

NECDA INAUGURAL CONFERENCE & GALA DINNER PROCEEDINGS REPORT

Wednesday 7th & Thursday 8th August 2024



NECDA
NATIONAL ECD ALLIANCE



Ready and waiting to register NECDA guests.



Motheo Training Institute Trust (MTIT) volunteer and NECDA Board Members help attendees to register on arrival.



Time for a quick chuckle and a cup of tea before the Conference starts.

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Conference sponsors Shuter & Shooter and HOPE worldwide exhibit their products and services to attendees.



The South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) and Elyon BlueStar engaging with their exhibition 'visitors'.



Members of Brand Boss and the Chartered Institute of Professional Practitioners and Trainers (CIPPT) supporting NECDA and its cause.



AfroCentric nursing sister busy at her station, while NECDA social media service provider, Moleboheng Sehume, grabs a seat at the Brand Boss table.

NECDA INAUGURAL CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday 7th & Thursday 8th August 2024

WELCOME & OPENING

Kwanda Ndoda (Innovation Manager, DG Murray Trust)

Kanda Ndoda welcomed the audience and began by discussing a critical study released by Datadrive2030 on positive deviance. He recommended this as essential reading for anyone interested in achieving quality ECD. The study resulted from years of work, during which data was collected using the Early Learning Outcomes Measure (ELOM). The ELOM assessed children's school readiness across five key learning domains.

The concept of positive deviance arose from outliers in the ELOM data. These children had significantly outperformed their peers within the same socio-economic quintiles. Ndoda challenged the audience to close their eyes and reflect on the ECD services they supported or were associated with. As he described the attributes of the outliers, he encouraged the audience to think about which characteristics were present in their own ECD centres. He suggested that these attributes might explain why the outliers excelled compared to their peers.

Ndoda's challenge served as a call to reflect on and enhance the quality of ECD services by incorporating these successful attributes into their practices.

ECD CHILDREN'S PERFORMANCE

Mpendulo Childcare

Young children from Mpendulo Childcare entertained attendees at the NECDA Conference opening, with the assistance of HOPE worldwide SA.

NECDA CHAIRPERSON'S OPENING ADDRESS

Rex Molefe (NECDA Chairperson)

The Chairperson's message emphasised the strategic growth and development of NECDA since June 2023. Under the leadership at that time, NECDA had been diligently implementing a Strategic Plan grounded in four key pillars:

1. Lobbying and Advocacy,
2. Partnerships and Government Liaison,
3. Information Sharing, and
4. Skills Development and Capacity Building.

This comprehensive strategy was instrumental in helping NECDA solidify its identity and define its operating environment within the framework of the Skills Development Act. As a result, NECDA took on a leading role in championing skills development in South Africa and across the SADC region.

With these initiatives, NECDA became well-positioned to achieve significant capital growth and seize emerging opportunities that would allow it to serve its members more effectively and efficiently. The Organisation had made deliberate efforts to strengthen its capacity for raising capital and equity, thereby providing robust support to its member organisations, especially those involved in Skills Development and Resource Training. This approach focused on enhancing the skills of the ECD workforce, which was crucial for ensuring quality service provision to millions of children throughout South Africa.

The successful implementation of NECDA's strategy led to remarkable growth in both membership and revenue. This progress also attracted new partnerships within the SADC region, positioning NECDA as a formidable entity in education, training, and development practices. Moving forward, NECDA was committed to continuing this momentum by fostering collaborations with key stakeholders such as the ETDP SETA, QCTO, and DBE. This commitment ensures a bright future and the Organisation looked forward to continued involvement in these efforts, instilling a sense of optimism in all NECDA members.

In closing, the Chairperson urged all NECDA members to prioritise and actively champion skills development within the context of ECD. This is not just a task, but a mission that is essential for the sector's long-term success and sustainability. Let's all stay committed and motivated to this cause.

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

Dr Janeli Kotze (Acting Director: ECD Directorate, Department of Basic Education)

Dr. Kotze underscored the pivotal role that resource and training organisations and NGOs played in delivering quality early childhood development (ECD). She recognised that these organisations were instrumental in making universal access to ECD a reality, emphasising that their daily efforts were critical to this cause.

Dr. Kotze spoke fervently about the shared responsibility of achieving universal access to quality ECD. She stressed that while the government had a clear and essential role, it could not succeed in isolation. Collaboration with NGOs and other organisations was not just important, but necessary. She underscored the need for these groups to work together, share knowledge, and support each other, all with the common goal of providing the best possible outcomes for children.

The keynote address concluded on a hopeful note, with Dr. Kotze encouraging attendees to celebrate their achievements, learn from one another's successes, and work together to solve ongoing challenges. She expressed her eagerness to hear about the innovative solutions and ideas that would be generated from the conference discussions and wished everyone a productive and inspiring day. Her message was a clear call to action, reinforcing the importance of unity and collaboration in achieving universal access to quality ECD.

SADC PARTNER: ZINECDA

Marceline Kahlari (Director, Zimbabwe Network of ECD Actors)

Marceline Kahlari presented a comprehensive overview of the Transnational Networks Advocacy Capacity (TRANAC) project. This project was dedicated to strengthening early childhood development education (ECDE) legislation, policies, and measures across Southern Africa. It operated under the Global Partnership for Education's Education Out Loud initiative, with a strategic focus on transnational advocacy, adaptive management, and collaborative efforts to improve ECDE. These approaches were chosen for their potential to influence policy and bring about sustainable change in the ECDE sector.

TRANAC addressed several critical issues within the ECDE sector, primarily controlled by communities, civil society, and private players, with only 14% involvement by the government. The sector faced challenges such as low access and participation rates, inadequate infrastructure, insufficient learning materials, and a need for a trained workforce. To tackle these problems, TRANAC aimed to strengthen the capacity of civil society oversight institutions at both national and regional levels, enhance the availability of reliable ECDE data, and engage in robust policy advocacy to influence sustainable and inclusive ECDE policies.

The project's overarching goal was to establish more robust national and transnational ECDE networks that held governments accountable. This was pursued through various approaches, including human rights-based advocacy, capacity building, research for evidence-based advocacy, and media engagement.

The TRANAC project's achievements were significant, including the formation of a vibrant transnational alliance, the increase in ECDE recognition and financing in Malawi and Zimbabwe, and the launch of the Africa Education Hub, which improved research accessibility for stakeholders. These successes underscored the importance of partnerships, adaptive management, and data-driven advocacy in ensuring the success of transnational efforts to enhance ECDE across the region.

UNICEF

Andries Viviers (ECD Education Specialist, United Nations Children's Fund)

Andre Viviers indicated that, for 30 years, South Africa has pledged its commitment to early childhood development (ECD), recognising its importance as a foundation for lifelong learning and women's empowerment. This journey began with the 1994 Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), highlighting the need for educational components in childcare. The RDP stressed the necessity of expanding ECD through increased funding, institutional support, and national awareness.

The 1995 White Paper on Education and Training further underscored this commitment by emphasising the need for specialised training for teachers working with young children. It warned against prematurely introducing children to formal learning, especially in languages they do not understand. The focus was creating a nurturing environment supporting early learning without overwhelming young minds.

Over the years, various policies have echoed these commitments. The White Paper for Social Welfare (1997), the Children's Act 38 of 2005, and the National Integrated Early Childhood Development Policy (2015) all reinforced the government's responsibility to ensure quality ECD services. These documents emphasised the need for a coordinated approach involving both public and private sectors to deliver on the promises made to society's youngest members.

Despite these well-intentioned policies, the gap between promise and practice remains significant. Each policy has laid a framework, but the implementation has often fallen short, leaving many children needing access to the quality education and care they deserve. This gap is particularly concerning as the early years are critical for cognitive, social, and emotional development.

The need to fulfil these promises is more urgent than ever. South Africa's future depends on the opportunities provided to its youngest citizens today. By delivering on its commitments, the country can ensure that every child, regardless of their background, has the chance to thrive. This requires renewed investment in ECD and a steadfast commitment to translating policies into tangible, measurable outcomes.

The focus must now be on action, ensuring that a robust and effective ECD framework supports the foundational years of every child in South Africa.



What's a NECD event without the children! Thank you, Mpendulo Daycare, for sending your young ones to entertain NECD's guests.



HOPE worldwide team members take time out for a pic. The camera also caught Dr. Monica Stach (Cotlands Enterprise), Moderator, and Kwanda Ndoda, Programme Director (DG Murrv Trust).

GENEALOGY & ANTHROPOLOGY OF ECD IN THE CONTEXT OF TRANSFORMATION

Leonard Saul (Chief Executive Officer, SA Congress for ECD)

Leonard Saul's presentation explored the genealogy and anthropology of ECD in the context of transformation. Genealogy was defined as tracing the line of descent, while anthropology referred to the science of origin. The presentation discussed the ability to trace the origins and evolution of ECD over time.

Saul recalled his earliest involvement with ECD in 1981 when a community project in Bloemfontein provided clothes, food, and educational support to 500 children. This project led to establishing an ECD centre, which continued to thrive. Over the years, Saul became deeply involved in ECD, including his appointment as Director of ECD by the Urban Foundation in 1993 and the formation of the South African Congress for ECD (SACECD) in 1994.

The presentation highlighted the ongoing challenges in the ECD sector, particularly regarding access. Despite numerous interventions over the past 30 years, access to secure, safe, and healthy ECD centres remained limited, especially for the poorest communities. Affordable training, appropriate learning materials, and nutritious food were critical, but many obstacles persisted.

Saul emphasised the importance of improving ECD centres' structural and process quality. He noted that while progress had been made in training preschool teachers and enhancing learning environments, true transformation in ECD remained elusive due to systemic issues such as compliance challenges, financial barriers, and the disconnect between experts and communities.

PROFESSIONALISATION FOR A QUALITY ECCE WORKFORCE

Sheila Drew (ECD Senior Programme Specialist, SA Institute for Distance Education)
& Melissa King (Consultant to the SA Institute for Distance Education)

Sheila Drew's presentation at the NECDA Session provided an in-depth examination of the professionalisation of the ECD workforce in South Africa. The presentation, developed in collaboration with VVOB and supported by extensive research, aimed to establish a comprehensive professional pathway for ECD practitioners. This initiative was centred around developing Professional Teaching Standards (PTS), conducting a thorough literature review, and creating detailed guidelines for ECD training programmes.

The presentation emphasised the critical importance of understanding the unique context of ECD, advocating for a multidimensional approach to address the complex and varied needs of both children and educators. It explored fundamental questions about who the child and educator were, what specific competencies were required for effective teaching, and how ECD educators could successfully access and progress through established professional pathways. The proposed ecosystemic framework was designed to address systemic challenges, such as funding, recruitment, and retention, essential for building a quality ECD workforce.

Drew raised significant concerns about the current rigid definition of professionalism in the ECD sector. She argued that many ECD practitioners, particularly non-traditional students and those with extensive field experience, were excluded from professional recognition due to the sector's qualification-based system. The presentation advocated developing a Professional Endorsement Framework (PEF) to address this. This framework would have broadened the definition of professionalism to include those with practical experience and specific skill sets outside traditional qualification routes.

Drew concluded her presentation by highlighting the necessity of strong partnerships and collaborative efforts across the ECD sector. Drew called for ongoing dialogue and collective action to create a more inclusive and professionalised ECD workforce, ensuring the sector's long-term growth, sustainability, and ability to meet the diverse needs of all children.

ORGANISATIONAL CAPABILITIES REQUIRED FOR SCALING ECD INTERVENTIONS

Dr. Riedewhaan Allie (Director, Western Cape Foundation for Community Work & NECDA Board Member)

Dr. Allie's presentation thoroughly examined the organisational capabilities necessary for effectively scaling social impact. 'Scaling' was defined as the process of increasing the impact of a social purpose organisation to match the magnitude of the social needs or problems it aims to address. The presentation underscored the critical role of social entrepreneurship, which involves combining exceptional leadership with innovative strategies to bring about meaningful social transformation.

The discussion included a detailed analysis of the Innovation Capability Model. This model highlighted how organisations could transform knowledge and ideas into new products, processes, and systems, vital for survival and competitiveness in a challenging environment. The presentation introduced the Scalars Model as a theoretical framework for developing and maintaining various forms of capital. These forms of capital are essential for scaling the social impact of entrepreneurial organisations and ensuring long-term viability.

Key organisational capabilities were identified as crucial for scaling efforts. Primary capabilities included Earning Generation, Staffing, and Replication, which were fundamental for organisational growth and expansion. Additionally, secondary capabilities such as Communication, Lobbying, and Alliances were highlighted as necessary for promoting the organisation's brand, credibility, and cost-effectiveness.

In conclusion, the presentation evaluated the scaling potential of the Family In Focus (FIF) home visiting programme, noting that the strength of the organisation's capabilities played a significant role in its success. The findings underscored the necessity of integrating a combination of these drivers to achieve wide-reaching and profound social impact. This approach ensures that the organisation can effectively serve a larger population while improving the quality of outcomes. The presentation emphasised that a strategic focus on these capabilities is essential for any organisation aiming to scale its impact successfully.

THE VALUE OF PARTNERSHIP

Nkhensani Mabunda (Senior Programme Manager, HOPE worldwide South Africa)

Nkhensani Mabunda's presentation focused on the 'Caregiver Learning Through Play' programme, which aimed to empower caregivers in South Africa by promoting playful parenting. Research has shown that children learn best through play, and caregivers play a critical role in early childhood development. The programme, supported by the LEGO Foundation and endorsed by UNICEF and the Department of Basic Education (DBE), sought to address the lack of quality early learning opportunities for millions of young children across Africa.

A Consortium of four NGOs implemented the programme, each bringing unique strengths. These organisations had extensive experience in curriculum development, monitoring and evaluation, advocacy, and community-based ECD programmes across several provinces. The Consortium aimed to create systemic behaviour change, ensuring children aged 0-6 years experienced responsive care and learning through play in their home environments.

Key outcomes of the programme included:

1. Empowering caregivers with knowledge and skills.
2. Integrating home-based learning through play into training programmes for practitioners.
3. Ensuring that ECD administrators and policymakers understood and supported this approach.

The project adopted a whole-of-society approach, forming strong partnerships with government departments, local communities, and other stakeholders.

The presentation also highlighted the challenges and lessons learned in building and sustaining partnerships. Trust, effective leadership, clear communication, and regular alignment of goals were identified as crucial factors for success. The programme had reached over 354,000 caregivers and integrated aspects of learning through play into the DBE's National Parenting Programme across four provinces.

THE POWER OF COLLABORATION | A PROJECT WITH WORDWORKS, BOOK DASH & LEBONE CENTRE

Jolene Tarr (Director, ICDP Trust Lebone Centre)

Jolene Tarr's presentation at the NECDA conference focused on the significant impact of collaboration in early childhood development, mainly through a project involving the Lebone Centre, WordWorks, and Book Dash. The Lebone Centre, established by the ICDP Trust, implemented various programmes designed to support the developmental needs of young children, both on-site at the Centre and off-site in local schools and communities. One of the Centre's most notable initiatives was the 'Little Stars' pre-Grade R literacy programme, developed in collaboration with WordWorks.

The 'Little Stars' programme aimed to enhance literacy outcomes for pre-Grade R learners by providing a comprehensive, full-year classroom programme. This programme was divided into six themed packs, each available in five South African languages. The themes included engaging stories, puppets, and sequencing cards designed for six weeks of teaching to immerse children in language through diverse and interactive activities. Additionally, the programme ensured that each child received eight books from Book Dash to take home, reinforcing the literacy activities and encouraging a culture of reading within their homes.

The presentation also detailed the challenges encountered during the programme's implementation. These challenges included managing the varying levels of training among ECD practitioners, aligning the programme with existing classroom themes, and addressing digital literacy barriers for effective monitoring and evaluation. Despite these obstacles, the programme received positive feedback from trainers, practitioners, and children alike.

Tarr stressed the critical importance of ongoing collaboration and exploring new initiatives. She highlighted ideas such as establishing book nooks and introducing STEM-related activities to support literacy and overall learning in early childhood education.

BUILDING CAPACITY FOR LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Mari Payne (Director: Education & Outreach, Sesame Workshop International)

The Sesame Workshop presentation focused on building capacity for learning through play in South Africa. The 'Play to Learn' programme combined the power of mass media with community engagement, aiming to involve children, their caregivers, and educators. The programme centred around the popular Takalani Sesame series, specifically emphasising its role in enhancing children's learning experiences.

The presentation explored key research questions, such as the impact of viewing Takalani Sesame episodes on children's task persistence skills and families' perceptions of the media content. It also investigated how participation in the Play to Learn community interventions influenced caregiver and educator outcomes.

The impact evaluation in the Eastern Cape and Free State involved children aged 4-6 years and their parents, caregivers, and educators. The findings revealed that children who watched Takalani Sesame showed positive effects in their ability to use flexible strategies and exhibited a positive attitude towards challenging tasks. Additionally, educators and caregivers who participated in the programme were likelier to incorporate playful learning practices at home and in classrooms.

70% of caregivers reportedly co-viewed the episodes with their children, enhancing the learning experience. The presentation concluded with recommendations for additional training and better alignment of time allocations. Overall, the results provided valuable insights into the importance of play-based, socio-ecological programme design in developmental and humanitarian contexts. Takalani Sesame remained a beloved and influential tool for promoting play and learning among young children in South Africa.



Some of the NECDA Conference Speakers.



More of the NECDA Conference Speakers.



Even more of the NECD Conference Speakers.

STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS FOR A PROFESSIONALISED SKILLS SECTOR

Marie-Louise Samuels (Board Chairperson, Chartered Institute of Professional Practitioners & Trainers)

Marie-Louise Samuels' presentation highlighted the benefits of joining the Council of Independent Professional Practitioners and Trainers (CIPPT) for early childhood practitioners, educators, and trainers. The presentation emphasised the importance of joining a professional body to gain recognition, credibility, and career advancement. Members of CIPPT could access job opportunities, promotions, and continuous professional development (CPD) through workshops, seminars, and educational events.

CIPPT offered quality assurance, standards, and recognition for competencies and specialisations. It also measured recognised prior learning (RPL), allowing members to leverage their previous experience and qualifications. The Organisation supported its members with professional services, educational programmes, and networking opportunities within a community of like-minded professionals.

The presentation detailed the application process for CIPPT membership, outlining steps from completing an online form to receiving a membership certificate upon payment. Samuels also explained the application process for designations and awards, which involved submitting supporting documentation for assessment by the CIPPT Board.

CIPPT, an independent non-profit professional body registered with SAQA, aims to professionalise education, training, learning, and development practitioners in South Africa. The Organisation is committed to fostering transformation through integrity, competence, and ethics.

The partnership between CIPPT and NECDA is described as transformative, with both organisations working together to ensure the best start for children in South Africa.

Samuels concluded by encouraging attendees to join CIPPT and become part of a community dedicated to excellence in education, training, and development.

PANEL Q&A SESSION

Moderator: Dr. Monica Stach (Founder, Cotlands Enterprise)

Professionalising the ECD workforce was the primary issue raised during the Q&A session.

Sheila Drew indicated that professionalising the ECD workforce required looking at various factors, including wages, working conditions, training, etc.

FRIENDRAISING BEFORE FUNDRAISING & BEST PRACTICE TO ACHIEVING EXCEPTIONAL FUNDRAISING RESULTS IN THE CURRENT ECD ECOSYSTEM

Mareldia Tape (Director & Chief Executive Officer, Grassroots Educare Trust)

Mareldia Tape's presentation at the NECDA Conference highlighted the transformative journey of Grassroots Educare Trust in early childhood development (ECD) through strategic collaboration and innovative approaches. From 2002 to 2024, the Trust faced significant financial and staff challenges but undertook various initiatives to rebuild its credibility and strengthen its relationships with communities, funders, and the government. Grassroots developed the PlayMat programme in partnership with three Pietermaritzburg-based organisations. This programme aimed to support parents in providing responsive care and early learning opportunities at home for children from conception to age five. It specifically focused on reaching children often excluded from traditional education systems, addressing a critical gap in early childhood education.

Grassroots reconnected with funders to overcome financial difficulties, curbed unnecessary expenses, and cleared its debts. The organisation also engaged in securing multi-year funding opportunities to ensure long-term sustainability. Regarding staff challenges, Grassroots prioritised fostering team spirit, discipline, and continuous staff development, ensuring that every staff member received support in their personal and professional growth.

Community trust was restored by maintaining a solid and visible presence, ensuring that capable and dedicated staff members effectively served each community. Grassroots also made concerted efforts to rebuild its private funding base by actively engaging with funders and being highly responsive to donor needs and expectations.

The presentation concluded by emphasising the importance of 'friendraising before fundraising.' Tape highlighted the value of building and maintaining relationships founded on trust, honesty, and appreciation. She encouraged ongoing visibility and collaboration to sustain and amplify the growth and impact of the Trust's work in ECD.

EMBRACING THE EFFICIENCY OF TECHNOLOGY | FOSTERING CONNECTIVITY TO UNLOCK NEW POSSIBILITIES

Constance Gadzikwa (Chief: Information Communication Technology, ETDP SETA)

Constance Gadzikwa's presentation provided an in-depth exploration of the importance of technology adoption for members of NECDA. The presentation emphasised that the world was rapidly becoming more digital, and technology offered vast new opportunities, particularly within the education sector, where there was growing interest and support for integrating technology into all spheres of operation.

Gadzikwa discussed global trends in ECD, highlighting the increasing infusion of technology in ECD centres, the adoption of innovative teaching methods and learning materials, and the growing emphasis on data-driven decision-making and programme evaluation. She also noted the shift towards more holistic, child-centred approaches and the enhanced focus on parent engagement and building strong community partnerships.

The presentation identified several significant barriers to technology integration in ECD centres. These challenges included a need for more funding, insufficient technological infrastructure, and limited competence among teaching staff in effectively using existing technologies. Participants in various studies expressed a need for more profound knowledge, more support in acquiring technology tools, and comprehensive training to manage and utilise these tools effectively within ECD settings.

Gadzikwa urged NECDA members to fully embrace technology, streamline administrative tasks, enhance educational experiences, and leverage digital platforms to connect with communities and create robust professional development networks. She emphasised the importance of training ECD professionals in digital skills, fostering meaningful partnerships, and securing the necessary funding and support for successful technology implementation.

The presentation concluded with a strong call to action, encouraging leaders to inspire, motivate, and support the broader adoption of technology in ECD to achieve truly transformational outcomes.

REINVENTING YOUR BRAND IDENTITY TO WORK FOR YOU | MARKETING STRATEGY TO DRIVE GROWTH AND SUCCESS

Charlene Ainslee (Marketing & Branding Consultant, Brand Boss Media House)

Charlene Ainslie's presentation focused on the pivotal role of branding and marketing strategies in driving business growth and success, especially within the ECD sector. The presentation outlined the essential components of effective branding, emphasising the importance of the 5 C's: Clarity, Cohesion, Consistency, Content, and Community.

Ainslie explained that branding goes beyond logos and slogans; it is about creating an emotional connection with consumers and making them feel good about supporting a company or organisation. She highlighted the necessity of clearly defining the target audience, effectively positioning the product, and ensuring a cohesive brand presence across all platforms, including websites and social media. She emphasised regular engagement with the audience as a key factor in building trust, loyalty, and long-term customer relationships.

The presentation also explored the numerous benefits of social media for businesses, particularly platforms like Instagram and Facebook. Ainslie noted that social media allows companies to attract customers, gather valuable feedback, build customer loyalty, and significantly expand their market reach, including international markets. The presentation also underscored the importance of maintaining a professional website, which helps create brand awareness, showcase creativity, and differentiate a business from its competitors.

In conclusion, Ainslie encouraged businesses to be bold in rebranding or reinventing themselves when necessary. She urged the attendees to embrace the power of branding and digital marketing as vital tools for enhancing their brand identity and achieving sustainable growth in an increasingly competitive marketplace.

THE IMPORTANCE OF GROWING YOUR FOOTPRINT | EXPANDING YOUR REACH AND IMPACT IN AN EVOLVING LANDSCAPE

Dr. Marc Aguirre (Country Director: South Africa & Regional Advisor: Africa Programs, HOPE worldwide)

Dr. Marc Aguirre's presentation focused on expanding the footprint of ECD programmes to increase their reach and impact significantly. He highlighted the Learning through Play consortium, a collaboration of four NGOs with extensive experience in the ECD sector. These organisations worked together to create systemic behaviour change, ensuring children aged 0-6 experienced responsive care and learning through play in their home environments.

The programme's key outcomes included:

1. Empowering caregivers with the knowledge and skills to engage in play-based learning with their children.
2. Integrating these practices into existing training programmes for ECD practitioners.
3. Ensuring that ECD administrators and policymakers understood and supported home-based learning through play.

The consortium also focused on training various practitioners, including community healthcare workers and social workers, to facilitate playful and educational interactions between caregivers and children.

Aguirre emphasised the essential elements required for effectively scaling up ECD programmes. These included developing and implementing evidence-based curricula, culturally relevant and accessible content, flexible delivery models tailored to different needs, and the establishment of strong peer support networks. He also stressed the importance of capacity building, particularly through training skilled facilitators and ongoing professional development. He further stressed community engagement and forming strategic partnerships as crucial for expanding the programme's reach and sustainability.

In terms of sustainability and financing, Aguirre advocated for cost-effective approaches, active government support, and the formation of public-private partnerships. He underscored the necessity of robust monitoring, evaluation, and data-driven decision-making to ensure the programme's continuous improvement and success.

The presentation concluded with a call to align ECD programmes with national policies and advocate for increased sector investment to ensure long-term impact and success.



NECDA Conference attendees making memories and networking during the breaks.



NECDA Conference attendees paying attention to the speakers – and to the photographer.



Loud, standing up shared noises and quiet, sitting down intimate whispers.

NECDA'S OPPORTUNITY TO LEAD PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE SECTOR | OPPORTUNITIES FOR STRENGTHENING THE ECD WORKFORCE WITH SHORT SKILLS PROGRAMMES

Rex Molefe (NECDA Chairperson)

Rex Molefe's presentation at the NECDA Conference highlighted the critical opportunities for strengthening the Early Childhood Development (ECD) workforce through the implementation of short skills programmes. He emphasised the vital importance of upskilling and reskilling the ECD workforce to not only improve productivity but also to enhance the overall quality of training and elevate standards of living within the sector.

Molefe discussed the significant economic impact of skills development, presenting it as a key driver in addressing pervasive issues such as unemployment and poverty. He argued that Education, Training, and Development (ETD) should be viewed as powerful economic instruments, with strong links to labour markets, ensuring that the workforce is adequately equipped to meet the demands of the evolving economy. To adapt to changing realities, he stressed the urgent need for redefining ETD to provide the workforce with the necessary skills to become recognised professionals and to deliver high-quality services in the ECD sector.

The presentation also focused on the crucial role of promoting professionalism and professionalisation within ECD by upskilling trainers, facilitators, assessors, and other key roles. Molefe highlighted the importance of establishing affiliations with recognised professional bodies and creating job opportunities within the ETD sector.

Strategic partnerships were identified as essential for the success of these initiatives. Molefe pointed to collaborations with the Chartered Institute for Professional Practitioners and Trainers (CIPPT), ETDP SETA, and the Department of Basic Education (DBE) as vital in ensuring the effective upskilling and reskilling of the ECD workforce.

Molefe concluded by emphasising the need for targeted interventions to address existing skills gaps, advocating for sustainable job opportunities, and calling for continued advocacy and action in championing skills development. Molefe encouraged NECDA members to prioritise skills development as a crucial propeller of economic growth and social progress.

FOSTERING EFFECTIVE PARENTAL ENGAGEMENT TO OPTIMISE CHILDREN'S LEARNING OUTCOMES

Julie Hay (Founder & Director, Singakwenza ECD NPC)

Julie Hay's presentation focused on fostering effective parental engagement to optimise children's learning outcomes. She introduced the Nurturing Care Framework, emphasising the importance of responsive care, which involves tuning into a child's cues and responding sensitively. She highlighted this approach as crucial for realising all aspects of nurturing care.

Hay addressed significant challenges in South Africa, noting that 60% of children were multi-dimensionally poor, lacking access to essential ECD services. She pointed out that only 17% of children aged 0-2 and 68% of those aged 3-5 attended early learning programmes.

However, these figures were even lower for children living in poverty. The presentation stressed that most excluded children were cared for by parents or family members, spotlighting the need to reach these caregivers with effective programmes.

To address this, Hay presented the PlayMat programme, developed in partnership with three organisations from Pietermaritzburg. The programme aimed to support parents in providing responsive care and early learning opportunities at home for children from conception to age five. It involved a nine-week community-based programme in which parents were taught parenting skills and how to create educational toys from recycled materials.

Hay concluded her presentation by emphasising the importance of parental involvement in ECD, as it supports children's development and strengthens community bonds. She called for the expansion of the PlayMat programme into other regions, encouraging partnerships to achieve a broader impact.

UKHANYISO FUND | STRENGTHENING FUNDRAISING, FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT & REPORTING THROUGH PRACTICE

Bulelwa Mggobele (Isisekelo Programme Coordinator, Ubunye Foundation)
& Nonyameko Gxaka Programme Working Group Member, (Isisekelo Programme Coordinator, Ubunye Foundation)

Bulelwa Mggobele and Nonyameko Gxaka's presentation focused on the Ukhanyiso Fund, a vital initiative of the Ubunye Foundation. The Fund aimed to strengthen fundraising, financial management, and reporting practices for ECD centres in rural South Africa. The presentation highlighted how the Ukhanyiso Fund was designed to encourage community ownership and financial independence of ECD centres.

The Ukhanyiso Fund provided ECD practitioners and parent body members with the skills and tools needed for effective fundraising. It offered practical support through a 'live' project approach, where participants learned by doing. The programme was structured into four funding levels, ranging from R2,000 to R10,000, with each level requiring successful completion and reporting before progressing to the next.

The Fund also focused on financial planning and project management. ECD centres received coaching on budgeting, project planning, and resource management. The imbizo-like sessions allowed centres to share experiences and learn from each other. Accountability was another crucial aspect of the programme. ECD centres were required to track and report on their use of funds, ensuring transparency and building trust with donors.

By 2023-2024, most of the 57 participating ECD centres had successfully applied for funding, with several advancing through multiple levels. The presentation concluded with a call to expand the programme and continue building financial management and sustainability capacity within ECD centres across South Africa.

FUNDA UDLALA NATHI | LEARNING THROUGH PLAY

Rebecca Wakeford (ECD Training Head, Midlands Community College)
& Patsy Pillay (Director, New Beginnings)

Rebecca Wakeford and Patsy Pillay's presentation focused on the 'Funda Udlale Nathi' pilot project. The name, translated from isiZulu as 'Learn and play with us', captured the project's aim to strengthen the ability of ECD practitioners and Grade R teachers to apply play-based pedagogies in their teaching. VVOB led the project in partnership with the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education, Ntataise, and Neil Butcher and Associates.

The primary goal was to reach 10,000 ECD practitioners, Grade R teachers, and 2,000 school and ECD centre leaders. By the end of its four-year duration, the project aimed to benefit 480,000 children aged 3-6. The initiative was divided into two modalities: light touch and more intensive support. Both modalities included onboarding leaders and educators onto an online course supported by Professional Learning Communities (PLCs). The intensive modality also included additional workshops and direct support for PLC coordinators.

Wakeford and Pillay highlighted the importance of partnerships in the project's success. Collaboration with the Department of Education and leveraging community relationships were essential for effective implementation. The project also focused on building capacity among participants through continuous professional development, data collection, and monitoring activities.

The presenters concluded by addressing the challenges, such as digital literacy and connectivity issues. However, these were not barriers to participation. Wakeford and Pillay emphasised the enthusiasm and willingness of participants to engage with the project and the positive impact on play-based learning in the classroom. They also discussed plans for scaling the project to additional districts in 2025.

PANEL Q&A SESSION

Moderator: Gloria Nkosi (Deputy Country Director: South Africa, Hope worldwide)

During the Q&A session, Rex Molefe drew the attendees' attention to several critical policies and legislation governing the ECD space that they had to be aware of.

On the matter that Constance Gadzikwa raised regarding the need to regulate artificial intelligence (AI), Pravienna Naidoo stressed the need also to celebrate AI's benefits. She challenged NECDA and its members to engage with internet service providers (ISPs), including the vast mobile telephony corporates, to make internet connectivity affordable and accessible to less-resources citizens for more people - and ECD sites - to benefit from the world wide web and AI.

Pravienna also added that Charlene Ainslee should have included 'behaviour' as a critical - if not the most important - factor in effective branding. Pretty logos, great pay-off lines, and fantastic collateral will not make up for 'off-brand behaviour by organisational leaders and staff.

The Q&A session was followed by NECDA Board Members distributing fits to all speakers as tokens of appreciation.

REFLECTIONS & CLOSING

Kwanda Ndoda (Innovation Manager, DG Murray Trust)

Kanda Ndoda, in his closing remarks, reflected on a point he had raised earlier about parents sometimes outsourcing their children's educational development to schools. He suggested that parents often did not position themselves as their child's first teacher. This comment resonated with the audience, as other speakers repeatedly mentioned it. Ndoda admitted that he felt anxious and concerned that he might have offended the parents in the audience, which was never his intention.

His true intention was to underscore the immense power parents hold in shaping the fate of children and the ECD sector. He stressed that parents, as the primary constituency and voting bloc, have the potential to influence politicians and drive significant change. He made it clear that while NGOs play a crucial role in advocacy, they cannot achieve this alone. It's the parents who can truly make a difference.

Ndoda concluded by reflecting on the only time he had witnessed the government implement policy directly due to pressure from a voting block—the students during the 'Fees Must Fall' campaign.



Beautiful body language and facial expressions during the Q&A sessions.



More beautiful body language and facial expressions during the Q&A sessions.



And even more beautiful body language and facial expressions during the Q&A sessions.

WELCOME & REFLECTIONS

Dr. Monica Stach (Founder, Cotlands Enterprise)

Dr. Monica Stach welcomed everyone to the second day of the NECDA Conference.

She cited the 'big' takeaways from the first day's proceedings to include the following themes:

1. Partnerships, especially regarding frameworks and principles,
2. Scaling,
3. Professionalisation of the ECD workforce, and
4. Parents and parenting programmes.

She alerted attendees that all Conference Presentations would be uploaded to the NECDA website for easy access.

STRENGTHENING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

Dr. Fortunate Gunzo (Director: Centre for Social Development, Rhodes University)

Dr. Fortunate Gunzo's presentation at the NECDA Conference 2024 focused on strengthening ECD through collaborative partnerships. She emphasised Makhanda's importance as a leading education city and highlighted the critical role of ECD centres in shaping young minds. The presentation showcased the Centre for Social Development (CSD) at Rhodes University, which has been instrumental in supporting and uplifting ECD centres in the region.

Gunzo provided an overview of ECD centres in Makhanda as of 2023, noting that there were 71 centres with 1,899 children enrolled. However, only 50% of the children had access to ECD services, indicating a significant gap in service provision. She identified vital strengths within the ECD sector, such as robust civil society partnerships and the dedication of practitioners. Nevertheless, she also pointed out challenges, including inadequate infrastructure, socio-economic difficulties, and the limited availability of free ECD services.

Gunzo discussed the outcomes of the Makhanda Education Summit 2024, which concentrated on five critical areas: physical access, teacher development, quality of ECD programmes, nutrition and health, and site registration. The summit recommended more focus on the first 1,000 days of a child's life, enhanced training for ECD teachers, and improved infrastructure to support ECD centres better.

In conclusion, Gunzo called for continued efforts to build partnerships, improve registration processes, and enhance the quality of ECD programmes. She stressed the need for a collective approach to address these challenges and ensure that every child in Makhanda has access to quality early education.

STRENGTHENING STAKEHOLDER PARTNERSHIPS THROUGH THE TRAIN-THE-TRAINER MODEL | A REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF THE EAT LOVE PLAY TALK (ELPT) PROGRAMME

Jabu Mthembu-Dlamini (Young Children Programmes Lead, Do More Foundation)
& Kabelo Mosate-Dambuza (Rustenburg Community Programmes Support in, Do More Foundation)

Jabu Mthembu-Dlamini and Kabelo Mosate-Dambuza's presentation on the Eat Love Play Talk (ELPT) programme focused on strengthening stakeholder partnerships through a train-the-trainer model. The ELPT programme aimed to improve ECD by promoting healthy eating, nurturing relationships, and fostering playful learning. The programme was implemented across several South African regions, targeting children aged 0-5 years, their caregivers, and ECD centres.

The ELPT model involved multiple levels of training. Master trainers were trained through workshops and virtual sessions, focusing on facilitation skills and specific content delivery. These master trainers then trained facilitators at ECD centres, who, in turn, worked directly with caregivers. The caregivers received practical training on engaging with their children using play-based methods, supported by resources like Book Dash books and food cards.

The programme's implementation revealed several strengths. The establishment of a network of master trainers across South Africa facilitated mutual support and the exchange of solutions. Using context-appropriate stories and simplified messaging helped convey critical messages effectively. Regular feedback loops were also established to monitor progress and adapt strategies as needed. However, the programme faced challenges, such as maintaining consistency across diverse communities and managing extensive data collection, particularly in rural areas.

Mthembu-Dlamini and Mosate-Dambuza concluded the presentation by highlighting the need for continuous supervision, robust communication strategies, and adaptability to local contexts. These elements were deemed essential for maintaining the integrity and effectiveness of the ELPT programme as it continues to expand and reach more communities.

REFLECTIONS & Q&A

Moderator: Gloria Nkosi (Deputy Country Director: South Africa, Hope worldwide)

Someone asked whether Rhodes University offered ECD qualifications as higher education qualifications and what the requirements were. Dr. Fortunate Gunzo responded that they still need to provide ECD as an undergraduate or postgraduate university qualification. Currently, they offer an ECD L5 Higher Certificate and L6 Diploma.

Rex Molefe cautioned that there was the danger of universities taking over the ECD training and qualifications space currently dominated by civil society ECD organisations.

Puleng Motsoeneng recommended that all NECDA members encourage parents to enlist for the Do More Foundation's 'Eat Love Play Talk' Programme.



NECDA Board Members with broad smiles – and their ‘special’ guests, too.

ATTENDEES

1. [ACFS Community Education & Feeding Scheme](#) | Sabelo Malevu
2. [Afrocentric](#) | Lerato Moeng
3. [Be Unlimited](#) | Pravienna Naidoo
4. [Brand Boss Media House](#) | Charlene Ainslie
5. [Bulungulu Incubator](#) | Esethu Mkhwenkwe, Lindiwe Tukane
6. [Centre for Social Development](#) | Fortunate Gunzo
7. [Chartered Institute for Professional Practitioners and Trainers \(CIPPT\)](#) | Gizelle McIntyre, Jaran Moodley, John Sandys, Marie-Louise Samuels, Ria Walshe
8. [Cotlands Enterprise](#) | Kerry Hugget, Dr. Monica Stach
9. [Department of Basic Education \(DBE\)](#) | Mpho Papale
10. [DG Murray Trust](#) | Kwanda Ndodo
11. [Do More Foundation](#) | Jabu Mthembu-Dlamini, Kabelo Mosate-Dambuza
12. [Dr. CL Smith Foundation](#) | Malcolm Mooi (NECDA Board)
13. [Early Years Services](#) | Veronica Williams
14. [Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority \(ETDP SETA\)](#) | Constance Gadzikwa
15. [Elyon BlueStar Sanlam](#) | Aaliyah Rajkomar
16. [Environment & Language Education Trust \(ELET\)](#) | Nazrana Hoosen
17. [Foundation for Community Work \(FCW\)](#) | Dr. Riedewhaan Allie
18. [Golang-Kulani Early Learning Centre \(ELC\)](#) | Margaret Letsoalo, Simon Setagane
19. [Grassroots Educare Trust](#) | Anneri Kruger (NECDA Board), Mareldia Tape, Sadeeqa Isaacs, Wadieah Abrahams

ATTENDEES continued...

20. [Grow ECD](#) | Lyndsey Petro (NECDA Board)
21. [HOPE worldwide](#) | Anneri Kruger (NECDA Board), Athini Rathebe, Gloria Nkosi, Kabelo Mohabi, Dr. Marc Aguirre, Dr. Monique Scholtz, Nkhensani Mabunda, Nomfundo Mkhize, Ntokozo Msibi
22. [ICDP Trust Lebone Centre](#) | Jolene Tarr
23. [Institute of Training and Education for Capacity-building \(ITEC\)](#) | Caroll Warmberg (NECDA Board)
24. [Khanimamba Training & Resource Centre](#) | Queen Baloyi, Ray Baloyi
25. [KwaZulu-Natal Experimental College \(KZNEC\)](#) | Simphiwe Stuurman
26. [Midlands Community College \(MCC\)](#) | Adelaide Mkhomazi, Rebecca Wakeford
27. [Motheo Training Institute Trust \(MTIT\)](#) | Gugulethu Giba, Mbali Nkosi, Palesa Sepengu, Palesa Tyatyti, Palisa Kasibe, Rex Molefe (NECDA Board), Rhirandzo Nkuna
28. [National ECD Alliance \(NECDA\)](#) | Abigail Peacock, Anneri Kruger (Hope worldwide), Caroll Warmberg (Institute of Training and Education for Capacity-building), Lyndsey Petro (Grow ECD), Malcolm Mooi (Dr. CL Smith Foundation), Rex Molefe (Motheo Training Institute Trust), Puleng Motsoeneng (Ntataise Trust), Tseli Scharer (Ntataise Lowveld)
29. [Network of ECD of Lesotho \(NECDOL\)](#) | Ma-Lord Nkosi, Shoeshoe Mafokeng
30. [New Beginnings Training Organisation](#) | Patsy Pillay
31. [Ntataise Lowveld](#) | Tseli Scharer (NECDA Board)
32. [Ntataise Trust](#) | Puleng Motsoeneng (NECDA Board), Sibusiwe Ndlovu, Sophie Masilela
33. [Penreach](#) | Amanda Sibuyane, Modupi Mazibuko
34. [Play with Purpose Educational Trust](#) | Robyn Wienand
35. [Producer's Note, The](#) | Moleboheng Sehume

ATTENDEES continued...

36. [Safe and Sound](#) | Colleen Walter
37. [Sesame Workshop International](#) | Mari Payne, Fathima Rawat
38. [Shuter & Shooter Publishers](#) | Amanda Mamabolo
39. [Singakwenza ECD NPC](#) | Julie Hay
40. [Singita Lowveld Trust](#) | Frank Makwakwa, Linky Nkuna
41. [South African Congress of Early Childhood Development \(SACECD\)](#) | Leonard Saul
42. [South African Institute for Distance Education \(SAIDE\)](#) | Melissa King, Sheila Drew
43. [South African Montessori Association \(SAMA\)](#) | Natalie Gross
44. [Training & Resources in Early Education \(TREE\)](#) | Freda Qanya
45. [Ubunye Foundation](#) | Bulelwa Mggobebe, Nonyameko Gxaka
46. [United Nations Children's Fund \(UNICEF\)](#) | Andre Viviers
47. [Wordworks](#) | Faith Shabangu
48. [Zimbabwe Network of ECD Actors \(ZINECDA\)](#) | Marceline Kahlari

NECDA GALA DINNER PROCEEDINGS

Wednesday 7th August 2024

OPENING & WELCOME

Andries Viviers (ECD Education Specialist, United Nations Children's Fund)

Andre Viviers, the UNICEF representative to the NECDA Conference, opened the NECDA Gala Dinner on the first day.

He welcomed everyone to the event, and thanked them for making the time after a long – yet fruitful – first day of conference proceedings.

He congratulated the NECDA Board on hosting their Inaugural Conference and Gala Dinner, and wished everyone a pleasant evening.

NECDA CHAIRPERSON'S ADDRESS

Rex Molefe (NECDA Chairperson)

Rex Molefe, the NECDA Chairperson, enthusiastically addressed his colleagues after a highly successful conference. He expressed his delight at seeing colleagues from across South Africa and the SADC region come together to celebrate their collective achievements, a testament to their hard work and dedication. Molefe highlighted the significance of the evening, describing it as a special and meaningful occasion that united everyone under a shared vision.

He spoke confidently about NECDA's ongoing efforts to achieve universal access to quality ECD services in South Africa. Looking ahead, Molefe expressed optimism for the Organisation's future for the remainder of the year and in the years to come.

Molefe encouraged attendees to enjoy the gala dinner, assuring them that NECDA prioritises their interests and is dedicated to serving them. He invited everyone to relax, enjoy the music, and indulge responsibly while reminding them that the critical business of the AGM would continue the following day.

SKILLS SECTOR ADDRESS

Joe Samuels (Director, Samuels Squared Pty Ltd. & Former Chief Executive Officer, SAQA)

Joe Samuels' speech centred on 'Unity in Diversity under the African Skies', focusing on Strengthening Partnerships to Professionalise the ECD Skills Sector. He began with an African proverb: 'I pointed out the stars and moon to you, but all you saw was the tip of my finger', urging attendees to see beyond the obvious and appreciate the broader vision for ECD.

Samuels highlighted the diversity within the ECD sector, including government bodies, non-profit organisations, private sector partners, community leaders, educators, and caregivers. He stressed that recognising and valuing this diversity was essential for enhancing the quality and reach of early childhood education.

He likened the partnerships within the ECD sector to the gravitational force binding stars in a cluster, underlining the need for robust collaborations. Key partnerships, he stressed, included government and policymakers for legal and financial support, educational institutions for accredited training, NGOs for reaching underserved communities, and the private sector for their crucial role in investing in and improving ECD infrastructure, thereby instilling a sense of hope and optimism in our collective efforts.

Samuels pointed to the partnership between NECDA and CIPPT as a model. This collaboration aimed to improve the quality and professionalism of ECD practitioners. He also delved into the challenges facing the sector, such as access and equity, inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and the crucial need for professional recognition.

Samuels concluded by urging the ECD community to strengthen partnerships, professionalise the sector, and overcome these challenges. This would validate ECD practitioners' hard work and dedication and show them the respect they deserve for their commitment to the future of Africa's children.

THE POWER OF STRENGTHENING ECD IN THE SADC REGION

Shoeshoe Mafokeng (National Coordinator, Network of ECD of Lesotho)

Shoeshoe Mafokeng emphasised the transformative power of ECD in breaking the cycle of poverty across the SADC region. She argued that a solid educational foundation is crucial for lifting communities out of poverty and ensuring long-term economic stability. Mafokeng highlighted the importance of applying Heckman's curve theory, which advocates for early and sustained investment in ECD to maximise societal returns and create a more prosperous future.

Mafokeng stressed that no one desires to become a refugee, and by helping neighbouring countries achieve economic stability through investment in ECD, individuals would be more inclined to remain in their home countries. This approach would reduce migration pressures and contribute to regional stability. She called on SADC governments to adhere to regional protocols by recognising ECD as a fundamental human right and making substantial investments in the sector.

Moreover, Mafokeng advocated for the design of effective advocacy strategies to ensure that the private sector, which benefits from the ECD sector, also contributes to the welfare of caregivers and teachers. She urged that these key contributors to the education and care of young children should benefit from the sector's success, thus creating a more equitable and sustainable system.

ENTERTAINMENT

Wayne Bosch (Jazz Guitarist) | DJ Ismail Abrahams (Metro FM)

The Gala Dinner guests were privileged to have two leading South African artists lead the evening's entertainment.

About Wayne Bosch

Wayne Bosch is a distinguished South African jazz guitarist and a dedicated music educator. Renowned for his technical prowess and deep understanding of jazz traditions, Bosch has made significant contributions to the South African music scene. He is celebrated not only for his performances as a thoroughbred jazz musician but also for his commitment to nurturing the next generation of musicians.

Bosch's teaching style is marked by a blend of practical expertise and theoretical knowledge, making him a respected figure in both the performance and educational spheres of jazz music in South Africa. His influence extends beyond the stage, as he continues to shape the landscape of South African jazz through his dual roles as a performer and an educator.

About Ismail Abrahams

Ismail Abrahams is a well-known South African DJ, celebrated for his dynamic presence in the music industry and his influential work at Metro FM, one of the country's leading radio stations. With a deep passion for music that spans multiple genres, DJ Ismail has captivated audiences with his versatile sets, expertly blending house, jazz, and local South African rhythms.

At Metro FM, DJ Ismail has played a key role in curating music that resonates with a wide audience, contributing to the station's reputation as a top destination for quality entertainment. His work at Metro FM has further cemented his status as a prominent figure in South Africa's music scene, where he continues to promote and celebrate the richness of South African music and culture.

INTRODUCTION OF NECDA'S ANNUAL 'SADICK GALANT' SKILLS AWARD Rex Molefe (NECDA Chairperson)

Rex Molefe introduced the NECDA Annual 'Sadick Galant' Skills Award.

About Sadick Galant

Sadick Galant was a revered South African educator and public servant known for his significant contributions to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and education in South Africa.

Born in Cape Town, Galant trained as a teacher, specialising in Early Childhood Development (ECD) after completing high school. Later, he went to England to further his ECD studies. He returned as one of the best-qualified ECD lecturers in South Africa. He worked at the Sally Davies Pre-Primary College before taking up a position as Deputy Education Specialist with the Western Cape Education Department. He sadly passed away in May 2024.

Galant's impact on ECD was profound. He advocated for quality ECD, particularly in marginalised communities. His work helped shape policies prioritising the development and training of ECD practitioners, ensuring that young children received the foundational education they needed for future success. His efforts were pivotal in making ECD a national priority, influencing policy and practice across South Africa.

Beyond his educational contributions, Galant was also a talented sportsman, having had a successful rugby career.

In his role as a teacher and later as a government official, Galant remained focused on the importance of education as a tool for social change. His legacy inspires educators and policymakers committed to advancing ECD in South Africa.

LONG SERVICE AWARD

Presented by the NECDA Executive Committee

Abigail Peacock, the NECDA Chief Operations Officer (COO) received the NECDA Long Service Award for her outstanding contributions to NECDA, its members, and the ECD over the past ten years. She first started out as the NECDA Administrator.



A beautiful bouquet at a beautiful dinner. Abigail Peacock (NECDA COO) proudly posing with her well-deserved NECDA Long Service Award (ten memorable years).



Other guest speakers in the spotlight at the NECDA Gala Dinner. NECDA Board Members with SADC Partner, Marceline Kahlari, Director of ZINECDA (Zimbabwe).



Posh styling, close conversations, and awesome jazz sounds at the NECDA Gala Dinner.

VOTE OF THANKS

Puleng Motsoeneng (Director, Ntataise & NECDA Deputy Chairperson)

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to everyone who has contributed to the success of this Inaugural Conference and Gala Dinner:

Our Members | For their active participation and engagement throughout the Conference: their presence, contributions, and insights have been invaluable to the success of this event.

Abigail Peacock and Carol Warmberg | For their exemplary coordination, dedication, technical support, and management, which were crucial in ensuring the smooth execution of the Conference.

Our Sponsors | ETDP SETA, HOPE worldwide SA, Lego Foundation, and Shuter and Shooter Publishers | For their generous contributions.

Rex Molefe | For his decisive leadership and strategic support as the NECDA Chairperson.

Gloria Nkosi, Dr. Monica Stach, and Kwanda Ndoda | For their guidance and oversight as our Programme Directors.

HOPE worldwide SA team members: Dr Monique Scholtz, Nomfundo Mkhize, Athini Rathebe, and others | For their invaluable support in the Conference planning and implementing.

Be Unlimited directors | Pravienna Naidoo and Tshenolo Motlhala | For their support and collaboration, and drafting and designing of the pre-event programme and post-event report.

Motheo Training Institute Trust's volunteer team | For their enthusiasm and hard work.

Institute of Training and Education for Capacity-building office team | For their support.

Takalani Sesame, Grow ECD, Grassroots Educare Trust, Elyon BlueStar, and Sanlam | For their continued support and partnership.

And to the Fairways Hotel team, Entertainers Wayne Bosch and Ismail Abrahams, Moleboheng Sehuma, Peter Ducray from Redefine Software, Intelligent Technology Solutions, and our Exhibitors | For their instrumental efforts in bringing this event to life and advancing our shared mission in the ECD Sector. Thank you for your dedication and support.

