



## PIECCE Theory of Change

### Why have a Theory of Change?

In our submission to the EU, we provided a Log Frame Analysis which describes the Overall Objective (Impact), the Specific objective (Outcome), the three Outputs and the activities associated with these. We also provided a 'description of the action'.

In her paper 'Differences between the Theory of Change and the Logic Model', Ann-Murray Brown says that "The ToC [theory of change] gives the 'big picture' and summarises work at a strategic level, while a logical framework illustrates a programme (implementation) level understanding of the change process." (Brown, 2016)

In comparing the ToC and the logical framework she also says that a theory of change "... gives focus to the complex social, economic, political and institutional processes that underlie societal change." (Brown, 2016) This explains why a ToC can often be very complex and 'messy', whereas a logical frame is neat and tidy, with no cyclical processes or feedback loops.

The PIECCE project is a complex project with many components, and is aiming to 'make a difference' to how early childhood teachers are taught and, in turn, teach young children. We want to engage collaboratively with complex concepts of quality, inclusivity and collaboration.

### Theory of Change and M&E

Comic Relief is a UK-based charity and funder. In their article 'Comic Relief and Theory of Change' they describe a theory of change as

*"... a very powerful learning lens, which makes us ask ourselves and others simple but important questions about what we are doing and why, helping us to explore and make explicit our understanding of how change happens – the pathways, factors and relationships that bring and sustain change in different contexts. We believe it helps us all to discuss, plan for and measure change, enabling us to develop more clarity and effectiveness in our approach and a clear framework for monitoring and evaluation. It can also help us strengthen our organisations, partnerships and communication."*

[Comic Relief and Theory of Change, August 2011]

As part of our submission to the EU we indicated that we would employ a Participatory Action Research approach in the project, and that this would form the heart of our Monitoring and Evaluation strategy. We believe that developing a more robust theory of change will help us to show the 'why' and the 'how' of the difference we want to make, and not just the 'what' captured by our Log Frame.

In the full application that we submitted to the EU we do capture some of the complexity of the context in which we will be doing this work. In the following we elaborate on the 'why' of our contribution to change, linked back to the objectives and outputs described in the Log Frame, and begin to outline how we think we will know and measure whether we can or have made a difference. To do this we will frame some 'learning questions' around our three key factors for change, and develop a small set of indicators for each factor that are specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time bound. The process and structure suggested by Comic Relief (2011) provides us with an opportunity to apply and reflect on our understanding of the change we want to make, over a period of time and in different ways.

## **Working for change**

In their paper 'The Truth of the Work: Theories of Change in a changing world' (2017) Reeler and van Blerk of the Community Development Resource Association (CDRA) in Cape Town, South Africa caution us against making assumptions and focusing on the predictable and projectable at the expense of 'working respectfully and thoughtfully with the existing forces of change'. They talk about participation and complexity as part of 'building theory beyond empiricism', where enquiry is not separate from action, and where learning is geared towards better practice. "The complexity of social change requires participation, not only because people have the right to be central to their own change process but also for their substantial and critical inputs to offer along the way ... Practice, then, is not just about the doing but also the learning and theorising of all actors." In this sort of paradigm, it is possible that even the objectives we have set for ourselves in this project might change.

Through this project perhaps we can become what Reeler and van Blerk call a "... curious, collective culture, (in which) learning can happen amongst all actors, ..." (Reeler & van Blerk, 2017).

## **1. The context for change**

### **1.1 Who are we aiming to support and why?**

We are aiming to support primarily ECD practitioners (qualifications beyond the Level 5 qualification in the occupational stream) and/or matriculants (initial teacher education) to get access to higher education 0-4 teacher qualification. Access means:

- RPL
- Alignment and articulation
- Quality programme that meets their needs
- Academic development and support
- Recommendations for quality Level 5 ECD programmes and Foundational Learning programmes
- Quality materials that support and guide their learning

But also:

- Teacher educators (frameworks to support the design of institutional programmes, exemplar learning materials to support students and to support teacher educators in delivery of programmes)
- TVET lecturers / ECD trainers (to upgrade their own qualifications)

And indirectly,

- TVET colleges and NGOs (potentially form partnerships for delivery of programmes)
- Children, and
- parents

## **1.2 Who are the groups, and what are the structures and processes that influence change in the target group's lives?**

No accredited programmes in higher education for practitioners in birth-4 so frameworks will support and facilitate new programmes, but only if programme designers have a voice.

In order to ensure alignment, draw on experience of existing trainers / training organisations / TVET colleges. Therefore, involve NGOs and ETDPA SETA / QCTO to give them a voice.

Improve quality of Level 5, specifically foundational learning (for academic learning)

## **2. Our project's contribution to change**

### **2.1 Long-term change we wish to see**

Through this project we want to contribute towards the professionalization of the ECD sector by increasing access for ECD practitioners to quality birth-4 programmes in Higher Education (HE) in South Africa.

We want to see to what extent a collaborative, research-based approach leads to the development of high quality, inclusive standardised programme frameworks for a Diploma and a Degree in ECCE specifically. We also want to explore the implications of this approach more broadly for being part of building a system for ECCE teacher education in South Africa.

### **Specific objective(s): Outcome(s)**

Standardised Programme Frameworks for Diploma ECCE at Level 6 and Bed ECCE at Level 7.

### **Outputs:**

1. A Collaboration Process Framework that informs programme development.
2. A research review of fitness for purpose of a representative selection of existing ECD and related capacity building programmes.
3. A set of support materials for selected modules of the Level 6 Diploma in ECCE based on the standardised framework, produced as Open Educational Resources (OER).

## **2.2 Key Factors for Change, and Learnings Questions**

### **2.2.1 Collaboration**

This is a collaborative partnership with higher education institutions (HEIs) and Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) Colleges, and ECD non-government organisations (NGOs). We believe that each role player has particular strengths and will add value to the project.

- The non-government organisation (NGO) sector has offered teacher education training for many years, more recently in the occupational space, and has done so through practical and innovative methods close to the communities that they serve. Accreditation, funding and infrastructure have, however, been a challenge.
- The TVET Colleges are relatively new to the sector, but have facilities, infrastructure and a reach in the community that will be of advantage in ECD programme delivery.
- Public HEIs are 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. They are familiar with the requirements for higher study, and the importance of researching practice. Located in main centres, and with human resource challenges, they need the contribution of the other role players to deliver practically relevant, well-supported programmes at the scale required.

Collaboration is a central feature of this project, based on the idea that different stakeholders can bring in different perspectives so that the final product is inclusive. Given that ECD has been a fragmented field, we believe that a collaborative approach to programme design will help develop common understandings and standards to benefit the field. We want to ensure that this collaboration is built on the idea of equal partnerships, on the idea of shared/common understandings, and on reaching agreement as a group. Collaboration is a triggering process which extends our views and takes our thinking as individuals to the next level.

This aspect of PIECCE is based on the assumption that we can successfully negotiate short term partner relationships that hold together for the duration of the project. We will need to reach agreement between all the stakeholders on roles and responsibilities within PIECCE. Over the life of the project we will need to find ways of developing and sustaining the relationships. We are bound to confront questions such as, “What if we cannot agree?”, “What if we don’t have sufficient time to have the conversations that are required?”, “What if some of the partners withdraw from the project?”, and so on.

The concept of collaboration is key to the whole project. If our structures and processes are not clear and supportive of collaboration we run the risk of not succeeding in reaching a common understanding of our key drivers of inclusivity and quality, and therefore of not producing quality, inclusive programme frameworks.

### **2.2.2 Inclusivity**

The design and development of the frameworks for the new qualifications will be informed by philosophical underpinnings that are relevant to early childhood and inclusive education. The centrality of the learner within the learning process will be emphasised. The principles of inclusive education and the need to prepare a critically reflective workforce in early childhood will also inform the design and development of the new qualification. This is important if we want to support the personal and professional development of each student, to foster innovation, critical thinking, ethical and professional practice in different situational realities.

We need to be mindful of the context of un- and under-qualified practitioners.

Our main assumption is that existing education programmes don’t prepare teachers for increasing diversity, and that exclusion practices are common in current early childhood development. This leads to children who are referred too quickly out to special schools and experts. Our perception is that teachers do not always agree that dealing with learners with barriers/ special needs should be another one of their responsibilities. Our goal should be ‘infusing inclusive practices in every aspect of learning’ – whatever the subject.

In order to address this the programmes will have to provide students with an understanding of National and international policies and guidelines (such as SIAS, DBE etc) on inclusive education, and help students to acquire certain skills related to inclusive education, such as early screening

identification, assessment and support (intervention). But in order to adopt a holistic approach to addressing inclusivity in the programmes we will need to help students to interrogate the 'why'. We need to embed into our programmes ways of ensuring that students have the right approach to inclusion and diversity. This is about a change in attitude as well as practice.

Our understanding of what 'inclusivity' means will be developed and agreed upon over the courses of the project. We start off thinking that it includes ideas such as practices, processes, curriculum and identities that have a collective strength, with respect for human rights, and which value difference not deficit. Our challenge is to agree on, and extend our collective understanding of inclusivity, and find ways of modelling this to students in the programmes.

Some of the questions that we are likely to confront are "What if we cannot reach a collective understanding of inclusivity?", "How can we build into the programmes ways of supporting students and teachers to adopt inclusive attitudes and practices in classrooms?", "How can we support teacher educators / trainers to model inclusive practice with their students?", "Is it important for us to model inclusive practice within PIECCE?", and many more.

### **2.2.3 Quality**

Not only are we talking about quality teaching for young children, but also what constitutes quality programmes and quality support materials. So, we will need to develop a common understanding of what quality means in ECD, and develop a set of criteria that will inform how we design the research and research tools, and the programme frameworks and support materials.

There is a difference between the general and ECD specific understandings of quality with the birth to four sector being the Cinderella of the group and often functioning in the most marginalised sectors of the community. We need to professionalise and provide a clear career path for the ECD sector especially at birth to four. This will be dependent on providing a quality ECD framework that draws from multiple disciplines and is adaptable.

We believe that the players in PIECCE have a wide range of expertise in different contexts that will enable us to design and develop a blend of practical, theoretical, contextually appropriate and accessible programmes and support materials that have reach into the communities they are intended to serve. We also believe that it is through this type of collaboration that we will find the best way to align and articulate the programmes within the qualifications system, allowing students to define a productive and professional qualifications pathway.

We run similar risks here as we do for inclusivity, of not being able to reach a common understanding of quality and what the means for the design of programmes and materials. It is also a tall order to define quality in a way that is inclusive of all contexts of all students, and convey those ideas in a programme framework.

### 3. Applying our Theory of Change

The Log Frame describes the specifics of what the project will do. In order to help us reflect on how we are applying our theory of change we have developed learning questions around the core elements that we believe will contribute to change ie collaboration, inclusivity and quality, to help us to track whether or not we are making progress towards the long-term outcome/s ie high quality, inclusive programme frameworks through collaborative, participatory action research.

We will explore these learning questions as part of an ongoing participatory action research approach to monitoring and evaluation of PIECCE.

To do this we have developed two or three indicators for each of the learning questions, and considered the inputs necessary to support the enquiry.

#### 3.1 Collaboration

##### Learning Question/s and indicators:

Learning question	Indicators
<p>1. How does <b>collaboration build consensus</b> on:</p> <p>1.1 what constitutes quality ECD;</p> <p>1.2 what constitutes the professionalisation of ECD practitioners;</p> <p>1.3 what inclusivity means in an ECD context.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreement is reached on the elements of quality in ECD.</li> <li>• This agreement is informed by multiple perspectives and shows cross-contextual understanding.</li> <li>• Agreement is reached on broad standards for practitioners.</li> <li>• The professional pathway for the practitioner is accessible in terms of entry and modes of delivery.</li> </ul>
<p>2. How does collaboration <b>improve relations, address silo thinking and lessen tensions</b> between different providers in the sector?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Historical tensions (e.g. competitiveness) between service providers are managed and negotiated within the consortium.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Practices and lessons learned are shared between different providers within and beyond the consortium.</li> <li>• A birth-4 Community of Practice convenes diverse ECD stakeholders who develop trust, common purpose and share practice for the reduction of duplication.</li> <li>• There is growing agreement on common standards.</li> </ul>
<p><b>3. What is the <b>scope</b> of this collaboration and how is it <b>sustained</b>?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal partnerships are maintained throughout the project.</li> <li>• Wider consultation is achieved through collaborative forums throughout the project.</li> <li>• The uptake and engagement of the project’s outputs by the wider sector via social media is monitored.</li> <li>• Post-project mechanisms for collaboration are set up (e.g. the Birth to 4 CoP).</li> <li>• Innovative storage, sharing and communication platforms are utilised during and beyond the project.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. <u>What are</u> (How do we <b>track</b>) <b>the benefits of and barriers</b> to a collaborative process for programme design for future applications?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Key principles and processes for collaboration are agreed on and adhered to.</li> <li>• Monitoring tools are used throughout the project.</li> <li>• Partners in the process feel engaged and empowered.</li> <li>• An informed model for collaboration (based on experiential learning, feedback and reflection) results from the process.</li> </ul>

**Inputs (how do we track ...):**

surveys, collaboration reports, reflection sessions

**Proposed responsibility:**

BRIDGE, Project Manager, full team

**3.2 Inclusivity**

**Learning Question/s and indicators:**

<b>Learning question</b>	<b>Indicators (for anti-bias approach and practice for equity inclusivity)</b>
1. How does infusing inclusive practices into every aspect of teaching and learning contribute to more flexible attitudes towards children?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Sameness - Category of differentiate, diversity, language, age, ability, culture, gender, race, class, generational differences</li></ul>
2. In what ways can inclusivity be infused into every aspect of an ECCE programme?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Knowledge, SKILLS, PROFESIONAL DISPOSITIONS/ attitudes and values= COMPETENCE = all years of study = integrated approach not just stand alone – richer competence.</li><li>• Tracking the curriculum/programme process through identifying whether the building blocks for competence are infused.</li><li>• Opportunities for awareness</li><li>• Opportunities for early identification</li><li>• Provide tools for appropriate actions e.g. modification, differentiate. Or too complex referral</li><li>• Working with the relevant roleplayers e.g. parents, specialist, district officials</li></ul>

**Inputs:**

research instruments, literature reviews, stakeholder seminars and consultations,

### Proposed responsibility:

Core Team [Saide (Project management, materials), BRIDGE (Collaboration), CSD (Research), UNISA (programme development)]; wider consortium through inclusive participation

### 3.3 Quality

#### Learning Question/s and indicators:

Learning question	Indicators
1. How do we arrive at a common understanding of quality in ECD/ECCE?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Agreement is reached on the elements of what defines quality.</li><li>• Quality is examined from multiple perspectives which are unpacked in the literature review.</li><li>• Broad standards for Practitioners/Teachers in the ECD/ECCE environment are determined and used to guide programme development.</li><li>• Literature is examined to assist in arriving at a common understanding. This is supported by the collaborative efforts of area specific task teams who will focus on topics such as WIL; RPL; Academic support and Norms &amp; Standards.</li><li>• Research is conducted to test current thinking which will inform the literature review and in turn inform the programme development</li></ul>
2. How do we develop quality criteria that take account of different contexts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Research will be conducted across training institutes namely HEI's; TVETs and NPOs to determine what the different contexts look like and how we can be flexible across contexts.</li><li>• Literature will be examined to determine case studies in different contexts.</li><li>• Students on programmes will be interviewed in focus groups to determine the needs of the different contexts.</li></ul>
3. How do we ensure that our understanding of quality is infused into the programme design?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arising from the empirical research will be a collaborative decision to examine programmes that are deemed to have potential evidence of quality delivery.</li></ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The selection of programmes will be examined through document analysis and making use of a collaboratively designed 'checklist' to isolate what factors contribute to a quality programme.</li> <li>• The factors that comprise a quality programme will be taken up by the programme developers to ensure the designing of a quality programme.</li> </ul>
<p>4. How does our understanding of quality in ECD/ECCE lead to a high quality programme for 0-4 and materials that support teacher educators and student teachers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Collaborative input will allow for the sharing of knowledge.</li> <li>• Task teams will use the literature review to inform their programme development.</li> <li>• Institutes will collaborate in materials development drawing from their individual expertise and resources to develop a model/framework and a selection of supporting materials.</li> </ul>

**Inputs:**

research instruments, literature reviews, stakeholder seminars and consultations,

**Proposed responsibility:**

Saide (materials); CSD (research to guide criteria); UNISA (programme development)

## References

Ann-Murray Brown, 'Differences between the Theory of Change and the Logic Model', 2016, found at <https://www.annmurraybrown.com/single-post/2016/03/20/Theory-of-Change-vsThe-Logic-Model-Never-Be-Confused-Again>

Reeler, D and van Blerk, R., 'The Truth of the Work: Theories of Change in a changing world', CDRA, 2017

Comic Relief, 'Comic Relief and Theory of Change', 2011