



PROJECT FOR INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

Building the PIECCE Collaboration Model

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GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CHE	Council for Higher Education
CoP	Community of Practice
DHET	Department of Higher Education and Training
ECCE	Early Childhood Care and Education
ECD	Early Childhood Development
ETDP SETA	Education and Training Development Practices, Sector Education Training Authority
EU	European Union
HEI	Higher Education Institution
KM	Knowledge Management
KP	Knowledge Product
NASCEE	National Association of Social Change Entities in Education
NATED	National Accredited Technical Diploma
NECDA	National ECD Alliance
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
PAR	Participatory Action Research
PIECECE	Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education
QCTO	Qualifications Council for Trades and Occupations
SAQA	South African Qualifications Authority
SARAECE	South African Research Association for Early Childhood Education
TEECEP	Teacher Education for ECCE
TLDCIP	Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme
TOC	Theory of Change
TVET	Technical and Vocational Education and Training
UNICEF	United Nations Children’s Fund
WIL	Work Integrated Learning

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The importance of collaboration in education projects is increasingly being recognised. Not only does collaboration between sectors and institutions help to ensure that project outputs are relevant for diverse contexts, but it also supports a move towards ‘common standards’ in education project outputs.

The Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education (PIECCE) was a three-year teacher education project aimed at producing a standardised programme framework for the delivery of early childhood care and education (ECCE) teacher qualifications. It was designed as a collaborative project between different players in this field, namely Higher Education Institutions (HEIs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and Technical and Vocational Training colleges (TVETs). One of the outputs of the project was a Collaboration Model for Programme Development, which is the focus of this report.

Section 1 describes PIECCE and its outputs, including the rationale for the collaborative nature of the programme, the scope of this collaboration, and the institutions and organisations which formed the consortium. Section 2 gives a brief background to some of the theoretical debates on collaborative interventions, drawing on prior research done in this area. Some of the collaborative features and typologies set out in collaboration literature are applied to various aspects of PIECCE. Section 3 outlines the theoretical orientations which shaped the collaboration processes for PIECCE. The central principle was the idea of explicit and structured reflection by the consortium on its own processes. The Collaboration Model would be built up by an iterative process of reflection at key points, through monitoring the effectiveness of collaborative processes, and through capturing key lessons learned throughout the project.

Sections 4, 5 and 6 go into the detail of these processes and lessons learned. Section 4 describes the various mechanisms used to promote and track internal collaboration processes. These ranged from knowledge management systems, to online tracking tools, to the capturing of outcomes of structured reflection sessions. It then goes on to describe the ways in which external collaboration was addressed, and how content knowledge and other learnings from the project were shared throughout the three-year period through the dissemination of knowledge products.

Section 5 is the heart of the report, in that it documents the lessons learned about collaboration from this project. The main finding is that effective collaboration is an explicit, intentional, time-consuming and defined process based on a number of key drivers. Collaboration needs to be planned and structured, and time and money must be allocated to reviewing processes so that they can be adapted for quality delivery. Section 5 describes a number of ‘collaboration enablers’ and ‘collaboration barriers’ identified in PIECCE, and extrapolates these into a generic guideline.

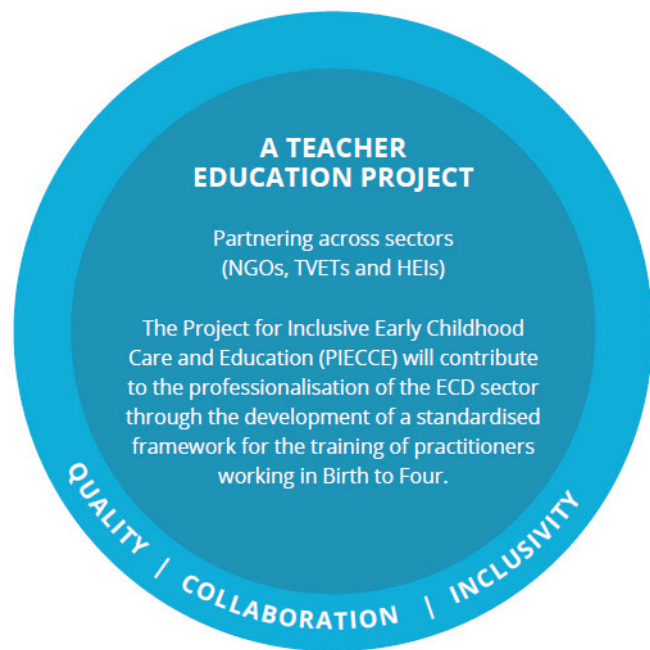
Section 6 sets out the Collaboration Model that has emerged from this process. It identifies some foundational components required in planning and designing a collaboration process, and gives an overview of the kinds of steps that could inform a collaboration framework. Such a framework could be adapted for use for any collaborative intervention.

SECTION 1: SETTING THE SCENE

1. What is PIECCE?

The Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care & Education (PIECCE) is a multi-stakeholder, collaborative project that aims to increase access to qualifications for ECCE educators working in Birth to Four. The objective is to produce a standardised Programme Framework for the ECCE Diploma and Bachelor of Education 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.

A number of higher education institutions and NGOs¹ collaborated on the project, which is funded by the European Union (EU), the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) and the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF).



Visit the PIECCE website to read more about the project, the partners and the knowledge products developed.
www.piecce.co.za

2. Rationale for the development of a Collaboration Model in PIECCE

One of the most compelling features of PIECCE is its innovative approach to the design of teacher education programmes through a process of collaboration between universities, NGOs and other relevant players in the sector. But what were the motivating factors behind this approach?

‘... much of the actual research, design and development work will be done collaboratively with consortium partners ... the building of collaborative partnerships will itself form an important part of the core research that the consortium will undertake.’

Extract from EU Annex A.2 Full Proposal, July 2015, page 4

¹ The original consortium partners were UNISA, the Centre for Social Development (CSD) Rhodes, BRIDGE, Saide, TREE, Ntataise and False Bay College. A further nine universities subsequently became part of the collaboration: the University of Pretoria, Witwatersrand University, University of Fort Hare, University of Free State, University of KwaZulu-Nata, Walter Sisulu University, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, North West University, and University of the Western Cape (joined in 2019).

Factor 1: Recognition of a diverse ECCE teacher education sector

The main thrust was the need to address fragmentation and lack of coherence in the ECCE teacher education field. Those involved in PIECCE recognised that there was little commonality in educator provision at different levels, both horizontally (between HEIs) and vertically (between NGO or TVET training providers, in terms of progression and access into higher education).

At the centre of quality provision of ECD services in support of South Africa's children is the ECCE practitioner. Those who work directly with children from Birth to Four (the mandate for the PIECCE diploma and degree outputs) range on a continuum from the untrained 'care-giver' to experienced practitioners who may be in possession of various certificates or qualifications. Historically there has been little articulation between the occupational and professional trajectories for ECD practitioners. Many who enter the field either have little or incomplete levels of formal schooling, or could not access higher education. Their training has been the domain of the NGO or not-for-profit providers, and of the TVET colleges. In the Higher Education band, there was no diploma or degree specifically tailored to address teacher education for those working in Birth to Four. It was this gap that PIECCE was designed to address.

The original four-member consortium (UNISA, *Saide*, BRIDGE, Rhodes CSD) did not, however, wish to confine its work simply to the development of a programme framework for university delivery. A key aim was to use this opportunity to foreground the need for coherence in ECCE teacher qualification pathways, so that those who entered the field with little formal certification could progress along a reasonably smooth professional trajectory. As noted in the original proposal:

Currently ECD practitioners for birth-4 do not have an opportunity to get qualifications beyond the Level 5 qualification in the occupational stream. This is because firstly, there are no accredited programmes in higher education for practitioners in birth-4, but secondly and importantly, most universities will not give entry, in many cases even for the new Level 6 Grade R Diploma, to practitioners who have a Level 5 or Level 4 even though policy allows for this. Access is about many things, but importantly about quality and articulation. Not only do we intend to design quality birth-4 programmes at Level 6 and Level 7 but we also intend to facilitate access by aligning these programmes as closely as possible with the existing and/or revised Level 5 qualification/s in the occupational sector. In addition, we hope to facilitate greater access by exploring ways of providing academic support modules to students, and making recommendations to the QCTO and NGOs for increasing the academic preparedness of Level 5 graduates through the Level 5 and Foundational Learning programmes. [Full Application to EU, July 2015]

Given this aim, collaboration and consultation was seen to embrace:

- NGOs: these have offered ECD teacher education training for many years and have done so through practical and innovative methods close to the communities that they serve. Certification traditionally has been linked to unit standards-based qualifications at NQF Levels 1, 4 and 5; to provider-based short course certificates; and more recently to emerging occupational qualifications.
- TVETs: these have been involved through offering Educare higher certificates and diplomas linked to NATED Report 191; through components of the National Certificate Vocational; and occupational certificates verified by ETDP SETA.

- HEIs: Public HEIs were being asked for the first time to offer ECD (0-4) programmes, but they also have a history of offering ECD components in their BEd and other programmes.

Bringing together these players offered a wide range of expertise in different contexts, which would in turn support the development of a blend of practical, theoretical, contextually appropriate and accessible programmes and support materials relevant to the communities they serve. It would also contribute to finding ways of aligning and articulating the different programmes within the qualifications system, allowing students to define a productive and professional qualifications pathway.

Factor 2: Recognition of the need for common standards in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) ECCE Educator Programmes

Before the original consortium could begin work, however, the scope of formal collaboration in the project was extended by a request from the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) to involve an additional eight universities. These universities were part of the Teacher Education for ECCE (TEECEP) project², working on the design and delivery of new qualifications for ECCE educators.

The obvious links between the two projects made a formal collaboration inevitable, turning PIECCE into a national strategy. Clearly, the work of PIECCE would be irrelevant if it was not done in tandem with all the HEI education programme implementers working through TEECEP. There is no point in producing a Programme Framework to ensure commonality and quality in ECCE teacher education after the universities have already submitted their programmes to DHET for registration. At the same time, however, the significant extension of the project scope in relation to the number of actors now involved obviously had an impact on the collaboration processes. (These are discussed in Section 5.)

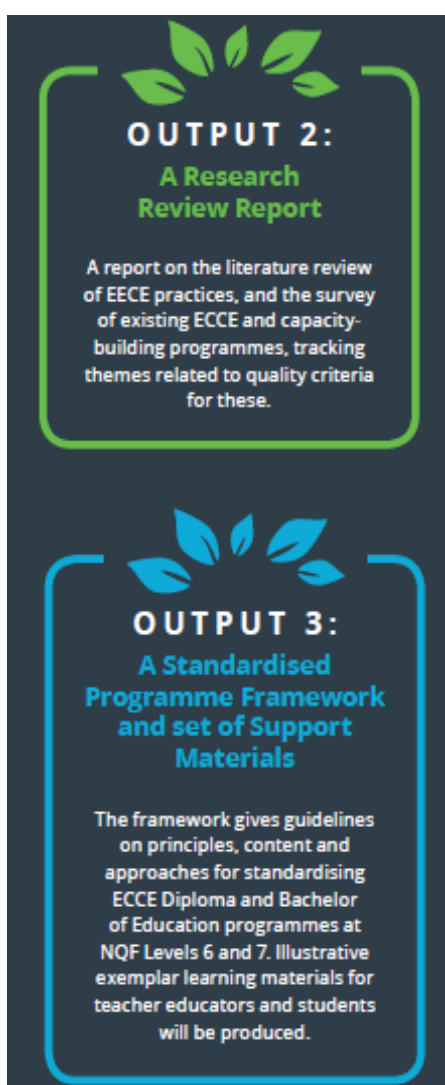
Factor 3: Adoption of three Key Drivers for PIECCE: Quality, Inclusivity, Collaboration

From the start of the consortium, three key drivers were recognised for the project. 'Quality' could only be achieved if our thinking around ECCE educator training drew on a range of perspectives outside and beyond those entrenched in HEI education departments. 'Inclusivity' was a principle in terms of both inclusive education practices, and in terms of inclusivity in our own work in the project. All voices need to be heard, whether this refers to the voices of the children themselves, categories of practitioners, or within the PIECCE consortium. The notion of 'collaboration' is a holder of the quality and inclusivity drivers, and is clearly related to Factors 1 and 2 above; it is, therefore, a central principle in PIECCE. In addition, as the project unfolded we developed a Theory of Change which foregrounds the 'why' and 'how' of the difference we wanted to make to the ECCE field. This ToC and supporting Stakeholder Strategy became linked to a set of 'learning questions' around the PIECCE Key Drivers, as an aid to defining the contribution to change which PIECCE aims to make.

² TEECEP is part of a larger European Union and DHET partnership called Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme (tldcip).

3. Aim of the Collaboration Process Model output

Given the three factors described above, the idea of collaboration was formalised as an explicit output for PIECCE. Output 1 takes the form of a Collaboration Process Model for Programme Development, charting the journey, barriers and enablers identified along the way, and the lessons learned about collaboration through this project. This report documents Output 1, as does the visual knowledge product (see point 4 below) which represents the Collaboration Process Model.



Collaboration in PIECCE happened through the activities related to the other two project outcomes. Output 2 was a Research Review Report which served as a baseline source for the development of Output 3 - the Standardised Programme Framework and set of Support Materials. Output 3 will later guide the design and delivery of university-specific faculty programmes for ECCE educators at NQF Levels 6 and 7.

The collaborative activities threaded throughout the processes for producing these two outputs were aimed at contributing to two key research questions underpinning the project. These were:

(i) specifically, how can we enable multiple stakeholder participation for developing the Diploma and the B Ed in ECCE?

and

(ii) more broadly, how can this contribute to programme development for ECCE, and to the building of more coherent systems for ECCE Teacher Education in South Africa?

While the model is framed towards the activity of 'Programme Development' as the major output for PIECCE, many of the processes undertaken and the collaboration dynamics identified could apply to collaborative undertakings relating to other purposes. In other words, the PIECCE Collaboration Process Model includes both project-specific and generic elements, in support of the research aims noted above.

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.

4. The role of knowledge management in PIECCE

Effective knowledge management (KM) is essential for enabling and monitoring collaboration in any project. In the context of PIECCE, it was vital to track evolving collaboration processes in order to inform Output 1. This output was the primary responsibility of BRIDGE Innovation in Learning. Overall, knowledge management responsibilities were shared between *Saide* and BRIDGE. The PIECCE project manager (*Saide*) was responsible for managing communication with project partners in relation to Outputs 2 and 3 (a key responsibility in terms of keeping partners connected), and for external communication around content with other stakeholders. BRIDGE was responsible for specific knowledge management activities in support of the development of the Collaboration Process Model, as described in this report. In addition, BRIDGE's KM role included packaging information and progress from the various phases of the project into bite-size accessible and usable knowledge products. These products have been disseminated through a range of communication platforms. Sharing debates, discussions and outputs in the form of knowledge products increases the range of impact achieved by PIECCE.

SECTION 2: WHAT DO WE MEAN BY COLLABORATION?

1. Definitions and elements³

The common-sense description of collaboration is to see it as a process through which people, groups and organisations work together to achieve defined goals and results⁴.

It is generally accepted that collaboration and partnerships can increase the effectiveness and impact of interventions aimed at improving education outcomes. While work on isolated, small-scale programmes can offer models for change, it is also crucial to build shared understandings of different elements of a problem, mobilise resources to address these, and share collective learning which can lead to the spread of good practices in the system. These efforts must ultimately work in support of government's mandate to deliver quality education for all.

At its simplest, collaboration is the act of working with someone to do something. Clearly, though, the units of analysis in this simple sentence have many layers of meaning. 'Someone' can refer to an individual, a team, another organisation, or a group of enterprises within and across sectors. The 'something' can also take a number of forms, from a concrete product to a desired impact. The degree of collaboration also varies in terms of type and intensity, ranging from low level to high levels. The type of collaboration will usually also determine what it means to 'work with' others: that is, the mechanisms which enable a collaborative process. The range here includes a continuum running from informal networking and information sharing through to structured roles and responsibilities within a formal partnership agreement.

The concept of collaboration itself as an object of study is a relatively new field, and cuts across a number of disciplines from the perspectives of both academic theorists and reflective practitioners. Collaboration studies appear in disciplines as diverse as organisational psychology, public management and administration, development studies, international relations and human resource management. Common contexts in which collaboration between agencies is practised include health or the environment, as well as public administration and governance. In education, 'collaboration' as a topic most frequently appears as school-focused, in the guise of 'collaborative learning' at classroom level, peer learning and team teaching for teachers at school level, or the benefits of

'Collaboration and partnerships can drive, support and enhance desired features of successful education interventions, such as:

- Systems change
- Sustainable change
- Impact
- Scale and replication
- Spreading of practice
- Innovation
- Increased return on investment.'

King, M, 2019. *Collaboration in Education Interventions: Learning from Practice*.

³ This section draws on BRIDGE's ongoing work on monitoring its own collaborative engagements, which is informed by a literature review undertaken in 2017- 2018. See King, M. June 2019. *Collaboration in Education Interventions: Learning from Practice*. Paper submitted to NASCEE Conference. Click [here](#) .

⁴ See BRIDGE and Zenex Foundation. *Learning and Working Together: A Framework for Donor Collaboration*. January 2016. <http://www.bridge.org.za/wp-content/uploads/2016/01/Donor-Collaboration-Report-final-print-version-Jan-2016.pdf>

school or other institutional networks. But collaboration in education can take many other forms, including project-driven collaborative service provision or collaborative innovations for a wide range of desired outcomes, impacts or outputs. PIECCE is a prime example of a collaborative undertaking between different institutional types working in the Higher Education (HE), Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) and NGO sectors, drawing on multi-stakeholder inputs for a set of specific outputs.

Collaboration literature⁵ suggests there are a number of ways in which collaborations can be described. The primary analytical lens could be any of the following:

1. Degrees or typologies of collaboration: these may exist on a continuum ranging from informal, networking arrangements to formalized, contractual obligations.
2. Collaboration as processes: the emphasis here is on activities which enable collaboration.
3. Collaboration viewed through the lens of structures and governance, such as joint committees or shared leadership.
4. Levels of delivery: for example, whether the collaboration is client-centred (such as inter-departmental health delivery initiatives) or programme-focused.
5. Collaborations with a major focus on platforms and mechanisms, such as technology-driven collaborations.
6. The emphasis in the collaboration is on stakeholder or membership categories.
7. Life cycles or levels of maturity: most collaborations go through different stages in terms of inception, growth and maturity.

Clearly, though, all these lenses can be applied to greater or lesser degrees to any collaborative undertaking.

2. PIECCE defined as a collaborative project

Most general definitions of collaboration stress the idea of groups (of individuals or other entities) working towards a common goal; a shared purpose to achieve a defined impact is the central reason for collaborating. What becomes clear from looking at the literature, however, is that 'defining collaboration' is not necessarily useful: collaboration always takes place in a context, and its features will be shaped by the dynamics and players in this context. To understand the dynamics of any particular collaborative project, it is useful to map out the who, why and how of collaboration in the context of practical delivery aspects of that programme.

In relation to the analytical lenses listed above, the PIECCE collaboration can be described as follows. Each description is followed by a pointer to a collaboration enabler or barrier. These are further explored in Section 5.

⁵ These descriptions are distilled from Morris, J C & Miller-Stevens K. *Advancing Collaboration Theory: Models, Typologies and Evidence*. Routledge, New York, 2016.

Analytical Lens	Application to PIECCE
1. Typology	<p>PIECCE is a <u>structured partnership</u> in that the original core members (with the addition of two consulting NGOs) are contracted and report as a consortium to the main funder (EU). This set of players is called the Core Team. There is a secondary tier of relationships through the looser collaboration with the other universities brought into the work of PIECCE through their own contracts with DHET (see Section 1); this set of institutions is called the Wider Consortium.</p> <p>The <u>two-tier nature of the contractual arrangements</u> definitely gave rise to a number of unexpected factors, such as time pressures and accountability issues. At the same time, it benefited PIECCE as a whole in terms of inclusivity, and in relation to increased impact through broadening the breadth and depth of the collaborative work.</p>
2. Processes	<p>A key principle set out in the proposal was that the framework for the Collaboration Model would not be determined up front, but would be built up during the life of the project through an <u>iterative process of reflection and feedback</u>. PIECCE has put in place a number of collaborative processes which include task teams, reflective sessions and joint site visits.</p> <p>The iterative process worked well in that adjustments were made throughout the project in terms of different ways of collaborating, and in that it allowed for definite growth in buy-in to the principles and processes of collaboration.</p>
3. Governance	<p>PIECCE's outputs are managed by the <u>Project Manager with support from the Core Team</u>. This consists of UNISA (the lead provider in contractual terms), Rhodes Centre for Social Development, <i>Saide</i> (project management), BRIDGE (knowledge management), and an additional two NGOs, Ntataise and TREE, as consulting partners. False Bay College (TVET) was also a consulting partner during the early stages of the project.</p> <p>The fact that the financial management and the project management were located in two different organisations with very different communication and decision-making protocols gave rise to a number of problems.</p> <p>The commitment of the project manager to the principle of collaboration was vital to making sure that that the collaborative processes were implemented. A strong project manager is essential to a collaboration.</p>
4. Levels of delivery	<p>The collaboration was <u>output-focused</u> in the sense that the Standardised Programme Framework was the primary output, with the other outputs developed in support of this.</p> <p>This benefited the ECCE teacher education sector as it linked the work of</p>

		<p>PIECCE with that of the universities in the wider consortium; their own contracted outputs (submission of Diploma and B Ed programmes for accreditation) had to be developed in relation to the Framework. There was definite growth in appreciation of the benefits of having common elements (informed by multi-source research and inputs) to guide university submissions.</p>
5.	Platforms and mechanisms	<p>This was a very minor element of the collaboration. Most of the task team work happened in <u>face-to-face workshops</u>, with follow-up communications via email. While the Core Team used Google Drive, there was little technology-based interactive work undertaken.</p> <p>Working through Google might have been enabled if there had been more time to bring all consortium members to the same level of willingness and competence in using online platforms to work together. However, face-to-face discussions and debates were key to reaching shared understandings of various aspects of the work.</p>
6.	Stakeholder/ membership categories	<p>A foundational principle of PIECCE was that it would be <u>multi-stakeholder and inclusive</u> of the various players in the ECCE sector.</p> <p>While this was achieved to a reasonable degree in terms of bringing universities and NGOs together, a number of contextual difficulties meant that TVET participation was intermittent.</p> <p>In addition, while the Core Team membership stayed reasonably consistent throughout the three years, there were changes in individual participation in the Wider Consortium; this meant that we needed to spend time on ‘on-boarding’ processes for new members.</p>
7.	Life Cycles	<p>PIECCE is a very good example of a <u>‘growth path’</u> in terms of a collaborative project. While the concept of collaboration was agreed on as a foundational principle from the start of PIECCE, there was initial resistance to spending time on explicit reflection on collaborative dynamics, at the expense of the limited time we had to spend on the immediate tasks at hand related to Outputs 2 and 3. However, because we tracked the evolution of collaborative processes and because we built in explicit reflection on attitudes to collaboration, there is evidence of an increased understanding of the nature and benefits of working collaboratively. A new ‘collaboration mind-set’ amongst project members is an outcome of the collaboration life cycle.</p>

3. PIECCE and levels of collaboration

The table above applies to the internal collaboration dynamics of PIECCE. However, PIECCE also aimed to reach out externally in collaborative ways, to engage other stakeholders outside the

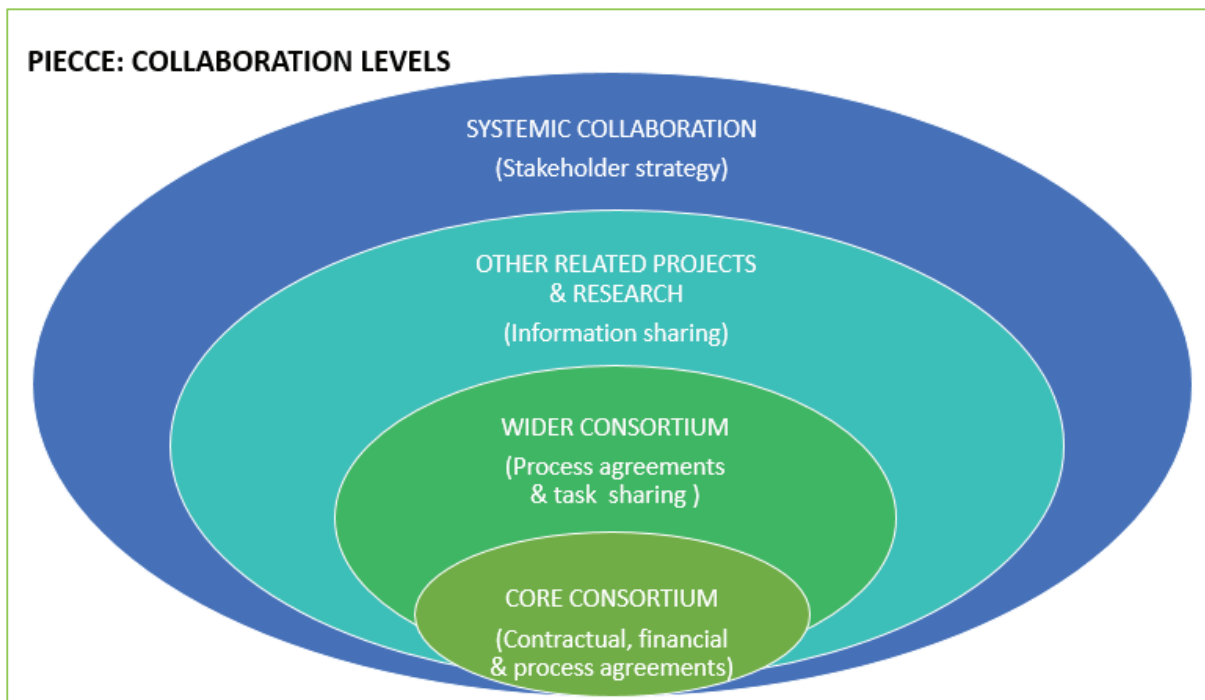
consortium. These external engagements were looser forms of consultation or occasional partner work, and reflect the potential of different levels of collaboration.

In relation to the wider stakeholder landscape, all consortium partners were asked to harness existing relationships to invite contributions, share, review and disseminate the outcomes of this project in general. The potential scope included relationships with local, provincial and national government departments, ECD projects within the presidency, government institutions such as SAQA and SACE, quality assurance bodies such as the ETDP SETA and the QCTO, and other HEIs, NGOs and TVET colleges. This has happened in uneven ways, dependent on existing relationships and general convenings in the sector.

Internal Levels of Collaboration	External Levels of Collaboration/ Consultation
<p>This refers to the ways in which consortium members worked together to achieve the PIECCE outputs.</p> <p>This can be seen as ‘tight’ collaboration in that joint work activities were based on contractual arrangements and monitored by the funders. DHET was present and active at most of the consortium workshops.</p> <p>Core Team: UNISA, <i>Saide</i>, BRIDGE, Rhodes CSD, Ntataise, TREE, False Bay TVET College (the latter for a period in Year 2).</p> <p>Wider Consortium: University of Pretoria, Witwatersrand University, University of Fort Hare, University of Free State, University of KwaZulu-Nata, Walter Sisulu University, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, North West University, and University of the Western Cape which joined 2019).</p>	<p>This refers to the ways in which PIECCE engaged with other projects and organisations in the sector doing related work, and the wider ECCE stakeholder base in general. These engagements took many forms, ranging from occasional active participation by PIECCE members in other projects, to looser consultative or information-sharing approaches in various forums. Some examples are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Engagement with the other two Inclusive Education projects funded by the European Union: Teaching for All and Teacher Empowerment for Disability Inclusion ▪ Drawing on research and work done by the Transformative Pedagogy research projects and the UNICEF Play Materials Consortium ▪ Interactions with key bodies or initiatives in ECD (e.g. NECDA, National ECD stakeholder Forum, SARAECE, DHET Teaching Practice Platform, SAQA Articulation Dialogue) ▪ Participation in BRIDGE national and provincial ECD communities of practice ▪ PIECCE-initiated consultative forums, such as the PIECCE Community of Practice and PIECCE knowledge-sharing seminars.

It should be noted that many PIECCE consortium members were also part of other funded projects or research programmes.

Any collaborative educational project that aims to effect positive change in a sector should intentionally reach out to other levels of cooperation and joint action beyond its own boundaries. PIECCE levels are illustrated below.



SECTION 3: THEORETICAL ORIENTATIONS

BRIDGE took a 'collaboration-in-action' approach to developing a Collaboration Model for the project, aiming to pause at key stages in the project to reflect on the collaborative journey and build up the Collaboration Model. There were, however, some theoretical orientations used as starting points.

1. Using reflective practice to build collaboration

This was a foundational concept. Structured self-reflection sessions with consortium members were built into the project. Reflection would happen in the context of consortium and working group meetings, through the use of collaboration tracking tools and instruments, and through various interview processes. Reflection is closely linked to the idea of experiential learning: new knowledge is assimilated by an active cycle of 'think, do, reflect'.

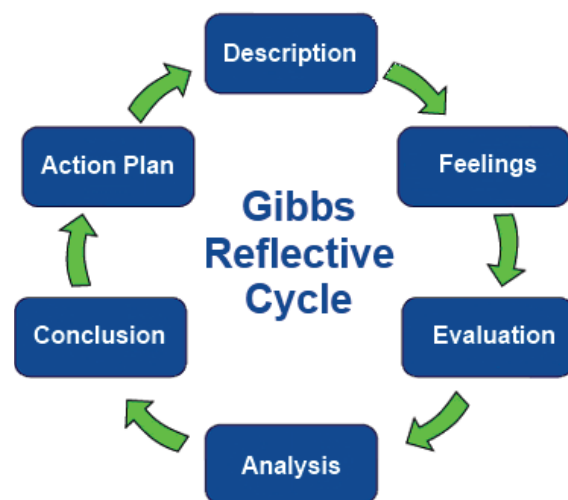
Reflective practice has been described as:

'... the process of learning through and from experience towards gaining new insights of self and/or practice... often involve(ing) examining assumptions of everyday practice. It also tends to involve the individual practitioner in being self-aware and critically evaluating her own responses to practice situations. The point is to recapture practice experiences and mull them over critically in order to gain new understandings and so improve future practice. This is understood as part of the process of life-long learning.'

Linda Finlay (2008) Reflecting on 'Reflective practice' PBPL paper 52 A discussion paper prepared for PBPL CETL www.open.ac.uk/pbpl. January 2008.

BRIDGE's approach to reflective practice is informed by Gibbs Reflective Cycle (1988).

<https://resources.eln.io/gibbs-reflective-cycle-model-1988/>



2. Using Participatory Action Research (PAR) to build collaboration

One definition states 'PAR is about jointly producing knowledge with others to produce critical interpretations and readings of the world, which are accessible, understandable to all those involved, and actionable.'⁶ This approach was specifically utilized for working together to achieve Outputs 2 and 3 (Research Review and Programme Framework) and is fundamental to the way collaboration is conceived in the project.

⁶ (Paul Chatterton, Fuller & Routledge 2007, accessed on <https://participation.wordpress.com/whatpar/defining-par/>).

As noted in the Full Application for Lot 1 (15 July 2015):

'We intend to implement this project using a participatory action research methodology ... to draw on the strengths of action research (in which researchers engage in a cycle of plan, act, review, learn, improve ...) ... enabling the full participation of all our partners in the design, development, review and refinement of the programmes and materials.'

The application also noted mechanisms for extending group participation to other stakeholders in the ECD sector.



Accessed from

<https://www.slideshare.net/sramen/cafs-2011-complete-presentation-finalmay2011no-notes>

The Task Teams working on Outputs 2 and 3 were guided by the principles of mutual learning and participation. As discussed in Section 5, there was some unevenness in how well these succeeded.

3. Constructivism

This philosophy underpinned the approach to building the model: participants are active constructors of views on collaboration through their own experiential learning during the project. This approach is extended to including the notion of 'critical constructivism', as this will allow for being explicit about the social-cultural context of the project, including the fact that consortium members come from different sectors and organizational or institutional types.

'Constructivism as a paradigm or worldview posits that learning is an active, constructive process. The learner is an information constructor. People actively construct or create their own subjective representations of objective reality. New information is linked to prior knowledge; thus mental representations are subjective. Major contributors to the development of different strands of constructivism include Vygotsky, Piaget and Dewey.'

[<https://www.learning-theories.com/constructivism.html>]

4. Valuing different kinds of evidence

Closely aligned to the previous point is the view that the model can only be built by drawing on evidence from various sources. It is vital to be aware of experiential, practice-based evidence of levers that influence the success or otherwise of collaboration. This ‘on the ground’ evidence is of two kinds: (i) BRIDGE’s own pre-existing knowledge of the dynamics of collaboration through its work in communities of practice; and (ii) the learnings about collaboration described by consortium participants. In addition, some of the literature on collaboration reviewed in this project draws on lessons from practice and case studies.



‘Experiential evidence is the collective experience and expertise of those who have practiced or lived in a particular setting. ... Experiential evidence provides distinctive guidance in the form of “real-world” experience gathered directly from multiple stakeholders.’

Understanding Evidence: Experiential Evidence Module Summary

https://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/apps/evidence/docs/Experiential_82412.pdf

Contextual evidence refers to information about whether or not a strategy ‘fits’ with the context in which it is to be implemented. In PIECCE a number of contextual factors which affected the collaboration were identified, as discussed in Sections 1 and 5. Finally, the research evidence refers to the fact that the building of the collaboration model in PIECCE was informed by a literature review on which this report draws.

SECTION 4: COLLABORATION PROCESSES IN PIECCE

This section sets out the steps taken in setting up the collaboration, and the mechanisms used for monitoring and reflecting on its progress throughout the project. This part of the report is merely descriptive: the lessons learned from these processes are covered in Section 5.

A. INTERNAL PROCESSES

1. Reaching agreement on principles for collaboration

A set of principles (see figure below) was agreed to at the first wider consortium meeting of November 2016. These principles served as a baseline against which we tracked our progress and growth in collaborating.



2. Understanding what collaboration means for group practice

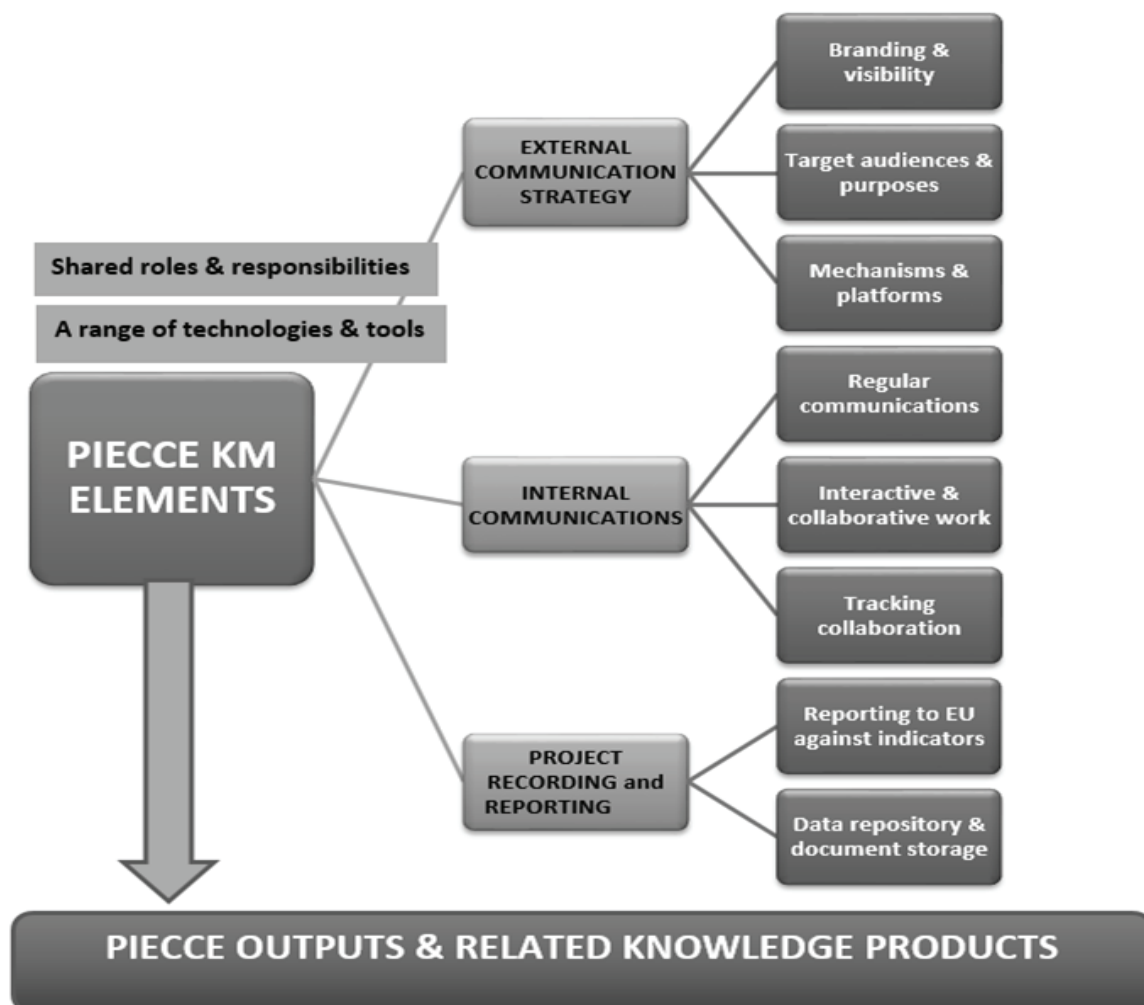
An initial concept document⁷ was also produced at the November 2016 meeting. The central responsibility for all of us was to ‘... to live up to our ‘group practice’ commitments and principles regarding self-reflection, inclusivity, communicating openly and own growth and learning through this project.’

⁷ Initial Concept Note: Collaboration Concept Session, 17 November 2016.

3. Developing and implementing a Knowledge Management Framework

To ensure good communication throughout the project, we developed a Knowledge Management Framework. The framework manual includes both an internal and an external communications strategy. It served as the resource for the more practical aspects of knowledge management, and includes meeting report templates, branding and logo guidelines as required by the funders⁸, and guidelines on the use of PIECCE Google folders.

'While good communication and a sound knowledge management system is key to any educational intervention, it is especially important in this project due to its collaborative nature. Collaboration studies stress that effective communication and, equally importantly, good record keeping from the beginning and throughout the process, are vital factors supporting successful collaboration. To this end it is important that all partners fulfil their recording and reporting roles, use consistent terminology and communication methods, and buy in to the processes agreed on by the consortium.' [PIECCE KM Manual]



⁸The KM Framework and Manual were informed by the *Communication and Visibility Manual for European Union External Actions*, 2010, and by branding guidelines from DHET.

4. Monitoring collaboration through the use of online tools

To carry out the monitoring aspect of BRIDGE’s knowledge management role in PIECCE, BRIDGE developed tools to capture lessons learned about collaboration, and changes in perception regarding working collaboratively. Over the course of the project BRIDGE used Google Forms to develop six self-administered Tracking Tools for online completion by the core team and wider consortium participants. These were designed to track collaboration processes in relation to specific phases and outputs within the project. The purpose of each tool is described below.

Various limitations to the usefulness of these tools for gathering ‘hard’ data soon became apparent. There were sometimes different understandings of the terminology of collaboration and the baseline principles. There was a low response rate, often because consortium members tended to prioritise concrete, output-driven work in their subject-matter field of expertise rather than spend time on reflecting on collaboration and filling in surveys (especially in the context of tight deadlines). In addition, while the core team remained fairly (though not completely) stable, there were frequent changes of individuals in the wider consortium participation; while specific HEIs may have been involved in the project from the start, new members came into the process without necessarily having been well briefed about the project. Because of this lack of stability in the response pool, the initial idea of using Tool 1 as a baseline to be repeated throughout the project was dropped. We had to accept that these tools needed to be adapted at different stages, and could only measure individual perceptions of collaborative processes at key points for those respondents who had not had common and consistent exposure to the project over time. That said, however, the tools did allow us to gather qualitative data which included useful views on which collaborative processes worked and which didn’t, as well as various perspectives on collaboration. The findings and lessons learned are discussed in Section 5 of this report.

Tracking Tool	Purpose	Project stage & date of analysis	# of responses
Tool 1: Collaboration Principles	The purpose of this tool was to track how our agreed-upon 9 principles of collaboration played out in different types of PIECCE meetings. The aim of this was to set the baselines for measuring the progress and evolution of the quality of collaboration within the work of the consortium.	Year 1, sent out February 2017 and August 2017	Round 1: 22 Round 2: 28
Tool 2: External Collaboration Aid	The purpose of this tool was: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To orientate/prepare consortium members to ‘think collaboration’ before attending meetings relating to external networking around PIECCE and related EU/DHET (or other) projects or programmes. To assist consortium members in 	Years 1 and 2, based on attendance by consortium members at other EU project meetings such as the Open Education Resources Reference Group meeting in 2017.	5

	reporting back to BRIDGE on any collaboration emerging between PIECCE and other projects.		
Tool 3: Literature Review Task Team Process Questionnaire	<p>The purpose of this tool was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To capture reflections on collaboration processes in the Literature Review Task Teams (linked to Output 2). To take these lessons forward to inform the next stage of collaboration in the Programme Framework Task Teams (linked to Output 3). To track collaboration barriers and enablers to feed into the Collaboration Model (linked to Output 1). 	Year 1, July 2017, completed by those active in the Literature Review task teams	9
Tool 4: Programme Design Task Team Process Questionnaire	<p>The purpose of this tool was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To track whether lessons learned from the previous task team process had been taken forward. To capture reflections on collaboration processes from the Programme Framework Task Teams (phase 1 2017). To take these lessons forward to inform the development of the Collaboration Model. 	Year 2, January 2018, completed by those active in the Programme Framework Design Task Teams	18
Tool 5: Wider Consortium Collaboration Reflection Questionnaire	<p>The purpose of this tool was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To track whether there were any changes in collaborative processes in the ongoing work on the Programme Framework design process as phase 2 (2018) progressed. To capture reflections on collaboration processes from the ongoing Programme Framework Task Teams. To take these lessons forward to inform the development of the Collaboration Model. 	Year 2, September 2018, completed by task team members and newer consortium members who may not have been on task teams but had given input at workshops	17
Tool 6: Final Collaboration Survey Questionnaire	<p>The purpose of this tool was:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To get a broad perspective on PIECCE as a collaborative effort overall, and to consider what could be done differently To reflect on the impact of PIECCE 	Year 3, November 2019. Completed only by those present at the end of the final PIECCE workshop in November 2019. While Tool 6 was subsequently sent out	13

	on individuals and others.	to the rest of the consortium, we did not get any more responses (mainly due to the time of the year and the fact that the project was winding up).	
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5. Monitoring collaboration through structured Reflection Sessions

While the core team reflected regularly on collaboration in monthly team meetings, there were several formal, facilitated Reflection Sessions with the wider consortium. Detailed reports on each of these sessions are available. The main takeaways and lessons learned from these sessions are discussed in Section 5.

Reflection Session	Theme
Reflection Session 1 (Wider Consortium): August Workshop 01-08-2017	The theme of this session was 'Taking the lessons forward: reflecting on collaboration in the Literature Review (Output 2) Task Teams'.
Reflection Session 2 (Core Team only): 08-05-2018	The aim of this session was for the core team to drill deeply into collaboration dynamics in PIECCE, and to discuss the elements of a collaboration model for programme development.
Reflection Session 3 (Wider Consortium): July Mid-Term Review 09-07-2018	The focus of this session was to consider how collaboration works at different levels, and to discuss the stakeholder strategy.
Reflection Session 4 (Wider Consortium): November Final Workshop 21-11-2019	The theme of this session was related to the impact of the collaborative aspects of PIECCE, and to a forward-looking discussion on how collaboration could happen in future.

6. Site visits to ECCE centres

An important collaborative innovation that came out of one of the workshops was the idea of site visits to ECCE centres. The rationale for this was the recognition by many in the HEIs that their focus has been on the Foundation phase, and that they are relative newcomers to the realities of ECCE in terms of caring and teaching children from Birth to Four. NGOs, however, have extensive experience in this space; NGO partners therefore undertook to set up site visits to centres or schools representing a range of contexts, from under-resourced to highly functional sites. Three such events took place, in Bloemfontein, Kwa-Zulu Natal and Gauteng. In Gauteng the focus was on centres that provide for special-needs children, so that issues relating to the concept of 'inclusivity' could be worked through. At each visit the practitioners were observed in action with their charges. After

each site visit there was a debriefing and reflection session (which included many of the NGO practitioner trainers) on what had been observed, and how these observations of the realities on the ground could inform PIECCE outputs. Experiencing the ECCE environments, and the interactions with the children, the practitioners and the trainers, led to new shared insights taken into the conceptual work of the consortium. In addition, people felt that these opportunities helped make their work (especially on the Illustrative Packs) more grounded, as they became more aware of the conditions in which their students will be working.

7. Building a Theory of Change

The PIECCE Theory of Change⁹ (ToC) was based on the idea that a ToC gives the ‘big picture’ and summarises work at a strategic level, while a logical framework illustrates the programme implementation level. PIECCE is a complex project with many components, aiming to ‘make a difference’ to how early childhood teachers are taught and, in turn, teach young children. We wanted to engage collaboratively with complex concepts of quality, inclusivity and collaboration. To this end the ToC was devised around a set of ‘Key Learning Questions’ and indicators for each of these elements of PIECCE. These learning questions were adapted through an iterative process in some of the Reflection Sessions. In this section only the Learning Questions related to collaboration are given.

	<i>KLQ: What is the change we want to see?</i>	<i>Indicators: How will we measure the progress towards achieving this change?</i>
1	How does collaboration build consensus on (i) what constitutes quality ECD; (ii) what constitutes the professionalisation of its practitioners; and (iii) what constitutes inclusivity in an ECD context?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agreement is reached on the elements of quality in ECD. • Agreement is reached on broad standards for practitioners. • The professional pathway for the practitioner is accessible in terms of entry and modes of delivery. • This agreement is informed by multiple perspectives and shows cross-contextual understanding.
2	How does collaboration improve relations, address silo thinking and lessen tensions between different providers in the sector?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Historical tensions (e.g. competitiveness) between service providers are managed and negotiated within the consortium. • Practices and lessons learned are shared between different providers within and beyond the consortium. • There is growing agreement on common standards.
3	What is the scope of this collaboration and how is it	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal partnerships are maintained throughout the project. • Wider consultation is achieved through collaborative forums

⁹ See Theory of Change and M&E Outline V02 30-07-2019

	sustained?	<p>throughout the project.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post-project mechanisms for collaboration are set up (e.g. the Birth to 4 CoP).
4	How do we track the benefits of and barriers to a collaborative process for programme design for future applications?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Key principles and processes for collaboration are agreed on and adhered to. • Monitoring tools are used throughout the project. • Partners in the process feel engaged and empowered. • An informed model for collaboration (based on experiential learning, feedback and reflection) results from the process.

B. EXTERNAL PROCESSES

1. Convening a PIECCE community of practice (CoP)

The PIECCE Community of Practice (CoP) was originally seen as a mechanism for consultation and collaboration on PIECCE outputs, and a way of ensuring sustainable interaction beyond the life of the project. The aim of the CoP was to create common purpose, peer support and trust, and to share working practice amongst different stakeholders, with the ultimate goal of getting buy-in into the project right from the start. The focus would be on future collaborations in ECCE Teacher Education.

A number of factors influenced a change of direction in this thinking. The first CoP meeting held in September 2017¹⁰ showed that there were various ‘on-the-ground’ concerns that needed to be addressed before any detailed interrogation of PIECCE thinking around teacher education at diploma and degree level could begin to happen. The NGO sector as the main provider of ECCE practitioner training at lower levels raised a number of issues relating to articulation and access. We felt that it would be more productive to engage with these concerns in existing forums (see 2.2), rather than forcing the idea of a PIECCE CoP. The second PIECCE CoP meeting was far more productive in terms of collaborative input. This was held in July 2019¹¹ and enabled PIECCE to get rich input from participants on the Work Integrated Learning (WIL) component of the Programme Framework.

BRIDGE has also used its own national and provincial ECD CoPs as forums for sharing PIECCE work.

2. Collaborating with other forums on access and professionalisation

A key aim of PIECCE was to take access issues into account in its work; this meant that we needed to be centrally focused on debates around alignment of training pathways into HEIs, and articulation of occupational, TVET and higher education qualifications. PIECCE took two initiatives in relation to

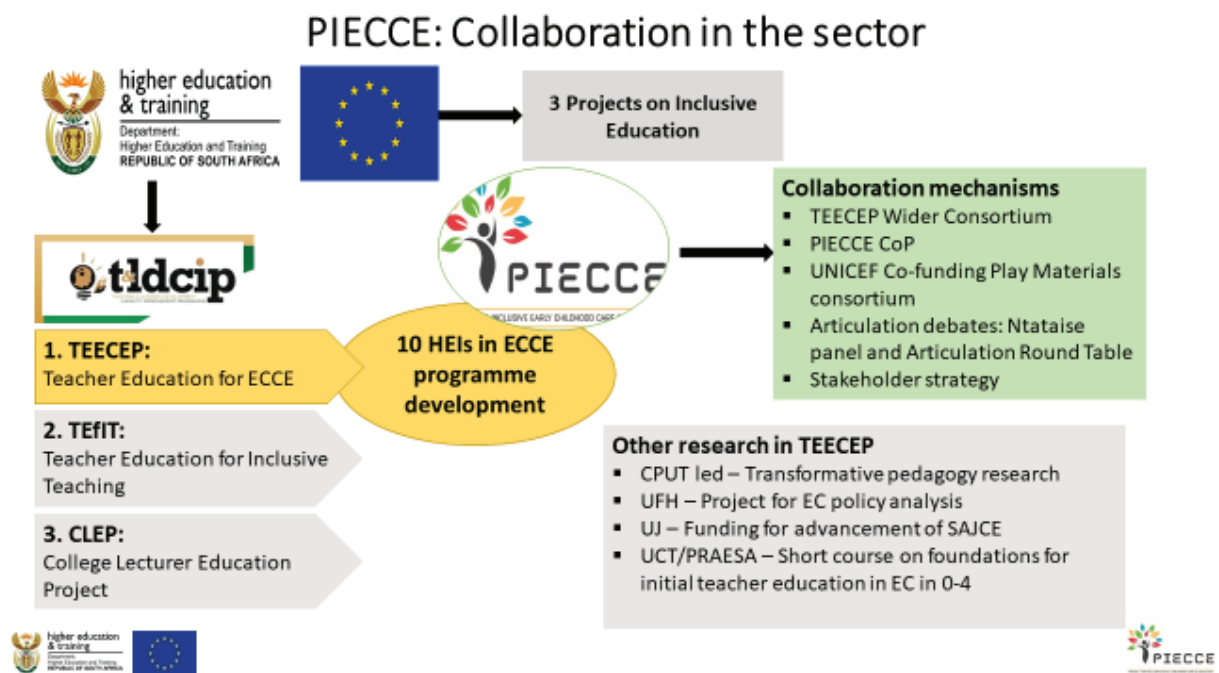
¹⁰ See The PIECCE Community of Practice: Overview of the CoP Meeting 20180928

¹¹ See The PIECCE Community of Practice: Overview of Meeting #2 20190723

interactions on these concerns. One was participation in the Ntataise (itself a PIECCE core team member) Network Conference in August 2017, entitled *'The ECCE Qualification Continuum: Articulating Level 3 through to Level 7'*¹², in which PIECCE team members were part of a panel on articulation. The second was the initiation of a multi-sector Round Table event, hosted by BRIDGE and NECDA, on the topic *'Articulation of Qualifications in ECCE'*¹³.

3. Working with other research teams and projects

The graphic below shows the different projects and initiatives in which PIECCE members took part or drew information from.



¹² See *The ECCE Qualification Continuum: Articulating Level 3 to Level 7*. Report on a panel discussion & conversation held at the Ntataise Network Conference. 22nd August 2017

¹³ See *Articulation of Qualifications in Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE)*. Report on Roundtable Discussion hosted by BRIDGE, NECDA and PIECCE. 4 June 2018

4. Sharing PIECCE Outputs and Knowledge Products

PIECCE drew on many sources of knowledge, expertise and experience throughout its work, and documented process and content learnings. PIECCE products were widely disseminated through various channels: they were initially hosted on the SARAECE website, and later on a dedicated PIECCE website <https://piecce.co.za/>, as well as distributed by consortium partners and at various ECCE events. The following outputs and resources have been produced.

PIECCE Outputs

‘Outputs’ are the final products required by the project Terms of Reference. They consist of:

OUTPUT 1	<i>Building the PIECCE Collaboration Model - A Collaboration Process Model for Programme Development.</i> January 2020. (This report.)
OUTPUT 2	<i>Research Review Baseline Findings.</i> August 2017. (A literature review of ECCE practices and survey of existing ECCE capacity-building programmes.)
OUTPUT 3	<i>Programme Framework for ECCE Qualifications, Diploma and Degree.</i> January 2020. (A standardised programme framework setting out ECCE themes and programme guidelines. A set of summaries for each chapter was also produced, and hosted on the PIECCE website.) <i>The Teacher Educator Support Materials: Illustrative Packs.</i> January 2020. (Support materials for educators.)

PIECCE Knowledge Products

The term ‘knowledge products’ in this context refers to information or knowledge that has been re-packaged or re-purposed for accessibility and easy sharing. PIECCE knowledge products (KPs) aimed at capturing project learnings as PIECCE progressed, in order to share these resources with the sector. Some of the knowledge products comprise summarised and visual representations of the main PIECCE outputs listed above. The following were produced:

1.	<i>PIECCE Brochure.</i> March 2017.
2.	<i>PIECCE Report Baseline Findings: Overview of the Literature Review and Surveys.</i> September 2017
3.	<i>The PIECCE Community of Practice: Overview of the first PIECCE CoP.</i> 28 September 2017
4.	<i>The ECCE Qualification Continuum: Articulating Level 3 to Level 7.</i> Report on a panel discussion & conversation held at the Ntataise Network Conference. 22nd August 2017
5.	<i>Crossing Sectors: Collaborating for Quality in Teacher Education in PIECCE.</i> Poster Presentation at SARAECE Conference. May 2018.
6.	<i>Articulation of Qualifications in Early Childhood Care & Education (ECCE).</i> Report on

	Roundtable Discussion hosted by BRIDGE, NECDA and PIECCE. 4 June 2018
7.	<i>PIECCE Communiqué.</i> May 2019
8.	<i>The PIECCE Community of Practice: Overview of the second PIECCE CoP.</i> 23 July 2019
9.	<i>A Collaboration Process Model for Programme Development.</i> January 2020
10.	<i>Overview: PIECCE Programme Framework and Illustrative Packs.</i> January 2020



SECTION 5: COLLABORATION LESSONS LEARNED FROM PIECCE

This section of the report covers the detail of lessons learned during the three-year project, in relation to some of the different collaboration processes and monitoring mechanisms covered in Section 4. We then go on to extrapolate these into a generic 'menu' of collaboration enablers and barriers which this project and its underpinning research has identified.

1. Lessons on using 'collaboration principles' as drivers

The lesson learned here is that the setting up of these principles as a collaborative tool had both benefits and limitations. A major advantage was that they set up a framework for the scope and 'mindset' of our collaboration, and gave the group a shared sense of identity; these principles were in fact a vital touchstone throughout the project. What became apparent towards the end of the project, however, was that we had not spent enough time defining these principles for ourselves throughout the project; we began with the assumption that we understood the same things by the terms. While we explored what was meant by concepts such as 'inclusivity' and 'reflective practice', other principles were not sufficiently unpacked. For example, the idea of 'sustainability' was interpreted variously as sustainability of the collaboration, or sustainability of the main Programme Framework output and its underpinning philosophy. 'Innovation' was another area that could have benefited from deeper examination, in relation to both collaborative practices and to the Theory of Change underpinning the Programme Framework. On a more practical note, as the project developed it became clear that knowledge management and communication should have been separate principles, as they reference activities on a number of levels and for a number of different purposes. Each one of the nine principles could have been the subject of deeper discussion (in relation to both collaboration and to the work of PIECCE itself) had time allowed.

2. Lessons on the Knowledge Management Framework

The inclusion of a dedicated and explicit knowledge management (KM) function in the project was helpful in relation to capturing and sharing knowledge and debates generated by PIECCE. In addition, this is in line with international practice in development interventions, which increasingly foreground the role of KM in organisations and in projects. What was not clear in the original terms of reference or the proposal was the overlap between 'knowledge management' and overall programme monitoring and evaluation (M&E) in its more familiar sense. In PIECCE, 'monitoring' through KM was confined to monitoring of the collaboration processes. While many discussions were held on the potential impact of the PIECCE outputs on the sector going forward, there is no post-project M&E system in place, or budget allocation for this.

The KM Framework was made concrete through the PIECCE KM manual. This was mainly useful to BRIDGE in terms of carrying out its visibility, branding and knowledge product development commitments, though some elements such as the reporting templates and the use of the Google folders were taken on board by the rest of the consortium. The process of thinking through a KM strategy and developing the manual was however very useful in itself, and is recommended for any collaborative project.

Our expectations around the use of Google Drive for collaborating on work outputs were not really met, and shared folders were mainly used as document repositories. Consortium members' Google

skills varied, and working groups and individuals tended to make their own arrangements when working on the same documents. The core team however used Google documents for commenting on and editing core team minutes and project reports. If future collaborations want to make more use of technology for shared work and interactions, several conditions for success need to be met. These would include elements such as (i) understanding the ICT skills profiles of participants; (ii) accessible technology support; (iii) time for any skills development required; and (iv) a stable group of participants throughout the project.

3. Findings from the online tracking tools

As discussed in Section 4 point 4, tracking tools were used at different points in the projects, but their findings are difficult to quantify. However, many of the views expressed in open-ended answers were valuable. Also, we were able to consistently track changing perceptions amongst a core group of respondents who were involved in PIECCE from start to finish. A key finding from the responses of this group across Tool 1 to Tool 6 (supported by face-to-face discussions) was that attitudes to collaboration went through troughs and crests at different stages. For example, at the start of the project the concept was enthusiastically embraced at a theoretical level; during some of the work processes there was a dip as some of the practical difficulties became more evident; then, as we learned better ways of dealing with collaborative processes, more positive views emerged. Overall, positive attitudes became stronger towards the end of the process as our understandings of the benefits of collaboration (and how to do it) deepened. The main point here is that a successful collaboration has to be 'grown' through the processes itself: it is not an automatic and static condition that exists simply because individuals and organisations find themselves working together in a project.

A high level overview of findings from each tool is given below.

Tracking Tool	Findings
Tool 1: Collaboration Principles (2 X in Year 1, 2017)	This tool asked people to reflect on the 9 principles in relation to meetings in the initial phases of PIECCE. In general, people felt that trust between individuals were high, but there was a lot of worry around the logistics of being able to work together in the given deadlines, and lack of clarity on roles and responsibilities: that is, who was going to do what in terms of the project going forward.
Tool 2: External Collaboration Aid	This tool was completed by only five individuals at different times over the three-year process, after attending EU project events. Synergies between different EU projects were noted (e.g. in relation to inclusivity research and the UNICEF Play Framework); some collaboration between the different projects has taken place, mainly due to the commitments of specific individuals involved across projects. One key issue raised of interest to all projects was the debate around all EU project outputs being Open Education Resources, and where these would be housed. This issue is still unresolved.

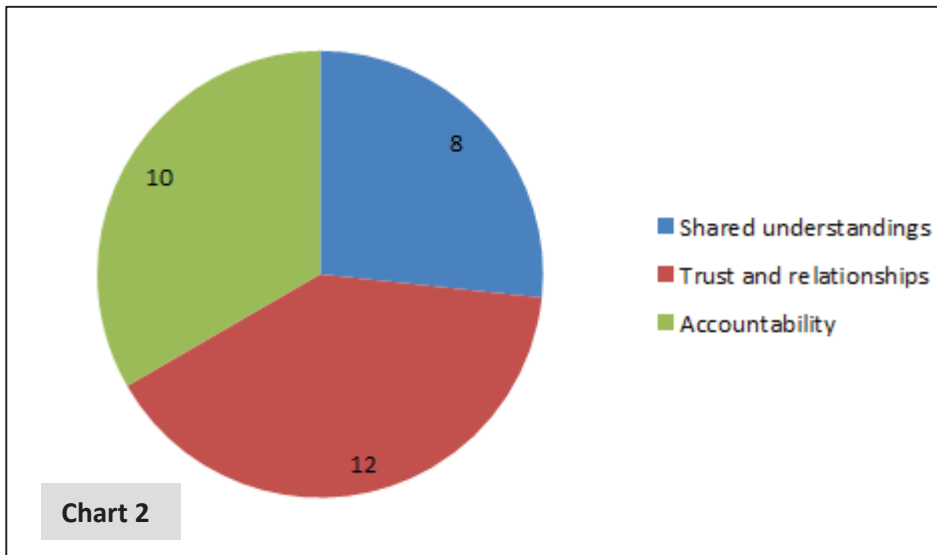
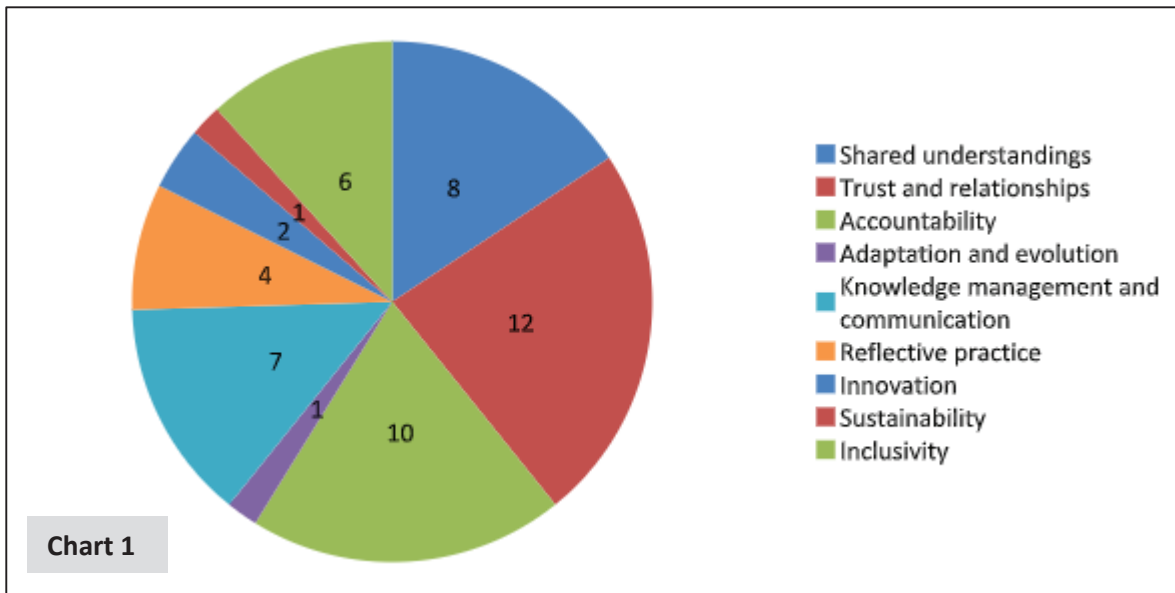
Tool 3: Literature Review Task Team Process Questionnaire (2017)	Substantial information on what worked and what didn't work in the task team processes was gathered through this Tool. The main issue at this point was the different assumptions, perceptions and expectations about people's skills levels in relation to this particular output. The clear lesson here is that we could have spent more time in setting up these task teams and understanding the commitment involved; however, at this stage of the project, deadlines were extremely tight.
Tool 4: Programme Design Task Team Process Questionnaire (2018)	This tool harvested relevant information about changed Task Team practices based on lessons learned from the previous task teams (Tool 3), and the general view was that these task teams functioned more efficiently.
Tool 5: Wider Consortium Collaboration Reflection Questionnaire (2018)	This Tool also related to the Programme Framework working groups, and yielded some commentary on the ups and downs on the process of collaborative writing needed to produce the Programme Framework. Working groups undertaking different chapters had very different experiences; much depended on the leadership and experience of group members. The face-to-face workshops were clearly identified by all as vital to the process.
Tool 6: Final Collaboration Survey Questionnaire (2019)	This tool was completed and discussed only by those present during the final PIECCE workshop in November 2019, and used as a basis for verbal reflections. Much of the discussion related to the benefits of collaboration, and what could have been done differently; more detail is given under Reflection Session 4 below.

Below is an illustrative sample of some of the questions and responses from the tracking tools.

Examples from Tool 5, analysed September 2018

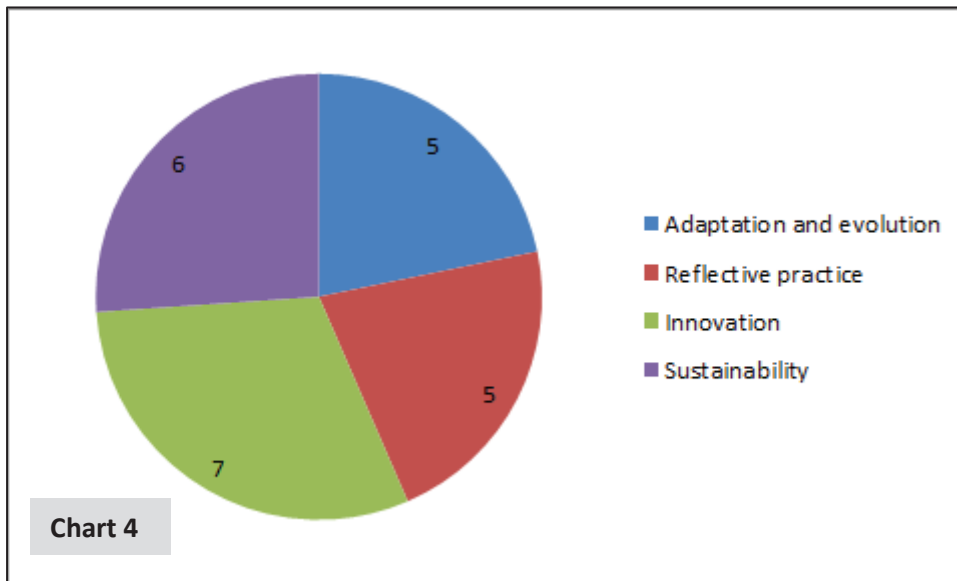
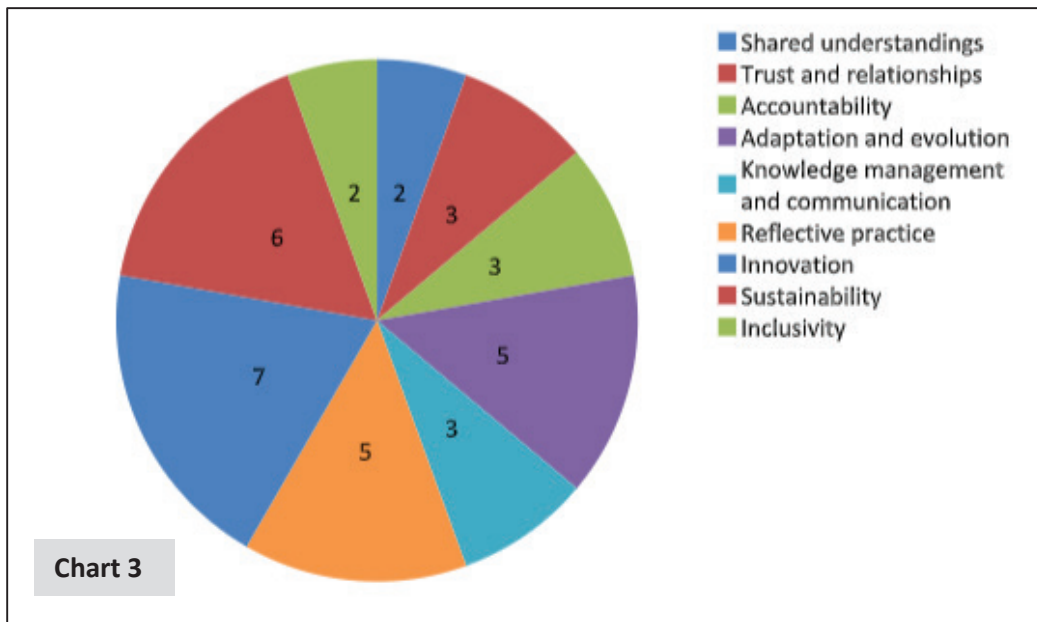
Question 2.1: Which three principles do you think are most important in order for collaborative work to be successful?

Respondents were asked to report on which three of the nine principles of collaboration they perceived as most important in order for collaborative work to be successful. 17 people responded to this question, giving us a total of 51 responses (3 X 17 = 51). Of the nine total principles, all were identified by at least one person as important for collaboration to be successful (see chart 1 below). Of the 9 principles the 3 most popularly reported (see chart 2 below) were *Trust and relationships* (23%), *Accountability* (19%), and *Shared understanding* (15%). These three principles accounted for more than half the responses, showing that they were perceived as significant.



Question 2.1: Which three principles do you think have been the most difficult to implement effectively?

Respondents were asked to report on which three principles they think have been the most difficult to implement effectively. A total of 15 people responded, in the context of the project stage as at August/September 2018. There were a total of 36 responses, as not everyone selected three principles although all respondents identified at least one principle. Each of the 9 principles was chosen by at least 2 people as being the most difficult to implement (see chart 3); this shows that none of the principles were seen as easy to implement. However, it is clear from the analysis that a greater percentage of respondents saw ‘innovation’ and ‘sustainability’ as being the most difficult principles to implement. Chart 4 shows *Innovation* (19%) and *Sustainability* (16%) as the two highest reported, with *Adaptation and Evolution* and *Reflective Practice* both scoring 14% (see chart 4). These four principles accounted for 63% of the total response.



The two factors undermining the usefulness of online tracking tools in a project like PIECCE were (i) the low response rate that sometimes happened, due to prioritising of subject-matter work in the context of tight deadlines and respondents’ other professional responsibilities; and (ii) the changes in the respondent pool during the three years of the project. Overall, however, individuals’ comments and insights into the process, as well as into their own collaboration journeys, makes up valuable qualitative data. A recommendation for future collaborations would be to use regular, well-constructed survey instruments which include open-ended questions, in conjunction with face-to-face reflection sessions.

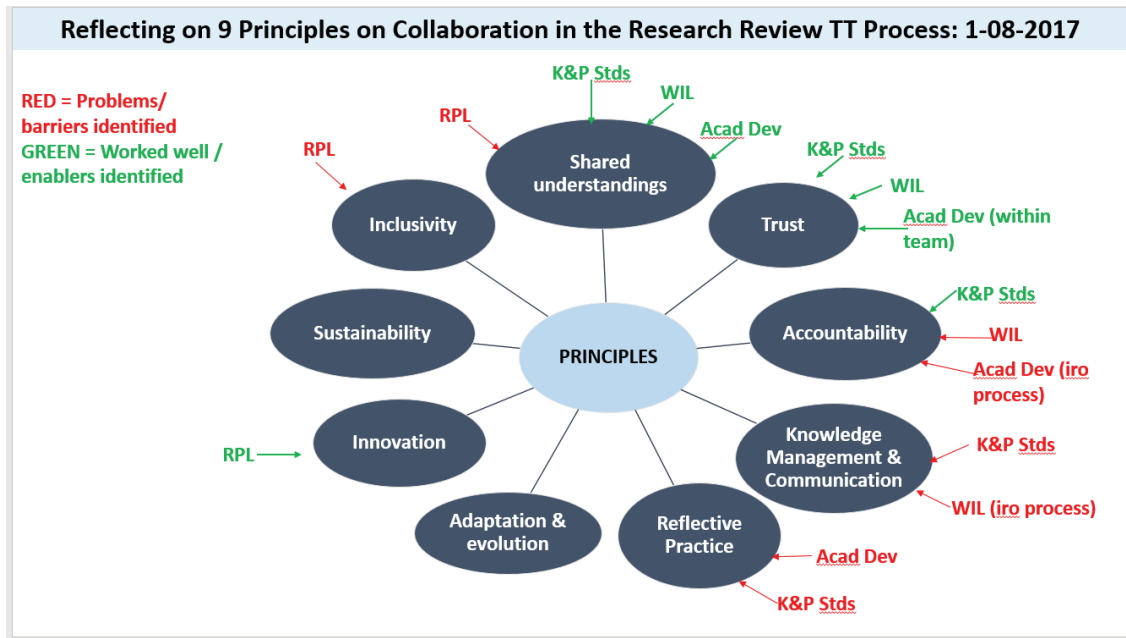
4. Lessons Learned from and about structured Reflection Sessions

The descriptions below extract the main takeaways from these sessions before making some observations about this approach.

Reflection Session 1 (Wider Consortium): August Workshop 01-08-2017

The theme of this session was 'Taking the lessons forward: reflecting on collaboration in the Literature Review (Output 2) Task Teams'. The aim was to identify what had worked well and what had not worked well in the collaboration process, in order to find ways of improving collaborative practices in the next task team cycle going forward. The session was structured around how the collaboration principles that had been agreed on played out in the work of the task teams.

Literature Review task team groups reported back as follows:



Examples of general barriers discussed:

- People struggled to participate and remain accountable to dates and times set, as tight deadlines were an issue.
- The group ratio in relation to sectors was unbalanced.
- Sector contexts affected access to research resources.
- Too little time was available for discussion of group profiles, spread of sector perspectives, and individual choices in initial setting up.
- There was a lack of mutual understanding about how different organisational types such as universities and NGOs operate in terms of day-to-day work flow practices, and this sometimes affected the task team work

Examples of general enablers discussed:

- Reflective opportunities to speak frankly and openly has increased trust and mutual understandings.
- We need to be more deliberate about how we form groups: principles of inclusivity as well as areas of strength and expertise need to be carefully balanced.
- Ways for the group to reflect on collaboration and support group maintenance should be built in to the process.
- Strong leadership, clear guidelines for the work and regular communication are all enablers.

Reflection Session 2 (Core Team only): 08-05-2018

The aim of this session was for the core team to drill deeply into collaboration dynamics in PIECCE.

A number of problems faced by the core team came up in this session. Some of the difficulties discussed were to do with shifting 'boundary conditions' for this project, related to funding, financial and contractual arrangements, and time frames. Most of these were due to the unique structural features of PIECCE, as a consequence of the 'grafting on' to PIECCE of the eight other universities through TEECEP. Ideally, PIECCE's work in producing a framework should have been completed first so as to provide a guideline for programme development. In order to try and accommodate this the TEECEP timeframes took precedence over PIECCE's own project plan, and we changed and condensed our time frames for producing the first draft of the framework. Working with the universities to support their accreditation submissions to DHET and the Council for Higher Education (CHE) took up time that had not been budgeted for. This put pressure on the quality of delivery and had budgetary implications. At the same time, however, it needs to be stressed that the work of PIECCE would be irrelevant if it was not done in tandem with all the implementers working through TEECEP. By producing this Programme Framework we hoped to ensure commonality and quality in ECCE teacher education across the universities.

Nonetheless, though we had a working draft of the Programme Framework, we needed to consult on, review and refine the framework even after the universities had submitted their programmes to DHET and the CHE. This puts into doubt whether the really innovative aspects of the programme framework will be incorporated into the delivery, since once programmes are accredited it is not easy to adapt them.

It did become clear much later in the project that the time frames for implementing the programmes were in fact more flexible, but this was after the fact, and the final deadlines for the PIECCE project proved to be inflexible. This forces us to consider the impact that power relations between funders and grantees, and expectations from funders and their intermediaries, has on collaboration. One lesson learned here is that funders need to consider how high level decisions might affect the development and delivery of project outputs, and be open to hearing about these issues from grantees.

It was in the context of this discussion that three main features or components of the PIECCE project were highlighted in relation to enablers and barriers to collaboration.

- Funding, financial and contractual agreements
- Cross-sectoral involvement
- Communication.

Here is a summary of **barriers, enablers and lessons learned** for each of these components, as experienced at this point in the project (May 2018). All of those listed in the tables below remained pertinent throughout the project.

PIECE Component 1: FUNDING, FINANCIAL & CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENTS

BARRIERS

Contractual and financial complexities of having ‘two bosses’ – EU and DHET, due to the overlap between two projects with different budgets.

Role delineation problems in contractual agreement. **Example:** the lead organisation and the project management organisation are not the same. As lead organisation UNISA plays the lead financial administrative role; however, the Project Manager has to manage all aspects of the project, and it is frustrating that she does not have control over the auditing process and the formal communication with EU regarding reporting on budgetary issues.

Initially, there was no shared understanding between partners in terms of the procurement and auditing processes. *[Note that auditing issues and delays continued throughout the project, due to the complexity of the lead provider’s own systems.]*

Unpredictable management and time frames for disbursements causes huge frustration, especially for NGOs who live from hand to mouth.

Deliverables for Year 1 exceeded what was budgeted for, mainly due to the complications caused by DHET’s deadlines and requirements. This affected NGOs more than it did those in an academic context, as staff in HEIs are guaranteed their salaries and not so concerned with funding, whereas those in NGOs have to multitask in a different way and fit their time to external funding linked to outputs.

Differences in financial contexts and financial management in different organisational types. **Example:** Discrepancies in terms of line items in different partner budgets due to different organisational HR/ salary approaches: this plays out as different rates in partner budgets being given to individuals who are doing the same work in the project.

Perception of scope creep in terms of roles allocated to different partners contractually, and expectations as the project evolved. **Example:** attendance of consulting partners at all workshops.

Tension between contractual demands and timeframes, and the need to accommodate time-consuming discussions related to quality issues.

Perception of budget being imposed rather than discussed.

Multiple partners mean that financial documents are not housed in one place.

Timesheets as a funder requirement are time-consuming, and imply a lack of trust.

Contextual barrier: high status of funding bodies in the South African context, and the sense that they are not open to discussion on flexibility regarding time frames.

ENABLERS

Note: as stated above, external boundary conditions in relation to funding and the structural complexity of PIECCE's collaboration with TEECEP have impacted on time frames for deliverables and therefore on budgets. The enablers for this section are therefore forward-looking, rather than a reflection of enablers that have been seen so far in the project.

In a consortium it may be advisable for project management and financial management responsibilities to be held by the same organisation.

An on-boarding or induction process around financial processes and roles and responsibilities may have been helpful (but may also have been time-consuming), particularly for those who came into the project later on.

Enablers also reside in personalities, in spite of structural barriers to collaboration. In this instance good project management and good relations between individuals mitigated some of the contractual issues, though not all.

Benefits and Learnings

- Scope creep had the unexpected outcome of pushing some individuals and organisations into 'forced learning', thereby supporting growth and capacity building.
- A project like this could include an 'unforeseen costs' category in the budget: for example, money and time to spend on mapping stakeholders to strengthen external collaboration.

PIECCE Component 2: CROSS SECTORAL INVOLVEMENT

(i.e. different training providers such as TVETs, HEIs and NGOs; public / private sectors; and occupational and professional sectors.)

BARRIERS

The regulatory and teacher training landscape for ECCE educators is divided, especially in relation to articulation between qualifications from different sectors. While this is a barrier to smooth collaboration, recognition of this divide is also the spur to collaboration.

Differences in perceived benefits for partners from different sectors can also affect collaboration. **Example:** sometimes it seems that TVETs and NGOs have to compromise more in order to fit the needs of higher education consortium members rather than the other way round.

There were different understandings initially in relation to the expertise required for some aspects of the project (e.g. the literature review); expertise for programme development in different universities). This led to uneven distribution of work, as well as some inefficiencies in using time and budget allocations. *[Note that this played out again in relation to expertise for programme development and submissions to CHE at a later stage of the project.]*

Lack of a robust mapping process of all stakeholders (including private providers) weakened our collaboration strategy in relation to the wider ECD field. The underpinning barrier here was the provision of time and money for a mapping process, which needs to be built in from the start.

There is competition between NGOs in relation to getting funding, and NGOs also feel threatened in that government money goes more towards TVETs. These pre-existing conditions can't really be addressed through one project.

TVET inclusion in both the core and wider consortium proved problematic and has been unsuccessful. This is partly due to an institutional culture which is less flexible and enabling (compared to NGOs and HEIs) in terms of decision-making and autonomy for staff members. It could also be linked to capacity issues.

There were different time frames for when collaborating partners came on board, both within the core consortium and the wider consortium. This exacerbated any differences of understanding people held about the project, and sometimes meant that different partners had differing priorities. **Example:** some of the universities seem to feel that they are doing PIECCE's work instead of their own; it was suggested this was partly because they wanted to continue to do what they had always done, and didn't like the 'disruptor' effect of PIECCE's work.

ENABLERS

There is a shared sense of mission across all sectors to improve quality of ECCE practitioner training and professionalisation for the benefit of ECD, and a shared sense of collaboration as a value-based activity.

Existing relationships between individuals and organisations from different sectors are a key enabler.

The will to collaborate and the commitment to the process on behalf of the relevant institutions/ organisations (and their leadership) is vital.

Benefits and Learnings

- There is now a greatly increased understanding of the different kinds of ECCE teacher training and the different kinds of qualifications that are offered in different sectors.
- The collaborative nature of the project has also allayed some of the suspicions the different sectors (NGOs, TVETs and HEIs) have had of each other: **for example**, that HEIs don't understand what happens at lower levels; and that they will 'take away' some of the TVET or NGO provision. It was acknowledged, however, that this might be limited to the immediate PIECCE partners; ECD silos can't be undone overnight.
- There is also a better understanding of where different kinds of expertise sit in the ECD field. **For example**, the practical experience NGOs have had of implementing WIL can inform any re-designing of the teaching practice component in initial teacher education in HEIs. Another example is the capacity-building that has gone on between some of the universities involved in the core and wider consortium. Whereas initially issues of expertise tended to be

<p>about blaming, now it is about sharing different strengths and weaknesses in different sectors or partners.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaborative relationships through a project can provide the basis for partnerships in delivery going forward, whether these are to do with implementation of WIL or different research opportunities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Collaboration through this project will be an enabler for future conversations and agreements about access. Example: a forum for discussions around alignments is emerging through the articulation roundtable event.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The process has surfaced a number of issues that were previously hidden. Even if ‘professionalisation’ ultimately comes about through imposition (through policy and the creation of a framework), it is the beginning of breaking down walls between the sectors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The benefits of collaboration (as opposed to some of its recognisable drawbacks) have become more apparent over time.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Specific sectoral dynamics, such as those that affect TVET colleges, can affect our ability to collaborate.

<p>PIECE Component 3: COMMUNICATION AND TASK TEAMS</p>
<p>BARRIERS</p>
<p>People frequently don’t respond to emails, but some of these require joint decision-making. Even if an individual feels she doesn’t have a contribution to make, she should still respond, as this is an aspect of accountability and participation.</p>
<p>Different levels of expertise and comfort with using Google Drive sometimes means that people don’t participate in the comment process. And those who do comment sometimes felt that there is no feedback on their comments.</p>
<p>Priorities, time pressures and changed deadlines sometimes undermine communication, especially in relation to task team work.</p>
<p>Untested assumptions about capacity or expertise of partners can sometimes lead to different expectations about deliverables, which in turn can cause discomfort.</p>
<p>Is it collaboration if some give more input into a task team product than others? How do we address different levels of skill, commitment or capacity in a collaborative venture?</p>
<p>ENABLERS</p>
<p>Google Drive should be an enabler, and there has been some progress in terms of uptake, usage and</p>

sharing of documentation.
The development of templates for recording and reporting has kept some consistency and accountability in relation to internal communications.
The process of developing an internal and an external Communications Strategy (rather than having an end product ready-made) and setting this out in a Knowledge Management Guide has itself been useful in terms of sharing protocols and decision-making on knowledge products.
Face-to-face interactions through task team workshops and discussions are clearly vital, and essential to set up any work done between meetings.
Benefits and Learnings
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ It is important to have a clear brief and guidelines for task teams, and to have time to develop and discuss these jointly. Discussion of the balance between individual and group work, and the different levels of expertise that may exist in the consortium, need to be held up front and openly. However, this process itself takes time, and the trust to do this may only develop over time within the project process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Reflecting on the first task team process led to improvements in the second task team process.

Reflection Session 3 (Wider Consortium): July Mid-Term Review 09-07-2018

The focus of this session was to consider how collaboration works at different levels. The brief for discussion is given below.

Discuss the benefits (or not) of collaboration for developing a standardised Programme Framework in the ECD sector.

What have the benefits of collaboration been:

- for you as an individual?
- for your organisation/ institution?
- for the wider consortium as a multi-stakeholder group?
- For the sector? What three key lessons on collaboration in ECCE can we share with the sector?

Here are some examples of observations made.

Individuals:

- Individuals sometimes felt isolated when back at their institutions, and over-burdened in that they were not released from their regular responsibilities in order to take part in PIECCE and TEECEP.

- Most people felt that benefits outweighed any negative impacts: the capacity-building aspect was stressed by a number of individuals, especially novice academics; and growth in both conceptual understanding and technical expertise (e.g. in writing programme outcomes) was noted.

Institutional/ organisational level:

- The key takeaway from this discussion (mainly from HEIs) was that there is a disjuncture between participants in this collaboration and their colleagues and management back at the institution. This disjuncture is linked to communication issues, and the lack of an underpinning change process. It was also noted, though, that a lot of these institutional issues related to the big picture context, and the pressure under which HEIs find themselves.
- On the plus side, institutions have benefitted from the personal relationships and expanded networks that collaboration have brought: for example, participants have started drawing on each other as external examiners.
- One possible lesson is the need to make expectations about both individual and institutional contributions clear from the start.

Multi-stakeholder/ sectoral level:

- There is a general lack of integration between different projects in the field (the genesis of PIECCE and TEECEP being one example), and of shared research in the field.
- The lack of the TVET voice was seen as an ongoing issue, and sustainability of collaborative discussion in the field was a concern.

As there had been some staff turnover in participating HEIs, this session also served to bring newcomers into the collaborative agreements and processes.

'If we work together we bring in new perspectives beyond our own; we achieve more; we also achieve more quality.'



'It has sometimes been difficult, but we have learned to question the assumptions we make about others, and the assumptions we make about how much we know ourselves, from the collaboration reflection sessions.'

Reflection Session 4 (Wider Consortium): November Final Workshop 21-11-2019

Those present were asked to fill in the final Collaboration Tracking Tool (Tool 6), and to use this as a basis for general discussion on the impact of PIECCE. Some of the points made in the tool and in discussion include:

- The capacity building element for all involved in PIECCE has been a major highlight. Both NGOs and HEIs have learned from each other through collaborative interaction – e.g. some NGO partners increased their ECCE theoretical knowledge; some academics gained new insights into the realities of ECCE delivery and practice on the ground; novice academics acquired valuable experience through their participation.

- The hands-on involvement of the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), in its capacity as both a funder and a state authority, was central to cementing the links between the Programme Framework and future delivery of the qualifications by HEIs; this will promote sustainability for the work of PIECCE.
- Consortium members were surprised at how little they knew about each other's respective sectors at the start of the project, and growth in understanding the nature of teacher education at different levels was huge.
- In terms of growth of knowledge, the two areas most often cited (by both novice and experienced consortium members) were curriculum development and collaborative processes.
- Personal relationships in the consortium were developed, such as mentoring relationships or mutual sharing of expertise and knowledge outside the project.
- Collaboration has been beneficial in that their own insights into topics such as ECCE pedagogies or the competences required by an ECCE professional, had grown immeasurably.

Those who have been involved in PIECCE need to actively find ways of continuing to collaborate for the good of the sector and their own practice, and various PIECCE legacy issues were discussed. These include the following:

- It had been agreed in previous discussions that the PIECCE Community of Practice could not continue to exist as a separate community of practice. Many of the issues that concern PIECCE are addressed in the BRIDGE National ECD CoP, and interested consortium members can participate in this forum. Consortium members can also take forward specific ECCE teacher-educator and professionalisation issues highlighted by PIECCE into a working group attached to the BRIDGE ECD CoP.
- Systems building is an ongoing concern, and we need to remain aware of the implications of inserting ECCE into the existing Teacher Education system. This includes looking at the role of the TVETS and the Care Diplomas, and considering who is in the pool of potential HEI students for the Diploma and Degree.
- The nature of PIECCE outputs as Open Education Resources, and where these will be housed, has not been finalised.
- Future partnership possibilities need to be pursued: for example, between different HEIs, and between HEIs and NGOs for implementation of Work Integrated Learning (WIL)/teaching practice requirements.
- The concept of '**Think Collaboration**' should inform student participation in initial teacher education for ECCE students.
- Contextual realities can undermine collaborative participation: e.g. the lack of consistent involvement from the Technical and Vocational Training (TVET) sector was a big gap; involvement of regulatory bodies for qualifications was also sketchy, and many issues around alignment of qualifications will continue to affect professionalisation of the sector.

Of all the mechanisms put in place to promote and support collaboration, the Collaboration Reflection Sessions were the most crucial. Dedicating time and energy to explicit discussion of the highs and lows of collaboration meant that consortium members became much more aware of how to work with others (especially those from different institutional or other contexts) more effectively and efficiently, and how to be more inclusive. It must be noted that there was often some resistance to holding these sessions, and time taken away from content-driven work on other outputs was sometimes begrudged. Apart from dedicated time, another crucial condition for real reflection is to make sure that the session is carefully structured (with, for example, group activity briefs and guiding questions) and well facilitated. Simply having plenary discussions will not bring hidden concerns into the open.

‘PIECCE has improved my own ability and capacity to reflect, and I will take the practices of reflection and collaboration forward into the design and implementation of my own projects.’



‘Collaboration, though complex and difficult at times, offers the opportunity for richness in learning from others, not only about the subject, but about oneself and other people. It invariably leads to one’s own growth and growth in the sector.’

5. A generic menu of collaboration enablers and barriers

This report has set out what we learned about collaboration at different stages in a three-year process. Many of these lessons are specific to the nature of PIECCE, the consortium members and the sector itself. Clearly, however, we have accumulated enough experiential evidence to list some general enablers and barriers or disincentives that could apply to most collaborative interventions.

Collaboration doesn’t happen by itself just because a number of organisations are in a joint project. Effective collaboration is an explicit, intentional, time-consuming and defined process based on a number of drivers.

Collaboration enablers

- Find a champion to lead, structure and monitor collaboration
- Appoint a strong project manager committed to implementing collaboration processes
- Commit to shared principles and goals
- Make sure there is a common understanding of all terminology used in the project
- Allocate time for planning, implementing and reflecting on collaboration
- Structure and facilitate collaboration reflection sessions
- Allocate budget for collaborative interactions and collaborative platforms
- Talk about any issues or problems as they arise (e.g. expectations, assumptions about skills sets, roles and responsibilities, or about division of work)
- Develop trust between partners
- Nurture a collaborative mind-set in all consortium activities

- Get regular feedback on collaborative working processes from members
- Adapt processes that are not working
- Make sure that new entrants to the process are brought on board
- Track and report back on shifts in attitudes towards collaboration
- Set up and follow good communication protocols between partners
- Make sure that all financial and contractual agreements are well understood and well managed

Collaboration barriers or disincentives

- Lack of shared understandings (e.g. purpose, scope and goals of the project or of the collaboration)
- Lack of trust and openness (e.g. fear of blame, feelings of inadequacy)
- Unequal power relations (e.g. different perceptions of 'status' of some collaboration partners)
- Lack of time and resources
- Poor communication
- Different understandings of language and terminology
- Lack of buy-in and accountability (from individuals, or from management back at the parent organisation)
- Lack of fit between organisational cultures
- Imbalances between skills, or levels of effort put into the work
- Participant turnover (new entrants who were not part of the original agreements)
- Financial and contractual imbalances or blockages (e.g. scope creep, or delayed payments that have different impacts on different types of partners)



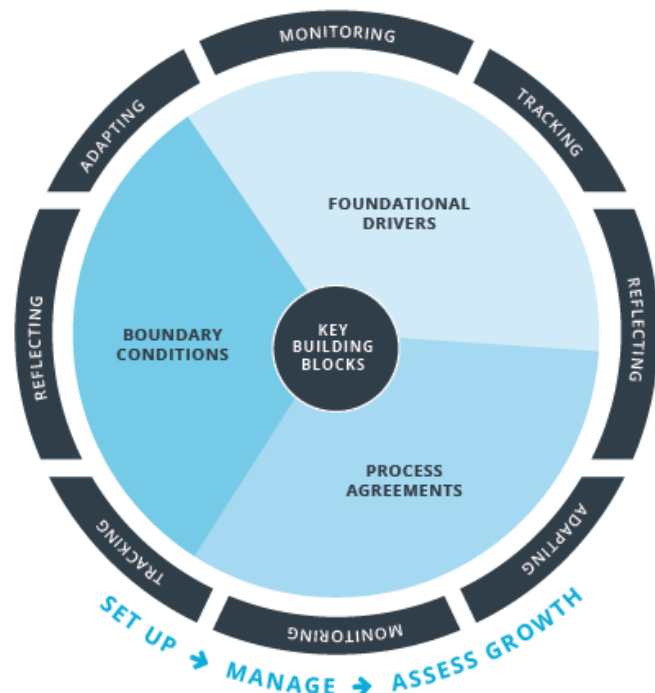
SECTION 6: BUILDING A COLLABORATION MODEL

The concluding section of this report summarises the major components of the PIECCE Collaboration Model for Programme Development. This model could be adapted for any collaborative project or intervention.

1. Key Actions

These actions underpin the collaboration model.

- Agree on and define a set of collaborative principles and values at the start of the project.
- Use reflective practice to build collaborative processes throughout the project.
- Value experiential and contextual evidence of collaboration.
- Monitor and adapt collaborative processes and practices as a result of reflections and feedback.



2. The Building Blocks

These are the components that need to be understood when designing the collaboration process.

- **Boundary conditions:** this refers to the context (e.g. characteristics of the sector) in which collaboration takes place, and the motivating factors (e.g. funding requirements; shared mission) for collaboration.
- **Foundational Drivers:** this refers to the factors that influence the way collaboration evolves. It is useful to define key drivers (such as the PIECCE drivers of *Quality, Inclusivity and Collaboration*) to shape a shared project mission, and to develop a common understanding of the principles, benefits and goals of collaboration for the project.
- **Process Agreements:** set out contractual, operational and relationship guidelines.
- **Stage planning:** this refers to understanding the collaboration as a developmental process which will go through different stages; plan for setting up, managing and adapting processes, and assessing growth in collaborative commitment.

3. Steps for effective collaborations

The key actions and building blocks given above are the foundation for a collaborative enterprise. The lessons learned from the PIECCE project also inform major elements of any collaborative project

design. The enablers and barriers identified in Section 5 are a useful checklist to promote awareness of possible pitfalls, so that these can be pre-empted in the project design stages.

These elements or 'steps' are given below. While they are loosely sequential, each block can be revisited and elements adjusted throughout the life of the project.



Concluding Remarks

PIECCE has been a multi-faceted and enriching experience for all those involved, and there is no doubt that the cross-sectoral, collaborative approach has both widened and deepened the content of the project outputs. As this report has shown, collaboration is a deliberate mission, requiring planning, dedicated time and budget. It is a continuum of effort that needs to be reflected on and adapted at different stages of a project. We hope that this model provides both conceptual and practical guidelines to those planning to undertake collaborative ventures in the future.

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