well as data during the districts work previously. So they have a lot of experience, both in the ECD sector and more generally, in education, which might be part of why the dataset looks very familiar to some participants.



UPDATES FROM BRIDGE AND THE FLOOR

- The Western Cape Vangasali project is currently on hold due to environmental health not able to allocate the number of children a facility may accommodate. Which is a requirement. WCED and SD ECD City of Cape Town are currently discussing the issue, with no feedback from WCED as yet.
- BRIDGE will be hosting an Interprovincial CoP, bringing together the Western Cape, Mpumalanga and Kwa-Zulu Natal provincial CoPs. Date and time to be confirmed
- There are also a few National ECD CoPs left for 2022.



CHECK OUT

Kayin closed off the session by explaining that the WC community of practice is an opportunity to learn from each other, do advocacy together, identify shared issues, problem solve and build on each other's expertise and not only about information provision, but being able to create work products that are valuable, as well as advocacy that really speaks to some of the shared challenges experienced in the sector.

He went on to thank participants for their time and emphasised the importance of coming together as a community to have these important discussions. The topic of how to leverage the ETDP SETA might be worth the community of practice trying to take forward, as there may be some work to be done in thinking through what might be helpful to contribute.

Useful Resources Shared

Presentation from the current ETDP SETA Chair: <https://bit.ly/3RELT0S>

Literature review with Innovation Edge on technology adoption:

https://drive.google.com/file/d/11CkQgucii13n5ED36PBao_GrNkXsRhHZ/view?usp=sharing

2021 ECD Census results report: <https://www.datafirst.uct.ac.za/dataportal/index.php/catalog/908>

Repurpose for Purpose: <https://domore.org.za/2021/06/29/shared-value-project-repurpose-for-purpose/>



LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

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Martin	Madale	Data innovators
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The CoP is reminded of BRIDGE's knowledge management role. All meetings, presentations and discussions are captured and shared on BRIDGE's Knowledge Hub. To view, follow this [link](#).