



PROJECT FOR INCLUSIVE EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE & EDUCATION

## WHAT IS PIECCE?

*PIECCE is the Project for Inclusive Early Childhood Care and Education. This is a multi-sectoral teacher education project that aims to professionalise the sector by developing a standardised framework for the training of ECD practitioners working in Birth to Four.*

Click [here](#) to read more about PIECCE



## The PIECCE Community of Practice

A PIECCE Resource

Overview of the first CoP meeting on 28 September 2017



higher education  
& training  
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# Background and introductions

## Purpose

The purpose of this community of practice (CoP) meeting was to introduce PIECCE to a wider circle of interested stakeholders, and invite participants to reflect on progress so far.

## Meeting Outcomes

By the end of the meeting participants:

- will be familiar with PIECCE
- understand the aims of the PIECCE CoP
- have shared their reflections on components of the programme framework
- have contributed to shaping the way forward for a sustainable CoP

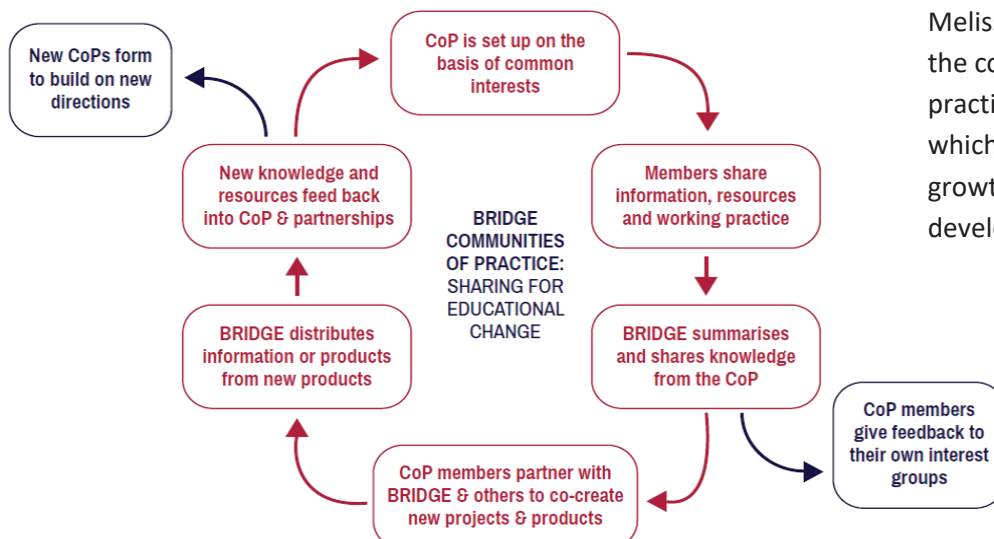
## Participants

Participants represented a cross-section of actors in the ECD sector, including training providers, NGOs, university and TVET representatives, materials developers and funders. Representatives from GDE and DHET were also present. The facilitator (Zarina Khan) introduced members of the PIECCE cross-sectoral consortium, as set out below. The list of participants at the community of practice meeting is in the Appendix.

Consortium members	
NGOs	Saide, BRIDGE, Ntataise, TREE, Rhodes Centre for Social Development
TVETs	False Bay College, South West Gauteng College
HEIs	UNISA, University of Pretoria, North West University, University of Fort Hare, Walter Sisulu University, Cape Peninsula University of Technology, University of the Orange Free State, University of the Witwatersrand and University of Kwa-Zulu Natal.

# Benefits of communities of practice

## HOW BRIDGE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE WORK



Melissa King from BRIDGE spoke to the concept of communities of practice (CoPs) and the ways in which they support professional growth and contribute to the development of a sector.

A Community of Practice (CoP) is established on the basis of a common interest and shared learning goals in relation to that interest. The purpose of a CoP is to connect people in the spirit of learning, knowledge sharing and collaboration. A CoP has a cycle of growth in that networks and collaborative partnerships can emerge from it; a CoP's activities can also have a strategic impact on a sector through interrogation and engagement with sector policies; and finally, it can lead to increased self-reflection, improved expertise and knowledgeability for individual members. Below are some observations from CoP members. For further discussion of the benefits of CoPs, [view the BRIDGE video here](#).

'When we do new work we have to stay open to possibility: CoPs help us break our own patterns and learn from alternative approaches.' [Pre-service Teacher Development CoP]

'The CoP has connected me with organisations whose work complements our core work, but adds a different dimension which we need in our programmes.' [ECD CoP]

## PIECCE: Context & purpose of the PIECCE CoP

Sheila Drew from Saide, as the project manager for the PIECCE consortium, provided an overview of the project outcomes and its genesis. The objective of the project is to develop standardised programme frameworks for the ECCE Diploma and B Ed at Levels 6 and 7, in support of professionalisation of ECD.



### OUTPUT 1

A Collaboration Process Model for programme development



### OUTPUT 2

A research review of fitness for purpose of a representative selection of existing ECD and related capacity building programmes

Sheila explained that Output 1 is ongoing, while Output 2 has been completed as a baseline to inform further work. Output 3 was the focus of this CoP meeting.

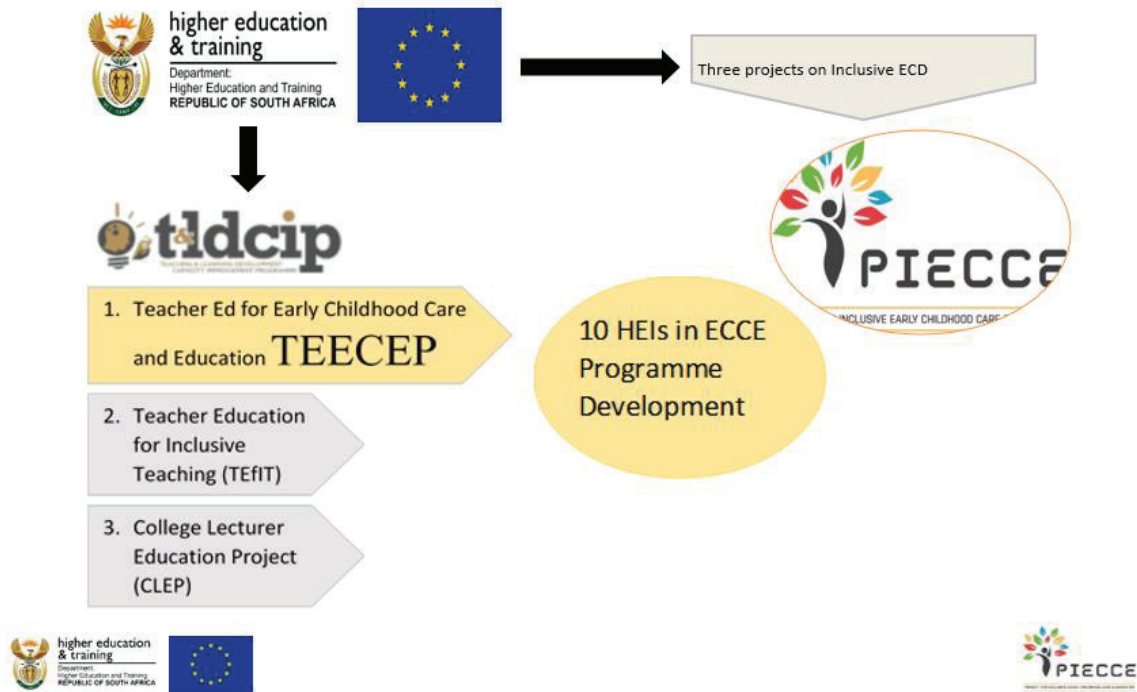


### OUTPUT 3

A Standardised Programme Framework and set of support materials

PIECCE is one of three Lots in the TEECEP (Teacher Education for Early Childhood Care and Education), which in turn falls under TLDCIP (Teaching and Learning Development Capacity Improvement Programme). This overall teacher education capacity building project is funded by the European Union and the Department of Higher Education.

## PIECCE in context



PIECCE believes in talking to those beyond the consortium, and we are in the process of mapping stakeholders. This stakeholder map will include bodies such as HEQC, SAQA, QCTO, SACE, ETDP SETA, DPME, DSD, DBE, DHET, Treasury, DoH, practitioners, NGOs (including NECDA, ECD Congress), TVETs, other EU projects, NDA, HSRC, SARAECE, SSPC, Donor Forum and others.



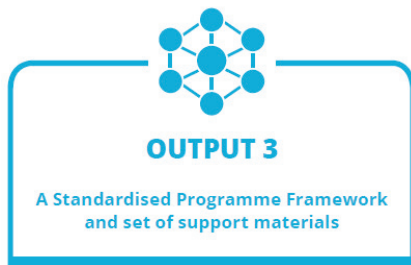
## The purpose of the PIECCE CoP

While PIECCE is itself a multi-stakeholder consortium, the PIECCE CoP is one mechanism through which the project can communicate with a larger circle of stakeholders. The CoP provides an opportunity to cut across the barriers and gorges that have been created in the ECD sector, and provide a space in which issues such as quality training and progression pathways in ECCE teacher education can be debated. At the very least, information about articulation between training and qualification pathways can be shared between those working at different levels, namely NGOs, training providers, TVETs and HEIs.

Input into the PIECCE outputs themselves may, however, be limited; PIECCE works within the constraints of a funded project, and timelines for requirements for universities to submit their programmes for registration have been set by DHET and the HEQC, so that the first intake of students for the new diploma and degree can happen in 2019. Going forward, this community of practice can consider its role in addressing ECCE teacher education issues in various ways. Practitioners as a broad group have an opportunity to engage policy makers such as DBE, DHET and QCTO. In addition, the CoP should be seen as a gathering for engaging critically with future directions for supporting and professionalising practitioners in the sector. It is a forum in which we can challenge ourselves to have new ideas: ideas about children, ideas about ECD, ideas about what kind of practitioners and teachers we want, ideas about how to support practitioners and teachers to be the best they can be, ideas about how to make a difference to practice in ECD sites in a variety of contexts.

Further discussion about how the CoP could engage with PIECCE is included in the final section below.

## PIECCE: Overview of the Programme Framework



A framework is not the same as a programme or a curriculum, but is a high level scaffold which gives guidance on common key principles, components and features to those who will design programmes leading to a qualification. The framework needs to set a standard, but also needs to be flexible, especially as programmes will be implemented in different contexts with different needs.

### Purpose and Target Audience

- Provide guidance on the design and implementation of programmes for birth to four Diploma (Level 6) and BEd (Level 7).
- Primarily teacher educators and programme designers
- Secondarily student teachers, teachers
- Indirectly children
- Also indirectly other stakeholders in ECD sector



Some of the framework components were given in the original EU brief and proposal, but as the consortium undertook its research review and began its framework discussions, other elements began to emerge. Currently the components are as follows:

Framework components	Example elements
<b>Principles</b>	What kind of teacher do we want to develop? What kind of child? What are the core values of the framework?
<b>Knowledge and practice standards</b>	What kinds of competencies do ECCE educators require? How can we link these standards to applied practice?
<b>Academic support/developmental integration</b>	What does it consist of? Is it integrated or stand alone?
<b>Work Integrated Learning</b>	What models are feasible? What are the implementation implications?
<b>Recognition of Prior Learning</b>	For access and/or for credit? What forms of RPL assessment are viable?
<b>Indigenous knowledge and African perspectives</b>	How do we incorporate African world views and values? How do we address multilingualism?
<b>Assessment strategy</b>	What forms of formative and summative assessment are appropriate?
<b>Pedagogy</b>	How do our teacher educators model the pedagogy (open, activity-based pedagogies) we want our ECCE educators to use with the children?
<b>Mode of delivery</b>	How do we accommodate different delivery modes and support students along the way? What are the issues of access and feedback?
<b>Articulation and alignment</b>	How can this framework be informed by issues arising in prior training at lower levels, and how can lower levels prepare trainees for higher education?
<b>Administration and planning</b>	What are the issues in relation to human resources, registration and fees?
<b>Technology</b>	Can we incorporate pedagogical use of technology, with sufficient access and support?
<b>Resources</b>	How do we ensure that all the resources are engaging, supporting and relevant?

Both the concepts of inclusivity and of quality run through the framework, taking into account different needs in different contexts. The framework is also underpinned by open learning principles, which help us to consider the many components of programme design that go beyond simple delivery or instruction.

Comments made by CoP participants in response to the presentations have been summarised in other sections of this report.

## Rotation session: group discussions on framework components

Due to numbers and time limitations, rotation-style group discussions were held with team leaders of selected task teams. Team leaders gave brief verbal inputs at their tables on key features of the work done so far in their task teams, drawing on the research review and current work. Below are summarised points of issues raised in discussion.

[Click here](#) to link to the Research Review Knowledge product, which will also take you to the main Baseline Research Review Report.

Task team groups were as follows:

- Knowledge & Practice Standards and Curriculum (Hasina Ebrahim, UNISA)
- Work Integrated Learning (Susan Greyling, North West University)
- Academic Support/ Developmental education (Sarah McGuigan, Ntataise)
- Recognition of Prior Learning (Mary Clasquin-Johnson, UNISA)
- Assessment Strategy (Namhla Sotuku, University of Fort Hare)
- Indigenous knowledge, African Perspectives (Blanche Ndlovu, University of Kwazulu-Natal)



#### 1. Knowledge & Practice Standards and Curriculum (Hasina Ebrahim, UNISA)

- Competency-based standards reflect what teachers need to know and what they need to be able to do. It is important that the field has a shared understanding of these two dimensions.
- Knowledge and practice standards are organised around themes:
  - \*professional knowledge [knowing],
  - \*professional practice [doing] and
  - \*professional mindset and responsibilities.
- While standards are needed in teacher education in order to harmonise a fragmented field, the ECD sector does not want formal schooling standards imposed on it. Standards need to be understood and shared in such a way that they are fluid and process-based.
- Do we have a shared understanding of what is meant by 'professionalising' the ECD sector? Further debate is needed on this, and the framework should possibly include a more explicit understanding of professionalism.

- We don't want technical teachers who depend on scripted lessons. We want programmes that will develop thinking, caring and sensitive teachers first.
- The standards could be used to inform a code of ethics for ECCE practitioners and educators.
- Where in this model are we training the student to be the next generation mentor for the next generation of student teachers? Foregrounding a mentoring role could perhaps be unpacked further through Core Competency 1 ('Becoming a professional by paying attention to mindset, roles and responsibilities') and Core Competency 10 ('Showing basic leadership, management and administration skills').
- The standards are aimed at achieving a mindset shift from a doer to an agent of change.
- Everyone needs to understand the policy on Birth to Four in relation to the National Curriculum Framework.

## **2. Academic Support/ Developmental Education (Sarah McGuigan, Ntataise)**

- Academic support needs to happen not only on campus when students are studying the theoretical aspects of a programme, but in each component of the qualification, including work integrated learning.
- Those students going through an RPL process also require academic support.
- A number of participants expressed the view that there are insufficient mentors on site, and that those who are there frequently don't know enough or know how to provide academic support.
- There should be guidelines for a phased approach to academic support up the continuum from NQF Level 4 upwards, so that there is some consistency.
- However, not every Level 4 or 5 student will go on to do a degree; different strategies may be needed for different kinds of students.
- Student teachers often complain that what they learn in theory is not what they experience in practice: following on from this, new entrants also seem to require some kind of support once they are placed. Perhaps the framework should include some advice on seeking support once placed, for example through professional learning communities and SACE.
- We have to be clear on what we expect students to know and be able to do on entry into a Level 6. This benchmark may be one thing now (until incoming students have been through a better quality Level 4 or Level 5) and change later.
- Should the framework include some form of monitoring of academic support?

## **3. Work Integrated Learning (Susan Greyling, NWU)**

- There may need to be different strategies for students who enrol as new, full-time students and those who are already in-service practitioners at a site.
- The framework could include a component that helps students support centres with registrations, possibly as part of their community work component.
- Collaboration and partnership with both NGOs that work with sites and with DSD will be key to the WIL process. There are opportunities for partnerships where cadres of NGO trainers / mentors are paid to do the mentorship work with HEIs.
- Training of mentors needs to be foregrounded.
- There may be different categories of mentors such as in-house mentors and travelling mentors.
- There is general agreement that mentorship is a vital aspect of WIL, but equally that there are not enough mentors around with the appropriate skills. We need to think about other ways of supplementing mentorship by helping students support each other in mini communities of practice, including using technology.
- Play groups and home visitors should not be forgotten about.



#### **4. Recognition of Prior Learning (Mary Clasquin-Johnson, UNISA)**

- Different institutions generally have different models and approaches to RPL, even across faculties. RPL has huge human resource and financial implications. PIECEE is keen to motivate RPL for both admissions and for credits, on the principle that an individual should not be forced to relearn what she already knows.
- In the context of ECD as a fragmented sector without a clearly defined career pathway, and where many practitioners in the birth to 4 space have had informal and workplace-based training, there is a recognition that many ECD practitioners as potential candidates need to be classified as mature students.
- Traditional portfolio-based RPL approaches demand high academic literacy skills, and this is an issue as many practitioners have limited English abilities, especially in the academic sense. Alternatives such as locally-based observations and the use of mentors and assessors in provinces need to be considered. Institutions may need to collaborate on such alternative approaches.
- Many of those practitioners who have achieved an NQF Level 4 ECD qualification will not be interested in going further. However, if the sector is professionalised and salary structures are improved so that they are equivalent to teacher scales there may be more uptake. These are conversations that need to be held with DBE; if ECD practitioners are not going to get any benefit from going further in their studies, why should they bother? There is a danger of ending up with an elitist group of qualified personnel who work in the private sector only.
- Will the Diploma become a minimum requirement for ECD programme registration (as has been implemented for Grade R)?
- Many ECD practitioners have completed short skills-based programmes. Organisations funding ECD training would greatly appreciate it if RPL could award credits for short learning programmes and informal workplace training, so that top-up training towards the Diploma becomes more affordable for them, and of shorter duration for their beneficiaries.

#### **5. Assessment Strategy (Namhla Sotuku, University of Fort Hare)**

- We need to acknowledge that contexts, backgrounds and learning styles differ, and for this reason an assessment strategy should try to take into account the diversity of the students. This means that there should be a multi-dimensional approach (e.g. going beyond written tests, and considering the use of oral assessments, journaling and so on).
- Any assessment model should include the range of baseline and diagnostic assessments, formative assessments and summative assessments.
- It needs to be acknowledged that multi-dimensional and performance-based approaches are time consuming, and bring in difficulties around moderation and quality assurance against a common standard.
- The knowledge and practice standards could help with the common standard as they are linked to quality indicators that describe criteria for professional practice. Each module should have learning outcomes linked to assessment criteria.
- Assessment should include feedback to students and promote self-reflection.
- There needs to be a revision cycle in an assessment strategy.
- The framework itself needs to give as much guidance as possible to programme developers; how 'common' will the assessment approach as spelled out in the framework be across different higher education programmes?

## 6. Indigenous knowledge, African Perspectives (Blanche Ndlovu, UKZN)

- What does the concept of 'indigenous knowledge' mean in teacher education? There will be links to principles of 'Ubuntu', for example.
- This will also relate to the inclusion of different cultural understandings and practices, the insights of the parent community, as well as support for multi-lingualism. The team will need to interrogate ideas around the nature of children and their developmental pathways and then try to frame these in the South African context.
- What does it mean to view technology through an African perspective?
- An understanding of different cultures will be very important in teacher training: this ranges from the way children play games to the way they interact with their peers.
- The framework will need to include guidelines for curriculum designers and for programme implementers working in teacher education.

## Plenary issues

Some key issues raised in plenary are summarised below.

### Birth to Four Qualifications Policy and Articulation Issues

- The RTOs and other NGOs who train practitioners are in essence the pipeline for HEIs in terms of ECD practitioners. They need to be heard in terms of the practical direction they can give in relation to admission policies.
- The **Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators** (Government Gazette No. 40750, 31 March 2017) deals with qualification issues such as knowledge mix, credit values, minimum requirements for entry and for WIL, and so on. It also sets out in detail how the proposed new qualifications articulate with current and historical qualifications (see Appendix to the policy).
- While we can recognise that there is a policy that speaks to articulation and qualifications, there are still questions around implementation mechanisms in terms of the articulation of HE qualifications with TVET offerings and with occupational qualifications which fall outside the DHET policy. DHET manages and monitors the implementation of the policy through evaluating the relevant programmes, which would include admission requirements.
- The policy made allowance for an ECCE educator qualification at NQF Level 5, as this is recognised as a gap in the transition process from occupational and legacy qualifications into the diploma and degree pathways. We need to apply more thought around the role and nature of such a qualification.

[Click here](#) to link to the Policy on Minimum Requirements for HE Qualifications in ECCE

[Click here](#) for a report on a panel discussion on qualification pathways held at the Ntataise Networking Conference

[Click here](#) for a presentation on Education Studies at TVET Colleges given at a PIECCE Consortium meeting

### Points on pedagogy

- Many participants felt that there were synergies between the approaches presented by PIECCE and their own work. The 10 competencies discussed resonated with other approaches of organisations in the room.

- The idea of **working with** the child rather than **talking to** the child was stressed.
- Gaps in the competence of teachers for the early years that have been identified in research and from practice include the teaching of early literacy and numeracy.



## Next steps

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A number of suggestions regarding feedback to PIECCE were made during the meeting. These included the use of Facebook or any other online comment platforms; the setting up of interest groups; the development of guidelines for feedback from the consortium itself; and the use of other forums to give input.

Any content ideas that have come up in this CoP meeting will be taken back to task teams for consideration. Suggestions for further feedback processes will inform the consortium's strategy for ongoing consultation, in terms of what is manageable within the project and what goes beyond the project. As noted above, PIECCE is a funded project that has specific outputs and deliverables within fairly tight time frames; the consortium needs to find a balance between these constraints and its desire to be inclusive. It also needs to develop a clear understanding of the role of the PIECCE CoP in support of PIECCE itself, and consider relationships with other networks or communities of practice. The Draft Programme Framework will be circulated to those present before the end of the year, with a process for comment.

Other ideas regarding the role the PIECCE CoP could play in the sector going forward include:

- Giving input into the next stage of PIECCE, in relation to the exemplar support materials to be developed.
- Continuing discussions on articulation and alignment, especially with regard to the pipeline into the Diploma and Degree that is the focus of PIECCE.
- Exploring partnerships between HEIs and NGOs regarding the delivery of WIL.
- Reflecting on teacher education issues, in the context of professionalising the sector.
- Managing useful links or overlaps with other ECD forums.

There will be another PIECCE CoP meeting in 2018. Finally, all PIECCE information and knowledge products can be found on the [SARAECE website](#), on the [PIECCE Facebook page](#), and accessed through the [BRIDGE website](#).

**Meeting Participants:**

<b>First name</b>	<b>Surname</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
Adam	Ely	CDTC
Andrea	Sciarappa	Tools for Schools
Anuschka	Mouton	PIFF
Benita	Taylor	NWU
Blanche	Ndlovu	University of KwaZulu Natal
Christabel Dudu	Mantlana	Walter Sisulu University
Christali	Botha	MGSL
CLAUDINE	STORBECK	Wits Centre for Deaf Studies
Colwyn	Martin	University of the Free State
Giulietta	Harrison	Rhodes University
hasina	ebrahim	unisa
Jean	Phoswa	mothers2mothers
Kaley	Le Mottee	BRIDGE
Keshni	Bipath	University of Pretoria
Kgaugelo	Chauke	VVOB
lorayne	excell	Wits
Mandlenkosi	Ndukula	QCTO
Marelize	Minnaar	False Bay TVET College
Mari	Payne	UNICEF
Mary	Clasquin-Johnson	UNISA
Matshediso	Modise	University of South Africa
Megan	Blair	Earlybird Educare@Work
Melissa	King	BRIDGE
Monica	Stach	Cotlands
Naseema	Shaik	Cape Peninsula University of Technology
Mumsy	Boikanyo	Northwest university
Namhla	Sotuku	University of Fort Hare
Natalie	Gröss	South African Montessori Association
Nerina	Nel	Children's disABILITY Training Centre
Norma	Rudolph	
Rex	Molefe	Motheo Training Institute Trust
Riette	Els	READ
Ruby	Motaung	DHET
Sarah	Mc Guigan	Ntataise

Sharon	Caldwell	REAL Learning
Sheila	Drew	Saide
Shelley	O'Carroll	Word Works
SITHEMBINKOSI	DAWUTSHUMA	Topsy Foundation
sizakele	Mphatsoe	Kagiso Trust
Sophia	De Beer	consultant
Susan	Greyling	NWU
Tanya	Nel	ECD Upliftment Projects
Terry	Morgan	Thusanang Trust
Thembi	Phala	UNISA
THOBEKA	Matshoba	University of Fort Hare
Tsakane	Baloyi	Gauteng Education
Venessa	T Hart	Cotlands
Vuyiswa	Ncontsa	BRIDGE
Wondra	Pretorius	READ Educational Trust
Zarina	Khan	
Zelda	Adendorff	DHET

