

Early learning at Malungeni and surrounding ECD centres

25th -28th October 2021



Stakeholders:

Dr Spiwe Xapile

Malungeni and surrounding district ECD teachers

Africa A+ Schools team

Report prepared by:

Carole Scott (iZinto materials director)

November 2021

We cannot predict the future for children, but we can nurture skills that ensure that they will thrive in times of unpredictability and change.

Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	2
PROGRAMME ACTIVITIES	3
1.1. ECD site visits:	3
1.2. Workshops	Error! Bookmark not defined.
1.3. General:	Error! Bookmark not defined.
EXPENDITURE	11
PROGRAMME HIGHLIGHTS	12
PROGRAMME CHALLENGES	14
Recommendations	15

Executive Summary

Africa A+ School facilitators, Carole Scott, Anya Morris and Yolande Delport, travelled to the Eastern Cape to facilitate a four day programme with the Malungeni and surrounding district's ECD practitioners from the 25 - 28th October 2021. The programme included some on-site pedagogical modelling at the Malungeni ECD centres in the mornings but because of the increase in the number of participants, this had to be curtailed to facilitate practitioners in the workshops. The aim of the four day programme was to:

- Introduce the ECD community to the concept and value of *found¹* materials.
- Put the participants in touch with their own creativity (imagination, problem-solving, innovation). The rationale underpinning this aim is that if ECD teachers enjoy their own creativity, they are likely to encourage and provide opportunities for children to be creative.
- Understanding that learning can be enjoyable and playful.

The programme was enthusiastically embraced by the ECD community. The total cost of the 4 days' travel and the 4 day programme was R78 427.

¹ Found materials are materials that are not for sale and are already in the environment including plastic recyclables, discarded items, overstock and items in nature such as pine-cones, rocks and shells etc.

1. Programme Activities

Date	Activities
23 - 24 October	TRAVEL to Malungeni from Cape Town
25 October	Workshop 1 (9.00am - 4pm): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introductions to core principles • Group work • Introduction to iZinto and working creatively with found materials
26 October	Workshop 2 (9.00am - 4pm): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different teaching styles and how they impact on children's learning • Storytelling as a joyful teaching method in the ECD centre On-site visit (morning): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling pedagogical practices at Libhongo Preschool
27 October	Workshop 3 (9.00am - 4pm): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reconnecting to childhood games and making links to early learning • Working creatively with found materials. On-site visit (morning): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modelling pedagogical practices at Vuyolwethu ECD Centre
28 October	Workshop 4 (9.00am - 3pm): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creative activities: painting, puppet making, clay, weaving, collage, printing, storybook making, bubble provocation and drawing • Reflection. Tying the threads. Closing ceremonies
29-30 October	TRAVEL from Malungeni to Cape Town

The activities listed in the table above are described in detail below:

1.1. ECD site visits:

Yolande Delport, Carole Scott and Anya Morris each spent part of a morning at the two ECD centres in Malungeni: **Libhongo Preschool** and **Vuyolwethu Early Childhood Centre**. The purpose of the visits was to model how to facilitate teaching and learning and creative activities using art and found materials. Due to the very large number of workshop participants, it was impossible for all the facilitators to do on-site visits as was planned. Anya and Yolande visited Vuyolwethu on the 26th and the 27th October 2021 and Carole visited Libhongo on the 26th October 2021.



The photographs above show the children exploring colour mixing and playdough at the Vuyolwethu ECD centre.

1.2. Workshops

Carole, Anya and Yolande facilitated four full day workshops from 25th - 28th October at the large community hall in which the Libhongo Early Learning centre is housed. A detailed account of the workshops is described below.



The large community hall in Malungeni

Workshop 1: Introduction/Review of Africa A Plus Principles and iZinto

The aim of this workshop was to introduce Malungeni stakeholders and practitioners to the principles of Africa A Plus and the concept of working with loose parts. The participants explored:

- What is iZinto?
- Why is early learning important?
- How can we facilitate early learning using *loose parts*²?

What the participants' commented on at the end of the workshop 1:

- *"We felt welcome"*
- *"We made new friends and enjoyed getting to know each other"*
- *"We enjoyed group work activity and naming the groups"*
- *"We found out that trash (loose parts) can be used for something else"*
- *"We liked working with the loose parts"*

² The term loose parts refers to any materials or combination of materials that can be moved, combined, redesigned, lined up, taken apart and put back together in multiple ways.



Participants explored the contents of the found materials box.

Workshop 2: Teacher A and Teacher B/ Storytelling

The aim of this workshop was to enable the participants to think critically about different teaching styles and how each impacts on the children's learning and development. The participants explored:

- Why is quality ECD important?
- How does my style of teaching affect the children's learning and development?
- How do you tell stories to children?

What the participants' said at the end of the workshop 2:

- *"I learn(ed) to create something in my own knowledge"*
- *"Allow children to get dirty, let them explore."*
- *"Storytelling can open many opportunities and can open a child's mind in most ways."*
- *"I enjoy the topic of Teacher A and Teacher B"*
- *"I will do the (storytelling) activity of "hats" with my children."*



The above photographs show the work of Workshop 2, Teacher A and Teacher B. The theme is circles. Here, the participants are outside looking for circles around them. These can be used for their collages and emphasise that nature also provides teachers with loose parts for creative activities.



The above photographs show the work of Workshop 2, Teacher A and Teacher B. The theme is circles. Here, the participants are in their groups creating circle collages using scissors, paper and glue.

Workshop 3: The Dot/What We Believe

The aim of this workshop was to build the creative confidence of the practitioners through their understanding of art and creativity. By experiencing an art activity, the practitioners learn that art is a process not a product. The aim was also to introduce the practitioners to the tenets of children's learning and development.

- What is creativity?
- What is Art?
- Why do you think creativity/art is important?

What the participants' said at the end of the workshop 3:

- *"Use things that are around, on the ground already."*
- *"Art can come out of anything"*
- *"Children learn by doing"*
- *"The importance of open-ended materials"*



The above photographs show the work of Workshop 3, the theme: The dot. Here, the participants are using their creativity to explore the dot through using pastels to create concentric circles on paper.



The photographs above show the work explored during Workshop 3 (The Dot). The participants first listened to music to create concentric circles using pastels on paper. Lastly they worked in groups using the loose parts to create circles.

Workshop 4: Art Experiences

The aim of this workshop was to explore the arts through different mediums and make links between the arts, creativity and ECD.

The practitioners explored:

- Am I creative?
- What is creativity and the arts?
- How can I nurture the children's creativity through the arts?

What the participants' said at the end of the workshop 4:

- *"Used material is much important (how to) help child on art and creativity."*
- *"When you teach a child do not tell them, let them do it themselves, you only drive them."*
- *"Let children discover things and learn at their own pace."*
- *"(I learnt) how to use materials creatively."*
- *"How to create your own thing with useless things to useful things."*
- *"When I play with children they are learning."*
- *Collecting different objects is important for me to teach my kids."*



Participants painting together and working on individual collages using the paper left over from the circle collage activity.

1.3. General:

During the four days of workshops, many local dignitaries visited and requested time to speak. This was very affirming for the facilitators and participants because they all stressed the importance of quality ECD for the community. The facilitators adjusted their schedules to accommodate the speakers.

2. Expenditure

The proposal budget and the actual expenditure were as follows:

Item	Proposed	Actual cost
Facilitation (three facilitators @ R10 000 each)	R30 000	R30 000
1) Travel: @ R 3,82 per km (estimate 2700km; actual 2905km)	R11 185	R11 097
Two nights travel accommodation for two facilitators	R3 000	R2624
Refreshments during four days of travel for two facilitators	R375	
PPE for COVID protocols (hand sanitisers, paper towel, masks, etc)	R 300	R396
Stationery (x30 participants @ R150 each)	R4 800	R4 916

Workshop resources	R1 000	R1 260
Refreshments for 30 participants @ R120 pp x 4 days	R14 400	R14 400
Malungeni Homestead (accommodation)	R9 750	R9 750
Food for 3 facilitators	R1 440	R1 440
Strategic Support	R1 500	R1 500
Administration fee	R1 000	R1 000
TOTAL	R78 750	R78 427

Note that we have an under-spend of R323 which we have put towards our third facilitator's travel costs.

3. Programme Highlights

Some highlights include:

- The level of enthusiasm by the participants to engage in the activities
- Visits from local dignitaries that included the ECD forum, the Chief, the local councillor and the mayor.
- Dr Xapile who addressed the practitioners daily, offering words of encouragement and support.
- The amazing food prepared by local cooks with some vegetables grown and donated by the community.
- The community's offering of housing to the participants attending from afar.

The **Malungeni Community** is very **warm, welcoming and organised**. On arrival, the facilitators were escorted to their comfortable accommodations and every effort was taken to ensure their comfort. At the community hall, members of the community were ready to fulfil any arising needs in our preparation and were active in helping with the setup of the facility for the workshops. Dr Xapile was always available and checked in regularly as was Olga Noncedile as the **community liaison**.

Two **excellent translators**, Sakhele Plaatjies and Bongiwe Ngebulana were available at all times during workshops and site visits to assist the facilitators and participants.

The **community hall** is a very large space flanked by two stage areas that house containers. One of the containers is home to the Libhongo preschool. The other container was used as the kitchen where the meals for 100+ participants and facilitators were prepared. The space was very well ventilated with electrical outlets and a space for the screen and projector to be set up. The hall space provided room for 10 large round tables to be set up with ten participants at each table.



View of the hall from the side stage.

The **participants were enthusiastic and engaged**, even participants who were not as limber, used the floor for art activities and participated in all the active games and energisers during the workshops. The group activities allowed everyone to participate in cooperative learning activities that were planned to allow for some serious group discussions and reflections. Many of the participants became immersed and engrossed in the creative activities and showed much enjoyment and pride in their work.



Snapshots of the participants working, building and expressing the sheer joy of holding completed art work during the workshops.

4. Programme Challenges

The proposal budget included stationary and materials for 30 participants. The facilitators only became aware that there would be more participants two days before the workshop. On arrival we learned that the number had **tripled to a hundred participants**. Stationary

had to be shared by tables which meant some activities took longer to complete. There had to be many reminders about Covid-19 protocols around the sharing of materials and the use of the space and during whole group activities particularly around social distancing.

The facilitators had to **re-plan** workshop strategies and activities to accommodate the large number of people. It meant that the site visits and support which are an integral part of the programme, were slotted in where it was convenient but not sufficient took place.

There is no **digital network** available at the Malungeni training venue so all communication takes place on cell phones. The facilitators used personal hotspot data to work online. Consideration needs to be given to data expenses incurred by the stakeholders.

The challenges included the fact that there was **one toilet** at the hall to accommodate over 100 people.

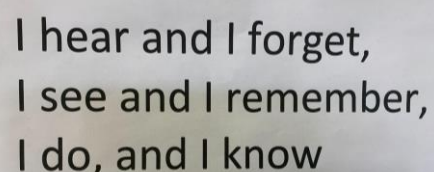
Loadshedding interrupted some of our planned activities and we had to continue in the dark without use of the projector.

It was also brought to our attention during a circle discussion with the elders in the community that there is a real problem of children not being able to attend formal schooling (Grade R and beyond) due to a lack of **official documentation** (no birth certificate due to home birth) and absent parents. These children are being cared for by family members and in many cases the parents have disappeared. This inequity needs to be considered when planning the three year Malungeni ECD programme

5. Recommendations

Changing mind-sets and transforming teacher behaviour takes time. The following recommendations have been made as a result of our observations and experiences during the four day workshop in October 2021:

- Use **experiential learning and modelling** to build the ECD teachers' self - confidence and understanding of what is quality early learning and how to implement it in the ECD setting.



I hear and I forget,
I see and I remember,
I do, and I know

Chinese Proverbs

- The number of **participants needs to be confined to 30** to ensure a high quality training, effective implementation and meaningful support.

- Adopting a **whole school approach**, supports making and sustaining changes at the ECD centres. When Malungeni and A+ proceed with the three year intervention, it will be essential to register the ECD centres, so that everyone, (principals, teachers, assistants, school leaders, aftercare helpers and governing body) are included in the intervention.
- **Libhongo ECD centre** has the potential for being a model site. The teachers have attended both workshops and there are fewer resources making them an ideal candidate for implementing the theory of loose parts and for identifying facilitators for facilitator training.

We would like to express our appreciation of Dr Xapile, his family and colleagues. Without Dr Xapile's vision and drive as a community leader, the development of the ECD sector at Malungeni would not have happened.



Dr Spiwo Xapile

"Imagination is the source of every form of human achievement."

Sir Ken Robinson