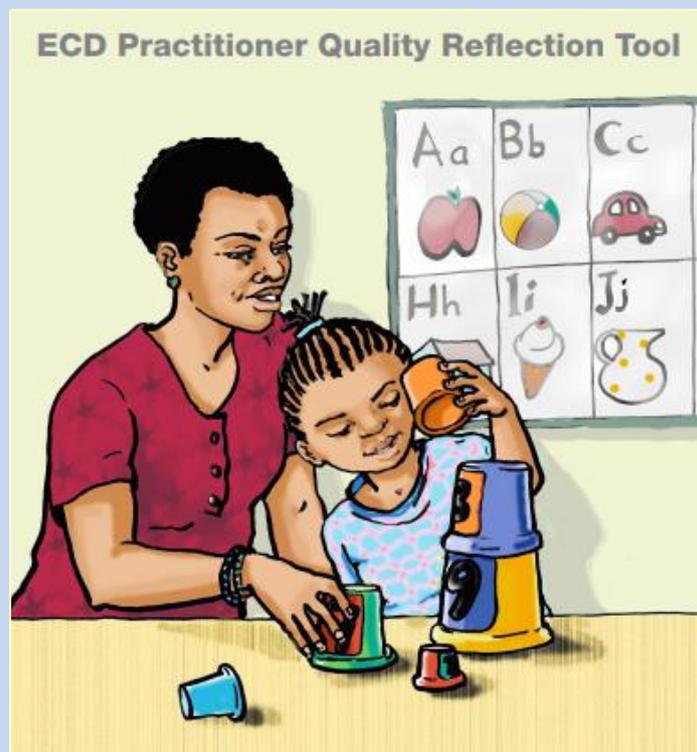


Mediator Guide

for the
ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool



May 2019

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This Guide supports the **ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool**.

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1. BACKGROUND, PURPOSE and SCOPE

The ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool and the Mediator Guide

This Guide goes with the ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool (QRT), a resource developed to help ECD practitioners reflect on their own practice in relation to issues of quality and context. The assumption made in this Mediator Guide is that readers have the QRT on hand, are familiar with its aims and scope, and intend to use it with ECD practitioners.

The QRT was designed as a stand-alone resource speaking directly to practitioners, who may choose to use it on their own and in their own time. We recognise, however, that many practitioners will need support in working with the QRT. In addition, the QRT can be mediated with practitioners (or ECCE education students) in a number of contexts, such as training programmes or other types of developmental interventions. This Guide aims to address the needs of mediators working in these different contexts.

What is mediation?

There are various definitions of ‘mediated learning experience’ or MLE¹. Essentially, though, mediated learning (for any age group) refers to a process in which a more knowledgeable or experienced person guides another person in thinking through new knowledge or information. It needs to be seen as a dynamic process in which the mediator helps the ‘learner’ to be an active user of new knowledge.

One of the principles of effective mediation is that those involved are comfortable in the language being used. While home language mediation of the QRT may not always be achievable, it should be done where possible. This may even involve switching between languages, or using interpreters².

Who would mediate the Quality Reflection Tool (QRT) and why?

This Guide speaks mainly to mediators who work through the Quality Reflection Tool with the ECD practitioners for whom it was designed. The main purpose of the Tool is to help practitioners reflect on their own practice in terms of various aspects of quality. This in turn helps them identify what they are good at and where they might need help. They can then plan for their own professional development.

For this purpose, the most likely mediators would be trainers, mentors, principals/ managers, or peers and colleagues. In some cases, mediators might be district officials or other government

¹ The concept of MLE is often linked to the work of Vygotsky and Feuerstein; see for example <https://profectum.org/fueresteins-mediated-learning-experience-mle/> or <http://www.tvcc.on.ca/cea/pdf/Module%202%20Final%20Copy.pdf>

² Note that users are free to version the Quality Reflection Tool itself and the Conversation Templates into another language if they wish to.

personnel. The goal of mediation would be to get practitioners to engage with the QRT, write up their thoughts and experiences, and use the file as a living resource.

Scope of the Guide

This Guide is a basic resource for those who want to use the Quality Reflection Tool in their work or relationships with ECD practitioners. It is an Open Educational Resource³ and can be adapted as needed, with acknowledgement to BRIDGE.



The Guide provides examples of processes and activities that lay the groundwork for practitioner engagement with the Quality Reflection Tool. These examples are drawn from the ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Toolkit Pilot Project, in which an early version of the QRT was mediated with a number of practitioners, and from a focus group session held with practitioners to test the final version.

Other purposes for and types of users of the Quality Reflection Tool itself are briefly noted under point 3 below.

2. EXAMPLES OF ACTIVITIES AND MEDIATION PROCESSES

This Guide does not provide a structured programme for introducing the Quality Reflection Tool to practitioners. Rather, it gives some suggested activities which can be integrated into any mediation or training intervention. You can select which examples are appropriate to your own relationships with practitioners and specific ECD sites.

Example 1: Orientation of practitioners to the Quality Reflection Tool

Orientation to the QRT is the first step in mediation of the Tool, whether this is by an external mediator going into a site, or a principal or colleague who knows the practitioner and her (or his) context.

Explain briefly to the practitioner what the Quality Reflection Tool is. It is important for the practitioner to understand that it is **not** a checklist. It is a set of questions for practitioners to ask themselves, to reflect on, and to answer honestly, for themselves. This is to help them identify their own good practice and to find areas that they need more support with.

If you are an external mediator who is meeting a practitioner/s for the first time, you will need to get a sense of the working environment and the site or centre context by asking questions such as those

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below. These questions can also serve as an introduction to the relationship between context and quality.

Orientation questions

What age group do you work with?

How many children attend the site/centre?

How many children attend your class? (if applicable)

What language or languages do you use at this site/centre?

How long have you been working in ECD?

Do you have any ECD certificates or qualification? What are these?

How long have you been at this site/centre?

Do you remember your own experiences, or your children’s experiences, of ECD?

What is the community context for this site/centre? (E.g. who are the most typical caregivers, what is the socio-economic status of most families and so on.)

Example 2: Focus on the goals of self-reflection

The QRT can also be introduced through an exploration of the idea of self-reflection, as practitioners will need to practise this throughout their engagement with the file.

Discuss the concept of self-reflection and its goals and purposes. You could do this in relation to a person’s professional or personal life. Professionally, self-reflection includes being aware of one’s skills, work practices and behaviours, and attitudes to one’s work. These discussions can range from informal ‘ice-breakers’ to more formal explorations of the concept.

The mediator could start with a reflection example and then talk about this together. The practitioner can ask herself (or himself) the question “What are my views on how children learn?” How does she answer that for herself? When she thinks about her answer, what does she learn about herself, and her work, what she knows and what she does not know? Do her attitudes support the idea of good quality in the care and teaching she provides? You can then explain that this, in essence, is what the QRT is all about.

The activities below illustrate other ways in which mediators can introduce and facilitate the idea of self-reflection.

ACTIVITY: Reflecting back

This activity should be done with a group of practitioners. Start by sharing this brief.

- Think about a game that you really liked playing while growing up.
- On paper, jot down what lessons this game taught you. What did you learn about yourself? How did you feel if you won or lost, or didn't do well? How did you interact with others while playing this game? What did you observe about the way others played the game? Did the game affect your self-esteem? Did it help you solve problems?
- Everyone describe your chosen game to the group, and give feedback on the questions.
- Now discuss whether or not you can apply any of these insights to your professional lives, aspects such as relationships with colleagues, or interactions with your own learners.

Mediator: You can then explain that the process they have just undergone is 'self-reflection', and define it through phrases such as 'thinking deeply', 'assessing yourself and your interactions with others', 'assessing how you work' and so on. Once they have done this activity, go through **Part 1** of the QRT which explains self-reflection in relation to the purpose of the Tool.

ACTIVITY: The 5 Whys

This activity can be done by a practitioner on her own.

The "5 Whys" method helps you reflect on any problems you may have in your work or personal life, and helps you to uncover the root cause of that problem.

- Write down the problem.
- Ask yourself 'Why is this a problem?'
- Write down your thoughts.
- Then ask 'why' again in reply to this thought.
- Do this five times, digging deeper each time.
- When you have got to the real cause, you can find a solution.

Here is an example to help you understand this activity.

My problem:	I don't know enough about the home lives of the children in my care.
Why?	I don't like to talk to parents.
Why?	I don't feel confident when I talk to them.
Why?	I'm afraid they won't respect me.
Why?	I feel I don't know enough, and can't explain ECD things well, even

	though I have lots of experience.
Why?	I don't have an ECD certificate or qualification.
Solution:	Speak to your principal/ site manager/ a training provider about how you can obtain a qualification or improve your qualifications.
<p><i>Mediator:</i> Explain to practitioners that this example shows the process of the 5 Whys. They will think of their own particular problem. Once the practitioner has done this activity, go through Part 1 of the QRT which explains self-reflection in relation to the purpose of the Tool.</p>	

Example 3: Working through the Quality Areas of the Tool

The heart of the Quality Reflection Tool consists of the reflection or learning questions linked to each of the four Quality Areas. As set out in **Part 2** of the QRT, practitioners engage with the Quality Areas through the Reflection Questions and thinking prompts.

One way of working through the QRT in a group training context would be to:

- Place practitioners in pairs, asking different pairs to discuss specified elements of the Quality Areas.
- Follow the pair discussion with group interaction and sharing of different views.
- Practitioners then fill in their own files in their own time.

Different Quality Areas could be undertaken on separate occasions. This approach could also work with the principal leading these discussions, and allocating different areas to different peer pairs. Such discussions could feed into school improvement plans, or personal growth plans.

Alternatively, a mentor or mediator could work with an individual practitioner on different Quality Areas over time.

Example 4: Using Conversation Templates in the four Quality Areas

On the following pages you will find Conversation Templates that you can use in verbal interaction in the language of choice in individual or group mediation contexts. These conversations take place before practitioners start working with the QRT. These templates mirror the content of **Part 2** of the QRT, but provide you as the mediator with prompts for drawing out information, and guidelines on what to listen for in order to build on the conversation. This type of mediation could serve as a precursor to private and ongoing use of the Quality Reflection Tool. Once practitioners have already had conversations based on the Quality Areas and reflection questions, they will find the QRT familiar and accessible.

Think of how to mediate the conversation process in the practitioner’s own context – e.g. babies and toddlers, Grade R, children with barriers to learning, and so on.

It is also important to communicate the idea that the QRT is meant to be a developmental tool rather than a punitive tool used for assessment of their work. Introducing the idea of professional development and how this is relevant to practitioners may help create a sense of ownership of the

QRT. All professionals (whatever their occupation) need to be given the means to understand what they are good at and in which areas they need help.

After your discussions, you can refer to the last part of each Quality Area section in **Part 2**, and use the Strengths and Weaknesses template to round off the conversation on that Quality Area. The kinds of prompts that you can use here will come out of your previous discussions with a practitioner.

Here are the Conversation Templates relating to the four Quality Areas in **Part 2** of the QRT.

Part 2 Section A: Teaching and Learning

2.1 Reflecting on how you plan and organise your teaching, and how you behave with your groups or classes

<p>What are your views on how children learn? How do you encourage learning in young children?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> hands-on, concrete learning, learning through exploration and discovery, sensory-motor learning, social learning (learning from other children); children’s participation.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How can children use their senses to learn? How can children learn from each other? How can you encourage children to learn through self-activity?</p>
<p>What do you think about learning through play, and how do you help this to happen?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> free choice, structured/organised play, the value of play, indoor and outdoor play, play resources.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Do children choose what they play? How do you encourage play? Where do children play? What do children play with?</p>
<p>What other methods or activities do you use? What kinds of activities do you do?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> teacher-guided, whole-group or small group activities, routines or daily programme.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you guide activities? What do children learn in groups? Are routines (snack, toilet) an important part of learning? What do children learn during ring-time?</p>
<p>How do you deal with different developmental areas, such as physical, intellectual, emotional and social development? How do you create a sense of well-being in these areas?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> different types of activities, learning corners/areas, age/stage appropriate, adapting or differentiating activities, integrated early learning, safe, trusting learning environment.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Please give examples of different activities for physical, intellectual, emotional and social development. How do you manage different activities for different children?</p>

<p>How do you manage a group of children who might be at different ages and different stages of development?</p>	<p><i>The practitioner may work with only one age group but there may still be different stages of development. Think specifically of practitioners who work with babies and young children.</i></p> <p><i>Listen for:</i> Adapting activities, changing the environment, changing the programme, children engaged in meaningful learning, children appropriately challenged, mediating/facilitating learning.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you change activities for different children? How do you use activities/toys to challenge children? How do you manage children who are having difficulty with an activity?</p>
<p>What do you do if you see children have learning difficulties? Are you always aware of these children?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> Observing and recording possible difficulties, confidentiality, supporting the child, adapting activities.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> What makes you aware that children might be struggling? Is it sometimes hard to identify difficulties? How do you help children who are struggling? How do you refer children for further help?</p>
<p>How do you talk to the children in your care, and get them to talk to you? How do you communicate if the children can't talk?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> using a respectful tone, giving clear instructions, asking questions, giving children time to think about answers, listening to children, being aware of possible hearing and speech challenges, using different languages.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Can you give some examples of questions and instructions that you ask children? How do you answer children's questions? How do you expect children to answer your questions? What if children can't talk? How do you respond to babies? How do you help children to communicate with you?</p>
<p>What do you do if there are different languages spoken in your group of children?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> children learn best through home language, which different languages are spoken, supporting children's languages, code switching, using visual examples, using different languages, asking another teacher/parents, making use of signing and gesturing.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Why do you think it is important for children to learn through their home language? How do you talk to children if you do not speak their home language? What do you do to help children understand what you are saying?</p>
<p>How do you help children develop confidence and a good sense of self?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> Affirming/praising children, talking to children respectfully, listening to children, children making decisions, individual learning needs.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you affirm/praise children? How do you let children know that you are listening? How do you</p>

	<p>encourage children to talk to each other in a respectful way? How do you encourage children to express themselves? How do you encourage children to make their own decisions? What do you do if children make a mistake?</p>
<p>What do you know about the ECD curriculum?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> National Curriculum Framework, 0-4 curriculum, NELDS, daily programme, planning.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Can you give some examples of how you use the curriculum? How do you plan what children will learn? How do you decide on teaching methods? How do you decide on appropriate activities?</p>
<p>How do you assess the children in your site?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> observation, formative assessment, observation instruments and records, sharing with other teachers and parents, tests, progress.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you assess children? When do you assess? Why is observation an important part of assessment for young children? How do you record observations? How do you share information with others?</p>

2.2 Reflecting on your own values, attitudes and beliefs

<p>How do your own values and beliefs affect your work as an ECD practitioner?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> different cultural practices, religious beliefs, values such as honesty, integrity, tolerance; own views influencing practice.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you share children’s different cultural and religious beliefs? How do you encourage children to solve conflict? How do you encourage children to accept differences in each other? How do you interact with parents who have different beliefs and practices?</p>
<p>How do your attitudes and beliefs about children and what they can do or learn affect my work?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> encouraging independence, children making choices, children’s opinions, children’s participation, children able to do things for themselves.</p> <p><i>If practitioner is not sure, turn these ideas into questions such as:</i> How do you include children in making choices? How do you set rules with children? How do you encourage children to become independent?</p>
<p>What ethical issues do you think are most important for an ECD practitioner?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> appropriate work ethic, being punctual, commitment, confidentiality, working as a team, having an ‘ethic of care’, the best interests of children.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Are there right and wrong ways to behave in your work?</p>

Part 2 Section B: ECD Environment

2.1 Reflecting on how you use your classroom or site and resources

<p>Do you have a good teaching environment that stimulates children?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> physical, social and emotional environment, indoor and outdoor environment, safety and security, simple and consistent rules, reasonable boundaries, cultural relevance, special needs, different ages and stages of development, balanced, flexible daily programme.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you make sure that the environment gives all children the opportunities they need? How do you make sure there is enough time for free-play, routines and teacher-guided activities?</p>
<p>What resources do you have in your classroom and in your environment?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> sufficient resources, rotating resources, differentiating resources, appropriate resources.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you make sure you have enough resources? What resources do you need?</p>
<p>Where do you get resources from? Are there other ways to get resources?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> making resources, indigenous toys, contributions from community and parents, educational toy providers, funders, DBE, toy libraries, municipal libraries.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> What things in your everyday environment could you use to make toys? Are there people or organisations that can help you get resources?</p>
<p>How do you create a caring environment where children can develop and learn?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> sense of security, routine, transition times, children making and correcting mistakes, encouraging perseverance, exploring, curiosity, asking questions, free choice, appropriate boundaries, respect, solving conflict.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you help children to feel emotionally safe and secure? How do you make sure children have enough time to complete activities? How do you manage changing from one activity to another? How do you encourage children to explore? How do you help children when they make mistakes?</p>
<p>How do you make sure your teaching environment is safe?</p>	<p><i>Adapt according to context</i> e.g. if babies, think about nappy changing areas, making of feeds, appropriate toys (no small pieces etc.).</p> <p><i>Listen for:</i> indoor and outdoor safety, recording problems, fixing</p>

	<p>damaged or unsafe equipment, clean and hygienic resources, first aid, emergency numbers.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you check for damaged equipment? How do you supervise children? How do you remind children of rules? How do you keep the site clean and hygienic?</p>
<p>Do you know what to do and who to contact in an emergency?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> calling emergency services, collaborating with other staff, accident records, informing parents, practising with children.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you contact emergency services? How do staff know what to do? What first aid knowledge and equipment do you have? What are the first aid rules? How do you record accidents? How do you inform parents?</p>
<h2>2.2 Reflecting on the community environment in which you work</h2>	
<p>How do you involve caregivers and other community members in children’s learning and development?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> sharing and explaining daily programme to parents, parents coming into site, records of parents’ details, notices, notes, sms, parent meetings, discussing learning with parents, accessible reports, parent involvement in activities such as show and tell, parental input.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you encourage parental involvement? How do you communicate with parents? How do you reach out to other community members?</p>
<p>How does a child’s home and community environment affect your teaching practice?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> knowing each child’s home background, child’s context, appropriate activities.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you know children’s home circumstances? How do you accommodate children’s home or socio-economic circumstances?</p>
<p>How can you share basic knowledge about ECD with parents and communities?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> information posters, brochures, sms, conversations with parents, school meetings, community gatherings.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Can you give some examples of how you communicate general ECD issues to parents? Are there ways in which you can help your community to be better informed?</p>

Part 2 Section C: ECD Policies and Procedures

2.1 Reflecting on how knowing about national ECD policy can help you

<p>What national ECD policies have you heard about, or read? How do these apply to your work?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> types of information in policies; different policies from DBE, DHET, DH, DSD; national, provincial and local level procedures; relevant legislation; documents such as CAPS, NCF, NELDS, Guidelines for ECD sites (DSD), access to copies of documents.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you find out about different policies? Can you give examples of ECD policy documents that have relevance for you? How do you find out about curriculum documents? How do you get copies of these documents?</p>
<p>What do you know about the support you (or your centre) can get from local or district government offices?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> different government departments (DSD, DH, DBE), local level offices, types of support provided.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you find out about the different departments? How do you get help from social workers and district officials?</p>
<p>Do you know where to go to get help with particular problems?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> ECD networks, government officials, local clinic or hospital, principal, colleagues, ECD Union or Association, referrals, professional development; identifying and referring children with particular needs (special needs, abuse, hunger etc.)</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Do you ask the principal or other colleagues for help? Do you contact a training organisation or a departmental official? Where can you go in your community to get help for children?</p>

2.2 Reflecting on what you know about policies and procedures at your site

<p>Do you know what written policies and procedures exist in your workplace? Do you know what they say?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> employment contract; purpose of different policies and procedures.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you use the policies and procedures at your site?</p>
<p>Do you know what your site/centre's policy is for communicating with others?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> communicating with different people/ for different purposes (parents, officials, the community, principal and colleagues).</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Who are some of the people you communicate with? What are some of the reasons why you communicate with them?</p>

2.3 Reflecting on how policies affect your own professional development

<p>What studies or training have you done that help you in your work as an ECD practitioner?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> attending courses, further training.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Practitioner's ECD qualification/s? Where did you get your training?</p>
<p>Do you know what study opportunities or career paths exist in ECD? How do you get this information?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> becoming better informed; joining a network, asking a training provider, looking online.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Where can you get this kind of information from? Have you thought about where you would like to go in your profession?</p>

This template applies only if mediation of the QRT is taking place with a Principal or Site Manager who will be using the QRT for their own self-reflection.

Part 2 Section D: Leadership and Management

2.1 Reflecting on how you lead your staff

<p>What are the core values of your centre or site?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> mission and vision, quality ECD service, growth and improvement, development and learning, best interests of child, motivated, well qualified staff.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> What do you want to achieve through your ECD programme? How do your goals impact on children, staff and parents?</p>
<p>How do you share the core values with your staff and make sure that they implement them?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> regular meetings, working as a team.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you help staff to adopt the vision and mission statement? How do you encourage staff to share ideas? How do staff know what is expected of them?</p>
<p>How do you know what kinds of support your staff need, and how do you provide this support?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> on-going staff support, staff strengths and weaknesses; relevant courses/workshops/conferences, staff involvement.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you find out what support your staff need? How do you make the time to talk to staff? How do you plan for staff training?</p>
<p>How do you ensure that your</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> appropriate people for input, other schools, regular</p>

staff gets professional development?	meetings, sharing appropriate input. <i>More possible questions:</i> How do you make sure that staff keep up-to-date? How do you motivate your staff?
Where do you go for support in implementing the ECD programme, and improving your own leadership skills?	<i>Listen for:</i> networks with NGOs, departmental officials, good relationships, appropriate documents, reading. <i>More possible questions:</i> How do you establish networking relationships with NGOs/other organisations? Who do you invite to assist with programme delivery?
How do you give feedback to your staff?	<i>Listen for:</i> trusting relationship with staff, respecting staff ideas and input, good channels of communication, negotiation. <i>More possible questions:</i> How do you encourage staff to listen to your feedback? How do you establish a relationship of mutual trust?
How do you encourage your staff to share practices with others?	<i>Listen for:</i> role model for sharing ideas, opportunities for sharing. <i>More possible questions:</i> How do you make time for staff to share ideas?

2.2 Reflecting on how you manage site operations

How do you manage your operations? (e.g. scheduling, financial systems, sustainability, human resources)	<i>Listen for:</i> good planning systems, recording systems, supervision schedules, site policies, management procedures, office and filing systems, staff management, site maintenance. <i>More possible questions:</i> How do you make sure the site runs smoothly? How do you control the finances of the school? How do you manage the staff?
What quality assurance system do you have in place?	<i>Listen for:</i> copies of site policies, procedures and processes, registration certification, routine maintenance of equipment, open door policy for parents. <i>More possible questions:</i> What quality assurance systems are in place? How do you make sure that all staff know the quality assurance systems?

2.3 Reflecting on how you lead through managing relationships

How do you manage relationships with your stakeholders (parents, community, district officials)?	<i>Listen for:</i> good networking, relationship of trust with stakeholders. <i>More possible questions:</i> How do you make sure that you maintain good communication channels with stakeholders?
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<p>How do you involve parents in their children’s development and education?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> honest, respectful communication; listening to parental concerns, discussing issues in a sensitive manner.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> How do you share information with parents? Can you give some examples of how you encourage parents to be involved with activities?</p>
<p>What are the ethical issues for leaders in ECD?</p>	<p><i>Listen for:</i> providing quality services, adequate work conditions, cost of ECD services, relationships with parents.</p> <p><i>More possible questions:</i> Can you give some examples of when you have had to deal with sensitive issues?</p>

Example 5: Using the Planning Tools in the Quality Reflection Tool

In **Part 3** of the QRT you will find a number of tools and resources to help practitioners identify goals, plan for professional improvement, and take actions to achieve their goals.

A simple way of getting practitioners started on identifying the goals they want to pursue is to have them draw 10 - 15 circles on a sheet of A4 paper, and to write down one of the key areas of their personal and professional lives in each circle. They then use this visual prompt to select the areas where their effort would have the biggest impact, and use the tips and guidelines in the QRT to set a goal for each of those areas.

To help practitioners stay motivated and focused on achievement, you could suggest that they create an inspiring way of thinking about their chosen goal. This could be a slogan, quotation or image that brings the goal vividly to mind, represents positive feelings and energises them.

Another way of introducing this section of the QRT is to talk about the difficulties of changing one’s mind-sets and habits in life. Any forward planning by definition involves a desire to change. You will easily find online resources to use as prompts from the work of influential ‘change’ thinkers such as Stephen Covey and John Kotter. Quotes and visuals can be used to begin a conversation about the processes of change, and the enablers and barriers to seeing a change process and plan of action through to the end. You can then refer practitioners to Part 3 of the QRT and talk them through using the planning and action templates for professional development.

ACTIVITY: Reflecting on Change

This activity can be done by a practitioner on her (or his) own, and discussed with the mediator.

Think about a change that you had to make in your life. This could have been something that happened in childhood, or a decision made as an adult. Examples could be moving to a different place, choosing what to study, or decisions around relationships. Think about all the processes

you went through before, during and after the change.

Mediator: Show the practitioner the visual prompts below and discuss if and how these are relevant to her own experience of change. Explain how this kind of thinking will prepare her to use the planning and goal-setting resources in **Part 3** of the QRT.

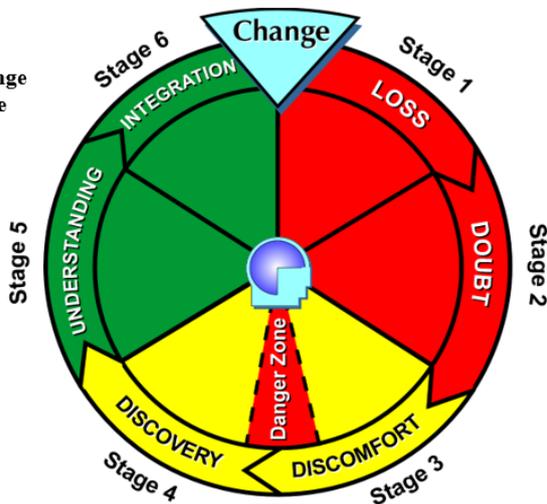
You can use the examples of visual prompts given below for this Activity

The ADKAR Change Process

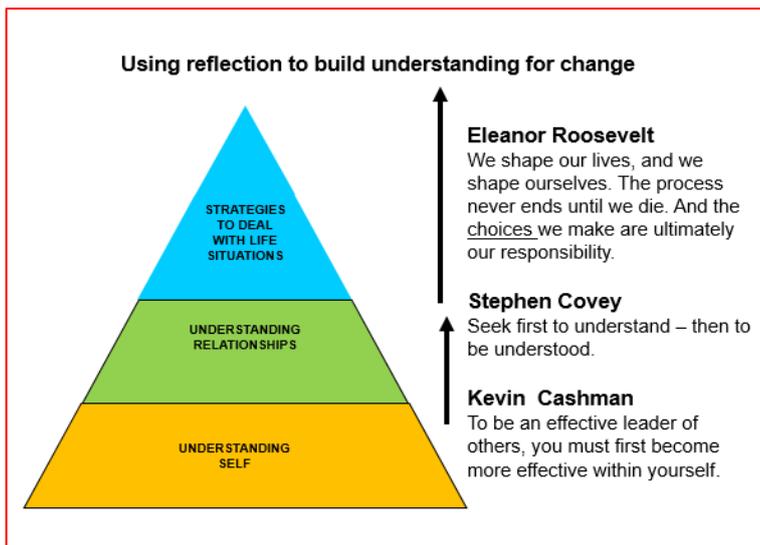


Understanding the different steps in the change process is part of self-reflection. Get the practitioner to reflect on how these steps played out in her own change story. How might these steps relate to planning for professional development?

The Change Cycle



Work through the different stages of the change process. Ask the practitioner if she (or he) thinks there can be a sense of loss or doubt even if a change is for the better. See if the stages relate to her own change story. Point out that stages 1 and 2, and in particular the Danger Zone area, are often the points at which people give up their change journey. What can be done to avoid this?



As the point of this graphic is to show that ‘understanding self’ is the foundation for relationships and life skills, you can link back to the concept of self-reflection. You could also discuss the different quotes with the practitioner in the context of her change story, or in the context of professional development plans or concerns.

Example 6: Using the Resources in Part 3

Mediators need to guide practitioners on adding in their own written pages to the file so that it becomes something they can present as a Portfolio of Evidence (PoE). The PoE could be used in a number of ways in support of professional development: for example, as a piece of evidence for a Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) process, for job interviews, or for building up points from the South African Council for Educators (SACE) if this is applicable. In this section, SACE is used as an example from the list of resources provided in **Part 3** of the QRT.

SACE recognises ECD practitioners with an NQF Level 4 and/or Level 5 qualification (certificate and national diploma). To find out more on how practitioners can attain Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) points, please visit the SACE website: <https://www.sace.org.za/>. Alternatively, BRIDGE has produced a resource⁴ that can be found [here](#); while this resource was designed for school principals, it includes guidelines that are relevant to educators in general who want SACE CPTD points.

Example 7: The Site Visit Observation Schedule

The following site visit observation template was developed⁵ in the context of the QRT Pilot Project to help mediators understand ‘quality in action’ at sites or centres visited. Observation relates to looking at administrative evidence as well as interactions between staff and behaviours in the classroom. While this Observation Schedule is not directly related to the QRT in its current form, we include it here as it may have some useful applications. Mediators could consider some of the following:

- Using and adapting parts of the Observation Schedule to facilitate peer observation or discussion in a training context.

⁴ The Guide to Tools and Resources for School Principals can be found on the BRIDGE website.

⁵ This schedule was developed by Lorayne Excell from the University of the Witwatersrand, with some adaptations by BRIDGE.

- Using the Observation Schedule as a monitoring tool in a funded programme.
- Using the Observation Schedule for ECCE students as part of their Work Integrated Learning (WIL)/ teaching practice requirement.

The headings of the Observation Schedule do not always directly match the Quality Areas defined for self-reflection. These headings pick up on quality issues related to what can be observed in a site visit.

The Site Visit Observation Schedule

Teaching and Learning

A group of teaching practices related to a (deep) understanding of what and how young children learn

Indicator	Guidelines for the observer
There is evidence of hands-on, active learning	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Active engagement, participation, meaningful activities ▪ Resources appropriate for age and stage of development (stimulate and challenge but do not frustrate) ▪ Resources encourage self-help and independent learning ▪ Teaching strategies encourage choice, support learning ▪ Practitioner offers suggestions, keeps direct telling and rote instruction to a minimum
There is evidence of a playful approach towards teaching and learning	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balance between teacher-guided activities, routines and free play ▪ Sufficient time given to each type of activity ▪ Opportunities to explore and discover ▪ Indoor and outdoor free play encouraged ▪ Resources for practical, hands-on activities (kinaesthetic, semi concrete) and creative expression (crayons, paint, paper) ▪ Practitioner uses a playful rather than instructional approach
There is evidence that the practitioner uses a variety of methodologies appropriately	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Examples of teacher-guided activities ▪ Practitioner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Builds new learning on what children already know ○ Mediates learning rather than directs learning experiences ○ Uses open-ended questions ○ Uses appropriate language for the group of children ○ Uses song, rhyme, code-switching ○ Uses daily routines (snack-time, toilet etc) to facilitate learning
There is evidence that	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Activities that:

<p>all areas of development are being developed</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Develop gross and fine motor skills ○ Promote social and emotional well-being ○ Foster self-confidence, perseverance, participation, etc. ▪ Activities and resources differentiated to accommodate different stages of development ▪ Variety of resources to provide varied learning opportunities and support development in each area ▪ Variety of teaching strategies (whole group, small group, individual) to cater for children’s different needs and abilities
<p>The learning contexts provide for a variety of learning opportunities</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Language/ instructions adapted to meet differing needs ▪ Use of appropriate questions and suggestions to mediate learning ▪ Play materials differentiated for different ability groups ▪ Clear, appropriate explanations that support development of concepts and skills ▪ Activities and resources that promote problem solving and creative thinking
<p>The practitioner appears to be able to identify and manage children with special learning needs</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The practitioner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Facilitates participation by offering individual children challenges appropriate to their developmental level and socio-cultural context (puzzles with differing numbers of pieces, varied complexity of questions, etc.) ○ Uses teaching strategies and materials to promote inclusivity ○ Provides appropriate additional individual support to children in need
<p>The practitioner helps children to develop a good sense of self</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The practitioner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Models appropriate behaviour ○ Encourages reflection to develop positive qualities (respect, patience, tolerance) and self-regulate behaviour ○ Uses praise appropriately
<p>The practitioner encourages good communication between herself (or himself) and the children</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioner gives children: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vocabulary to talk about their learning experiences ○ Opportunities to develop skills, attitudes and confidence to participate in discussions ○ Sufficient time to answer ▪ The practitioner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uses gesturing, instructions, open-ended questions appropriately ○ Listens respectfully to children ○ Answers children’s questions ○ Encourages children to talk to and listen to each other
<p>The practitioner is</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ To what extent the school’s LOLT represents the children’s home

<p>fluent in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT)</p> <p>The practitioner is able to make language adjustments where children do not speak the LOLT</p>	<p>language/ languages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioner competence in the LOLT ▪ The practitioner uses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Other languages and strategies (re-phrasing, code-switching, peer mediation etc.) to enhance meaning and communication ○ Songs and rhyme to reinforce language and emergent literacy ○ Communicative rather than rote methods to teach language (stories, show and tell, dramatization) ▪ Availability of books and materials in the LOLT and the home languages of the children ▪ Practitioner awareness of need for children to develop perceptual-motor skills and concepts that underpin reading and writing
<p>The practitioner knows about the ECD curriculum</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of practitioner understanding of subject knowledge ▪ Practitioner’s ability to extend children’s learning informed by the curriculum ▪ Copy of appropriate curriculum available in the classroom
<p>There is evidence of formative assessment</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Practitioner observation of specific behaviours of certain children ▪ Availability of observation book/ checklist ▪ Availability of copies of observation reports

Managing the Learning Environment

Indicator	Guidelines for the observer
<p>Structure: The environment is predictable and orderly and a daily programme is adhered to</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ A clear daily programme ▪ Balance between routines, child initiated activities (free play) and practitioner guided activities ▪ Sufficient time allocated to each component/activity (age and context appropriate) ▪ Daily programme displayed ▪ Sufficient flexibility to accommodate responding to children’s incidental needs without losing focus
<p>There are adequate resources which are properly utilised. Give some examples</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Sufficient variety and quantity of resources to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ develop skills and concepts in each developmental area ○ allow free choice ○ stimulate independent play ▪ Resources are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ culturally relevant

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ easy to reach to (encouraging independence, free choice) ○ in some cases, made by the practitioner ▪ Classroom includes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ book corner, fantasy corner ○ display materials (birthday chart, weather chart, themes, posters, parent literature) ○ display of children’s own work ▪ Practitioner supports children’s active learning processes
<p>It is an emotionally caring environment</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Balanced, predictable programme with smooth transitions ▪ Children interact freely with material ▪ The practitioner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Uses suggestions, questioning, modifying, modelling, rather than telling and direct instruction ○ Responds appropriately to children’s questions and concerns ○ Applies rules consistently ○ Gives reminders of appropriate behaviour (sharing resources, taking turns etc.) ○ Guides children towards appropriate ways of dealing with conflict (building on children’s contributions) ○ Encourages children to explore the environment and investigate ideas
<p>It is a safe indoor and outdoor environment which supports learning</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <p>INDOOR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT that supports learning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appropriate space and furniture (carpet that accommodates a ring, chairs and tables sized for children) ▪ Variety of play areas positioned to facilitate flow and safety (fantasy corner, book corner) ▪ Readily accessible resources ▪ Age appropriate toys ▪ Acceptable light, ventilation, room temperature <p>OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Separate play area ▪ Adequate supervision ▪ Variety of outdoor equipment in adequate condition, safely erected and safe for use ▪ Adequate storage space ▪ Practitioner encourages use of available resources
<p>There is evidence of supervision</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Supervision that is helpful and appropriate to the activity, whether this is a quiet learning activity or an active physical activity ▪ There is regular communication between staff members about supervision protocols and practices
<p>There is evidence of handling emergencies</p>	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Readily available emergency contact information

in a competent manner	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Well-equipped first aid box ▪ Accident register
There is evidence of the external environment impacting teaching and learning	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Contextually cultural approach, children’s home languages being used (labels, singing of songs, books in different languages; toys and games indicative of different contexts etc.)
There is evidence of parental and community involvement in the teaching and learning environment	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability of parent contact details ▪ Parental presence at arrival/ departure ▪ Communication with parents (notices, information posters) ▪ Sharing of reports with parents ▪ Contributions by parents to teaching and learning environment

Support Systems on Site

Indicator	Guidelines for the observer
Evidence of government policies and procedures	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copies of relevant documents (ECD site guidelines, Children’s Act, National Integrated ECD Policy 2015, NELDS, NCF for birth-four) ▪ Information on childhood health issues, immunisation schedule, HIV/AIDS policy etc.
Evidence of following a curriculum	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Copy of relevant curriculum documents (context appropriate; e.g. NCF for Birth to Four) ▪ Evidence of activity planning ▪ Up-to-date practitioner file, etc.
Evidence of training	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Certificate displayed ▪ Notes from course attendance ▪ Evidence of implementing what has been learned
Evidence of working collaboratively	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Evidence of input from ECD Union/Association, notes, booklets, etc. ▪ Lists/files with names of organisations from which practitioner accesses support
Evidence that practitioner shares knowledge about ECD with parents	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parent information posters displayed ▪ Parent information sheets/ booklets ▪ Notices sent to/shared with parents

Leadership and Management

Indicator	Guidelines for the observer
Evidence of principal modelling the vision and mission statement	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Vision and mission statement available ▪ Staff appear motivated ▪ Site/centre appears welcoming, positive ▪ Children engaged in interactive learning
Communication with staff with regard to vision and mission statements	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Regular meetings held (minutes, anecdotal mention etc.) ▪ Staff awareness (copies in classrooms, mentioned in conversation)
Being aware of staff needs and providing appropriate support for staff	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Is aware of what is happening in the school ○ Communicates positively and respectfully with staff ○ Listens and responds to staff requests and problems ○ Shares good practices (reinforcing where needed)
Principal provides a variety of support	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Staff attendance at talks/ workshops etc. ▪ Lists of organisations/people who could/do provide support ▪ Networking with NGOs, training institutions etc. ▪ Staff meetings, principal providing leadership etc. ▪ Principal motivates staff to share good practices (e.g. having a sharing session on the agenda)
Providing professional support	<p><i>Watch for: (in addition to above)</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The principal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provides firm but friendly control and support ○ Models a democratic approach, gives staff a voice ○ Values staff ideas, includes these (where appropriate) in the curriculum and daily programme
Giving feedback to staff	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Good networking and communication channels with staff ▪ Evidence of negotiated decisions ▪ Constructive handling of conflict ▪ Collaborative problem solving strategies ▪ Staff appear confident and knowledgeable ▪ Use of additional resources to give appropriate feedback (e.g. resource books, copies of policy documents)
Managing the school	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Availability of relevant documents (ECD policy document, NELDS, Guidelines for ECD centres, health policy documents – integrated

	<p>management of childhood illnesses, immunisation schedules etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Planning for the ECD programme (yearly and weekly plan, daily programme etc.) ▪ Log book/ diary recordings of site activities ▪ Site policies (emergency evacuation plan, HIV/AIDS policy safe arrival and departure of children etc.) ▪ Operational files, checklists, templates (up-to-date children’s files, menus, templates for recording nappy changing, first aid etc., checklists for cleaning, equipment maintenance, etc.) ▪ Financial information (workable/viable budget, financial records, bookkeeping) ▪ Human resources information (staff files, service contracts etc.)
Quality assurance systems	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Policies and procedures ▪ Evidence of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Inspections (DoH, DBE, DSW, Local authority, funders etc.) ○ Compliance (certification) ○ Good communication with parents ○ Principal’s review of lesson plans, etc.
Relationships with stakeholders	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Respectful conversations with parents/ visitors ▪ Communication with parents/ community stakeholders (information letters/ posters, contact lists)
Involving parents in their children’s education	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Parental presence at the school ▪ Open-door policy for parents ▪ Communication with parents (meetings, feedback after events/ outings) ▪ Inviting guest speakers to address parents
Managing ethical issues	<p><i>Watch for:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ On-going practices at the site promote the children’s interests ▪ Positive interaction between principal and others (adults and children) ▪ Personal information is kept confidential ▪ Cell phones switched off during teaching time

3. OTHER USER CATEGORIES OF THE QRT

The QRT evolved from discussions in the BRIDGE National ECD CoP, and CoP members have given input on other potential users of the QRT. These user categories, and potential purposes of the QRT and the supporting Mediator Guide, are summarised below.

User Category	Possible Purposes
FUNDERS	<p>For Monitoring and Evaluation purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use to design measurable progress or success indicators in ECD projects • Use to assess change or impact in projects • Could be used as a pre- and post-assessment tool in the context of an intervention <p>Other purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use in selection/ profiling/ induction of beneficiaries (e.g. practitioners) in a programme • Apply to funding criteria for service providers (e.g. whether or not they will address various quality components) • Provide the QRT to beneficiaries as an additional resource • Help funders identify which quality areas need more investment and development • Help funders understand ECD as holistic, in terms of interventions taking all quality areas into consideration
TRAINING PROVIDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Add to the curriculum / plug in to existing course frameworks • Use as a hands-on tool in training • Use for self-reflection in the context of teaching practice/ WIL • Use reflection to assess whether the course content promotes increased knowledge and confidence in different areas • Use to inform Continuing Professional Development Guidelines • Get mentors to mediate the QRT, and to use in building relationships with practitioners • Empower practitioners and create ownership of their own views and experiences
NGOS OFFERING GENERAL SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use for needs analysis/ profiling of specific sites or groups of practitioners, in order to identify where specific services could be developed • Use as a general resource for capacity-building in different areas • Catalyse planning and action • Help sites to develop a self-reflective environment in all their activities / promote self-reflection as a value • Use reflection results for gap assessments, which can help inform funding proposals relating to NGO support for ECD • Use as an awareness-raising and advocacy tool in the sector

<p>ECD SITES (PRACTITIONERS, PRINCIPALS, MANAGERS)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use as a platform to get feedback from practitioners • Principals could use the QRT for counselling/ supporting staff/ capacity building for staff • Use the QRT to help practitioners communicate with parents • Choose different areas of the tool as topics for practical discussion in monthly or weekly staff meetings • Use as the basis for Personal Development Plans • Practitioners can develop the QRT as a resource for their own use, and as a Portfolio of Evidence (e.g. for RPL) • Use in joint peer-to-peer reflection
<p>ACADEMICS/ RESEARCHERS</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the QRT as a launching pad for research, e.g. to understand what practitioners mean by ‘play’ • Use the QRT with teacher education students: e.g. adapt for students’ self-reflection in teaching practice/ WIL • Identify gaps in the QRT, such as a focus on 21st century skills and ICT integration into ECD practitioners’ skills sets • Adapt the QRT for different levels of self-reflection for potential students, and for professionals in ECCE • Inform the development of new ECCE resources, such as course content, text books or other learning materials • Provide some data on practitioner views on quality • Link understanding of Quality to human resource/ workforce issues in ECD policies
<p>GOVERNMENT</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapt the QRT into a way of measuring compliance • Different ‘quality areas’ could guide discussions at district meetings • Some of the content is relevant to IQMS (Integrated Quality Management System) and PMDS (Performance Management and Development System) • Mediation of the QRT by district officials could give government deeper insight into specific concerns in different areas • Inform funding and development needs, and project endorsement
<p>OTHER</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be versioned into a parents’ information kit • Extracts could help with increasing parental awareness • Could be versioned into other languages

4. FEEDBACK TO BRIDGE

As a means of monitoring the use of the QRT, as well as the benefits and areas of improvement required by both the QRT and the Mediator Guide, BRIDGE has developed two Feedback Forms. One

is to gather information from mediators, and the other is to gather information from practitioners. We would really appreciate feedback from the users of the QRT and the Guide.

If you are comfortable with providing feedback on the mediation process, please use this link: <https://bit.ly/2YJcUFp>.

If the practitioners that you have used the QRT with are willing to give feedback, please share the link <https://bit.ly/2VYIEKM> with them, or help them to complete the form as part of the mediation process.

For any comments or questions that you might have about the Mediator Guide, please email info@bridge.org.za.

The BRIDGE Mediator Guide for the ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool, May 2019

<p>ApexHi Charitable Trust</p> 	<p>Deutsche Bank SA</p> 	<p>Ilifa Labantwana</p> 	<p>Sasol Global Foundation</p> 
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The **ECD Practitioner Quality Reflection Tool** and the **Mediator Guide** are available online at www.bridge.org.za

