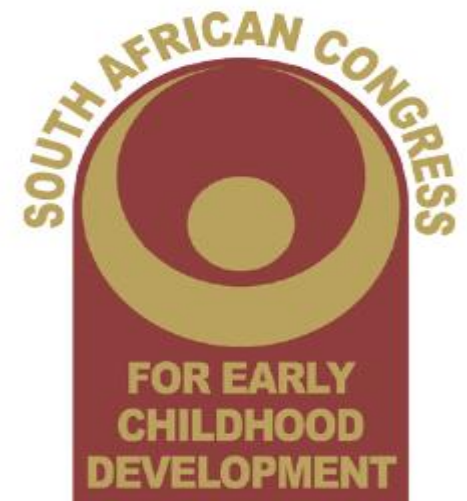


CECDN REPORT OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS ON FUNCTION SHIFT DIALOGUES



Background and Objectives of CECDN

BRIDGE Innovation in Learning Organisation (BRIDGE) is an NPO which runs communities of practice aimed at sharing knowledge, working practice and innovation

South African Congress for ECD (SACECD) is a national mass-based NGO that represents the interests of early childhood development workers

National ECD Alliance (NECDA) is a network of ECD NPOs and sector experts whose members provide capacity building, high quality training and resourcing to the ECD Sector

OBJECTIVES OF CECDN

To hold and represent the views and voices of the ECD community in their differences and multiplicity

To use the strengths of the individual partners to mobilise the ECD community towards solutions that can lead to sustainable and impactful change in the sector

The Intersectoral Forum ISF Steering Committee is also represented in the collaboration and serves as a strategic line of communication that channels pertinent sector issues raised at the ISF to the CECDN, and channels updates and plans from the CECDN to the ISF

Dialogues on the Function Shift-Purpose and Process

National Dialogue:

The purpose of this dialogue was to gather CECDN's civil society partners and obtain their input to guide the CECDN in the process of stakeholder consultation.

Themes of engagement:

1. Policy and legislation
 2. Training and curriculum
 3. Registration and infrastructure
 4. Communication and advocacy
 5. Finance and ECD donors
 6. Monitoring and evaluation
 7. Health and nutrition
 8. Social protection
 9. Human resources / Workforce
- (Themes also informed the process of provincial dialogues)

Provincial Dialogues:

Dialogues provided a platform for the diverse members of ECD civil society to interrogate and confront issues in ECD, and to freely express their views, needs and expectations relating to the Function Shift:

- **comments reflect the perceptions of people in the field and show how they are affected – within their own contexts – by the issues and influences that impact on ECD provision**
 - **dialogue participants saw themselves as actively representing children, and their contributions reflect their deep interest in the care and well-being of children.**

Process of the Dialogues:

- Dialogues took place between August-October 2019
- 822 stakeholders reached (91% target reached)
- Network partners executed all activities
- Output 1: Full report of dialogue proceedings
- Output 2: Recommendations on each of the themes
- Themes in line with DBE workstreams
- Report dissemination

Policy and legislation

Review the current ECD policy by setting up a structured review process which will identify (i) aspects of current policy which need to be kept but are currently not properly coordinated or implemented; (ii) current relevant policies and legislation which need to be changed; and (iii) any new provision to accommodate migration concerns.

A successful review process will:

- Identify bottlenecks and impediments within all ECD related policy that negatively affect the provision of ECD services.
- Apply contextual principles to develop policy that can accommodate and be implementable within South Africa's diverse communities and their structures, e.g. townships and informal settlements.
- Develop mechanisms to deal with the challenges in the implementation and coordination of the NIECD Policy. This should include the formation of an independent body responsible for spearheading the implementation of ECD policy. Such an organisation should include representatives of all government departments and civil society organisations involved in ECD, and the representatives should have executive authority to hold the departments or organisations accountable.
- Review the roles and functions of existing coordination and implementation structures as mandated by ECD policy (such as the ECD Intersectoral Forum, the Inter-Ministerial Committee on ECD and the National Inter- Departmental Committee for ECD).
- Review and standardise municipal requirements and by laws to improve access for registration of ECD sites in all settings and contexts.
- Develop mechanisms to increase and accelerate the provision of access to quality ECD through the mixed mode strategy promoted by the NIECD Policy of 2015.
- Put in place legislation to regulate the employment of the ECD workforce.
- Draw up an implementation plan for the reviewed policy.
- Communicate changes timeously, and to the entire ECD sector.

Training, professionalisation and career paths

Develop a comprehensive strategy to (i) increase practitioner qualification levels and competence; and (ii) allow for easier access to training, and movement across different provider sectors; and (iii) increase recognition of lower level qualifications and other forms of certification.

The strategy should include:

- Qualification articulation within ECD and beyond, into the Foundation Phase.
- Quality of programmes and training provision.
- A targeted selection process to identify candidates for training with an interest in children; cooperation between training providers and management of ECD centres providing the workplace-based learning component; and more rigorous performance-based assessment.
- Alleviating barriers to entry and progression (other than lack of articulation) through RPL, bridging courses, and a variety of delivery modes including use of home language.
- Coordinated funding mechanisms that increase funding for practitioner development and promote equitable access to training.
- Interim measures relating to the Function Shift.
- Using civil society expertise to advantage in extending and strengthening ECD training provision.
- Developing a database and tracking system to track qualified and unqualified practitioners.
- Disseminating information to the sector relating to qualifications, training programmes and funding.

ECD curricula

Review existing curricula for birth to 6 years old, to ensure that the curricula (i) address the challenges in implementing the NCF; (ii) are developmentally appropriate for a child's progression up to and including Grade R; and (iii) address the alignment and articulation between the NCF and CAPS.

Factors to consider are:

- Internationally recognised ECD principles such as the importance of play-based learning.
- Using ECD sector expertise in developing the curriculum and guiding implementation.
- Disseminating information on curriculum requirements to the ECD sector.
- Mechanisms to support implementation, including guidelines, material, training, equipment and resources.
- Capacitating school management and district officials on ECD principles and pedagogies.

Registration

Simplify the process and requirements for registration of ECD sites with the aim of achieving optimal access to ECD services for all children who need these services.

This should address the following:

- Identifying impediments to compliance and the registration of sites and programmes.
- Provision of support to register unregistered and partially registered ECD sites.
- Relaxing by-laws and repealing outdated requirements to allow for ECD centres to be established within communities where they are needed.
- Standardisation of compliance requirements throughout South Africa.

Infrastructure

Create the infrastructure for ECD provision, by investing in ECD sites (i) which give access to ECD in communities where it is most needed; and (ii) where children can receive developmentally appropriate ECD services.

This includes:

- Local government, in partnership, taking responsibility for the building and maintenance of early learning facilities
- Using existing infrastructure for dedicated ECD delivery
- Government widening provision to access through the mix-mode delivery model
- Enabling ECD centres to become official feeder sites into schools. (This would require ECD centres and schools in the same communities to work together.)

Communication and Advocacy

Develop a comprehensive, coherent communications strategy for the ECD sector that (i) explains what the Function Shift is and how it will impact the sector; (ii) enables regular communication on Function Shift implementation developments using accessible media platforms; and (iii) centralises ECD information and makes it easily accessible to the sector.

This would need to address:

- Mechanisms for providing information about the implementation of the Function Shift as currently communication from government to the sector on this matter is inadequate.
- Misinformation and a lack of information and understanding about policy and its constraints, to enable robust engagement on ECD issues.
- Mechanisms to facilitate communication on issues relating to ECD at government department level.

Finance and ECD Donors

Develop a comprehensive, coherent funding strategy for the ECD sector that (i) enables access to quality ECD services for all children who need it and (ii) develops a sustainable ECD sector.

This would need to address:

- The scope of government responsibility for funding and resourcing ECD (provision of infrastructure, training, practitioner salaries and employee benefits, subsidies, provision of equipment and nutrition).
- Mechanisms for delivering the funding and resources.
- Mechanisms for monitoring the distribution and use of funding and resources.
- Using donor funding to advantage in extending and strengthening ECD provision.

Monitoring and evaluation

Develop a comprehensive monitoring and evaluation strategy for the ECD sector that (i) is developmental in approach; (ii) that enables coordination amongst the various government departments involved in ECD provision; and (iii) is conducted by appropriately qualified officials with a good understanding of both ECD and M&E.

Factors to consider are:

- The objectives and scope of M&E in the ECD sector.
- Tools, methods and processes for conducting M&E in the ECD sector.
- Selecting and capacitating officials in ECD principles and play-based pedagogies to conduct M&E for the ECD sector.
- Using existing ECD expertise and specialist skills within the sector to strengthen M&E implementation and outcomes.

Health and nutrition

Develop a strategy to meet the health and nutrition needs of young children in ECD facilities as well as in Grade R in public schools.

This should address:

- Mechanisms to support the nutritional needs of young children (appropriate menus and servings, adequate number of meals throughout the day, safe and hygienic handling of food).
- Using ECD facilities effectively to provide health services to young children.
- Processes to monitor that children receive the right food and the right health services (this speaks to coordination of services).

Social protection

Develop guidelines for creating conducive environments for young children that enable children to interact with their environments (i) without facing harm; and (ii) in ways that promote their holistic development.

These guidelines should enable children to:

- Reach age appropriate milestones through relevant pre-school teaching methodologies underpinned by play-based pedagogy both inside and outside of the classroom.
- Be safe from potentially harmful situations that may occur within or outside the learning environment (this would include the provision of extended aftercare and referral services).
- Receive an integrated package of services (including health and nutrition, early learning and social services) as stipulated by the NIECD.
- Receive care and stimulation from a multi-disciplinary team trained in the social protection and holistic care of children, and supported in their roles.

Human Resources / workforce

Develop a comprehensive human resources strategy that (i) enables the sector to provide quality ECD services; (ii) extends the reach of these services to include all children who need them; and (iii) meets the needs of the sector.

The strategy should include:

- Capacitating the ECD workforce more broadly on a range of management and operational skills required to run ECD facilities effectively (financial; health and safety; human resources; caring for infrastructure, grounds and equipment).
- Maintaining the employment of the current ECD workforce. Preference should be given to people who are already working in the ECD sector for ECD training, bursary and employment opportunities (this should include older members of the workforce).
- Determining future sector training needs and providing for these.
- Provision of full remuneration packages for practitioners and support staff. This would require recognition and standardisation of minimum skills development training programmes and qualification requirements for the ECD workforce across different contexts.