



Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoP) **Framework**

2023-2024



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Executive summary

Quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) is essential for building a productive and competitive nation in Ghana, as highlighted in the Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030. In response, the government introduced compulsory, free kindergarten education in 2007 and a play-based curriculum in 2018. However, the effective implementation of ECE is hindered by challenges such as fragmented coordination among stakeholders, insufficient teacher professional development, limited understanding of the play-based curriculum, and weak school leadership that excludes relevant stakeholders from school development plans. Consequently, only 2% of children achieve the desired literacy standards by the end of their early years.

To address these challenges, VVOB/ACSL, Sabre Education, Right to Play, and Afrikids, with support from the Jacobs Foundation, launched an innovative intervention to strengthen play-based ECE through Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoP). These LCoPs bring together district education officers, school leaders, and community leaders to collaborate and improve ECE implementation. Participants engage in an inquiry-based learning cycle over six sessions, meeting bi-monthly to discuss ECE issues, prioritize one key challenge, and implement one feasible solution using available resources. A guiding framework supports this process, making the LCoP approach an effective model for enhancing ECE through targeted, collaborative action.

1. Background

The government of Ghana introduced two years of compulsory, free kindergarten education in 2007 and a play-based curriculum in 2018. This was done because quality Early Childhood Education (ECE) is seen as critical for the building of a productive and competitive nation envisioned in Ghana's Education Strategic Plan 2018-2030 (Ministry of Education, 2017b). With this vision, the ECE policy was developed to strengthen the ECE sub-sector to advance the physical, cognitive, psychosocial, and emotional growth of all 4-5-year-old children. This is true not only in Ghana but across many contexts, and research has identified benefits for play for children's development (Mendenhall et al., 2021).

However, several challenges, as outlined in the 2017 Education Sector Analysis in Ghana, are hindering the achievement of the expected results, including fragmented coordination for quality ECE implementation and inadequate teacher professional development leading to poor understanding and use of the play-based curriculum. In addition, poor school leadership that does not involve relevant stakeholders in school development plans hinders the effective implementation of quality ECE. As a result, children are left behind without a strong foundation and readiness to access higher levels of education (Ministry of Education, 2017a). In fact, just 2% of pupils attain the desired standards for literacy after their early years of education (Ministry of Education, 2015).

Addressing these challenges requires collaboration of educational stakeholders at different levels. It is in view of this that four organizations namely VVOB, Sabre Education, Right to Play and Afrikids initiated and are implementing an innovative intervention with the support of Jacobs Foundation, to address the identified challenges that hinder promotion of quality ECE in Ghana. The intervention aims to strengthen play based ECE in Ghana through Leadership Communities of Practice.

Through this project, Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoP) will be set up with district educational, school and community leaders. The project partners will also come together in a separate Community of Practice to discuss and share insights on effectiveness and impact,

sustainability and scalability, and the role of partnerships in supporting quality ECE nationally in Ghana.

2. Leadership component

The community of practice (CoP) that this project is seeking to establish is expected to play a leadership role to advance learning through play in ECE in respective schools, community, municipality, or district. Members of the LCoPs are seen as agents of sustainable change towards improved teaching and learning in ECE.

2.1 Understanding the concept of educational leadership.

Rather than focusing on one definition for educational leadership, some authors have identified key dimensions of educational leadership. Bush (2020); Bush and Glover (2014) (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006) identified three key dimensions of educational leadership: influence, values and vision.

(1) Leadership and Influence

One definition considers leadership as a “*social influence process whereby influence is exerted by one person (or group) over other people (or groups) to structure the activities and relationships in a group or organisation*” (Yukl, Gordon, & Taber, 2002, p. 3).

This definition includes the following key elements (Bush 2020; Bush, 2008):

- The focus is on **influence rather than on authority**. Influencing is not the same as imposing or controlling. Both influence and authority are dimensions of leadership, but authority is based on formal position, while influence can be exercised by anyone in the school or the community. In this sense, leadership is independent of formal positions while authority is linked directly to it. A parent with strong social reputation may influence change within a school although she/he does not have legal positional authority.
- **The process is intentional**. The person who is exercising influence is doing so to achieve certain goals.
- **Influence may be exercised by groups as well as individuals**. This supports the idea of distributed leadership.

(2) Leadership and values

Leadership is linked with values (Bush, 2020). Leaders are expected to base their actions on clear personal and professional values. This idea reflects the growing interest in moral leadership (Bush, 2008). The values of leaders are key components for successful leadership. Research shows clear links between leaders' personal qualities and leadership success (Day & Leithwood, 2007). The most successful educational leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others. They are flexible rather than dogmatic, but with respect for their core values. They are persistent in their high expectations of others, and they are emotionally intelligent and optimistic (Leithwood et al., 2008). Values are expressed through the way we act.

(3) Leadership and vision

Vision is a third important component of leadership (Bush, 2020; Bush & Glover, 2014b; Karikan, 2011). A clearly articulated school vision gives clear direction for all stakeholders, leading to shared goals. However, it is not enough to have a clear vision for the school, the vision needs to be communicated, internalized, and accepted by all members. Thus, school leaders establish the conditions that enable and inspire others to intentionally work towards the common vision.

2.2. Leadership model

Leadership does not necessarily refer to a formal position or the authority of a single person. Rather, it can be practiced by different relevant actors within an organization as well (Aubrey et al., 2013; Spillane et al., 2004). True leaders use the power of influence rather than positional authority to engage and align people, focus their teams, sustain momentum, and perform. This is often referred to as distributed, shared, collective or relational leadership, in contrast to a hierarchical structure (Douglass, 2019). The author shows that leadership influences a set of practices that may have a positive impact on children's learning, development, and well-being. This project explores another, but related form of leadership referred to as "Leadership communities of practice (LCoP)". These LCoPs will be organized in three districts whereby School Management Committees (SMCs) of two different schools (one in rural area and the other one in urban area) at district level will come together every two months to discuss and learn from one another on how to effectively lead play-based learning in ECE in respective schools.

Acheampong (2015) describes the School Management Committee (SMC) in Ghana context, as the main governing body of public basic schools. The SMC handbook of GES (2010, p.18) defines the SMC as "a community-based institution aimed at strengthening community participation and mobilization for education delivery". Its main "aim is to promote the best interest of the school and to ensure that learners in particular school receive the best education possible"(GES, 2010).

The leadership practices expected from the LCoP members are aligned with the main roles of SMCs as categorized by the GES (2010). These include but are not limited to ensuring effective use of school resources (human, financial, physical, ...) for improved teaching and learning. Using the available resources, SMCs and LCoP members are expected to ensure improved support for ECE teachers to strengthen play based ECE learning, leading to improved learning outcomes for children.

2.3. Defining a community of Practice

A community of practice is defined as a group of people who share a common interest or goal and who interact regularly to improve their skills and knowledge (Wenger, 1998). In this definition, Wenger identifies three characteristics of a Community of Practice as depicted in *Figure 1* a domain of interest, a shared practice, and a community of learners.

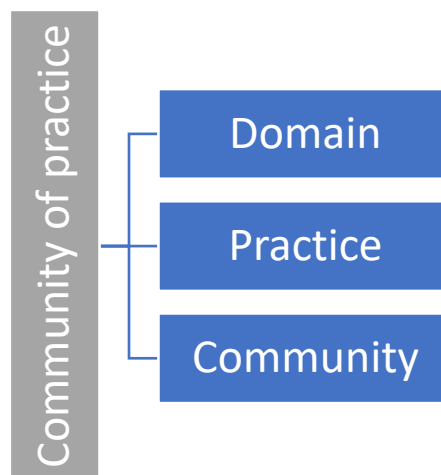


Figure 1: Characteristics of a community of Practice by (Wenger, 1998)

(i) The **domain** is the subject matter that binds the community together into a social entity. For example, in this project, the domain of interest is about “promoting learning through play” in Early Childhood Education in Ghana.

(ii) The **practice**. Members of a community of practice are practitioners with shared commitment to the domain. Therefore, they develop a shared repertoire of resources: experiences, stories, tools, ways of addressing issues—in short, a shared practice.

(iii) The **community** refers to a group of individuals involved in the shared practice. It is a learning partnership among people who find it useful to learn from and with each other about a shared domain. They use each other’s experience of practice as a learning resource.

3. Structure of the Leadership Community of Practice

The structure of the Leadership Communities of Practice in ECE in Ghana is aligned with the three characteristics/dimensions of a community of Practice as described above. This framework describes the domain of interest, the shared interest and the community of educational leaders involved in promoting Learning through Play (LtP) in ECE in Ghana.

3.1. Domain of interest

The subject matter that will bind the leadership community together is about promoting “learning through play” in Early Childhood Education in Ghana.

a. Understanding the concept Learning through Play (LtP) and benefits

To define the concept of learning through play it is important to understand that children engage in play every day because play is natural for them. Educators and education stakeholders thus should see play not only as a fun and entertaining activity, but as a tool for learning and development. This is supported by research which shows that play-based learning has an impact on different aspects of the child development, including cognitive social social-emotional, language, and physical development (Bergen, 2006; Leong & Bodrova, 2012; Roskos & Christie, 2013). Additionally, there is evidence that by engaging in play-based learning activities, children

can learn and retain new information, develop problem-solving skills, build strong relationships with their peers, and develop a positive sense of self (Leong & Bodrova, 2012; Lillard et al., 2013).

Play-based learning activities indeed provide opportunities for children to explore and experiment with new ideas and concepts, and to use their imaginations to create new possibilities (Leong & Bodrova, 2012). Play-based learning can also be used to support children with special needs, by engaging them in meaningful activities, to developing their skills in a supportive and inclusive environment (Copple et al., 2014).

b. A continuum /spectrum of playful learning

The literature explains playful learning as operating along a continuum from free play at one end to more guided or structured play (see *Figure 2*). Researchers have recently added games under the umbrella of playful learning (Hassinger-Das et al., 2017).

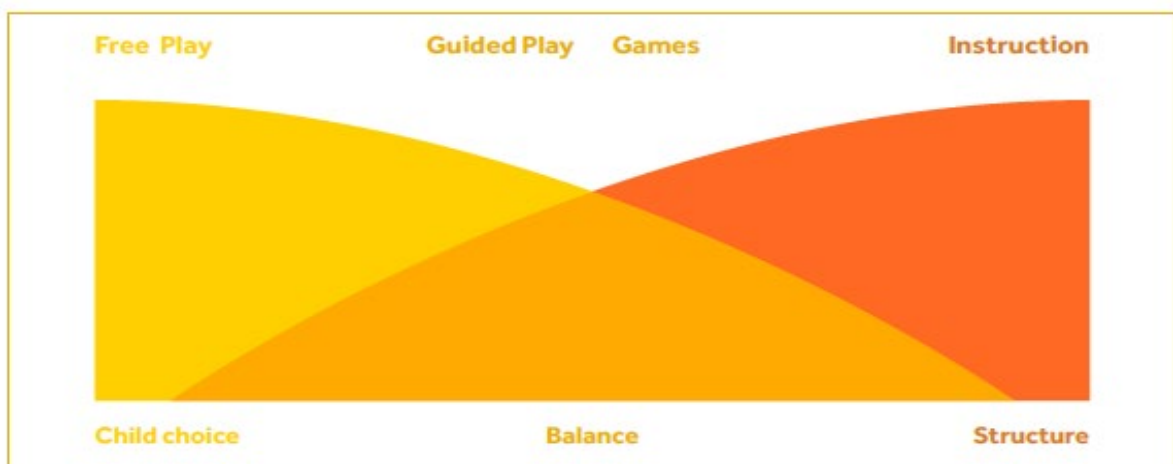


Figure 2: Spectrum of Play

- In **free play**, children play without any guidance or interference from adults. They choose and decide what they want to play and how they want to play. Free play help children to develop social skills, language skills, and emotional regulation, as well as to explore their interests and develop their creativity (Bergen, 2002).
- **Guided play** is a more structured form of play which are initiated by the adult and directed by the children. This form of play is proved to be a powerful tool for teaching

and learning to introduce new concepts or skills (Copple et al., 2014). Guided play can also be used to support children’s learning in specific areas, such as literacy, numeracy, or science (Roskos & Christie, 2013). Research shows that guided play also provides opportunities for children to practice their language skills as they engage in conversations with peers and adults (Lillard et al., 2013).

To understand what “learning through play” means, and in line with the above forms of play, we can also refer to five characteristics that define playful learning experiences by The LEGO Foundation (Zosh et al., 2017).

c. Characteristics of learning through play

The LEGO Foundation has defined five characteristics for learning through play (see *Figure 3*). This is based on evidence from the science of learning (Zosh et al., 2017). Learning through play works best if it meets the conditions below:

- Play is **meaningful**: Meaningful implies that learners can find meaning in their learning by connecting it to something they already know and value. By doing so, they can express and expand their understanding.
- Play is **joyful**: Joy is at the heart of play. Although play can sometimes be frustrating (e.g., oh no, my tower fell down!), but the overall feeling is one of enjoyment, motivation, thrill, and pleasure.
- Play is **actively engaging**: When you watch children playing, you will see that they are deeply involved. Learners are immersed in what they are doing, hands-on and minds-on. They stay focussed and don’t get easily distracted.
- Play is **iterative**: Children play to practice skills, try out possibilities, revise hypotheses and discover new challenges, leading to deeper learning. Children can make mistakes and try again till they get expected results.
- Play is **socially interactive**: Play allows children to communicate ideas, to understand others through social interaction, paving the way to build deeper understanding and more powerful relationships.

The 5 characteristics will not always be present to the same extent in learning through play activities. But all children should experience moments of joy, meaningful connection, be active and absorbed, iterate, and interact with others. The leadership community of practice will play a great role in ensuring that the characteristics or conditions below are met in ECE in schools/communities and districts.

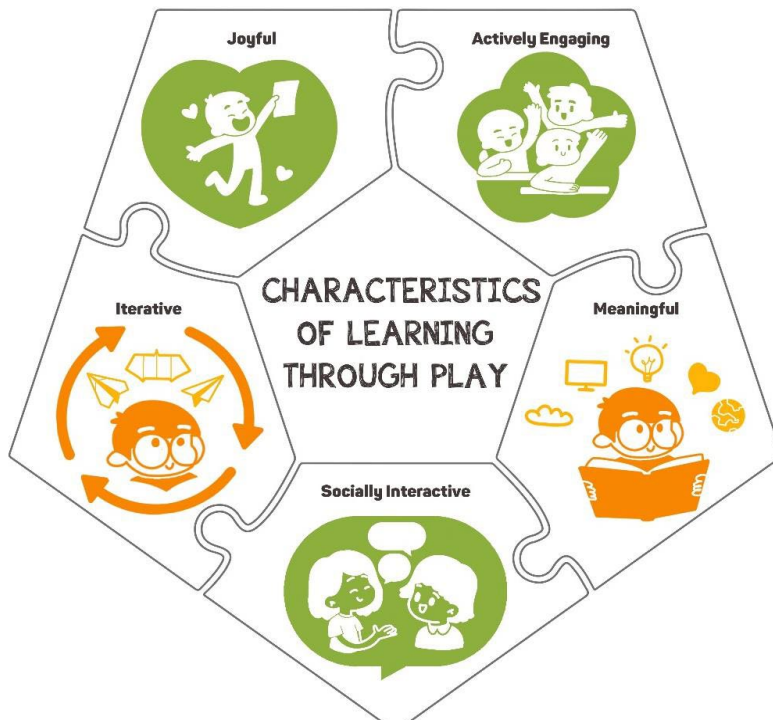


Figure 3: Characteristics of learning through play

d. Common challenges in Learning through Play in ECE and proposed solutions

Although Learning through play has been proved to be an important component of early childhood education, there are challenges that can hinder the implementation of learning through play in early childhood education. The common challenges include, but not limited to:

- (1) **lack of understanding of the importance of play-based learning** among parents, caregivers, and educators. The study conducted by (Blakemore & Choudhury, 2006), confirmed that many parents and caregivers prioritize academic skills over play-based learning, which can lead to a lack of support for this type of learning. The solution to address this challenge would be to educate parents, caregivers, and educators about the benefits of play-based learning (Copple & Bredekamp, 2009).

(2) **lack of resources and materials** necessary for effective learning through play. Pyle & Bigelow (2015) explains that inadequate resources can hinder the implementation of play-based learning, as children may not have access to the resources they need to engage in meaningful play. The solution to this challenge would be to provide adequate resources and materials to facilitate Learning through Play.

This would require equipping classrooms with developmentally appropriate resources that facilitate learning through Play. Collaboration among educators, parents, and caregivers is also important in overcoming challenges associated with play-based learning. Clements & Sarama (2008) support the importance of creating partnerships between educators and parents to ensure that children have access to the resources they need to engage in meaningful play.

(3) **lack of professional development opportunities for educators.** Barbour and Barbour (2014), indicates that many educators do not have the knowledge and skills necessary to effectively implement play-based learning. As a result, they lack confidence and are reluctant to use this approach in the classroom. To address this challenges, professional development opportunities should be provided for educators to learn about how to effectively implement play-based learning in the classroom.

3.2. Shared practice

Ideally, the Leadership Community of Practice (LCoP) members should be practitioners with shared understanding and insights, as well as a clear commitment and leadership in support of play based ECE teaching and learning in Ghana. As this is not the case in these LCoPs that the project is seeking to facilitate, LCoP members (SMC members) will need some training sessions on play-based learning in ECE to be able to play their leadership role in this area.

As depicted in the Theory of Change below, this project aims to set up ECE Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoP), to create learning societies in which key members and leaders within the learning community develop shared understanding and insights, as well as a clear

commitment and leadership in support of play based ECE teaching and learning in schools. This will enable improved support for teachers to strengthen play based ECE learning, leading to improved learning outcomes for children.



Figure 4: LCoP theory of change

Leadership Communities of Practice Cycle

The Leadership Communities of Practice (LCoPs) will meet once every two (2) months to discuss key issues in ECE and the implementation of play-based learning. Every LCoP will go through one inquiry-based learning cycle. *Figure 5* shows four phases that the LCoP learning cycle will follow. Members will meet in 6 sessions to complete this inquiry-based learning cycle.

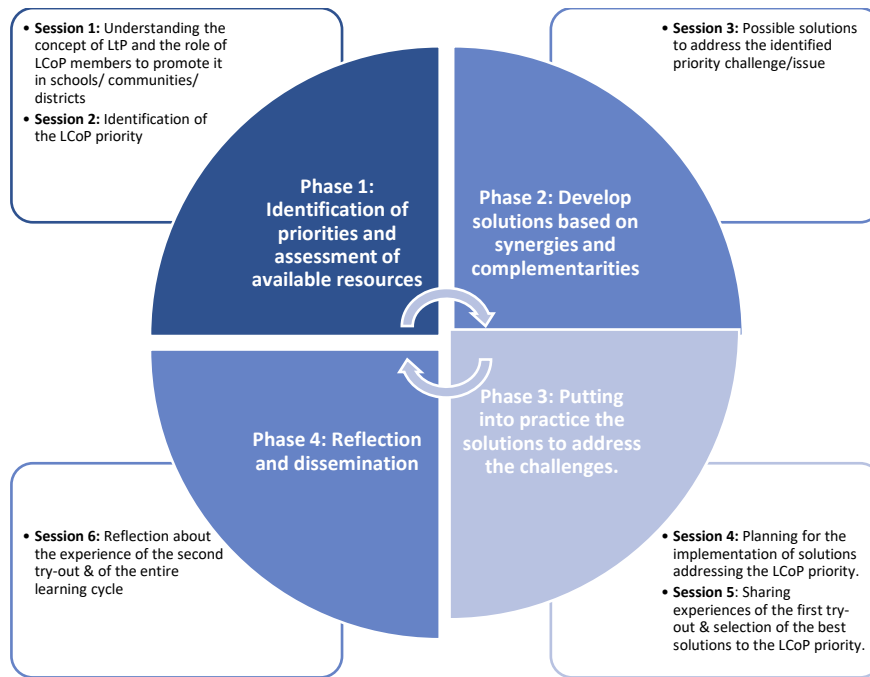


Figure 5: Inquiry-based learning through Leadership Communities of Practice

Phase I: Identification of priorities and assessment of available resources

In this phase, LCoP members will be introduced to the concept of Learning through Play, also referred to in this framework as play-based learning, in Early Childhood Education, its importance and challenges. It will also be an opportunity to identify and discuss challenges/issues related to implementation of play-based learning approach in ECE and agree upon a common priority challenge/issue to be addressed by the LCoP members during the learning cycle. They will also assess available resources needed to address the priority challenge. Two LCoP sessions will be organized in this phase.

- **Session one (1)** will focus on understanding the purpose of the LCoP including the leadership role of LCoP members. They will also be introduced with the concept of Learning through Play in ECE, its importance, and challenges. In this session, members will be given a practical assignment to be completed before session two. The assignment will be about assessing the extent to which LtP is implemented in ECE in respective schools/communities/districts, in reference to the 5 characteristics of LtP. In other words, using the available tool (appendix 2), members will assess how children experience moments of joy, meaningful connection, active engagement, iterative learning, and social interaction. Based on their assessment results, LCoP members will reflect on what is done well, areas of improvement, available resources, challenges, and possible solutions to the challenges faced and how they can contribute to addressing these challenges.
- **Session two (2)** will focus on discussing the results of the assessment of the implementation of LtP in ECE in respective schools/communities/districts. Based on the results of this assessment, members will identify the common priority challenge/issue faced in implementing LtP in ECE in respective schools/communities/districts.

Phase 2: Develop solutions to address the identified priority.

In Phase 2, LCoP members will meet in **session three (3)** to select at least 3 solutions/ strategies to address the identified priority challenge/issue related to implementation of LtP in ECE in respective schools/communities/districts, within the available resources.



Phase 3: Putting into practice the solutions to address the challenges.

Phase 3 is about putting into practice agreed upon solutions to address the identified priority challenge in implementing LtP in ECE in respective schools/communities/districts. Members will try-out the solutions in their schools/communities/districts and together they will decide on the most appropriate strategy/solution to effectively address the identified LCoP priority. Two sessions will be organized in this phase:

- **Session four (4)** to jointly plan for the implementation of the agreed upon solutions addressing the priority challenge in respective schools/communities/districts. Members are expected to try-out the selected solutions/strategies before the next LCoP session (session five).
- **Session five (5)** will be organized after the first try-out of the solutions to share experiences of the try-out in respective schools/communities/districts. Members will agree on the best solution to effectively address the identified priority challenge/issue faced in implementing play-based learning in ECE. LCoP members will be given another opportunity to implement the chosen best solution in respective schools/communities/districts.

Phase 4: Reflection and dissemination

This phase will be about the closing of the action-oriented cycle. LCoP members will come together in **session six (6)** to reflect about the experience of the try-out the selected best solution/strategy to address the priority challenge in the implementation of LtP in ECE in respective schools/communities and districts. They will also discuss the entire process of the learning cycle and record lessons learnt that would be shared widely with the aim of knowledge sharing.

3.3. Leadership Community of Practice

As depicted in *Figure 6*, the LCoP will consist of district leaders, parent representatives, community leaders and school leaders. Teachers and parents are boundary partners of the LCoP that are motivated and capacitated.

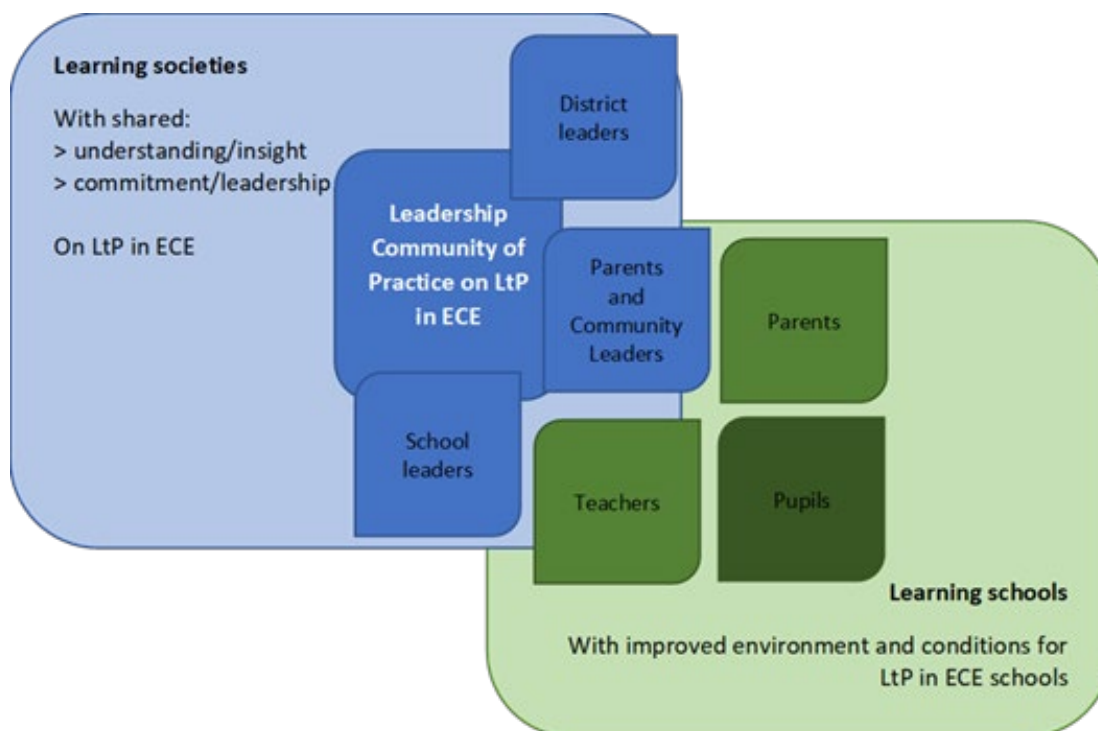


Figure 6: Composition of the Leadership Community of Practice (LCoP)

The LCoPs will be initiated in **Ho West district – Volta region, Komenda-Edina-Eguafo-Abirem (KEEA) district – Central region, and Binduri district – Upper east region**. In every region, one LCoP will be initiated at school community level bringing together SMCs from two schools (one rural and one urban school community) in their selected district. Each LCoP at the school community level will be comprised of local community leaders, , parent representatives, head teachers and teachers representatives. The facilitators of the LCoP should ideally be the duty bearers within the education system.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Roles and responsibilities are shared at different levels among partners involved in the project. Sabre Education, Right to Play, and Afrikids are responsible for the identification of members of LCoPs in consultation with the district officials. They will also play the role of co-facilitating the LCoP sessions together with the ECE Coordinators. Facilitators are also responsible for reporting on the implementation of the LCoP sessions using a shared reporting template.

VVOB will develop the LCoP framework, train and provide support to facilitators of the LCoPs. VVOB will also lead monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of the project in collaboration with Sabre, Right to Play and Afrikids.

All LCoP members including district leaders, parent representatives, community leaders, teachers and school leaders share the responsibility of promoting LtP in ECE. Their roles include but not limited to active participation in the LCoP sessions, implementation of agreed upon solution to address challenges hindering the use of LtP in ECE in respective schools, communities, and districts, sharing experience with other members of LCoP and giving feedback on shared experience.

5. Key enablers for Successful LCoPs

For an effective LCoP session, discussions and activities should ideally be conducted following six key enablers highlighted below (Katz et al., 2009; Wenger et al., 2011):

1. Purpose and focus

LCoP members define the purpose of each session and allocate enough time to the issue being discussed. At the end of the session, they should be able to establish whether they achieved their objectives or not. Following the session, actions should be taken back at the school/community or district.

2. Relationships

During LCoP sessions, members share information openly, including successes and failures, and they trust and respect each other. Some of the information shared could be sensitive, which means that confidentiality is important for LCoPs members. Having strong trusted networks facilitates LCoP discussions.

3. Collaboration

LCoP members engage in intensive interactions where they present their beliefs and best practices to investigate, explore, reflect together, and adopt. It is expected that they will work together collaborating to identify challenges and jointly create solutions.

4. Inquiry

LCoPs are enquiry- and evidence-driven, focused on the development and implementation of solutions for specific issues in the context of strengthening learning through play in ECE in Ghana. Members collectively question teaching and leadership routines in ECE, examine teaching and learning and engage in supporting each other's professional growth. Inquiry is the process by which the collaborative network can identify challenges and create solutions to common challenges.

5. Leadership

LCoP members share roles and responsibilities in the sessions, i.e., setting agenda, leading on specific tasks. Leadership is shared and distributed among the members. However, each session should have a leader to drive the meeting agenda and ensure there is a productive outcome from the session.

6. Accountability

LCoP members hold each other accountable for agreed upon decisions and targets set in the sessions. This accountability is demonstrated during the reflection sessions where members can pose questions, discuss reasons for successes or failures and provide support so that each member can be successful and grow.

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8. Appendices

Appendix 1: Rubric for evaluating Leadership Communities of Practice sessions.

The six enabling factors for effective LCoPs are used as indicators to assess LCoP sessions. It will be used by the LCoP facilitator or other relevant stakeholder to assess the effectiveness of a LCoP session. At the conclusion of each session, the facilitator must fill out this rubric, highlighting areas that need improvement for the subsequent session.

Indicators	EXCELLENT	VERY GOOD	NEEDS IMPROVEMENT	MEANS OF VERIFICATION
1. Purpose and focus	All LCoP members demonstrate understanding of the purpose and objective of each session and allocate enough time to the matter. LCoP members share a common understanding on improving the children’s learning	Some LCoP members demonstrate understanding of the purpose and objective of some sessions and allocate time to the matter.	LCoP members never demonstrate understanding of the purpose and objective of each session and allocate enough time to the matter.	Explanation of LCoP members on the purpose and focus.
2. Relationships	All LCoP members share information openly, including successes and failures, and they trust and respect each other.	Some LCoP members share information openly, including successes and failures, and they somehow trust and respect each other.	LCoP members never share success stories and failure openly. They do not trust and respect each other.	Interaction of LCoPs members in the session LCoP meeting actions
3. Collaboration	All LCoP members engage in intensive interactions where they present their	Some LCoP members engage in interactions. They present their beliefs	LCoP members never engage in interactions. They never present their	LCoP sessions minutes.

<i>Indicators</i>	<i>EXCELLENT</i>	<i>VERY GOOD</i>	<i>NEEDS IMPROVEMENT</i>	<i>MEANS OF VERIFICATION</i>
	beliefs and practices to investigation and practice.	and practices to investigation and practice.	beliefs and practices to investigation and practice.	
4. Inquiry	All LCoP members collectively question teaching and leadership routines, examine teaching and learning and engage in supporting each other's professional growth.	Some LCoP members collectively question teaching and leadership routines, examine teaching and learning and engage in supporting each other's professional growth.	LCoP members never question teaching and leadership routines, examine teaching and learning and engage in supporting each other's professional growth.	LCOP sessions minutes. Feedback provided in the LCOP sessions.
5. Leadership	LCOP members assume leadership roles within the LCOP, e.g., setting the agenda, leading on specific tasks.	Some LCOP members assume leadership roles within the LCOP, e.g., setting the agenda, leading on specific tasks.	Very few LCOP members assume leadership roles within the LCOP, e.g., setting the agenda, leading on specific tasks. Decision making is limited to very few influential members.	LCOP sessions minutes.
6. Accountability	LCoP members hold each other accountable for implementing the decisions taken and ensuring the functionality of the LCOP.	Some LCOP members hold each other accountable for implementing the decisions taken and ensuring the functionality of the LCOP.	LCOP members do not hold each other accountable for implementing the decisions taken and ensuring the functionality of the LCOP.	List of those who do not implement decisions taken in LCOP. LCOP sessions minutes.

Appendix 2: Observation and self-assessment tool on playful teaching and learning.

1. Characteristics of Learning through play				
		1: Yes, this can be observed	2: It can be observed a bit, but could improve	3: Not observed
		Yes	Yes, but	No
1.1. Learning is Joyful	1.1.1. The children experience pleasure, motivation, surprise, thrill, etc... (Evidence of joy, smiling, laughter, being silly, celebrating, dancing ...) during numeracy activities			
	1.1.2. The teacher integrates moments of fun and pride in the activity.			
	1.1.3. The children show a relaxed, open, friendly, positive behaviour.			
	1.1.4. Children experience joy through success after overcoming challenges themselves.			
1.2. Learning is actively engaging	1.2.1. The learning activities attract learner's interest; children are curious to see what happens.			
	1.2.2. The children are involved with and absorbed by what they are doing, and they can persist despite distractions. Children are thinking along, they are focused on the activity (not staring out of the window).			
	1.2.3. The learning activities hold learner's interest; children are concentrated for a long time and not easily disturbed.			
	1.2.4. The teacher uses activities with different levels of challenge for children.			
	1.2.5. The teacher motivates children to engage at the beginning and during tasks and activities.			
1.3. Learning is iterative	1.3.1. The children repeatedly try out new possibilities, revise hypotheses and explore other ways to do things. Student(s) started the task again or adjusted when they thought of a better idea/approach.			
	1.3.2. The teacher motivates children to experiment and try out by themselves.			
	1.3.3. The teacher responds positively to making mistakes.			

1.4. Learning is socially interactive	1.4.1.	The children share ideas, have interactions, collaborate and communicate. Children work in pairs or groups; children develop and share ideas with other classmates.			
	1.4.2.	The teacher allows and encourages children to speak out during interaction moments and activities, and responds positively to ideas expressed by the children.			
	1.4.3.	The teacher allows and encourages children to interact with each other.			
1.5. Learning is meaningful	1.5.1.	The teacher harvests and uses the interests, ideas and initiatives of the children to expand the theme or activities.			
	1.5.2.	Children are given the opportunity to interact with concrete, real life materials. They can manipulate and transform materials.			
	1.5.3.	The teacher responds to observed needs and interests of children with meaningful impulses (e.g. child is playing with blocks, building a tower, and teacher asks “Which tower is highest? What will happen when we add this big block on top?”)			
	1.5.4.	The learning activities relate to something that is already known by the individual children. The teacher starts from what individual children can already do and challenges them to take the next learning step.			
	1.5.5.	Learning activities (such as numeracy) are integrated in meaningful activities such as corner play and free play, are linked to the theme of the week/month and the context of the child.			

Appendix 3: Overview of key project activities (GANTT chart)

Key activities	Inception May-August 2023				Implementation Sep 2023-Dec 2024													
	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct.	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct
Stakeholder engagement (Govt / ECE actors in Ghana)	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Development LCP framework	█	█	█															
Identification of LCP members			█	█														
Development of Research plan			█	█	█	█												
Training of LCP facilitators					█	█												
ECE knowledge-sharing sessions					█	█												
LCP sessions							█		█		█		█		█		█	
LCP facilitator support sessions								█				█				█		
Qualitative research							█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█	█
Partner CoP sessions	█			█			█			█			█			█		
Dissemination of learnings																█	█	█



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