

CECDN Provincial Dialogues on the ECD Function Shift: Collective ECD Civil Society Response

CONSOLIDATED PARTICIPANT COMMENTS

This document is a compilation of verbatim comments collected during the nine CECDN provincial dialogues on the ECD Function Shift. The comments reflect the multiple views, experiences and contexts of members of ECD civil society, as expressed during plenary discussions and group activities on the identified themes. The comments have been consolidated but are otherwise as recorded (which has resulted in some duplication and overlaps across the different themes).

To assist the reader, the comments on each theme have been loosely grouped under broad sub-headings.

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THEME 1: POLICY AND LEGISLATION

Risks

Variations in interpretation/ application of policy and legislation

- There is a serious challenge with the interpretation of policy and legislation, in different government departments. This causes confusion.
- Municipal by-laws often stand at odds with provincial and national guidelines. This is especially the case in Buffalo City where the municipal by-laws do not align with national policies.
- Rezoning leading to confusion as to where to send children.

Communication/ information /understanding of policy and legislation

- Communication does not filter down to parents and ECD practitioners. This especially creates gaps in parents' understanding of policies and legislation.
- No communication or feedback in time.
- Not knowing the age at which children need to go to school – this needs to be clear and communicated to people on the ground.
- Exclusion of people working on the ground leads to people being misinformed.
- Where will grade R and grade RR be accommodated?

- Who is going to be the custodian of social protection?

Contextual diversity

- There is little consideration for the context in which policies apply. National and provincial policies might not correlate with the municipal context in which they are being applied.
- Problems are province specific and so there is no one-size-fits-all approach.
- Children with disabilities are often excluded from the ECD discourse.

Impact of policy and legislation on provision

- The Function Shift will prioritise TVET colleges over private colleges that have more experience. This is reflected in the current funding trends.
- The Function Shift might prompt the 'schoolification' of ECD. This will displace play-based pedagogical approaches.
- Children could be taught by practitioners/ teachers who do not have experience with younger children which can lead to developmental gaps.
- ECD qualification requirements will be a stumbling block because there is currently no qualification alignment in the sector.
- The integrated approach seems to be on the back burner. How will we be able to keep the integrated approach that is in the integrated policy?
- Making ECD the responsibility of one department only; other departments are not visible and yet their involvement is paramount.
- Reporting to two different departments creates room for confusion.

Remuneration/ employment

- Minimum wage – a comparison is made between the pre-school practitioners and the domestic workers whose current minimum wage is R20 per hour. Most of the time we cannot afford to pay this R20 per hour.
- Practitioners are remunerated with stipends.
- Training currently offered through NGOs and ECD centres becomes a risk as most of the practitioners will move to schools where they will be offered better stipends.
- There will be substantial job losses in the sector.
- Currently, DBE subsidises grade R and the teachers/practitioners through stipends. Considering the Children's Act – what will DSD's responsibility be?

School environment unsuitable for young children

- Children will not have the opportunity to go outside for outdoor games and they will not develop intellectual skills or be stimulated.
- Unqualified academics designing curriculum that is out of touch with educational realities and requirements of young children.
- Children's safety will be compromised. Schools tend to close earlier than ECD centres do, leaving children without supervision and care beyond school hours.
- The nutritional needs of children will be compromised because school menus cannot accurately cater to the nutritional and developmental needs of children.
- Children will not be school ready.
- Overcrowded classrooms.

- School facilities are not appropriate for the 0 - 4 years old age groups.
- Young children still have fragile immune systems and they would be more exposed to health risks in primary schools.
- How will young children's safety be ensured at schools?
- The age development of children differs from ECD (less formal).to school (formal).
- The safety of young children will be compromised in schools.
- Play might be compromised when children are moved to formal schooling. Schools do not use play-based learning pedagogies.

Implementation capacity

- We feel a lack of trust when we look at grade R and the way it was integrated into the school system. In driving access to Grade R, government has achieved quantity, but not quality.
- Government is still trying to implement current policy and legislation, and lots of children are not yet in ECD facilities, yet government is incorporating new policy and legislation to perform the Function Shift.
- The ECD Migration or Function Shift will be expensive for government and taxpayers.
- Government currently takes too long to put policies in place and implement them, so the policy/legislation leg of the Function Shift can be expected to take as long.
- Policies are good but there is no money.
- No tools to upscale the NCF policy.
- Practitioners do not have time to wait until 2030 for changes to take place – they need better working conditions and recognition from Government now.
- Public schools aren't able to integrate Grade R children well. It will be even worse with Grade RR as teachers are not equipped to handle Grade RR children.
- DBE has not yet shown that it has the capacity to accommodate grade R.
- The different departments struggle to work hand in hand and they cannot get the integrated policy of 2015 right. How will the Function Shift work if government cannot see eye to eye?
- DSD meetings discuss the same issues with no resolve and no action taken. There needs to be a more direct approach to issues in the ECD sector.
- Lack of funding to carry the Function Shift out.
- Lack of capacity to get this done.
- The DBE might not have the capacity to run ECD programmes.
- DBE teachers are not trained in ECD so how will they accommodate young children?
- Research shows that 33000 classrooms are needed in Cape Town.

Opportunities

- There is an opportunity to consolidate and standardise policies and legislation across the country, so that all the relevant stakeholders have the same interpretation and understanding.
- The ECD community is eager to support the National Integrated ECD Policy because there is a need to create access for children who are without ECD.
- Children will be able to attend ECD Centres – even those who come from poor families and cannot afford to pay fees.
- Gives practitioners the opportunity to register and to obtain a license irrespective of their qualifications.
- Creates opportunities for:
 - ECD to be in existence in the coming years

- socio-economic growth
- practitioners to empower themselves.
- Sourcing individuals/qualified companies to assist struggling ECD schools with policies.
- Certain Acts will be evaluated and could be improved upon. The Children's Act and Schools Act as an example can facilitate improvements in ECD.
- The ECD sector (ECD practitioners, trainers and providers) will be recognised as valuable and important by the government.
- ECD practitioners will get salaries not stipends. This comes with employment benefits and bonuses.
- Salaries and benefits may match experience and qualifications of ECD practitioners.
- If ECD practitioners register with the DBE, they will have access to workshops, training development and monitoring.
- The Function Shift is an opportunity to take an integrated approach. Despite the Function Shift to the DBE, there will still be vital roles in the system as a whole for the DoH and DSD. The important question is: How to integrate? This will require leadership and coordination by the DBE.
- Government doesn't provide support to ECD centres that are non-compliant, instead they tend to recommend closing these centres. There is an opportunity for government to provide funding to ECD centres and support them in becoming compliant.
- Colloquiums give people a chance to give proper input.
- Moving the responsibility for ECD centres to DBE may be an advantage for ECD centres as there may be improvement in structure of ECD centres and M&E as well as in training of practitioners.
- This is a good opportunity for a lot to happen, as the ECD space is an informal one at the moment where ECD hasn't been made a priority. When it is formalised there will be an opportunity where all children can have access. The shift can lead to increased access.
- This is a good opportunity for DBE to take civil society's concerns and work them into implementation.
- Will there be an opportunity to work with the DBE? Will we be recognised as formal structures to then feed into particular primary schools? We need to be strategic about this – how can government support that which is already in place?
- The shift is a positive thing. At ECD centres practitioners need to teach and the department will provide a framework for this. DSD will handle infrastructure and DBE will handle quality. This will enhance standards and quality. This is desperately needed in Polokwane where many children are taught under trees.
- I support the migration from DSD to DBE because there will be more opportunities for ECD practitioners to learn more and further develop themselves.
- Work with us and not against us as practitioners.

Recommendations

Review/ amend/ create/ integrate/ standardise

- We need to clearly review some policies to make provision for practitioners, etc.
- Government long term needs to take responsibility for education of children.
- Financing/resourcing policies e.g. per child, per day, South African Schools Act to include the 2 pre-grade years.
- The Schools Act of 1996 should be amended. The Function Shift will present an admissions age discrepancy.
- There needs to be a separate ECD Act.
- The Development Policy needs to be created alongside the Children's Act.
- Policy and legislation must be designed to be amended within a certain period of time.
- The same opportunities that are given to schools to discuss policies must be given to ECD.

- There should be a policy that states that children of a certain age need to go to an ECD centre.
- Standardised by-laws for ECDs need to be clearly indicated in the policy.
- There needs to be something in the policy that protects the sector.
- The Schools Act of 1996 needs to be amended.
- ECD admission policy and legislation should be uniform across all provinces.
- Children should attend ECD centres before attending school. It should be mandated through legislation and enforced by government.
- Government's knowledge and understanding of ECD is limited, so government should involve the ECD sector and use its input when creating policy.
- ECD sector should be able to collaborate with the Dept. of Public Service and Administration and assist in their review of various ECD policies in the proposed Function Shift.
- Support for the current ECD centres to be legislated and made a requirement.
- Government policy on ECD should accommodate and be implementable within South Africa's diverse local contexts; it has to recognise that ECD facilities in informal settlements are unable to achieve the kind of infrastructure that would be achievable in better-resourced areas.
- The NQF Amendment Bill should be strengthened and extended to ECD to curb bogus providers and fake qualifications.
- The issue of policies affects the whole eco-system of ECD. We need to look into the 'ecology' of ECD in both the apartheid and post-apartheid eras, and how far ECD has evolved with regard to policy development.

Integration

- ECD involves much more than just education, especially for young children, so policy has to be integrated and all the relevant departments need to work together.
- DSD and DBE need to work together – DSD handles infrastructure and DBE handles the curriculum. All the other departments that feature in ECD need to start showing presence as well for delivery of ECD services.
- The integrated approach set out in the National Integrated Early Childhood Development (NIECD) Policy 2015 must be retained.
- DSD policies to be integrated with DBE policies – as policies often contradict each other.
- All government bodies need to come to a consensus and work better together.
- DBE to work better with ETDP SETA.

Retain young children in ECD

- Children should remain in ECD centres.
- Children aged 0 - 4 should not be housed at DBE facilities but remain in ECD centres.
- Children should remain in ECD centres and practitioners should retain their jobs.
- If government wants to be successful in terms of ECD, children must remain in the same ECD centres and not move. They should also provide practitioners with finances so the children can still get the same benefits with the same expertise from the existing ECD practitioners.
- Unpack the Function Shift carefully. Grade RR children should remain in ECD, and government should inject funding into ECD.
- ECD directorate should visit the centres and meet the children where they are.
- Children to be kept at the day care centres because there is safety and love there.

Implementation

- Clearly define roles and responsibilities in all the departments.
- Policy implementation first has to happen before the shift can take place.
- Consult ECD centres to make sure that policies are achievable.
- ECD centres must be registered with the DBE.
- Government needs to work quickly to develop and implement the new policy and legislation relating to the Function Shift. What are the timeframes, and are they realistic?
- The Function Shift must be properly thought through.
- For the Function Shift to be implemented well, the sector's key concerns need to be addressed.
- Importance needs to be placed on monitoring and evaluation.
- Communities need to be in charge of ECD.
- DBE must take ECD as seriously as it takes the schools
- The government needs to create a detailed Function Shift implementation plan.
- There should be clear policies that state what is happening when and how.
- The government must pilot the schools before the Function Shift roll out.

Employment conditions/ training/ remuneration

- There should be legislation that regulates the employment of Grade R teachers. Above and beyond this, there should be clarity about who the employer of Grade R teachers is. As things stand, NGOs are the employers, however government subsidises salaries through the conditional grant.
- Need policy intervention for curriculum education, upscaling of practitioners.
- There should be a review of policies, as they relate to the employment of ECD practitioners in the DBE. Currently the requirements stipulate that qualifications need to have Relative Educational Qualification Value 13 (i.e. a Matric certificate plus a B.Ed. qualification) to be employed by the government. This excludes practitioners who do have formal qualifications; practitioners who only have NQF level 4 and 5 qualifications and those with a Grade R Teaching Diploma.
- Need to look at a salary scale for teachers [practitioners] – but if we don't know where we belong then how will we know what the salary needs to be?
- ECD practitioners should be entitled to take leave in the same way that public school educators are – leave policies that are used at public schools must be used in ECD.
- Practitioners must be remunerated according to their qualifications, not with stipends.
- Dismiss teachers that are not fulfilling their roles properly (laziness etc.).
- The policy should contain conditions of service for practitioners.
- People who are already working in ECD should be given first preference when the DBE hires.
- The ECD workforce must be paid salaries. The ECD workforce encompasses gardeners, cooks, practitioners, security guards etc.
- Government should come up with a policy that speaks to the employment of ECD practitioners.
- There is a need for legislation that regulates employment for practitioners.
- ECD practitioners with Level 4, 5, and 6 to be recognised by DBE and also to be remunerated.

ECD curriculum

- The DBE must give a directive on the curriculum that is to be used in the sector.
- Need to mentor NCF in schools.

- Need to look at the age cohort of children and who will take charge of the particular age cohorts and the curriculum that needs to match these age cohorts.
- If the children migrate, then the practitioners should also migrate as the primary school environment is too formalised and very structured.

Access to quality provision

- The proposed Function Shift should not be at the expense of access to and quality of ECD service provision. UNICEF and UNESCO studies indicate that there are millions of children who are not accessing any form of ECD service provision. The sector recommends that the mixed model delivery approach be recognised in order to realise access to quality ECD service provision. The mixed model type of approach encompasses home-based service provision, centre based service provision and play group services.
- The mixed delivery model is cost effective and should be retained.

Information dissemination/ communication

- Policy and legislation should be written for all to understand and disseminated properly.
- There should be clear communication strategies across different government departments. Above and beyond this, there should be clear communication channels and/ or platforms, that include all stakeholders in local communities (i.e. local businesses, NPOs, parents and ECD practitioners).
- There should be one access point with regards to communicating the Function Shift and its progress.
- The Department should develop a comprehensive communication strategy in addition to the existing strategies. Communication should be centralised through an ECD repository.

Independent body for ECD

- The sector needs a statutory body and or an ECD agency that will assume the responsibility of leadership and coordination of ECD. This can be located and housed within the Presidency, DSD or even the DBE.
- ECD should have its own umbrella body (such as SACE) that will oversee ethics and policies.
- The power of trade unions is too big. Independent boards must go into all teaching environments.
- The CECDN, NECT or a similar association should be the sole representative of the ECD sector, throughout the Function Shift implementation process and beyond. This association should function like an advisory body which can source and disseminate accurate and current information that is communicated to the sector.
- A whole different department dedicated to the young child.
- We are too passive when it comes to ECD - ECD must form one group and not be led by others.

School/ ECD relationship

- Local ECD centres should be linked to local primary schools so that they can serve as feeders to local primary schools. This will ensure that Grade RR children can remain in ECD centres, where they belong. The administration and management of the ECD centres must remain with ECD practitioners, however the relationship between ECD centres and primary schools should be strengthened.
- The policy should protect ECD centres by stating that they be at least 5 km away from schools.
- ECD centres should be recognised as feeders into primary schools.

THEME 2: TRAINING AND CURRICULUM

Risks

Quality of practitioner training

- Many RTOs do not meet the requirements to register with DHET. Some of these RTOs run training courses, despite the fact that they do not meet the stipulated requirements.
- In colleges, learnerships are attendance based and not performance based, meaning students seldom grasp the learning.
- Practitioners that are on training are not on the national learner data base [NLRD] hence no certificates are received after the training.
- Differences in the professional development of practitioners/ teachers for the age group 0 - 4 years, and for grade R - 3, cause confusion. The practitioner curriculum used in training is not clear.
- NCF & Grade R: How do practitioners get holistic training? More integration is needed for a seamless progression from 0 - grade R.
- Norms and standards are outdated.
- Many programmes are not up to scratch.
- Teachers in schools end up addressing gaps that have been created in centres.
- ECD lacks when it comes to the art and science of teaching methodologies for individual children who need support.
- There is an urgent need for an audit around the qualifications of the ECD workforce.
We need to urge developers of practitioner training curricula to audit what level of qualification does exist in registered and unregistered ECDs.

Articulation

- Training of ECD practitioners differs from training for school e.g. NCF.
- There is a huge chasm between qualifications currently in existence for ECD vs B.Ed.
- Huge discrepancy with training through Universities and RTOs; the way they implement the curriculum is different. Academics are theory based; RTOs are more hands on.
- NCF covers the gap (0 - 4 years) – but CAPS (grade R - 3), two curriculums – separate trainings therefore two separate qualifications.

Access to training/ qualifications

- Currently, there are some ECD practitioners that do not meet the entry requirements for accredited training programmes, despite opportunities being available.
- [Older people may have] No relevant school qualification.
- Government trains us for Levels 4 and 5 – and afterwards they say this training has no value.
- There is no training for cooks, or in first aid or use of fire extinguishers.
- Children are at risk because government is neglecting ECD centres. Government has a responsibility to enable ECD practitioners who need them, to obtain L4 and L5 qualifications.
- ETDP SETA now wants to move into level 7 where students have to write tests and exams – this can disadvantage some practitioners who are good but would be unable to demonstrate their skills through exams.
- Universities don't recognise Level 4 even though it is meant to be equivalent to the NSC.
- High costs are a barrier to accessing training.

- There is some confusion as to the implication of the shift on the qualifications of ECD practitioners. The DBE has set new qualification standards for ECD practitioners. Most practitioners have a NQF4 qualification and no matric diploma. These new standards exclude practitioners who don't have the necessary qualifications and can't improve them because of financial constraints. The DBE has not offered any support, financial or otherwise, to these practitioners.
- Training for practitioners must be prioritised by the DBE. Currently, ECD practitioners understand how 4 - 5 year olds need to be taught.
- ECD practitioners require assistance to further their training, those with level 4 and higher should be able to access higher qualifications. This is usually not the case. Level 4 is equivalent to the NSC or matric certificate but it is still impossible for practitioners to articulate to tertiary qualifications such as the B.Ed. FP.
- Practitioners who have been working in the field for long will also need to be trained. Government has to look into alternative options such as RPL for this cohort.
- We are told L4 is equivalent to matric – so why can't we go on after L4 to do L5? Most of us with L4 want to do L5, to empower ourselves.
- ECD NQF Level 4 learnership – for you to be admitted to Level 4 you don't have to have matric, so why is it that when learnerships are being issued matric is made a requirement? This excludes a lot of people that currently work in ECD.
- The policy is clear. but we would like to appeal that the universities must also come on board as some universities are reluctant to admit practitioners with proper NQF recognised qualifications. Why not admit them? The whole articulation and career path needs to be looked into.

Selection processes

- In some cases, DBE trains people who are not part of ECD centres or bodies such as SA Congress. These people accept the opportunity from DBE not because of passion for children or the sector but because they are also desperate and want the stipend.
- Opportunities for government training must be given to people who are already working in ECD and are in need of qualifications. Currently government picks whomsoever it pleases to train.

Workforce issues

- The current cohort of ECD practitioners tends to be older women, who either work as volunteers or receive a very small stipend. The sector is battling to attract younger ECD practitioners.
- Unemployed graduates who are not trained in ECD dictates may be prioritised over the ECD workforce.
- Training of employees and not retaining them – this affects the children psycho-socially as teachers are always coming in and out. Training is a long and expensive process.
- ECD centres run the risk of losing children to schools. The result will be loss of jobs/income for ECD practitioners.
- ECD centres could be closed down.
- ECD practitioners will need more qualifications so that they are not overlooked.
- Qualifications but no jobs – conditions of service.

Curriculum for Grade RR / 4 - 5 years

- It is not yet clear where Grade RR will be accommodated in the curriculum spectrum. Will the learners use the CAPs curriculum or the NCF?
- The ECD curriculum and the school curriculum do not correlate. There is no succession between the two curricula.
- We can't use CAPS on three or four-year olds.

- Changing the curriculum is a risk. DBE must be clear about which curriculum will be appropriate for the 4 - 5 year olds as they are currently in limbo.
- CAPS is not play-based so there is a problem with grade R CAPS and the gap between the NCF and CAPS.
- There is currently no standardised curriculum.
- Changing the curriculum is a risk. DBE must be clear about which curriculum will be appropriate for the 4 - 5 year olds. Will it be the NCF or CAPS?
- Why do we have to conform to one particular curriculum from grade R upwards with CAPS? Why not look at us as professionals and allow us to choose the curriculum as long as it is registered and you reach the assessment standards in that grade?

ECD curriculum development / implementation

- The lack of skills amongst practitioners.
- The lack of resources available for curriculum development.
- There is a shortage of young ECD practitioners who are curriculum developers.
- We need a curriculum that is fit for purpose, while the Function Shift is rolled out.
- People don't know how to implement the curriculum that they have been taught as they don't understand how to use the ELDA book – people need to be taught how to use these resources – there needs to be something clearer (NCF).
- The lack of support needed to implement the curriculum – DBE officials need to visit and monitor ECD practitioners on play-based pedagogy.
- The lack of support for practitioners to implement the NCF.
- We are not well equipped about the curriculum.
- How will the sector ensure that the curriculum is consistent and ensure that the practitioners will be able to implement it?

School environment not developmentally appropriate

- Children moved to schools will be taught content that isn't age-appropriate and or relevant to their developmental stages and needs.
- There are tensions between the facilitation of the learning (pedagogy) in ECD, and the formal teaching and learning approaches in DBE schooling.
- People teaching in primary schools are not trained for ECD and don't understand the appropriate pedagogy or how play impacts on the brain.
- Overcrowding in schools threatens children's holistic development.
- Practices in schools are developmentally inappropriate for young children (e.g. how will toilet, meal and rest routines be accommodated?) (e.g. toilet routine – in ECD children are accompanied, but in schools they have to fend for themselves).
- In driving access to Grade R, government has achieved quantity, but not quality. Class sizes are too large for real learning to take place.
- In schools, children are rolled over to the next level even if they haven't learnt what they are supposed to. Because ECD classes are smaller, ECD is able to pick up on learning problems and do something to correct them.
- Taking young children out of ECD centres, to schools is not suitable. Teachers just teach, ECD practitioners facilitate and monitor. This is what children need.

Opportunities

- There will be a standardised ECD curriculum.
- There will be opportunities to train young curriculum developers.
- Curriculum will be easily implemented.
- Ensure that all practitioners have access to the curriculum and all activities.
- ECD centres may receive standardised curriculum guidelines and support from the department.
- Standardisation for grade RR curriculum.
- Standardisation for the first 1000 days.
- Quality education will be implemented.
- People will be better qualified to teach.
- To ensure that all ECD centres are on the same level.
- Quality education and children will actually be taught (play can continue as a tool for their learning).
- The sector will be professionalised.
- The professionalisation of the ECD sector will lead to job opportunities that attract younger ECD practitioners.
- Recognise DBE trained practitioners by providing them with certificates.
- ECD centres may have their facilities developed and professionalised.
- Updating the skills of practitioners.
- Creating informed practitioners.
- The quality of training will improve.
- Practitioners will have better earning potential and/ or salaries and opportunities to study.
- Career path development: ECD is now on the NQF (see policy MRTEQ ECD - 2017) – access considerations.
- Teachers/practitioners to get a living salary.
- Having informed centres.
- There will be wider training opportunities for training providers. The Function Shift will mean that school principals need to be trained on ECD to capacitate them to meet the educational and developmental needs of children. Practitioners and teachers will need continuous professional development, which requires training.
- There is an opportunity for training organisations to train principals so that they understand ECD ahead of the Function Shift.
- Equal training to be given.
- Teachers paying for their own studies would lead to more commitment from them. They could either pay full or part of the expenses.
- The Function Shift is an opportunity to upskill the 95% under-trained ECD practitioners in South Africa.
- The Function Shift is an opportunity to be strategic about how government can support what is already in place.
- Provincial education departments could provide guidance through monitoring.
- The ECD migration/ Function Shift will bring with it new ways of doing things.

Recommendations

Qualification articulation and progression pathways

- The development of a formal ECD degree should be linked to job opportunities and remuneration.
- The articulation of ECD career paths needs to be reviewed.

- Create more integration in the training and professional development of ECD practitioners and Grade R - 3 teachers.
- Practitioners must be able to articulate into relevant qualifications as per the NQF standard. This must be enforced across the board.
- Training pathways need to be created.
- Training in general must be ongoing.
- All qualifications registered on the NQF, by SAQA, should be recognised in this transition. The ECD sector shouldn't have to work outside of that framework. Universities and other institutions of higher learner should cooperate in this process so that practitioners with various NQF qualifications can be admitted into universities, if they wish to study further.
- Government is saying they want to implement grade 9 as school leaving – why not take this up and create a route for people to specialise in ECCE after grade 9?

Quality of practitioner training and assessment

- There should be a national body for Training and Evaluation.
- DBE should look into standardising the training of ECD practitioners.
- Review qualification content and learning outcomes.
- Review and update norms and standards of programmes.
- It is essential to recognise RPL such as ACBRIDGE, HOW TO READ, ELSIT ETC. [Training for] The NCF should not be attendance based.
- Need to be practical in terms of expectations and standardise according to SACE.
- Assessments should be [both] practical and theoretical and the criteria should be allowed accordingly. 0 - 2 year olds need to be elevated.
- Professional training is necessary with the following included:
 - An audit chasm – audit existing qualifications in ECD.
 - Differentiating by age – can't use CAPS when children need concrete play-based learning
 - Establish Independent Assessment Boards – look at experience training
 - Relook at offerings by colleges – learnerships prioritised for ECD based on experience
 - Training for learnerships should be re-instated on Saturdays and courses to upskill educators should take place over holidays
 - ECD curriculum needs to incorporate values.
- Assessment boards must include ECD specialists to audit across ECD and B.Ed. overlap selection criteria.
- Emphasis needs to be placed on home language in training and development in the sector. This would lead to consistency in educators' qualifications because people have understood what's expected.
- Equal standard training levels are required, and DBE needs to stand behind and support this.
- There must be a focus on training the trainer in order to keep up with changes and to remain relevant.
- Training and curricula should align with the National Integrated ECD Policy, 2015 (NIECD) for NQF Levels 1 - 4 & 5.
- DBE should make use of civil society more. There should be more of a collaborative approach where government works with the private sector/NGOs and uses their knowledge to design the curriculum and programmes.

Recognition of training/ issuing of certificates

- Certificates must be provided timeously – they must be for registered qualifications, not attendance certificates (and they must not expire).

- Training certificates need to be given/awarded timeously.
- All training institutions and service providers should register their learners on the National Learners' Records Database (NLRD).
- Basic skills should be recognised through a stepped approach.
- DBE should work with SAQA in order to recognise all [ECD] qualifications.

Increase access to training / improve practitioner qualification levels

- The DBE must take ECD seriously and take us to the next level by supporting us to obtain relevant qualifications.
- The proposed Function Shift should take all ECD practitioners on board. Practitioners should be upskilled and RPL should be factored in.
- If you legislate Level 5 qualifications for working with 4 year olds, that should be provided through the DBE system.
- Let government/ DBE provide unqualified and underqualified practitioners with proper training and qualifications
- Let NQF L4 and L5 be the qualifications for grades R and RR
- Practitioners with NQF Levels 4 and 5 must have the opportunity to do Level 6 in North West Province.
- Provide more ABET centres and courses to accommodate those without matric.
- We need to engage universities on the issue of Level 4 as this is the same as matric.
- Provide bridging qualifications / programmes specifically designed to enable ECD practitioners to move into schools.
- ECD practitioners should improve their qualifications to at least certificate level.
- DBE should open up opportunities to train current ECD practitioners to attain at least a level 7 qualification so they can teach Grade R and Grade RR.
- DBE should assist the ECD centres with training already existing practitioners.
- Recognition of Prior Learning for mature practitioners. Mature practitioners need to be trained not kicked out of their jobs.
- Use RPL processes to recognise relevant practitioner knowledge and experience.
- We need to have recognition of prior learning in terms of experience of working in an ECD centre. Government should consult those working on the ground on how to formalise this.
- Some workers without matric don't qualify for learnerships, but are hard workers – we ask the DBE to create a scheme that will give a skill, with a certificate, to those who cannot get on to learnerships.
- The DBE must not concentrate only on skills development (Levels) but must include programmes to universities and properly registered colleges because some ECD practitioners have matric (it must be a 3 year programme).
- Provision should be made in rural areas for training and development above Level 5 so that it is easy to upskill.
- Recognition of all skills, experience and qualifications must be taken into account.

Funding practitioner training

- Adopt policy of internships where if you leave within a year you pay back a certain amount so as to increase retention. [Many dialogue participants disagreed with this position.]
- Training funding is being misused through providing food at training workshops and offering stipends.
- Stipends should fall away as people study only to access the stipend but do not become part of the ECD sector. Removing stipends will ensure that people are passionate about ECD study towards it.

- Provide bursaries, learnerships and internships for ECD qualifications and practitioners
- Practitioners must be given bursaries to study further.
- There needs to be financial support/ co-sponsorships to ensure equitable access and offset the high costs that are a barrier to accessing training. Funza Lushaka bursaries should be available to people training as ECD practitioners.
- Bursaries for practitioners.

Use a variety of development/training delivery modes

- There needs to be holiday condensed training – colleges need to provide Saturday learnerships so that there is the choice to attend these.
- Hold quarterly workshops to improve ECD employee skills.
- There should be a variety of empowerment opportunities (online/ distance, face-to-face, blended) that practitioners can use to obtain a certificate, diploma or degree.
- Government should provide professional teachers in each ECD region to work with/ teach/ develop groups of practitioners in that region.
- Private independent training providers also need to be prioritised through this transition and be afforded the same respect and status as public providers. Funding should also be channelled to these training providers.
- Acknowledge and work with big community service providers who are currently doing training and are accredited.

Selection of candidates for training programmes/ learnerships

- Give learnerships to those with prior experience not to those that do not have the heart for ECD.
- Before DBE selects people for training, they should get input from the ECD forums on who to take. DBE brings matriculants to the ECD centres for learnerships – but the challenge is that often they have no aptitude or interest in the children, spend their time playing on their phones, and don't want to help children who have soiled themselves.
- Unions have too much power – it is in the best interest of the children to prioritise learnerships for those with prior learning [in ECD].
- DBE should not bring their own people – they should consider us, the existing practitioners.
- Have interview sessions with students beforehand to see that they are passionate and interested in this sector.
- The government keeps training people that do not have the heart and the passion for ECD. The government should prioritise the people existing in the sector who have a minimum of 2 years in a facility. It should offer training to someone who has not had training and even those without matric.
- Instead of finding people that aren't interested in ECD, rather go to centres where people aren't qualified and train them up. Start with people that have a passion, upskill them so they can increase their income.
- Government should follow through with assessments before granting bursaries so as to make sure that the right people are selected and to give people a fair chance before just saying 'no'.

Improve WIL implementation

- Patience is required with the person that is studying – ECD centre leaders need to realise the importance of this training to benefit the centre in the end.
- Practitioners no longer implementing/not working due to signing of learnerships without including SGB and supervisor.

- Regarding learnerships for L4 and L5: There has to be a proper induction to learnerships for both the learners and the centre management – the principal, the SGB and especially the designated supervisor of the learners. The management has to know what days the learners are supposed to be at the centre and what assignments they are supposed to do, so the management can work together with the department.

ECD curriculum / pedagogy

- The curriculum should be maintained and regularly updated.
- Value shaping for under 6 year olds needs to take place as values are shaped between 3 - 6 and we play the biggest role in shaping these children.
- The curriculum should include leadership and values.
- Clear understanding of the curriculum needs to be present.
- Key ECD stakeholders involved in the provision of ECD should be included in the development of the curriculum.
- There needs to be some criteria to support and standardise the implementation of the NCF.
- DBE curriculum must be informed about how practitioners are guided to implement the programmes.
- Review and update the NCF.
- ECD must stay at ECD centres as we all know that children learn through playing and at schools there is no learning through play.
- It would benefit DBE to keep children in ECD centres, and to support the centres as young children do better in ECD centres than in school classrooms.
- There must be a very strong move to educate teachers and district officials on the appropriate pedagogy and how play impacts on the brain, before even considering moving children to schools for grade RR. We can't have worksheets as evidence of progress in Grade RR.

Quality of provision

- There needs to be clarity on how to monitor practitioners/teachers throughout.
- Ensure that all [ECD facilities] are working at the same level.
- Qualified practitioners should be working in 0 - 4 NCF.
- The core focus should be on the quality of education. This means practitioners should have a minimum Level 4; and they have to use ELDA not just for the 4, 5 and 6 year olds but for all the little children.
- If we want to make our pre-schools into pre-schools of excellence, we need to remember to look at their management as well as the roles and responsibilities of the boards, trustees and governing bodies.

Curriculum support and resources

- Schools have many resources that they do not use – DBE should provide ECD centres with these resources that are not being used in the schools.
- Hold workshops to provide CAPS curriculum and resources to practitioners.
- There must be relevant training and curriculum materials, and these must be distributed across the sector.
- The sector must be supported the very same way that schools are supported.
- The DBE to provide learner and teacher materials.
- Curriculum implementers are not relevant and do not do enough to support and monitor.

THEME 3: REGISTRATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE

Risks

Challenges/ Impediments to registration

- The ECD registration process is challenging. Town planning by-laws, parking bay requirements, and building plan approval requirements hinder other registration processes. Government officials cause delays.
- Registration requirements discriminate against ECD centres in informal settlements.
- Why is there zoning of ECD centres – which are part of the community – when they are necessary for the community?
- Registration bylaws of different municipalities, DSD and DBE contradict each other– these need to be standardised in each province.
- Registration processes are complex and DSD has not executed these well. How will the DBE do it any better?
- No sites from municipality.
- Problems providing proof of residence for registration.
- Requirement to have proper structure before registration.

Compliance issues

- There are current ECD centres that do not have the appropriate infrastructure to cater to the safety and developmental needs of children.
- Some ECD centres will be shut down because they do not meet the necessary requirements. There is currently no strategy in place to address the use of those spaces once the centres have been closed down. What will happen to the empty centres?
- There is a mushrooming of ECD centres that do not comply with legislation or the norms and standards.
- Mushrooming and improper infrastructure will continue to be on the rise.
- There is a concern about the opportunistic mushrooming of ECD centres. How will the DBE regulate this?
- When will the DBE start registering the centres and what are the criteria for registering the centres?
- The infrastructure and learning environments of ECD centres are not always conducive for learning.
- Compliance – It is a risk to operate without registration.
- Compliance issues as far as the registration and operation process of centres is concerned.
- According to DSD, ECDs are not to close during school holidays in order to sustain funding and compliance.
- In the meantime, whilst we wait for the proclamation, what will happen to the help we need from government regarding compliance?

School environment not appropriate for young children (physically or developmentally)

- The assessment measurements used in schools do not align with the ECD sector's priority areas. Schools use the pass and fail lexicon, whereas ECD uses developmental milestones lexicon, which places emphasis on the unique developmental pace of each child.
- Primary schools are not as safe as centres. The operating hours of schools means that children will have to leave early and this poses a risk. Being left to stand at the gate without supervision is also a risk.
- Schools are not physically ready for the shift.
- Lack of infrastructure appropriate for facilitating learning through play in schools.
- Classrooms are too small for the influx of children.

- The infrastructure in schools is not suitable for children under 6 years of age. Infrastructure examples: bathroom facilities, class settings, indoor and outdoor activity area.
- School times are not suitable for children aged 0 - 6 years old.
- If children are moved to schools, there may be overcrowding in the classrooms.
- There will be no child supervision at schools.
- Primary schools have no suitable spaces for young children to play. They would need to provide a safe and stimulating environment that encourages play, i.e. a safe playground area, with grass, mud, sand, etc.
- There is a risk to safety in moving 4 and 5 year olds into public schools. Young children need supervision and support. In public schools, young children will interact with older learners who may be ill-disciplined or violent.
- How will the DBE accommodate the sudden influx of 4 and 5 year olds in public schools when they don't have adequate resources or the infrastructure to accommodate Grade Rs now? A number of schools comprise old buildings with no fencing, no internet connection and no phone lines.
- Children might feel intimidated.
- Over-crowding.
- Unsuitability of toilet facilities in primary schools.
- The infrastructure in primary schools is not suitable for small children. This remains a growing concern for ECD practitioners, even with Grade R learners. It will be even worse with Grade RR learners.
- The closing of schools in rural isolated areas and the transporting of children is a serious concern. Children will be transported for long distances to get to schools. Let them rather stay in ECD centres.
- How, logistically, will Grade RR children be transported in the Eastern Cape? Will 4 year olds be put on busses and expected to sit still until they reach their destination? Will the factors associated with the age and behavioural problems between younger and older kids be monitored?

Opportunities

- There will be improved services for children, because the DBE will set up appropriate operational norms and standards.
- Designing schools that will be tailored for children's needs and safety, especially as this relates to playing facilities and ablution facilities.
- The Function Shift might make it possible to standardise legislation and by-laws and ensure correlation between the two.
- To reduce the stress of the 'ups and downs' of registration.
- There will be less problems with funds if the structure is provided by government.
- For all government structures to make sure that they assist ECD centres with registrations.
- Develop ECD centres (particularly rural centres) instead of shutting them down.
- Increase capacity for the growing ECD sector, particularly if for GR R and GR RR.
- ECD accommodates children with special needs (or different ability and / or developmental barriers).
- Recognition and promotion of ECD centres as places of learning and safety for young children.

Recommendations

Reduce impediments to compliance and provide support for registration

- Requirements for compliance are very complex. In connection with the Function Shift, address the impediments to compliance so as to simplify the process of registration and make it more affordable. This should include relaxing by-laws and repealing outdated requirements.

- Instead of making it difficult for ECD centres in informal settlements to register, government should support ECD centres in informal, under-resourced areas, so that the children in these areas can be better served.
- DBE / DSD should provide ECDs with support (including financial support) to be compliant, as ECDs provide a service on government's behalf / support government in terms of its mandate.
- Hold government accountable for creating policies that are in context with the areas of implementation [e.g. informal settlements].
- Relax by-laws and work within the environment of the child; brick structures, toilets, space ventilation, kitchens etc do not exist in informal settlements but children do! They need to be better served.
- Government should help ECD centres meet full registration compliance and give them access to land.
- The cost of registration should be subsidised.
- There needs to be a clear description of what the spatial stipulations of the indoor and outdoor spaces required for ECD centres are. These stipulations need to be informed by the developmental needs of children and not necessarily compliance.
- There needs to be a correlation between the DSD's spatial guidelines and Municipal by-laws and zoning restrictions. The lack of congruence between these makes it difficult for ECD centres to comply with the DSD's registration requirements. Operational norms and standards should be context specific.
- The DBE should have a mechanism to provide for the spatial migration patterns of people, socio-economic changes brought about by urbanisation and the inverse.
- The DBE requirements need to be communicated.
- Centres that are not registered need to be shut down to curb mushrooming.

Simplify, integrate and standardise compliance requirements and registration processes

- Government needs to streamline the registration processes at all levels of government (i.e. Municipal, Regional, Provincial and National levels).
- Separate registration processes from social services work and make registration more integrated. The different government departments that impact on registration need to collaborate or integrate to avoid confusion on registration requirements.
- Government should communicate the correct process of registration (which should be universal) and hold workshops on registration.
- Compliance requirements should be standardised so that they don't vary from one municipality to another.
- Health, safety and sanitation requirements are important and should be prioritised in registration processes/ requirements.
- Municipalities should change and standardise by-laws.
- The use of technology must be incorporated into registration processes to avoid duplication of registration procedures.
- Make registration an online process and monitor accordingly – more efficient process for registration needs to be put into place.

Government investment in ECD facilities

- Government should help ECD centres meet full registration compliance and give them access to land.
- Cluster existing ECD facilities and provide them with funding, so they become centres of excellence.
- The DBE should be able to provide for the growing population of children in urban areas where there are issues of land tenure and space.
- DBE should provide our ECD centres with funding (the money) for infrastructure.

- Municipalities can assist with Mayoral Funds.
- Government must build a centre next to each primary school so that we can provide them with well-developed children.
- Government support is needed out in the community in the form of infrastructure and nutrition etc. It is about community development and adult education as well as health and well-being.
- Existing schools should be upgraded to accommodate the needs of young children in Grade R and Grade RR.

Use existing infrastructure optimally

- Make use of churches as ECD centres as churches are only mainly used once a week on a Sunday, not only churches but also community halls etc.
- All vacant sites could be recommended to ECDs.
- Make use of infrastructure that is already there.
- Unoccupied government buildings should be given to ECD for good use.
- Invest in community-based centres rather than into primary schools; this money could be used to improve the infrastructure of already existing structures.
- Community buildings not in use could be used instead of building new centres.

Support and develop ECD facilities

- More funds should be allocated to the sector.
- The ECD sector must be supported by government.
- There should be an upskilling of community members and support for SMMES that support the ECD sector.
- Aftercare courses for caregivers need to be made available as ECD centres have longer hours.
- Toy libraries can be sent to rural areas – funding should be given to this.
- Employ qualified individuals to educate teachers in the rural areas.
- The government should provide appropriate materials. This especially goes for children aged 4 - 6 years old (Grade RR and Grade R).
- The government needs to ensure universal ECD access and quality coverage for all children. This includes children who access ECD services from centres that operate on 'undeclared land'.
- ECD centres need to be able to provide free schooling with the support of the government.
- Instead of moving all children in the Grade RR cohort to schools, government should sponsor those children who are able to gain access to ECD centres. This would use the same money that government would otherwise use to pay Grade RR teachers.
- The DBE should give the same learning resources and equipment to independent ECD centres as they give to schools.
- Municipalities need to be more involved with ECD centres, as they are closer to us – without municipalities, other departments would not know we exist.
- Proper training, and proper equipment and teaching aids must be provided.
- Proper free training needs to be provided to public, private and rural centres.
- Government must provide centres with learning resources and equipment at the beginning of every year.

THEME 4: COMMUNICATION AND ADVOCACY

Risks

Lack of information

- There are mixed messages about the implementation of the Function Shift and the proposed roll-out timelines.
- Lack of information – stakeholders, South African Congress for ECD, DBE, DSD, DOH.
- Too many sources of information leading to different interpretations.
- Uncoordinated information amongst all departments.
- Many ECD stakeholders are unaware of the Children's Act (2005) and how it impacts them.

Poor communication

- There is a lack of communication with practitioners and parents.
- Not being heard when concerns are raised.
- Government should have had consultations with civil society before announcing the Function Shift so as to really understand its implications.
- Communicating in a language that is not understood by most participants.
- There is a lack of communication between government and civil society. This fuels confusion and mixed messages.
- It's concerning that we are not hearing from the DSD – it is up to the DSD as our current department to convene the sector and consult with us.
- Delayed information.
- Decisions being made without consultation of those working on the ground
- Practitioners are antagonistic towards government because they don't understand the timeline of the proposed Function Shift. The process needs to be communicated with practitioners more clearly.
- We are constantly participating in this kind of workshop, but our input is not considered. This is disrespectful of the sector and the practitioners.
- Having the shift blamed onto the ECD NGO sector when the sector has raised some issues.

Opportunities

- ECD Forums will provide a clear communication mechanism and platform for parents and ECD practitioners.
- An opportunity to let the SA Congress and other networks advocate for us.
- If the SACECD gathered ECDs to give input to the Function Shift – an opportunity for information to reach the ECDs.
- There is the opportunity to take the concerns raised here in this type of forum forward by listening to concerns of the ECD community.
- There may be a greater recognition of the sector and ECD practitioners.
- This is an opportunity to strengthen ECD forums.
- There should be one source of information dissemination; this can lead to accountability.
- ECDs will start doing the right thing and comply.
- ECD centres are being identified and people are speaking about ECD, so we need to make sure that we become part of the lobbying for the sector.

Recommendations

Provide clear information on the Function Shift

- The Function Shift process, its timeline and logistics need to be communicated.
- NGOs and all the stakeholders involved must be engaged and the relevant information must be filtered down to parents.
- There should be a clear communication strategy that needs to be costed.
- We need to be informed by government every step of the way regarding the Function Shift.
- Consultative meetings with the ECD sector about the Function Shift.
- Use a variety of different media to publish the process – radio, TV, newsletters, campaigns/imbizo.
- The sector has to be given clear information regarding the completion of Grade R and the introduction of Grade RR: how this will be catered for, where it will be housed, and whether the children will move.
- We need to understand what the purpose of the shift is and what issues it is truly trying to address.
- ECD does not only involve children and teachers; parents are also there and they need to be informed about the Function Shift.

Make information accessible

- Government should use various media outlets such as television, radio and social media to inform civil society of the changes that will take place once the Function Shift is proclaimed.
- Consultative meetings with the ECD sector about the Function Shift.
- Use a variety of different media to publish the process – radio, TV, newsletters, campaigns/imbizo.
- DBE should communicate with the South African Congress for ECD for anything to do with ECD, i.e. Congress should be the intermediary between ECD and the DBE
- SACECD should be active and reach out to ECD.
- Information should reach all the ECD centres.
- We must be given time to speak for ourselves.
- Make use of the SABC to broadcast information.
- Enough time should be allocated to listen to everyone's concerns.
- There needs to be a translator at these types of forums to ensure that all voices are heard.
- Government must find a way to communicate the Function Shift on a continuous basis.
- There should be [government to civil society] communication through the media and [Function Shift] training workshops.
- There should be consultations with civil society.
- Consultations/ roadshows should be held with key ECD stakeholders, i.e. principals and practitioners. There needs to be parental involvement and participation, i.e. through consultation / workshops. ECD forums can be used to mobilise parents.
- Communication vis-a-vis the Function Shift must be centralised in all districts to ensure everyone is informed.
- Strengthen ECD forums so they benefit the sector, for e.g. by providing information on legislative requirements. The sector would then be better placed to help itself and provide effective community input. At the same time, protect the autonomy of ECD forums, so they don't just become conduits for channelling government information. ECD forums have to remain independent and able to raise any issue that is needed.

Centralise ECD information and communication

- ECD practitioners should have ECD Forums in every community, to streamline communication at a community level.
- The creation of an information hub – all ECD related government documents housed in one building where people can go to, to get help/information:
 - Establish ECD centres' quality
 - Regional
 - Increase access
 - Improvement of programmes and resources
 - Mentorship.
- The creation of a web link/booklets and documents containing comprehensive information and universal forms that are needed in the sector – documents should be comprehensive enough to include all the necessary information.
- Appoint one source for all ECD related information in the form of an ECD hub.
- There should be a centre or ECD hub in each province. These centres should have everything related to ECD and should house all the necessary forms and information about ECD etc. This will also lead to better decision making and consultation. Each department that is involved with ECD, particularly DSD, DBE and DoH, should have a representative each that is deployed at the provincial ECD hub.

THEME 5: FINANCE AND ECD DONORS

Risks

Costs/ financial implications

- The financial implications of the Function Shift are huge and will impact on each stream.
- Housing grade RR in schools has a huge financial impact for government.
- There is no infrastructure in schools for younger children. There will be huge financial costs to change this.
- DBE is not ready financially for the demands of ECD in terms of food.
- Schools are not ready financially – there are already budgetary constraints with grade R so how can they handle this?
- Does government have the infrastructure and resources? Where will the money come from to build the proper facilities? Government cannot provide for current requirements, e.g. toilets.
- If Grade RR children move to schools, parents will incur additional costs for after-care services and transport.
- Various government departments say that there is no budget; however, moving children around will be costly, so where will this money come from?
- Is there a resourcing and financing strategy in place?
- Misdirected use of limited government resources into new infrastructure development in schools.
- There is a lack of clarity in government's budget allocation.
- The review of budget is inconsistent.
- Shifting will be more expensive than improving our ECD centres: no shifting.

Donor funding

- Donors are reluctant to directly fund government, so the ECD sector as a whole will lose funding.
- Funding will be lost to the sector while government decides on policy around the Function Shift.

- How flexible would government be in terms of accommodating donor criteria for funding?
- Nationalising ECD would mean a loss of CSI funding and international donors. It would also create loopholes for corruption and mismanagement.
- Some ECD centres receive funding from donors without training on financial management skills so the funds are misused
- Donor/corporate funding seems to be limited to RTOs and corporate funding that comes with that is millions of Rands however the rest of the ECD sector struggles to access this funding.

Loss of revenue to the sector

- Funding is limited all around – without funding, good quality ECD is at risk
- There is a risk of revenue erosion and the ultimate elimination of ECD centres.
- The ECD Function Shift might deplete RTOs' funder base, because the DBE might be looking to train practitioners itself.
- Funding is increasingly being directed towards TVET colleges, at the exclusion of the ECD sector.
- Impact on existing business in respect of revenue stream, i.e. school fees as parents could choose to register their children at schools paying less or no fees, meaning a loss of jobs, income for teachers and direct impact on the economy.
- If government assumes the responsibility of being the main funder, the work and autonomy of civil society will be compromised.

Training / workforce issues

- Qualified practitioners might leave the ECD institution and there is limited funding to keep on training new staff.
- ECD centres don't have enough funds to pay salaries equivalent to those of public/private schools, hence qualified practitioners leave for better pay once qualified.
- How will ECD practitioners make a living wage if they can't (for reasons related to inadequate qualifications etc.) be transitioned into the DBE as part of the Function Shift?
- ECD practitioners face the threat of losing their salaries and livelihoods which will increase the national unemployment rate.
- ECD practitioners generally aren't paid on time. Government needs to understand that salaries and their timely payments motivates the workforce and must work to change this. ECD Donors can help to mitigate these issues.

Subsidies

- Who will be responsible for the child subsidy for pre grade R and grade Rs?
- There may be a loss of subsidies for ECD centres.
- Losing the subsidy from DSD.
- How will subsidies be processed?
- Will current funding continue if ECD centres register with DBE?

Loss of sector autonomy

- If government assumes the responsibility of being the main funder, the work and autonomy of civil society will be compromised.

General

- Situation now:
 - Parents currently paying the bill for 0 - 4 years and part of 5 years
 - Practitioners are paying for their own studies and their salaries are paid by crèches
 - Schools/crèches are community-based organisations.
- After migration:
 - Will government take over the funding?
 - Will government take over funding practitioners?
 - Is DBE ready for infrastructural migration, socio-economic challenges, safety and security of young children?
 - Will DBE take over funding for these children who they intend to migrate?
 - Is funding available for all the resources needed for this age group?
 - Will nutrition be catered for?

Opportunities

- The DBE will be able to allocate fund appropriately.
- There will be a budget allocation for infrastructure.
- There might be a supply of material for ECD curricula.
- There's a possibility of the DBE introducing a no-fee ECD centre model.
- DSD should provide funding in order to have no fee centres.
- Allocation of subsidies should be reviewed.
- More funding towards ECD centres should be provided by corporates.
- Government could engage corporates and funding organisations in order to fund ECD more.
- There is an opportunity for the private sector to enter into public-private partnerships that would be mutually beneficial.
- Basic employment conditions will be reviewed.
- Reviewed salary structure for level 4 and 5 teachers.
- Reviewed legislation on basic wage.
- ECD practitioners' salaries might improve.
- ECD practitioners might have stable jobs and consistent income.
- ECD Practitioners might receive employment benefits (such as medical aid, amongst others) and opportunities to study.
- Bursaries and funding for everyone involved in the centre could be provided.
- Funding to train current practitioners requires subsidies – DBE can provide subsidies or even full funding
- Qualified practitioners will have a positive impact in that the ECD centre will be able to retain grades R and RR learners because it will have practitioners who are qualified to teach them.
- Recommendations from the sector will be acknowledged when the sector is recognised, valued and respected by government, meaning the sector will have a voice.

Recommendations

Implementation

- A study must be conducted to look into the finance and resources strategy for the ECD sector. The results of the study must influence the implementation process.

- The cost of the ECD Function Shift/ Migration process should be studied ahead of implementation.
- A Human Resource strategy must be developed for the sector. The strategy must be scientific in nature and provide answers to the following questions: “How many ECD practitioners will be needed in this transition process and at how much? How will ECD practitioners be remunerated? Where will food and toys be sourced and from which service providers?”
- An ECD communication strategy must also be developed and costed, so that there is a clear and systematic way to disseminate information in government departments and civil society.
- The ECD Function Shift should be both a psycho-social and education orientated intervention. This requires a feasibility study into the blending of care and learning.
- DBE and DSD must come up with a strategy around the shift and then cost it – with this costing there are things to look at such as the allocation of salaries, review of policy etc.
- The Function Shift must be carefully unpacked. Grade RR children should remain in ECD, and government should inject funding into ECD.
- Government should implement all changes within the current ECD sector: training, resources, support (in respect of compliance issues), funding etc.
- Instead of moving all children in the Grade RR age cohort to schools, government could instead sponsor those children who are able to gain access to ECD centres. This would use the same money that government would otherwise use to pay the Grade RR teachers.

Financial, budget, funding, subsidies

- The budget must follow the function.
- The budget coordination should be managed and controlled by the DBE.
- There should be a budget allocation for ECD infrastructure, because schools are not suitable for young children.
- Each child should receive a subsidy irrespective of their parents’ income.
- Explore more donor funds and partnerships in order to receive funding for ECD.
- Challenge corporate companies to adopt ECD centres.
- Government should fund privately operated ECD centres.
- DBE must fund the full budget of the centre, for example salaries, food and maintenance.
- Financial management skills must be incorporated into the training programmes of practitioners.
- Government must provide centres with learning resources and equipment at the beginning of every year.
- If ECD migrates to the DBE, the subsidy model must change to a funding model, without prescriptions. Currently, funding comes with prescriptions on what percentage of the money must be allocated towards salaries, operations etc.
- Business to provide financial support.
- Standardise school fees for public and rural schools.

Remuneration, training

- The government should ensure that it has systems in place to pay ECD practitioners on time. ECD centres can’t wait up to three months for payment.
- The DBE must speed up processes to train and equip existing practitioners so that they can be capacitated to deal with the changes that the Function Shift will bring. This also means allocating money towards the training and development of practitioners through support mechanisms like bursaries and opportunities to study further.
- Salaries need to be increased in order to retain practitioners.
- All staff members to receive salaries.

- DBE should subsidise salaries.
- The recruitment strategy should be reviewed.
- Grade R stipends should be paid monthly, on time, directly into practitioners' bank accounts.
- Grade R stipend payments to practitioners [are sometimes] not paid regularly and missed payments [are] not made up when requested.
- All provincial education departments should have to follow the same universal system, with the same payment amounts and conditions.
- Stipends for Grade R must be the same for all 9 provinces.
- DBE should pay all unqualified staff with work experience the minimum wage (R3500 pm).
- DBE should subsidise salaries.
- Salaries need to be increased in order to retain practitioners (i.e., DBE should provide benefits)
- Stipends must be changed to a salary and the amount must be increased after Level 4 and 5 ECD qualifications are obtained.
- Budgets allocated for practitioners must be adhered to.
- Practitioners that are already working in the ECD centres should be considered for bursaries.
- Skills (with certificates) to be provided to practitioners who don't have matric.

THEME 6: MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Risks

Poor quality/ misdirection of current M&E processes

- M&E is often framed as the policing of people in the sector. This hampers learning and relegates M&E processes to compliance exercises that otherwise leave people vulnerable to being punished.
- Department officials are not trained to monitor and evaluate ECD programmes.
- There is an all – round lack of clarity around what M&E means in the ECD sector.
- The ECD sector is monitored by social workers (DSD) who have no background knowledge of ECD. This means they cannot assist in identifying gaps.
- M&E is currently done by government social workers; they only do facilities monitoring and have 'scary' attitudes.
- Government is policing instead of doing M&E.
- Those doing M&E usually don't understand ECD.
- Government does not have a full understanding of ECD. Most centres are doing a good job, and government should build on what is already there.
- M&E is generally not done well by the departments involved in ECD.
- Centre Inspectors want to implement CAPS and not NCF.
- Centre Inspectors only have high school or primary school experience and therefore cannot cope with ECD.
- No monitoring and evaluation taking place at all.

DBE capacity to conduct M&E processes

- The DBE will not be in a position to evaluate the implementation and outcomes of ECD programmes, because it is not their area of expertise.
- The DBE might not have the capacity to monitor and evaluate ECD, especially as it relates to learner-teacher ratios.

- There is no clear understanding of what M&E processes will look like if children are taken to schools.
- There is a lack of research and strategic planning for the proposed Function Shift. How will the DBE monitor active learning? How will the DBE monitor the quality of education that teachers have?
- The DBE has a schooling approach to learning. There needs to be support from the sector to help them gain insight into the sector.
- Government officials who monitor and evaluate the Foundation Phase curriculum are not trained to monitor the ECD curriculum. This means that they will not be able to monitor Grade RR.
- Lack of play time for the younger children – will this be monitored? We need to make sure that children aren't just receiving paperwork in both Grade R and Grade RR
- Inspectors for schools not knowing what to look for as they are not familiar with ECD.

Possible impact on ECD sector

- Forfeiture of DSD funding because of lack of monitoring tool at the beginning of the financial year.
- Closure of ECD centres by DBE due to a lack of academic qualifications.
- It is a risk if there is lack of infrastructure and teaching aids.
- Monitoring signatories pose a threat by not always being present when needed.
- Practitioners might lose jobs because:
 - ECD Practitioners are underqualified
 - There is a lack of resources in the sector
 - ECD practitioners are not considered professionals.
- When incidents in ECD centres are splashed all over the media, this harms the whole sector. Such incidents should be treated as isolated and not used to threaten the sector.

Opportunities

- There will be data capturing apps developed and ECD databases will be centralised.
- There will be a development of the correct M&E tools.
- We see no bigger risks but positives:
 - Daily programmes will be structured professionally
 - Finally we will have a better chance of getting tools to improve and to meet the set norms and standards
 - Growth – obtain better qualifications as better qualified ECD practitioners – learners will get a good foundation and thus ECD will yield more interactive learners
 - Self-assessment
 - Preparation
 - When you follow the norms and standards of every stakeholder it leads to the growth of the centre.
- New tool to be created for monitoring.
- Sectoral gaps and shortcomings could be identified earlier if the sector is regulated by the DBE.
- Practitioners may be capacitated through training and workshops to bridge the gaps.
- New curriculum to be created.
- Job opportunity for teachers and departmental heads to become monitors.
- Representative for each province to follow up at meetings (circuit).
- Job opportunities for inspectors to monitor and evaluate centres and programmes.

- Assistants in every class creates job opportunities.
- Parents may benefit because the DBE offers free education whereas ECD requires school fees (especially the NGOs).
- Legislation, norms and standards, compliance and planning and human resources.

Recommendations

Planning and preparing for the Function Shift

- The DBE should collect data on the sector ahead of the Function Shift.
- The DBE should have a Municipal and District Level Research Directorate, to ensure an evidence-based approach to the proposed Function Shift. The Research Directorate should work hand-in-hand with the DMPE, to ensure planning and expertise. An ECD agency should be set up to coordinate and administer this.
- M&E processes should follow a clear Logic Model, informed by an appropriate Theory of Change.
- The government will need an integrated plan, which also provides for children with disabilities.
- Baseline must be done at ECD centres so that the impact of the changes can be evaluated.
- Planning should be long term, medium term and short term.

Improving ECD through M&E

- A framework needs to be developed that is easy to understand so that we know what to assess and know what the requirements are. The framework must integrate all curriculums that currently work.
- A holistic M&E system informed by a theory of change should be implemented.
- The bridge between the ECD space and the Foundation Phase into M&E needs to be closed so that there is consistency. This allows ECDs to know what to assess and what the requirements are at Foundation Phase level.
- Monitoring and Evaluation tools should be provided, not for monitoring of furniture etc, but to assess the children – we need to be better qualified to assess children, and need to know how to use M&E tools for classroom monitoring
- M&E has to involve curriculum content (social), implementation, planning, practitioner qualifications, SAQA accreditation, and experience.
- The government social workers who do M&E should use a developmental rather than a punitive approach. They should provide feedback to ECD centres on previous M&E visits and provide help where there are challenges.
- M&E processes should be transparent. Officials should inform centres of intended M&E visits, not just arrive. Government should show us what they are coming to evaluate.
- Guidance for teachers in terms of monitoring and evaluation needs to be created.
- Irrespective of the migration and where children are located, DBE has a strong role to play in monitoring and overseeing programme development and practitioners.
- Less paperwork and more online documents need to be created-for tracking purposes.
- Follow-up is key and people who do monitoring in sites must be equipped – they must be ECD specialists.
- Monitor assessments based on NCF.
- The Mpumalanga DoE should monitor using identified criteria.
- Classroom admin and management (take daily registers).
- Standardise the requirements between departments so that everyone is on the same page.
- Create a unified standard for all private, public and rural centres.
- Inspectors need to be deployed to centres to ensure standards are being met.

- There needs to be no bribes in government and there should be serious consequences should this happen.

Use civil society expertise to improve M&E of ECD

- Training providers should support the DBE in building expertise about the sector.
- ECD is monitored by DSD (social workers) who do not have foundational knowledge of ECD. This means that social workers struggle to identify gaps and assist practitioners in the ways that they need. The government must bring forth qualified ECD practitioners to work as assistants to the social workers. ECD practitioners will have a better understanding of the field, while the social workers can bring technical expertise.
- ECD training providers who are subject matter experts and who understand the sector should be brought in to do M&E.
- The ECD sector should give input to inform M&E processes.
- The ECD community has people who can fill up these posts in the form of ECD inspectors and even other positions articulated in the National Integrated ECD Policy 2015.

Train /capacitate officials to conduct M&E

- Officials evaluating the sector should have a thorough understanding of the ECD sector. They will need to be trained to this effect.
- Capacitate government officials on M&E and also these must be officials who have knowledge of ECD.
- Officials who carry out inspections must be properly trained so they know what to look for when they inspect centres. Social workers doing M&E should be workshopped so they know about ECD, just as practitioners are workshopped.
- Centre Inspectors to be capacitated and DBE to employ more CIs that are qualified, such as centre managers.

THEME 7: HEALTH AND NUTRITION

Risks

Schools not equipped to cater for nutritional needs of young children

- Schools cannot cater for the nutritional needs of children under the age of 4. ECD centres are more suited for this need.
- Children may be scared and nervous being around older children and this may affect their digestion.
- At ECD centres, everybody eats the same healthy meal but at schools all parents provide children with meals of their choice; what will the teacher do to ensure that the child does get healthy meals then?
- Not monitoring meals of children.
- Standards vary per province and parents may not be able to provide these specific foods due to cultural differences and income disparities – we need a standard throughout all the provinces.
- Enough food for all children.
- Not knowing the food guidelines leading to unhealthy choices.
- No balanced diet at schools.
- Balanced diet is not considered.
- Set up (kitchen) dishing up for all ages at the same time, with the same quantity.
- Criteria for identifying the child who must get food (health policy).
- Children generally receive just one meal a day at public schools whereas ECD centres generally provide 2 meals a day and offer a wider variety of foods.

- Schools provide only one meal per day.
- The hygiene and safety of ECD centres are monitored and evaluated by the DSD. DBE doesn't inspect the preparation of food served in public schools regularly which means children are at risk of eating poorly prepared food and falling ill.
- Departments (DSD and DBE) don't have menus on standards of food and amount of food that children should eat.
- Adequate nutritional support – promote growth and development, prevention of malnutrition and stunting, differentiate menus between ECD and school.

Schools not equipped to cater for health needs of young children

- Health and Nutrition might not be supervised in schools. Children will be at risk of malnutrition and stunting.
- The hygiene of children will not be closely monitored in schools, because of the influx of learners and lack of adequate health systems.
- Clinics promise to come to ECD centres for vaccinations, but they do not come.
- Health visits – monitoring visits by DSD, DOH.
- Health risks differ from schools to ECD.
- Sanitation risks linked to health threats.
- Contagious diseases.

School environment not developmentally appropriate for young children

- Schools are likely to neglect the developmental needs of children, because they are not equipped to handle them.
- Children with disabilities are not fully accommodated in schools – their health needs will be compromised in schools.
- Toilet routines may not be supervised or assisted which is needed for younger children.
- There is a contradiction of policies in terms of child teacher ratio.
- Over-crowding in school classes.
- No proper supervision during routines.
- No proper development.
- Unsuitable toilets at school.
- Water shortages in our villages.
- Not having standards harms development.
- Taking children to school too early may delay their holistic development.
- Children with special needs may not be included in the ECD Migration or Function Shift.
- There is limited outdoor space in schools, whereas ECD centres tend to cater to children's' right to play.

Opportunities

- When leaving 4 - 6 year olds in ECD:
 - We will be able to monitor if all children have eaten
 - The children benefit by getting 3 meals per day
 - No child will go to class on an empty stomach
 - We make sure that all the children are full / well-fed
 - We are exposed to workshops about diet

- Vaccinations, the clinics go to the schools
- Enough space indoors and outdoors
- Continue with three meals per day at our centres
- Supervise and encourage children
- More job opportunities
- Health to be monitored
- Clinic visits to be maintained
- Parental involvement
- Health department to do regular visits and check ups
- Regular lice inspections
- To move with all our staff irrespective of age willing to align with the Function Shift.
- To give us a chance for our voice to be heard while the president is waiting to announce the promulgation.
- Education on health and nutrition which results in healthy lifestyles and make better choices with regards to their own health – training is key for parents and ECD practitioners.
- Ask grocery stores for donations.
- Job creation opportunities exist in the following areas: having the community be part of decision making, training of cooks and in social protection jobs.
- Work opportunities and parent benefits might increase.
- Children from less fortunate families can get access to food through school nutrition programmes.

Recommendations

Retain 4 - 6 year olds in ECD

- 0 - 6 year olds to remain in ECD.
- Leave the 4 - 6 year olds in ECD as we understand and know how to dish up according to age groups.

Integrated approach to providing for health and nutritional needs

- DBE should network with various stakeholders to support the dietary needs of children. Department of agriculture should be roped in.
- DBE should engage the DoH to ensure immunisation and deworming of children.
- Practitioners should be involved in all aspects of a child's development.
- There should be an ECD association as ECD is not just one aspect – all departments should be involved.
- DBE should hold DSD to account on their responsibilities.
- DoH, DBE and DSD need to come together to provide sufficient and healthy food so that ECD centres do not only depend on the ECD subsidy.
- Clinics must work with the ECDs, have a local ECD database.

Funding and support

- Sufficient funding should be allocated.
- Provide funding for nutrition.
- Start providing food gardens in centres.
- Trained people need to be remunerated properly.
- Continue with training while we are in our centres.
- DBE to continue with funds as DSD funded us.

Provide for health and nutritional needs of young children

- Cooks at schools should be trained for the optimal nutrition of children. This includes training on meal portions, food hygiene and preparation.
- Give training to teachers that will cater for all the children.
- Build more classrooms and hire practitioners who are already in ECD.
- Ensure a safe and clean feeding scheme.
- Revise the daily menu chart as we [in ECD] are used to catering three meals per day.
- Train the parents and then train the teachers on nutrition.
- Hygiene and health to be considered. Cleanliness of utensils and eating environments is significant here.
- Feed all the children and monitor their eating habits.
- Have a two-week cycle nutritional menu.
- Take allergies into consideration – provide alternatives.
- The age-appropriateness of menus and feeding processes must be carefully considered. Children must be grouped according to their age and fed appropriately.
- Keep databases of children up to date.
- Regular check-ups.
- Regular check-ups and inspections of the food that the children eat.
- The nutritional needs for children with special needs should be catered for.
- Train people on healthy food and have proper kitchens.
- School principals should understand the importance of clinic visits.

THEME 8: SOCIAL PROTECTION

Risks

School environment unsafe for young children

- If children are taken to schools and are separated into different age groups, they will be susceptible to abuse from older learners.
- Child accidents and injuries due to the location of schools.
- Child trafficking, bullying and intimidation.
- The exposure of children to other things such as drug use as well as selling drugs.
- Toilet supervision is not available at formal schools.
- Bullying of Grade R and RR learners by older learners.
- Formal school hours are less than those of ECD – increased danger of child trafficking, bullying, raping.
- Overcrowding in classes and surroundings which causes stress in children and practitioners.
- Possible bullying of young ones.
- Lack of supervision for the younger ones.
- Physical safety of younger children may be in danger.
- Bullying – small children in contact with bigger children.
- Safety issues after school (after 1:00pm).
- Ensuring children's safety at a school – in ECD a practitioner accompanies children everywhere. In schools, children are just let out at break times and have to fend for themselves.

- Children aged 0 - 4 should not be housed at DBE facilities but remain in ECD centres; their immune systems are fragile, and they would be more exposed to health risks in primary schools.
- Children are going to be abused emotionally, physically, socially and academically.

School environment developmentally inappropriate

- Taking children to school will be overwhelming for them. The transition of children from home to pre-schools and from pre-schools to schools must be carefully managed to avoid stunting the development of children.
- If taken to schools, children will get lost in the bigger schooling community. ECD sites are more suitable for children's developmental needs. It is easier to track children when they are in one facility.
- The issue of infrastructure not being developmentally appropriate for the child.
- The language of bonding is different between practitioners and learners' vs between teachers and learners. This means that children will be horribly disadvantaged at schools.
- School environments cause developmental delays in children.
- Loss of focus on the 'whole' child.
- Low teacher / child ratio – too many children in a small space.
- Disruption of parent-teacher communication – having to wait until the next day to see a teacher.
- Grade RR aged children are not ready for a primary school environment and infrastructure, e.g. toilets not fit for small children, lack of safe and stimulating play areas.
- Overcrowding in schools threatens holistic development.
- Primary school children from birth to 4 years are still young for primary school enrolment.

Pressure from parents/ too early formalisation

- We need to guard against the 'schoolification' of ECD. There is already pressure from some parents for ECD centres to teach children to read and write. This is not what ECD should be doing. It shows a lack of understanding of the ECD curriculum and play-based pedagogy.
- Parents need education – not just pedagogy but adult education – placing 4 year olds into primary school is wrong as the expectations of parents are reading, writing, arithmetic – not learning through play.
- More and more, the practice is that children in the age 0 - 4 cohort are being taught how to write. This has serious psychological ramifications for children. In ECD, the focus is more on learning through play. Learning through play may reveal emergent writing and reading skills, but that is not the focus. The learning through play pedagogical approach should be upheld.
- How can the sector help parents understand the proposed Function Shift and the implications thereof on children? Taking children to school too soon can have an adverse effect of their development.

Threat to / loss of existing structures and safeguards

- The loss of the safety hub service that the ECD centre is currently offering. ECD acts as protection and safety hubs so what will happen when these are taken away?
- The role that ECD centres play in reducing poverty will be impacted.
- The Department of Children and Family falling away could lead to social challenges.
- The integrated approach is at risk, i.e. there is a risk that the departments concerned do not coordinate or integrate, or that coordination does not lead to integration.

Opportunities

- If the Function Shift is implemented the training of teachers on practices of referrals will be a big opportunity. NPOs currently assume that role.
- There will be a specific and standard criterion for the demarcation of play areas and ablution areas in ECD facilities.
- There will be established databases for accessing child protection and social protection services.
- The creation of an integrated multi-sectoral safety network.
- The opportunity for collaboration in professionalising the sector – this is good as there is a conversation around the issues and we should utilise the opportunity well to address all social protection concerns.
- All ECDs will need to be registered (Partial Care Registration).
- DBE have higher requirements for the registration of ECD centres. This mitigates fraudulent and risky centres that are not properly vetted. This speaks to children's safety and should continue.
- This is an opportunity to/ for:
 - See all children as needing/ benefitting from educational input and stimulation; this includes the age group birth to 4.
 - Each ECD site to take responsibility for quality in care and education.
 - Take an integrated approach. Despite the Function Shift to DBE, there will still be vital roles in the system for the departments of health and social development. The question is: How to integrate? This requires leadership and coordination by DBE.
 - Educate parents about quality ECD.
- At ECD centres:
 - We monitor the children's indoor and outdoor movement
 - Parents sign the record book before and after collecting children
 - Practitioners only leave after all children have departed
 - The practitioner to child ratio is 1:25.

Recommendations

Integrated/ multi-disciplinary approach

- The rights and the dignity of the child must be kept at all times.
- The focus should be on providing integrated collaborative care. This would need to include parents, social workers, other educators, relevant local government officials etc, so that integration takes place on a local level.
- The DBE must make use of DSD practices that work well for the sector, and not take away functions that could be done by other departments.
- Presently DSD assumes the responsibility of registering ECD educational programmes when social workers are not trained in that respect. The DSD should assume responsibility for the care of children, while the DBE takes responsibility for the educational programmes of children, aged 0 - 4 years.
- Centres that cater for children in the 0 - 4 years old category should register with DoH, DSD and DBE to ensure comprehensive care and developmental support. The Function shift must cater to the specific needs of children.
- Social Protection is a cross-cutting theme and it needs to be provided for in a comprehensive manner. There cannot be a singular custodian of Social Protection.
- There should be an ECD agency that coordinates the multi-pronged nature of Social Protection in ECD.
- There is a need for a multi-sectoral approach to the whole process as the situation differs on the ground.

- Both the DSD and DBE should clearly stipulate and divide their functions, so that there is no ambiguity, chaos or confusion.
- The DSD should regulate and support the social wellbeing of children e.g. Hygiene, Health and Nutrition, Social Protection. The DBE must regulate and support the Training and Development function e.g. curriculum, teaching material and M&E.
- Integrated collaborative care includes parents, social workers, other educators, relevant local government officials etc.
- There needs to be inclusive education in terms of children with disabilities when the children move [from ECD] into the different school environment.

Implications for training and qualifications

- There should be a collaborative process between DoH, RTOs and local Universities and TVETs that yields some kind of qualification framework for the sector. This is important for the standardisation of qualifications and the creation of norms and standards.
- Just as there are levels and stratification of the B.Ed. degree, e.g. Foundation phase, Intermediate Phase and Secondary Phase, there should be the same delineations in ECD studies.
- There's a need to develop an ECD degree, which can also be supported by other types of qualifications.
- Teacher/ practitioner education and training must include integrated knowledge of the system, the policies, how local government works etc as well as pedagogy.

Capacitate and support practitioners

- We need to advocate for recommendations from people on the ground such as owners of ECD facilities etc. so that proper engagement and recommendations are made by people that this is a reality for.
- Special focus needs to be placed in creating more awareness on the people/ECD workforce to enable them to do more on what they are passionate about but with more capacity and better understanding.
- ECD practitioners will need to be incentivised to remain in the sector, as a social protection mechanism. If practitioners are not motivated, children are also affected.
- ECD practitioners must stay where they are and be supported and upskilled.
- Psycho-social support services for ECD practitioners so that they can cultivate the tools to help themselves and the children in their care. Children must be prioritised and protected.

Fund, resource and support ECD facilities

- Children should remain in community-based centres.
- Learner and teaching support materials must be distributed to all ECD centres regardless of their location.
- ECD centres should be classified by quintiles and given resources accordingly.
- Government to improve centres (sites, infrastructure, training, funding).
- Empower the existing centres and practitioners.
- Adoption of ECD centres by nearby schools and feeding into these schools.
- Harness skills in society.

Involve / educate parents

- Use the Function Shift as an opportunity to educate parents about quality ECD. It is important to focus on the whole child, and to remember that play is part of social care as well as stimulation.
- Create good relationships with parents.

THEME 9: HUMAN RESOURCES / WORKFORCE

Risks

Implications for sustainability

- There will be potential losses in the sector.
- There is no clarity on the ECD delivery model. Will the Function Shift take place through existing platforms or new platforms?
- Will there be an opportunity to work with the DBE? Will we be recognised as formal structures to then feed into particular primary schools?
- The loss of RTOs as service providers of training stakeholders in ECD.
- Losing children to schools which means a loss of income for centres.
- Children moving to schools will be a loss for ECD centres – this will impact employment in ECD centres.
- ECD Centres will have no children to house. The buildings will be empty and prone to vandalism.
- Sustainability of the centre is at risk due to reduced funding.
- The stringent labour law requirements are a risk to ECD; they place the employer at a disadvantage.
- There is a risk that once practitioners are qualified, they will move away from ECD centres.
- The government took Grade R from us, and now they want to take Grade RR. What will be next? We are entrepreneurs, and losing that age group will lead to loss of employment.
- ECD centres touch on HR and EE (employment equity) legislation. Many centres work with the impoverished; how can they then afford to pay minimum wages? The Department of Labour (DoL) puts pressure on these organisations that are just trying to do the right thing, by enforcing minimum wages. This results in DoL closing down ECD sites/centres, which then puts the children on the street. The DSD doesn't get involved. How will the DBE handle it when DSD isn't even interested?
- Stringent labour law requirements are a risk to ECD as they place the employer at a disadvantage. Many centres work with the impoverished; so they cannot afford to pay minimum wages and are at risk of being closed down by the DoL.
- If government is willing to pay educators in public schools to take on new groups of children, why won't they consider paying ECD practitioners to continue caring for young children in existing ECD centres?
- Decisions taken at high level directly impact us as business owners, and government can change its position at any time. I used my own resources to open centres – and will be out in the cold if government closes them.
- Most ECD centres are businesses. The DBE has said that we as businesses have a choice of becoming public enterprises or private enterprises. There are consequences to this – if we are private, we won't get the subsidy but we must still conform and register. If we are public, we will get the subsidy, and we have to register and follow the curriculum that the department prescribes to us. How do we make this choice?
- NPOs and RTOs could become extinct if the government takes over all the training of practitioners

Remuneration issues/ stipends/ working conditions

- There is low remuneration for ECD practitioners, due to their qualification levels.
- Will the minimum salary of R20 per hour be paid to practitioners by DBE?
- Low salaries
- Grade R stipend payments to practitioners not paid regularly and missed payments not made up when requested. Where does this money go?
- Stipends are not enough.
- Practitioners are considered volunteers; they are not regarded as professionals.
- The working hours are long.

- The remuneration of practitioners remains low.

Funding of training

- With no learnerships being available, funding is a huge challenge.
- DBE teachers are trained and government has taken responsibility for training yet with ECD this is not the case. It becomes the responsibility of the employer to cover these expenses.
- When there is funding involved, the focus is on numbers and not on the quality.
- Practitioners do not have money to study further.
- ECD practitioners who are disadvantaged in terms of funding will struggle to upgrade.
- Will the DBE fund practitioners to study and develop themselves ahead of the Function Shift roll out?
- Practitioners need to take the time to consider and assess whether they can keep up with the demands of studying before they go ahead and make use of available funding and they need to remember that there are terms and conditions that come with bursaries, bursaries can be withdrawn if these are not met.

Qualification and training issues

- DBE teachers are not trained in ECD so how will they accommodate young children?
- There is a lack of clarity on minimum qualifications for ECD practitioners.
- No clarity on whose duty is it to train teachers.
- FET Colleges and not universities are offering ECD qualifications. Universities need to start offering ECD qualifications.
- FET and University entrance requirements are not consistent.
- Age restriction, e.g. for learnerships.
- Qualifications are designed to suit certain aspects and they are not broad.
- The L4 qualifications we have as practitioners are not taken seriously.
- Practitioners no longer implementing/not working due to signing of learnerships without including SGB and supervisor.
- There is a lot of motivation to be a trained practitioner as they think there will be better salaries.
- Some risks and challenges in terms of training/ upgrading qualifications are: affordability; access for practitioners in rural areas; financing the training. People's age could also be a hindrance.

Risk / threat to continued employment of current ECD workforce

- Unqualified staff in ECD centres have gained experience over the years, is their experience worth anything?
- Recruitment is too professional – most practitioners are not qualified; if recruitment is too professional, this becomes a risk.
- Loss of jobs for unqualified staff.
- Retrenchment due to lower level of qualifications.
- There will be job losses due to illiteracy and age.
- Experienced practitioners will lose their jobs to younger graduates.
- No action is being taken now. Practitioners aren't upgrading their skills in order to get ready for the change.
- The Function Shift will be a risk for those who don't have relevant/ appropriate qualifications.

- There is a fear that the shift will impel the DBE to retire more veteran ECD practitioners as they introduce younger, more qualified practitioners. Why hasn't government engaged more veteran practitioners directly?
- If qualifications are a criteria, employment is at risk.
- Mature women have much to offer in ECD. The retirement age should be increased to allow women who are mothers and who have wisdom and experience to continue to take care of young children.
- The problem in the ECD sector now is qualifications vs experience vs remuneration. There is a large cohort of people with a wealth of experience that have never qualified. We must not lose sight of them.
- Instead of bringing in matriculants as childminders in Grade R classes in schools, DBE should use practitioners with NQF L4 and L5 ECD qualifications, and should pay them the same.
- We feel a lack of trust in the system. ECD practitioners are not considered qualified enough to teach Grade R, yet we have parents coming back to ECD facilities to ask us to teach their children to read and write.
- We have been told by the DBE in the Free State that the children will remain in ECD centres, but we will be regulated by the DBE. This process will work for younger and qualified practitioners, but it will exclude day mothers and older ECD practitioners.
- There is an ECD qualification for Level 4, for those aged 18-35. But what about older ECD practitioners? The government is providing opportunities for the youth but taking away opportunities from the people who started ECD centres. The Function Shift is going to exacerbate this problem.
- Employment of older matrons and practitioners will be at risk.
- Despite government's promise to mitigate issues of gender-based violence and child abuse, some members of civil society feel this shift abuses both vulnerable groups because it deprives female ECD practitioners of their livelihoods and threatens the safety of young children who will be moved to public schools.

School principals lack understanding of ECD

- Primary school principals tend to be a stumbling block in collaboration efforts between ECD and primary schools. They do not understand the importance of collaboration between the schools and ECD centres.
- The Function Shift will mean that when principals do not have enough administrative staff, they will pull out Grade 1 teachers to take care of grade R classes, and relegate ECD practitioners to an administrative role. This will have serious ramifications for children's development.
- Grade R teachers are called out of their classes to go and do menial administrative tasks, leaving children without supervision. This will be worse with the incorporation of Grade RR into schools.

Opportunities

- There might be upskilling for people in in-service training.
- There might be Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL).
- Opportunity to ensure that workshops and training are provided by SACE accredited institutions.
- This may push people to strive for proper qualifications.
- There might be higher qualifications for youth and mature practitioners.
- Practitioners still have time to study and get full qualifications.
- If ECD is migrated to the DBE, ECD practitioners might get bursaries to study further.
- The Function Shift is an opportunity for using RPL processes and bridging courses to upgrade practitioners' qualifications.
- DBE can do something significant in terms of qualifications, training and remuneration of the current workforce.

- The sector may receive relevant qualifications and training.
- Practitioners may get bursaries within government.
- The salaries of ECD practitioners will be reviewed.
- There are so many opportunities for jobs in ECD, the problem lies with qualifications.
- This is an opportunity to open conversations with government (DBE) to unpack the criteria for qualifications for ECD educators.
- ECD centres are job creators.
- The Function Shift could be an opportunity for ECD practitioners with a B.Ed. degree to easily move into a school, but a risk for those who don't have relevant qualifications.
- ECD practitioners may receive benefits.
- Better qualified practitioners will lead to better teaching quality.
- Upgrade the existing centres.
- Empower practitioners through training.
- There might be hiring of staff with relevant qualifications.
- To be able to identify those who are qualified/ not qualified.
- There may be better equipment for teaching.

Recommendations

Retaining the current ECD workforce

- The DBE should absorb and upskill existing ECD practitioners.
- The DBE should create opportunities for experienced and mature ECD practitioners.
- No age restrictions for practitioners.
- Unqualified practitioners should be considered and trained (workshopped).
- There should be no age restrictions – rather combine experience with qualifications.
- All workers in the ECD sector should be accommodated in the Function Shift irrespective of age if they are willing to align with the Function Shift.
- Make use of people already involved in the sector.
- DBE should support all those with NQF Levels 4 and 5 to obtain suitable qualifications. They are the ones that trained us but now they don't take us seriously. Let us not waste money but use it for our children and our benefits.
- Caregivers should not be forgotten about – many day mothers don't have qualifications, but they shouldn't lose their jobs.

Implementing the Function Shift

- The Function Shift must be implemented in existing ECD platforms, using a mixed model of delivery, with the DBE assuming responsibility for coordination of the sector.
- The delivery mechanism of ECD can shift, but the implementation thereof should stay within current ECD platforms (i.e. current infrastructure and current ECD network organisations).
- The children should stay where they are. The status quo must prevail.
- The Functions that must shift from the DSD to the DBE are those contained in Section 92 of the Children's ACT: the functions of overall coordination, strategy and planning. The implementation of this shift must recognise existing ECD networks and the experience that they hold.
- Skills, workshops and trainings [on the Function Shift] should be developed for all. The content of workshops and trainings must be understandable by mature practitioners.

- Training on the Function Shift needs to be inclusive of all ECD practitioners (administrators, clerks etc.).

Training/ professionalisation

- Provide clarity on the minimum requirements for ECD practitioners to be employed by the DBE to teach Grade RR. This must include information on upgrading existing qualifications, e.g. admission requirements, RPL processes, bridging courses.
- The DBE must clearly state what the relevant qualifications for Grades R and RR are.
- ECD practitioners need to get points just as DBE teachers get points for attending training.
- CSI initiatives need to be geared more towards teacher training.
- Take RPL into consideration for entry into Level 4, 5 and 6.
- Universities to come on board to offer ECD qualifications.
- ECD Forums need to be acknowledged as a way to offer training for teachers.
- Level 4 and 5 curricula must be revised to include Teaching Practice evaluations.
- We need to first ensure we have a workforce at tertiary level to properly train ECD teachers and to bring them on par with DBE teachers.
- Teacher training opportunities need to be provided in rural areas as this is severely lacking.
- The database should be updated yearly so they should know how many qualified/ unqualified practitioners there are.
- For learnerships and certificates, DBE to make sure that providers are fully accredited and that qualifications are registered with SAQA.
- Workshops and training must only be provided by accredited institutions registered by SACE.
- Skills (with certificates) to be provided to practitioners who don't have matric.
- Give practitioners in-service training.
- Recognise prior learning.
- Qualifications we have as practitioners must be taken seriously – L4 must be taken as equivalent to matric.
- Recognise current qualifications towards B.Ed.
- Bursaries should be offered for practitioners who are already practicing but are not accredited to do so.
- There should be recognition of all ECD qualifications from Level 1, right up to the highest qualification.
- All ECD qualifications should be mapped on to the National Qualification Framework. This will help with articulation in the sector.
- All ECD qualifications must be accredited and RECOGNISED.
- Career pathing for ECD workforce.
- All ECD communications, training, and professional development must be directed to ECD centres (do not include schools in our plans).
- Provide funding support to practitioners who cannot fund their own training.
- The professionalisation of ECD should cover the following two points:
 - Relative Educational Qualification Value 13 (matric certificate + degree) should be reviewed such that it recognises different ECD qualifications.
 - ECD practitioners who obtain any qualification, should be allowed to work throughout the foundation phase. Currently the B.Ed. qualification confines practitioners to one age cohort (i.e. age 0-4 years old). Practitioners being able to work throughout the foundation phase speaks to articulation opportunities within the sector.

Provide for broader sector training needs

- We need to ensure that the workforce at higher level (ECD managers/principals and government officials) take on ECD training
- Government must give us financial management training and workshops
- Should be internships for those that will be monitoring
- Occupational therapist in ECD, for example.
- Health and safety courses – fire safety.
- There should be training and computer skills for staff and infrastructure must be upgraded to meet technological shifts and demands e.g. installation of Wi-Fi amongst other resources.
- Government must give us financial management training.
- There must be capacitation of practitioners through free training and workshops around legislation, norms and standards, compliance and planning and human resources.

Remuneration/ benefits

- As practitioners we should be recognised – government should provide bursaries and salaries.
- ECD practitioners should receive benefits e.g. medical, housing, etc.
- Stipends must be changed to a salary and the amount must be increased after Level 4 and 5 ECD qualifications are obtained.
- Stipends for Grade R must be the same for all 9 provinces.
- DBE should pay all unqualified staff with work experience the minimum wage (R3500 pm).
- Grade R stipends should be paid monthly, on time, directly into practitioners' bank accounts.
- Provide PERSAL numbers.
- Salaries with full benefits for all ECD employees.
- Outline the conditions of service.
- Salaries and conditions of employment need to change.
- Salary scales need to be in place.
- All provincial education departments should have to follow the same universal system, with the same payment amounts and conditions.