



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, during the ECD Function Shift Handover held at Freedom Park, Pretoria

01 April 2022

Programme Director

Cabinet colleagues

MECs for Education and DSD from all our nine provinces

Leaders of teacher unions and school governing bodies

Stakeholders and experts in the ECD sector

Representatives of non-governmental organisations and civil society

Members of the media

Ladies and Gentlemen

It gives me great pleasure to address this Early Childhood Development (ECDs) function shift handover in the presence of ECD stakeholders and my cabinet colleagues.

There is no better way to start building the future we imagined than to focus on reinforcing the early learning foundations.

Early childhood education is the foundation for cognitive development by its very nature.

Today marks a high point as we follow our peers worldwide by shifting ECDs from Social Development to Basic Education.

Despite the official function shift, we have adopted a whole government approach to the critical role of ECDs.

As we know, the needs of infants and young children span across health, nutrition, social protection, psychosocial and cognitive development as specified in the *Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy*.

Thus, the rollout of new reimagined ECDs requires an integrated, cross-sectoral approach and plan across government departments.

The ECD function shift will be doomed without involving civil society, the corporate sector, religious organisations, non-governmental organisations, and parents.

Therefore, this means the Department of Social Development, Health, Treasury and others will continue to play a significant role in our quest to strengthen early learning foundations.

Our partnership with DSD will continue beyond the function shift, and we have jointly put in place transitional arrangements to ensure a smooth transition.

The success of the function shift will depend in part on our collective understanding to achieve universal access to ECDs and equitable access to quality ECD services in our lifetime.

Therefore, our collective success as a nation depends on strong leadership, technical knowledge, and expertise within the relevant departments and across all the government spheres responsible for delivering a bouquet of ECD services.

Today is more than just a symbolic function shift handover but marks a renaissance of the early learning foundations in our nascent democracy.

It is a new dawn in the history of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) sector in South Africa.

On behalf of the political leadership in the basic education sector, I appreciate the token from Minister Zulu of the Department of Social Development.

I thank Minister Zulu for her unparalleled leadership, which she displayed while helping us steer the function shift through stormy waters.

Furthermore, we convey our gratitude to my cabinet colleagues with whom I share the crucial responsibility of ECD service delivery.

I applaud the MECs from both departments for the mature manner they handled sensitive negotiations relating to the function shift.

I acknowledge the expertise of the DGs and HoDs from both sides, who emptied themselves in ensuring the success of this project of national importance.

We also thank senior officials from both the National and Provincial departments of both departments for burning the midnight oil in the service of the nation.

We extend our thanks to all partners and stakeholders in the ECD ecosystem, without whom not much will succeed.

As a government, we are committed to working with and strengthening the Inter-Sectoral Forum, which coordinates the ECD sector.

I commit myself and all officials of Basic Education to work closely with other State departments, NGOs, civil society, partners and other entities to ensure that all children, including those with disabilities, are provided with access to quality ECD.

Programme director, throughout the journey of the function shift, we had intellectual giants of the NECT on the road with us.

NECT supported us through coordinating a series of dialogues that have been very useful in bringing us to this point today.

In conclusion, we welcome the staff that has come over from DSD and wish them well in their new home.

Although the function shift occurs today, I must stress that we will only be in total control in the 2022/23 financial year to allow transitional arrangements and sector improvements.

I thank you.