



AfECN

Africa Early Childhood Network



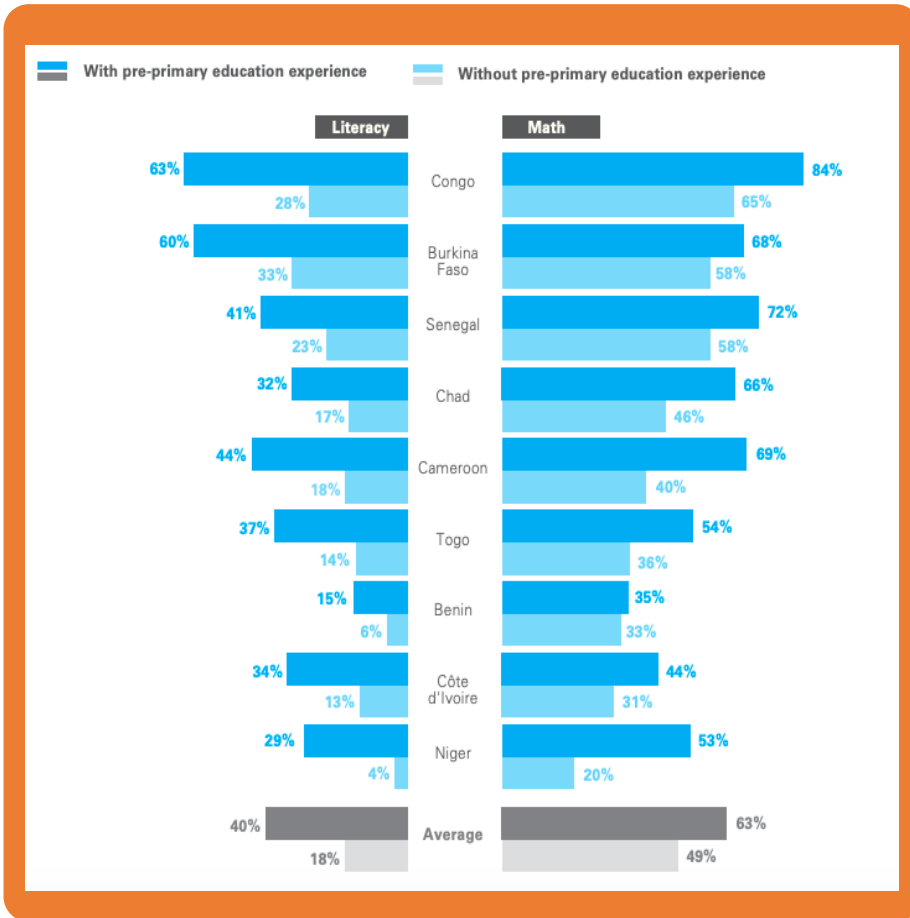
Learning through Play

Global and Regional Perspectives

Sherri Le Mottee, Dec 2020



Contextualizing a
focus on PLAY



- ❖ These data underscore the ‘*severe learning crisis* that undermines economic growth and the well-being” of Africa’s citizens (Bashir, 2018).
- ❖ Children who had attended pre-primary schooling achieved a low score of 40% for literature and only 63% for proficiency for maths.
- ❖ These figures don’t change up the learning ladder despite an increase in enrolments between 60 – 80% in Sub- Saharan Africa over the last two decades.
- ❖ Less than 20% of children are proficient in reading and mathematics by the time they finish their primary years (GPE, 2019).

Percentage of Grade 2 students who demonstrate minimum competency in literacy and mathematics in select countries in West and Central Africa, by participation in pre-primary education programmes (Source: UNICEF, 2019).

The learning crisis is not just about getting children into the education system, it is also about what that system offers.



Motivating for political support to prioritise access for young children to ECD services is critical, focusing only on this goal will be insufficient to realise its multiple benefits.



Play is our
strategic
opportunity

Play is the
right of every
child!



Play is a core
feature of
QUALITY in ECD
provision


Play is how
children learn
best!

The pedagogy of
play is central to
child centered
practices



By Integrating learning through play
into early learning environments we
can strengthen **quality**

Improving quality can **boost**
children's learning outcomes and
prepare them primary school and for
a fast-changing world

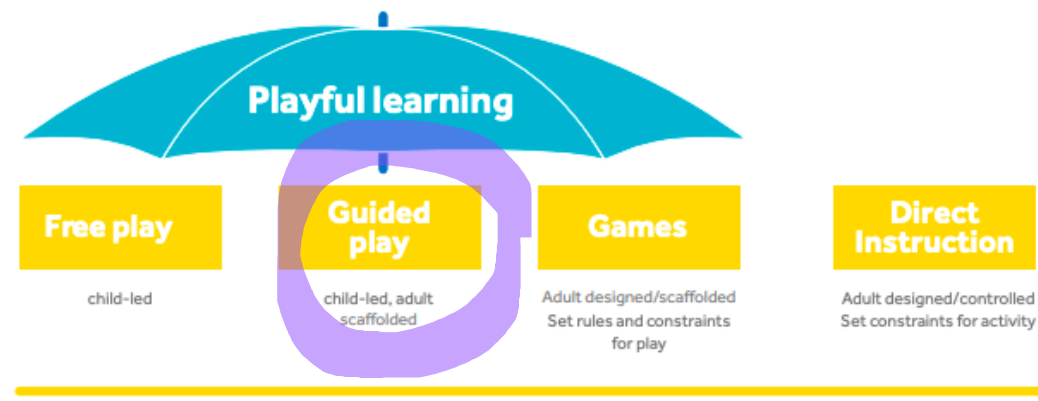


Landscaping
highlights:
Strategic
Opportunities




What is Learning through PLAY?

- LtP Integrates a wide range of children's intellectual, physical, social and creative interests and abilities.
- Prepares children for a fast-changing world calling for new kinds of knowledge, skills and resilience.
- Is a multi-faceted continuum which works best when there is a between child-directed play, guided play and adult-led learning activities.
- Evidence shows guided play is a sweet spot!





Key findings from the landscaping

- The growing evidence base for LtP has contributed to it taking hold on the African continent
 - Over 60 actors in Africa all doing exceptional and influential work.
 - Some already working collaboratively and others pursuing similar but separate agendas.
 - Together, reach is across almost every single country on the continent.
- 




Patchy BUT Promising

- In several instances, multiple actors prioritize and engage in the same country but don't necessarily work together.
- There are several global and regional networks which are not specific to play but touch on it as part of a wider ECD agenda.
- ALL this potential can be harnessed to increase the reach of LtP initiatives and influence the quality of early learning for more children



Systematise to increase reach

- Government is acknowledged as a lead role-player, without whom these efforts cannot be scaled
 - Current evidence is that investments in ECD do not favour ECCE, with the balance going to health and nutrition.
 - Key messages that advocate for increasing investments in early learning access AND quality could bring resources for LtP.
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Low Hanging Fruit

Parenting: playful interaction, the home learning environment and parental support for children's early learning.

The quality of early childhood care and education services with particular focus on the role of the **teacher/practitioner as facilitator/teacher/guide.**

Growing evidence and tools Extensive work has been done to **develop tools, resources and training packages to support implementation.**





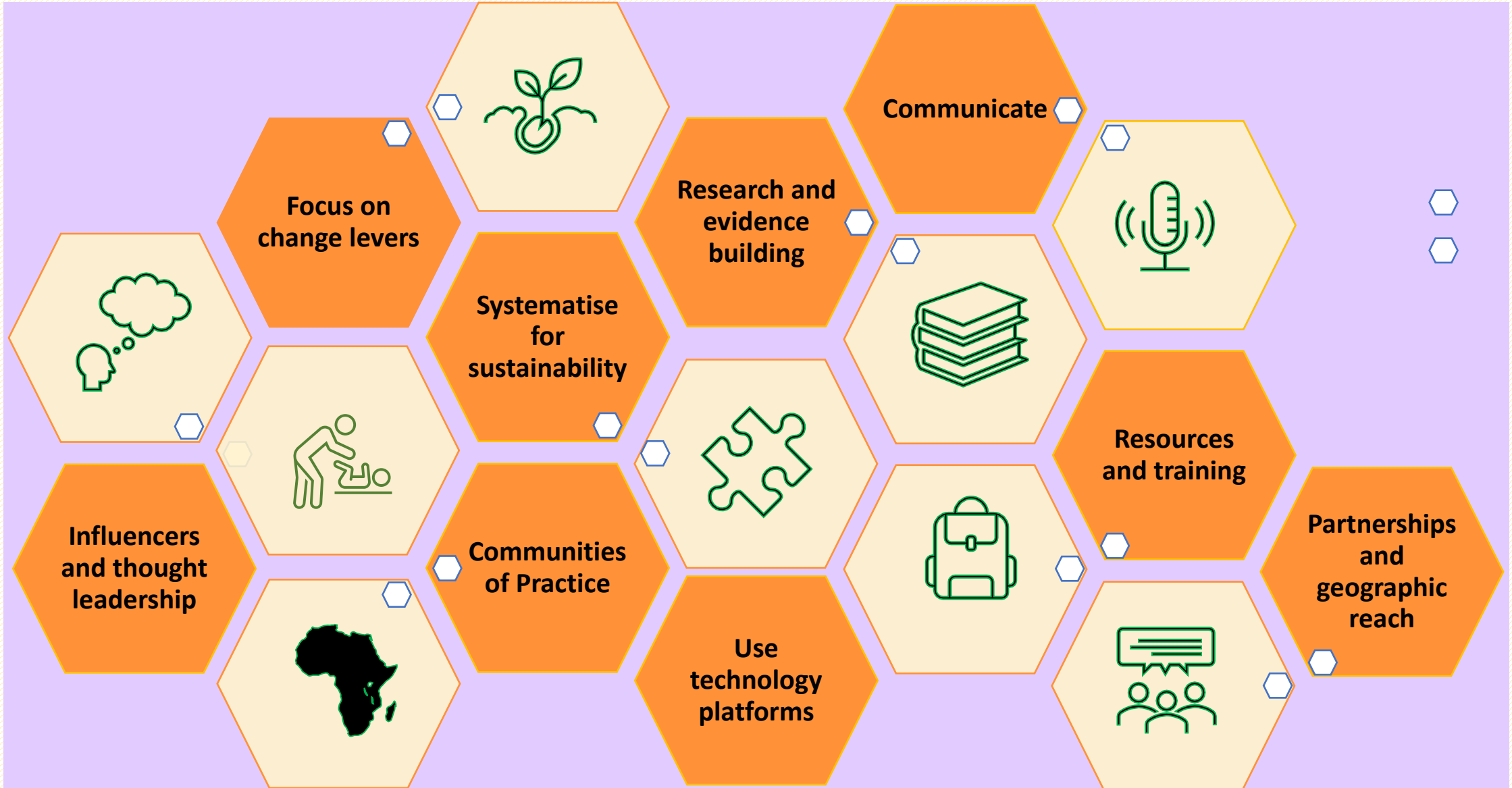
Collaboration

- Harvard Centre of the Developing Child hosts a COP comprising global and domestic researchers, practitioners, developers, non-profit leaders and policymakers. They have been working on four key issues: 1) the science of play, 2) how to measure the impact of playful learning, 3) play in community settings, and 4) the framing of messaging around play.
- Virtual global COP facilitated by LEGO - PlayFutures brings together different voices, perspectives and theory to influence practice. It seeks to build common understanding and shared identity across stakeholder groups to stimulate collaboration.



Communication

- Fine-tuned messages have been shown to “re-orientate public and decision-maker thinking leading to dramatic changes.
- Communication campaigns in the landscaping including:
 - the use of multi-media approaches like the Sesame Workshop,
 - Playwell and Be Happy,
 - Play an online teacher training programme in South Africa,
 - Playlist a host of activities online for parents and children
 - Uvongo reaching children through TV and radio
 - ECD kits distributed by UNICEF. In addition,
- Other types of campaigns like the LEGO Foundation ideas conference, the World Play day, Outdoor Play Day and the Child Friendly Cities initiative all raise understanding and commitment to the idea of learning through play and engage multiple actors in experiences that are joyful.



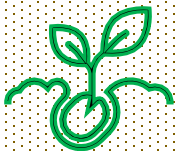
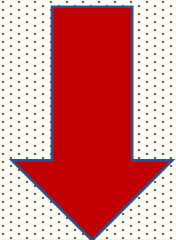


In summary





53% of LMIC children are learning poor and **begin primary schooling with gaps** in their basic cognitive abilities and unprepared for the 21st century



Strengthen the focus on expanding ECCE by emphasizing quality and **embedding the pedagogy of play** to **reduce learning poverty**



Happy, learning children, ready for primary school



Policy change: Integrate LtP pedagogy into policy education policy and ELDs

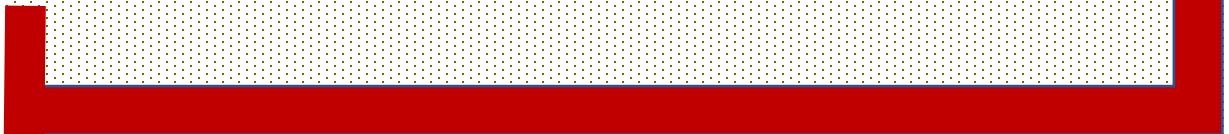
Prepare teachers: In-service and pre-service training programs for teachers/practitioners

Energize parents by supporting skills development and providing resources for home based LtP

Communication and advocacy (thought leadership) e.g., share resources, convene training, facilitate campaigns,



Opportunities to build the eco-system and systematize the pedagogy of learning through play (leveraging off existing good practices and interventions).



Play is our *Strategic Opportunity* let's make sure it's systematized and embedded in the ECCE expansion agenda





Merci
Thank you
Asante
Obrigado
