

Frequently Asked Questions

ECD Function shift

What is the function shift?

A function shift is a purely administrative process where functions, or roles and responsibilities, are transferred from one Minister to another.

What is a Proclamation and what does it mean for ECD?

A proclamation is a legal document that the President or Premier signs. A Proclamation cannot change any contents in an Act, but only changes the reference from one Minister to another. In the case of ECD, it will mean that every time Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of the Children' Act mentions the Minister or MEC of Social Development, it will now refer to the Minister or MEC of Basic Education. This will mean that the DBE will become responsible for everything that DSD was responsible for in terms of delivering, funding, registering, monitoring and supporting the ECD sector.

Where does the function shift originate from?

During the February 2019 State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Cyril Ramaphosa directed that "the responsibility for ECD centres will be migrated from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Basic Education". This statement of commitment by the President has created an opportunity to accelerate provisioning and redesign the systems for state monitoring and support for ECD.

The President's mandate is derived from a variety of sources, namely the Bill of Rights as articulated in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa, the resolutions of the 52nd, 53rd and 54th National Conferences of the African National Congress, the pronouncements of the National Development Plan (NDP) 2030 on ECD institutional architecture, and the commitments made by the Governing Party in its 2019 Election Manifesto. Indeed, this is in line with many other countries that have moved from viewing ECD less as a child protection function and more as an early learning function that is led and coordinated by national ministries of education. Further, consolidating early learning within the DBE would streamline the continuum of education, and create positive pressure for greater resource allocation to ECD as a mechanism for preventing the educational disparities we currently see in the Foundation Phase grades and beyond.

What will change?

The DBE will become responsible for ensuring the universal availability and adequate quality of, and equitable access to, inclusive learning opportunities for children aged birth to until the year before they enter formal school. The DBE will fulfil this responsibility through the development, delivery, regulation, registration, quality monitoring, improvement and evaluation of early childhood development programmes.

The DBE will, however, **remain** responsible for the functions that they originally had, and will also become responsible for some of the functions that DSD had about overall leadership and coordination, delivery, regulation, registration, monitoring and support.

Historically the DBE has been responsible for the early learning component of ECD. The National Curriculum Framework from birth to four (NCF) has been developed and practitioners are being trained and supported in delivering the NCF. The DBE is also training ECD Practitioners in various NQF levels for the purpose of improvement in qualifications and will continue with these functions and strengthen the monitoring and support aspects of these functions.

DSD will remain responsible for the functions related to social support and care, and will provide support to ECD programmes similar to the support that they are currently providing to learners in schools.

	DSD	DBE
New functions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensuring universal availability and adequate quality of, and equitable access to, inclusive learning opportunities; and • Development, delivery, regulation, registration, quality monitoring, improvement and evaluation of ECD programmes.
Functions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Child protection; • Psycho-social services; • Child support grant; 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of early learning curriculum;

<p>remainin g</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to social services to prevent and address risk factors; • Parental support programmes; and • Partial care facilities that relate to afterschool services, private hostels and temporary respite care centres. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continuity and synergy between early learning and Grade R; • Integration of key health messages in the school curriculum; • Training, implementation and monitoring relating to curriculum implementation for birth to four-year-olds.
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In terms of the new functions, the DBE will take 2021/22 as a planning and preparation year. During this year, the different branches will be preparing to deliver these function, as well as prepare and develop the systems that are required for delivering the ECD function. An implementation plan is currently being developed and we will be workshopping these plans with the sector throughout the year.

When will this change?

Although the Proclamations have been signed now, they will only take effect from 1 April 2022. Nothing will change until 1 April 2022.

Will the ECD Integrated Policy of 2015 remain applicable and in force?

The ECD Integrated Policy of 2015 will remain applicable and in force until the DBE, through thorough consultative processes, has reviewed] the policy to ensure that the function shift is reflected in the policy. This will entail ensuring that the roles, responsibilities and functions reflected in the policy are aligned to the shift. What this will mean is that the DBE will need to become the lead Department in the Policy. The roles and responsibility shift between the DBE and DSD will also need to be reflected in the Policy. All changes that will be made to the Policy will follow the correct procedure and the sector will be thoroughly engaged on these changes.

What will happen with ECD practitioners' current employment arrangements?

ECD practitioners are currently employed by ECD programmes and this will remain the case come 1 April 2022. The DBE will not become responsible for paying the salaries of ECD practitioners, this will still be the responsibility of the ECD programmes. ECD programmes will remain the employers of ECD

practitioners after the ECD function shift. DBE will engage with providers to determine the options for supporting them to ensure quality outcomes for children.

What will the implications be for training and qualifications?

The DBE is not expecting ECD practitioners to upskill themselves before 1 April 2022. We will be developing an ECD Human Resource Strategic Workforce Plan that will build onto the existing workforce. This plan will outline the qualifications that are available for ECD practitioners; the expectations in terms of competencies, skills and qualifications at different levels; flexible opportunities for training and development including recognition of prior learning; clear career paths and conditions of service. This plan will only come into effect in 2023 and will be thoroughly workshopped with the sector before it is adopted. This means that the ECD Qualifications of NQF Level 4 and NQF Level 5 are still relevant, and the Department would like to encourage those who are ECD practitioners to continue with their studies towards these qualifications.

What will this mean for the ownership of ECD programmes?

Since the largest majority of ECD programmes are owned by non-governmental organisations, communities and private institution rather than the Department of Social Development, they will not be affected by the function shift. Rather, the DBE will become responsible to support, subsidise and regulate the programmes according to the specifications in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 of the Children's Act.

What will this mean for the registration of ECD programmes?

In 2021, the legal teams in the provinces will work on the transfer of the Service Level Agreements between the Provincial Departments of Social Development and the ECD programmes. With this, they will determine the best way to transfer the registration status of currently registered programmes to ensure that ECD programmes that are currently registered with the DSD will remain registered with the DBE.

Nevertheless, the DBE recognises the complexities around the registration process in the ECD sector. The registration of ECD facilities and programmes is regulated by the Children's Act and DBE will therefore need to implement these regulations until we have had the opportunity to make the required changes. The DBE is committed to investigating improvements to both the

registration process and the registration regulations to ensure that there is a single-streamlined process that is standardised across the provinces.

Will NPO registration be done through the DBE or DSD?

The Department of Social Development will remain responsible for NPO registration and the function shift will not influence this process in any way.

What will this mean for the subsidies that ECD programmes have been receiving?

Come 1 April 2022, the DBE will become responsible for paying the subsidies exactly the same as how the DSD has been doing. Over the next two years, the DBE will, however, be reviewing the subsidy model to see whether it is the best way to be supporting ECD programmes. We recognise that the sector has been under-funded and we will be doing a baseline assessment this year to better understand how we can further increase support to the sector. Once we have a proposed funding model, we will be workshopping it extensively with the sector before rolling it out. This will likely only be in 2023.

What are the implications regarding the Curriculum?

The 2015 National Integrated ECD policy already specifies that the DBE is primarily responsible for the implementation of curriculum development, support and training, and the roll-out of the Reception Year (Grade R). The function shift will therefore not change our responsibility.

We want to strive to provide all children in South Africa with access to quality ECD programmes and this will rely particularly on the implementation of the National Curriculum Framework (NCF); National Early Learning and Development Standards (NELDS); the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (ECD Policy) and The Policy on Minimum Requirements for Programmes Leading to Qualifications in Higher Education for Early Childhood Development Educators.

In line with international best practice, the DBE is investigating the implementation of a quality assurance system that will support and guide practitioners with the delivery of quality early learning and care.

What is the ECD Census and the ECD Baseline Assessment?

To develop evidence-based plans for Human Resource Development and the Funding Models, the DBE needs to know how many ECD programmes and ECD practitioners there are. The DBE will therefore be conducting an ECD Census to make sure we include ALL ECD Programmes (registered and unregistered, centre-based and non-centre-based) in our database. This information will help us to know where we need to focus our support and where we need to expand access. This project will build on the Vangasali project and aims to ensure that ECD is integrated into the Education Management Information System that will be updated yearly.

In addition, the DBE also needs to understand the quality of care and early learning services being offered at ECD programmes. The DBE will therefore also be undertaking an ECD Quality Assessment in a sample of ECD programmes. The Assessment will score the quality of programmes in five domains: learning environment; learning and teaching; relationships and interactions; curriculum; and teaching strategies. The results of this Quality Assessment will help the DBE to understand the current realities and challenges that ECD programmes and ECD practitioners are facing.

We would like to appeal to all ECD programmes to assist us in these two activities. The more information we can get from the sector, the better we can plan to support the sector.