ECD Quality Toolkit Pilot: Resource for Observation

This is a supplementary document which can be used in preparation for observation of classroom practice in an ECD context. It draws on the dimensions of the ECD Reflection Tool developed by BRIDGE's ECD Community of Practice.

Dimension 1: 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	• Children are encouraged to actively engage in participatory learning • They are meaningfully occupied • Resources are appropriate – they stimulate and challenge children rather than lead to frustration ▪ There is evidence of sufficient resources which encourage self-help activities and independent learning ▪ Resources provided and teaching strategies allow for and in fact encourage the child to make choices • Practitioner makes suggestions, supports learning • There is a minimum of direct telling and rote instruction
There is evidence of a playful approach towards teaching and learning	• Learning and teaching happens through teacher-guided activities, routines and free play • There is a balance between these methodologies • Sufficient time is given to each • Opportunities provided for the children to explore and discover • There is adequate supervision, especially during free play • Indoor and outdoor free play is encouraged • There are sufficient appropriate resources to encourage meaningful learning kinaesthetic, semi concrete and for older children pencil and paper activities, other than worksheets or workbooks • There is evidence of a playful approach to teaching
There is evidence that teacher uses other methodologies appropriately	▪ Evidence of teacher-guided activities - give examples of what you observed ▪ Practitioner makes explicit the links between the child's context and the learning experience under discussion e.g. starting from what is known to the child, placing a story in a familiar context ▪ Practitioner appropriately mediates children's learning rather than simply directing the learning experience. ▪ Open-ended questions are asked that open up learning opportunities. • Appropriate language that enhances all children's understanding is used

	• Makes use of songs, rhyme and code switching to enhance understanding • Routines (toilet, snack time etc.) are built into the daily programme and practitioner uses these times to facilitate learning (give an example)
There is evidence that all areas of development are being developed	• Activities develop gross and fine motor skills, promote social and emotional well-being • Practitioner creates opportunities for the promotion of learning dispositions, e.g. courage, perseverance, self-confidence, participation, responsibility. • Activities and resources are differentiated to accommodate children at different stages of development • There are a wide variety of resources that provide ample opportunities for developing similar skills (e.g. blocks, puzzles, lotto, sand and water play will all develop fine-motor co-ordination amongst other skills) • Give examples of what was observed to encourage development in each area e.g. climbing, running outdoors, puzzles, manipulative and construction toys, books, fantasy play etc. • Practitioner uses a variety of teaching strategies, e.g. whole group, small group, individual teaching as a means of responding to children's needs and abilities
The learning contexts provide for a variety of learning opportunities	• The practitioner adapts language/ instructions to meet differing needs - mediating learning through the use of appropriate questions and suggestions • Play materials are differentiated to meet different ability groups – e/g fat crayons for children with poor fine-motor control, thinner ones for other children • Explanations are clear and at an appropriate level, and relate to the acquisition of concepts and skill • Providing opportunities for problem solving and creative thinking, through for example, the practitioner's choice of activities and resources made available to the children
The practitioner appears to be able to identify and manage children with special learning needs	• Practitioner offers individual children challenges appropriate to their level and sociocultural context e.g. practitioner offers puzzles with differing numbers of pieces and varies complexity of questions asked to facilitate participation of all children • Practitioner ensures through the choice of material and teaching strategies that all children are included in the teaching and learning day • Having identified special needs, the practitioner takes appropriate steps to address them e.g. additional support is given to children in need, one on one checking of understanding in relation to the activity.

The practitioner helps children to develop a good sense of self	• Demonstrates /models appropriate behaviour and encourages children to align, through reflection, their behaviour with hers e.g. respect, tolerance, patience • Makes use of appropriate praise • Encouraging children to reflect on and self-regulate their behaviour
The practitioner encourages good communication between herself and the children	• Children (including babies & toddlers) are provided with language (vocabulary) to talk about their learning experiences • Where appropriate use is made of gesturing etc. • Providing older children with opportunities to develop the skills, attitudes and confidence to participate in a discussion • Appropriate instructions are given to children (give examples) • Children are asked open-ended questions (give some examples) • Children are given an adequate amount of time to answer • Practitioner listens to children in a respectful way • Children's questions are answered • Children are encouraged to talk to each other and to listen to what others say
The practitioner is fluent in the LOLT The practitioner is able to make language adjustments where children do not speak the LOLT	• The school's LOLT represents the home language of the class • The practitioner's own language competence meets the needs of the children • The practitioner uses languages other than LOLT to enhance meaning. • The practitioner uses a variety of strategies to enhance communication- e.g. re-phrases, code-switches, uses peer mediation • The practitioner makes use of alternative strategies such as rhyme and song to reinforce language and emergent literacy • Language is taught in communicative ways, rather than through rules and rote learning (decontextualised ways). E.g. through story, show and tell, dramatization • Learning support material – e.g. books are available in the LOLT and the home languages of the children • For Grade R children the practitioner demonstrates awareness of the underpinning perceptual-motor skills and concepts that children should acquire if they are to become successful readers and writers
The practitioner knows about the ECD curriculum	• Practitioner shows an understanding of subject knowledge and is able to extend the children's learning informed by the curriculum • Copy of the appropriate curriculum is available in the classroom
There is evidence of formative assessment	• Practitioner appears to observe specific behaviours of certain children (give examples) • An observation book/ checklist etc. was made available to you • A copy of a report was made available to you

Dimension 2: Managing the learning environment

Indicator	Guidelines for the observer
Structure: The environment is predictable and orderly and a daily programme is adhered to	• A balance between routines, child initiated activities (free play) as well as practitioner guided activities. In other words, a clear daily programme that structures the learning environment • Sufficient time is allocated to each component/activity – (age and context appropriate). Give some examples • The daily programme is evident on the wall • The daily programme is flexible according to incidental needs - practitioner is able to deviate from teaching plan in response to children's needs and interest without losing the focus of the activity
There are adequate resources which are properly utelised. Give some examples	• There are sufficient different resources for developing skills and concepts in each specific area of development • There are sufficient resources to encourage free choice and independent play • There are enough diverse resources – promoting development in all areas as well as being, for example culturally, appropriate • Resources are appropriately stored – e.g. on low shelves which encourage independence and free choice • There is an appropriate book corner and other print material • There is an appropriate fantasy corner • The practitioner supports children's active learning processes • Practitioner has made some of the resources e.g. Posters (theme and parent and supporting parent literature • The classrooms is well resourced in terms of appropriate display materials e.g. birthday chart, weather chart, appropriate posters to support theme displays • Children's own work is displayed
It is an emotionally caring environment	• The programme is balanced • Children have a good idea of what to expect throughout the day • Transitions (changing from one activity to another) are sensitively handled • Children are encouraged to interact freely with the material • The practitioner supports learning through asking appropriate questions and making, when necessary, appropriate suggestions • The practitioner responds appropriately to children's questions and concerns • There is a minimum of telling and direct instruction • Practitioner extends children's learning of knowledge, skills, attitudes and values through modelling, modifying and

	suggestion
	• Consistently enforcing rules and children reminded of how to behave if necessary
	• Encouraging children to share resources, to take turns etc.
	• Guiding children towards appropriate ways to deal with peer conflict and attain resolution. The practitioner interacts and shares and builds on children's contributions
	• Encouraging children to explore the environment and investigate ideas related to this
It is a safe indoor and outdoor environment which supports learning	• INDOOR PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT supports learning e.g. acceptable room temperature, appropriate use of space e.g. there is a carpet big enough for a ring, sufficient tables and chairs at an appropriate height
	• There are a variety of play areas, e.g. book corner, fantasy corner etc. which are well positioned to facilitate flow and safety
	• Resources are accessible to children e.g. the materials are at a suitable height
	• There is sufficient/adequate storage space for resources
	• Toys are age appropriate
	OUTDOOR ENVIRONMENT
	• Where appropriate the area is separate from the other play areas (e.g. baby and toddler).
	• There is adequate supervision
	• There is sufficient outdoor equipment e.g. climbing apparatus, swings, balancing apparatus, sand play
	• Equipment is in an adequate state of repair, properly erected and safe for children to use etc.
	• Adequate storage space for the equipment
	• The practitioner makes use of the available resources
There is evidence of handling emergencies in a competent manner	• Emergency contact details are readily available, shown to you
	• Evidence of a well-equipped first aid box
	• Evidence of an accident register
Evidence of the external environment impacting teaching and learning	• Evidence of a contextually cultural approach – e.g. selection of different books in reading corner, evidence of children's home languages being used *e.g. labels on theme table, singing songs in other languages, toys, games indicative of different contexts etc.
Evidence of parental and community involvement in the teaching and learning environment	• List of parent contact details observed
	• Evidence of parents coming to school – arrival/departure
	• Respectful approach to parents
	• Evidence of parental communication –e.g. notices, information posters for parents etc.
	• Evidence of reports shared with parents

	• Evidence of parent contributing to teaching and learning environment. Give examples

Dimension 3: Support systems

Indicator	Guidelines for the observer
Evidence of government policies and procedures	• Practitioner has copy of relevant documents – ECD site guidelines, Children's Act (or an abridged version), information on childhood health issues, immunisation schedule, HIV/AIDS policy etc.
Evidence of following a curriculum	• Copy of relevant curriculum documents – context appropriate, evidence of activity planning – practitioner file which is up to date etc.
Evidence of training?	• Certificate is visible, notes from attending a course • Evidence of implementing what has been learned
Evidence of working collaboratively	• Evidence of input from ECD Union/Association, notes, booklets, etc. • Evidence of lists/files of names of organisations from which practitioner access support
There is evidence that practitioner shares knowledge about ECD with parents	• Parent information posters are visible • Booklets to share with parents are available • Evidence of notices being sent/shared to parents or parent information booklet

Dimension 4: Views of leadership role

Indicator	Guidelines for the observer
Is there evidence of principal modelling the vision and mission statement	• Do staff appear to be motivated? • Is programme implemented in a way that serves the best interests of the children? • Copies of the vision and mission statement in filing cabinet • Were these shown to you? • The school is welcoming, positive and inviting and there is a focus on interactive learning
Communication with staff with regard to vision and mission statements	• Evidence of holding regular meetings – minutes, anecdotal mention etc. • Staff seems to be aware of these statements – copies in their classrooms, they are mentioned in conversations • Evidence of principal listening to staff • Evidence of suggesting ideas related to good practice to staff • Evidence of reinforcing good practice when appropriate

Being aware of staff needs and providing appropriate support for staff	• Evidence that principal is aware of what is happening in the school • Evidence that principal communicates positively with staff; no ridiculing or 'talking down' to staff • Evidence that principal listens to staff requests and problems
How does principal provide support	• Documentary evidence of staff attending various talks/ workshops etc. variety of files in which possible • Documentary lists of possible organisations/people who could/do provide support • Documentary evidence of networking with NGOs, training institutions etc. • Documentary evidence of staff meetings, principal providing leadership etc.
Providing professional support	• Evidence as mentioned above • There is firm but friendly control and support • Principal models a democratic approach by, for example, encouraging staff to express themselves and have a voice • Valuing staff's ideas and including these, where possible, in the curriculum and daily programme
Giving feedback to staff	• Evidence of good networking and communication channels with staff • Talks to staff respectfully • Evidence of negotiated decisions • Conflict is handled constructively with an emphasis on collaborative problem solving strategies • Evidence of being confident and knowledgeable • Evidence of making use of additional resources to give appropriate feedback e.g. resource books, copies of policy documents etc.
Motivating staff to share practices	• Evidence of holding meetings • Evidence of placing issues relating to practice on the agenda (see agenda/ minutes of meetings) • Evidence from conversations with staff members • Adequate supervision of children by all staff
Managing the school	• Evidence of filed copies of relevant documents – ECD policy document, NELDS, Guidelines for ECD centres, health policy documents – integrated management of childhood illnesses, immunisation schedules etc. • Documentary evidence of planning for the ECD programme – yearly plan, weekly plan, daily programme etc. • Evidence of log book/ diary recordings of activities taking place at site • Documentary evidence of school policies – emergency evacuation plan, HIV/AIDS policy etc.

	- Documentary evidence of menus - Documentary evidence of children's files which are up to date - Documentary evidence of adequate recording templates – nappy changing, first aid - Check lists in place and up-to-date re safety of equipment etc. - Documentary evidence of a workable/viable budget - Documentary evidence of book keeping - ledgers etc. - Documentary evidence of staff files, service contracts etc. - Are procedures in place for example ensuring the safe arrival or departure of children etc.
Quality assurance systems	- As above - documentary evidence of policies and procedures being in place - Evidence of inspections – DoH, DBE, DSW, Local authority, funders etc. - Evidence of compliance – necessary certification - Evidence of good communication with parents – see 4.10 - Evidence of principal reviewing lesson plans etc.
Relationships with stakeholders	- Evidence of talking politely/ respectfully to parents or visitors at the school when you are there - Evidence of correspondence/communication with parents, community members etc. e.g. information letters, evidence of contact telephone numbers etc. - Evidence of parent posters etc.
Involving parents in their children's education	- Observe any conversations held with parents – polite, respectful, helpful etc. - Is there an open-door policy – parents coming to the school - Evidence of communicating with parent's e.g. holding of meetings, giving feedback after specific events/outings etc. - Evidence of inviting guest speakers to talk to parents
Managing ethical issues	- Observe on-going practices in school – are they in the best interests of the children - Observe how principal interacts with adults and children in the school - Evidence that documentation is filed properly and not left for others to read - Reinforcing that cell phones are switched off during the teaching morning (especially if there is a secretary)