



basic education

Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Address by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, MP, during ECD community engagement with ECD practitioners held at Vereeniging

02 June 2022

Programme Director, Mr Metsing

Gauteng Education HoD, Mr E Mosuwe

MMC, Mr Tsotetsi

MMC, Mr Radebe

Officials from the District, Province and National

ECD owners and practitioners

Members of the community

Ladies and Gentlemen

Dumelang

I wish to express my heartfelt gratitude to all of you for attending this critical public engagement.

It gives us a chance to hear the voices on the ground of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) practitioners and proprietors.

This is critical following the ECD function shift, as we seek to support the practitioners and sector as a whole.

Today we are engaging in a meaningful activity, a collaboration between the Government and citizens, that seeks to renew the people's contract to bring about a Better Life for our young learners.

This is a significant undertaking, not a tick box exercise, to engage with the ECD sector as part of the new dawn and put into practice the concept of a government for the people by the people.

I am offended by civil servants who engage in public consultations and engagements in a perfunctory manner and with resignation, more to serve bureaucratic expediency than to accomplish any higher purpose.

By its very nature, basic education serves a higher purpose for the nation; more so, the strengthened early learning foundations map out a better trajectory for our learners.

In other words, we meet today to engage on how best we can contribute to building the country of our dreams marked by thrift, improved learner outcomes and an engaged citizenry.

We are not meeting today to suss out the new officials following the ECD function shift for possible tainted tenders and rent-seeking evil ways.

As a people, after years of state capture and malfeasance, we must turn our backs against corruption, fraud and rent-seeking because it diverts public funds away from the productive economy to rent-seekers.

Sadly, corrupt civil servants enable corruption in the public service, in other words, by people like you and me.

The ECD is the most crucial period in the development of children.

We are grateful to all ECD practitioners and the entire ECD workforce for their role in shaping our children's early years.

On most occasions, for low pay and challenging work environments, you, the practitioners and proprietors, provide our young learners with early learning opportunities.

As we know, early learning opportunities enable our little ones to develop and reach their full potential.

In the February 2019 State of the Nation Address, His Excellency, President Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the responsibility for ECD

centres will shift from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education.

On the 01st of April this week, we kept the President's commitment and announced Basic Education as a new holder of this important public function.

The function shift of the END centres has created an opportunity to speed up the provisioning and restructuring of systems for improved state monitoring and support for ECD.

I must explain what a function shift is: A function shift is purely an administrative process where functions, roles and responsibilities are transferred from one Minister to another.

With everything it entails, the function is shifted 'as is.'

Put differently, we are not about to build new ECD centres, bring all ECD practitioners into the government payroll or nationalise ECD centres owned and operated by communities and the corporate sector.

Neither does it mean ECD programmes will be moving to ordinary public schools.

The ECD programmes will continue to operate from where they are, as children still need to develop holistically.

Furthermore, we are aware that ECD programmes currently employ ECD practitioners, which has remained the case even after the 01st of April.

We also acknowledge that Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs), communities, and private institutions own the majority of ECD centres and run the programmes.

As I said, “as is” means the employer-employee relationship between ECD practitioners and proprietors will remain “as is” for the near future.

All this is in line with what a function shift really is as decided by the cabinet.

This “as is” mantra doesn’t take away the fact that your role in young children’s stimulation, development, and education as practitioners and proprietors is valued.

I am happy to confirm that all of you play a vital role in the development and school-readiness of our children.

We, therefore, appreciate you very much; however, system changes do not happen overnight.

The big question is, thus, what is the role of the DBE?

As the DBE, we will support your professional development, including ensuring that we recognise your prior learning as you move up the qualifications ladder.

We are working with a range of stakeholders and partners to provide you with the required professional development programmes and the support you need to access them.

You may be aware that while we were waiting to receive the ECD function, we commissioned research projects to help us plan for access and quality better.

The department conducted the recently released Thrive by Five Index and the ECD Census.

The Index allows us to know the proportion of children under five years who are developmentally on track for their age and the quality of ECD programme provisioning.

We will now be able to track improvements in service delivery until 2030 to help us understand the gaps in the system regarding quality and access for our children.

Therefore, we will continue to support the sector to achieve these quality outcomes.

We now know the level of access through the ECD Census data, and we intend to plan better resource allocation and improved access.

We know that we have 42,420 ECD centres in South Africa.

The data from the Census will also help as we will integrate it into the Education Management Information System (EMIS).

We all know how important data is. The President of HP Enterprise, Antonio Neri, said that “data is the new currency.”

I would therefore like to thank you for your cooperation with researchers and your participation in the process when your ECD centres were visited for data collection.

Programme Director, we believe that by laying solid foundations in the lives of our young citizens, we will ensure that history will positively judge us.

Before I conclude, let me remind you that this week, from the 29th of May to the 05th of June 2022, is Child Protection Week, under the theme: “Let us all Protect Children during Covid-19 and Beyond”.

Child Protection Week aims to raise awareness and mobilise communities to care for and protect children from abuse and acts of violence, neglect, and any other form of violation of their rights.

Therefore, I urge all ECD owners, principals, practitioners, parents, support staff, and the community to protect our children and report all incidences of abuse to authorities.

We all know the African proverb which says, “it takes a village to raise a child”. As this village, let us all join hands and pull together to ensure that our children are protected, loved and cared for.

It is true, as former President Nelson Mandela told the UN Special Session on Children in 2002: “History will judge us by the difference we make in the everyday lives of children.”

In conclusion, I invite all our social partners, ECD stakeholders and communities to support quality ECD programmes.

We must strive to lay a solid foundation where children will be positively stimulated and nurtured to become responsible citizens.

Therefore, this ECD function shift will help us expand access, improve the quality, strengthen the ECD programmes, and upskill practitioners.

Ke a leboga