



Building a Foundation for Democracy and Inclusion

A South African Perspective on Early Childhood Development in Transition

Structure

Apartheid

Onset of Democracy

Maturing Democracy

Shifts and Affordances

Apartheid South Africa – Separate and unequal early childhoods (before 1994)

APARTHEID'S IMPACT

racial segregation in early education



RESOURCE DISPARITIES

education used to reinforce racial hierarchies



IDEOLOGICAL CONTROL

education used to reinforce racial hierarchies



LOSS OF INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE



traditional symbols or

LASTING EFFECTS

long-term developmental impacts



The Onset of Democracy: Reconstruction of society through ECD (Constitutional Democracy and Rights)

ECD TIMELINE: South Africa 1994–2014



Political Structures and Will

1994: New democratic government prioritises social transformation and equity, including education and ECD

- **2001:** White Paper 5 on ECD released by Department of Education (DoE)
- **Early 2000s:** National Interdepartmental Committee on ECD formed, coordinating Health, Social Development and Education



Mapping Inequities

- **2001:** ECD National Audit underscores inequalities in access and quality. identifies disparities by province, race, location (urban/rural)
- **2001–2005:** Data informs funding models for marginalized areas
- Recognition and support of informal and unregistered ECD providers



Infrastructure Gaps

- **2001:** Audit reveals many centers lack facilities like toilets, water, and safe structures
- **Mid-2000s:** Conditional grants introduced, aim at infrastructure improvement in under-resourced communities
- **2006:** Guidelines for ECD Centre Registration released mandate minimum infrastructure standards, many community-based centers struggling to comply



Achievement of One Year of Grade **R**

- **2001:** White Paper 5 sets universal Grade R access 2010.
- **2010:** Target year for universal Grade R access, significant improvements in access, but implementation challenges remain
- **2013:** DBE Impact Evaluation reports over 85% of 5-year-olds enrolled in Grade R
- Grade R deemed essential for bridging ECD and formal schooling, improving school readiness, despite uneven quality

1994

2001

2010

2014

Maturing Democracy : Breakthroughs 2015-2025

Theme	Highlights
Political Leadership	ANC-led, later reaffirmed under a broader “Government of National Unity” banner with cross-sectoral collaboration.
Institutional Shift	April 2022 saw ECD transition from DSD to DBE, driving a sharper education-focused approach.
Data & Monitoring	Landmark 2021 Census and “Thrive by Five” audit provided baseline metrics, shining light on staff capabilities and child readiness.
Strategic Operations	Mass registration (Bana Pele), eCares digital rollout, legislative updates, and quality-driven subsidy.
Funding & Subsidies	Static R17/day subsidy eroded in real terms until substantial R10 billion infusion in 2025, raising it to R24/day.
Private–Public Collaboration	Partnerships with the Non-Governmental Organisations. Businesses and others European Union, World Bank, LEGO, FNB, USAID, OMT, and DBSA helping with data gathering, infrastructure, funding models and registration scaling.
Quality-Centered Framework	National ECD Strategy to 2030 focuses on access, safety, nutrition, play-based learning, and workforce support.

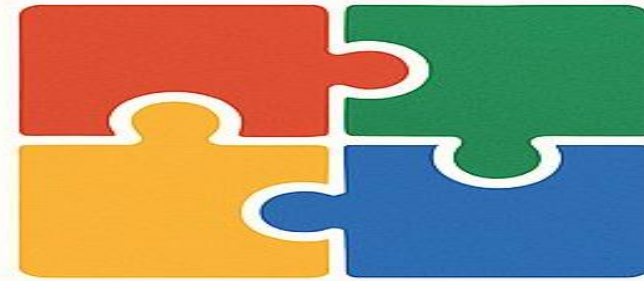
In Conclusion: ECD in SA, despite wicked problems and challenges, illustrates a case of building a foundation for democratic equity, inclusive growth, and intergenerational justice

A Mirror of Democracy and Inclusion

From Exclusion
to Equity



From Fragmentation
to Unity



From Welfare
to Rights



From Silence
to Voice

