

Every day we hear and read about dishonesty in the world of government and of business. This is a global trend and is not confined to South Africa or the African continent, as Afro pessimists often write. More recently we are starting to read of failings – dishonesty - in the NPO sector. The Mail and Guardian of 29th June to 5th July in fact had an editorial titled “Power corrupts – even in our respected NGOs.”

I recently came across a very good article by Annelize van Rensburg, director and co-founder of Talent Africa, an executive search and talent management company. She writes that, “It is unusual to speak of honesty in terms of corporative advantage” and comments on recent instances of dishonesty in the corporate world. She goes on to say that “...it may be opportune to give a reminder that honesty has a lot going for it as a way of attracting top talent, improving motivation and lifting productivity. Corporate honesty is also the most fundamental means of guarding against reputational damage... to the business and business leaders.”

She says that dishonesty is costly and that rival brands improve their competitive position, citing the cases of Samsung and VW. Here in South Africa we would add KPMG, Oakbay, Steinhof and many others. She then makes suggestions for business and organisations to follow:

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1. Honesty must be built into organisation culture. This takes more than the publication of a list of corporate values. Leaders must behave honestly and openly.
 2. Executives should strive to build honest environments.
 3. Honest communication should trigger discernible action. When good feedback comes through, the team should see management acting on it.
 4. Blunt, hurtful communication may be honest, but can be destructive. It is not what you say, it is the way you say it.
 5. The truth will out; not only spread through gossip, but via social media and perhaps through whistle-blowing. Senior managers have to be scrupulous with disclosure – about their qualifications, possible conflicts of interest, the use and misuse of company resources and the accuracy of expense claims.
 6. Be consistent. Do not preach honesty and then be dishonest. Even small indiscretions are noticed.
 7. Make yourself accountable and hold yourself to high ethical standards.
 8. Honesty, like strategy, has to be implemented and put to work.”

I make these observations because we are increasingly seeing dishonesty from some NPOs and also from some donors. We must guard against this.

Enjoy the edition of EARLY YEARS.

ERIC ATMORE
Director

THE LASTING PAYOFF OF EARLY EDUCATION

~ Bari Walsh

Benefits of early education found to persist for years, bolstering graduation, reducing retention, and reducing special education placements



We know that early childhood education is a good thing, but even with growing enrollments and public investment, debate periodically erupts about the specific benefits of early education and whether those benefits last or fade away over time. Whenever a study finds smaller-than-expected impacts, a new round of questioning begins.

A new study may finally signal the end of the “does early ed work?” debate, uncovering significant evidence that the positive effects of early childhood education persist for years.

Researchers from five universities, led by Dana Charles McCoy at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, analyzed 22 well-constructed research studies published between 1960 and 2016, looking at the overall impact of classroom-based early childhood education (ECE) on special education placement, grade retention, and high school graduation. The meta-analysis, published today in *Educational Researcher*, finds that children who attend high-quality ECE programs are:

- less likely to be placed in special education;
- less likely to be retained in a grade; and
- more likely to graduate from high school

than peers who didn't attend such programs.

The reason for those gains is not fully established, McCoy says, but “there is increasing evidence that social-emotional skills may play a role, as they support children's ability to

continuously engage in learning environments, manage their own behaviors, and get along well with others.” It's an area that calls for more attention from researchers in the future.

But even without a clear cause, the new analysis emphasises the payoff to public funding of ECE, suggesting its potential to mitigate the high costs of special education and of dropouts and other poor educational outcomes.

This work reinforces previous assessments of ECE's impact on student progress, placement, and completion, but it covers a wider age range, reflects a mix of historical and contemporary research, and uses more rigorous criteria in designing its research parameters.

(Co-authors on the research were Hirokazu Yoshikawa of New York University, Kathleen M. Ziol-Guest of the RAND Corporation, Greg J. Duncan of the University of California, Irvine, Holly S. Schindler of the University of Washington, Katherine Magnuson of the University of Wisconsin–Madison, Rui Yang of New York University, and Andrew Koepp and Jack Shonkoff, both of the Harvard Graduate School of Education.)

There hasn't been much disagreement that early childhood education is a good investment for children and families - that it plays an important role in supporting children's cognitive ability in language, literacy, and math, as well as social skill development and emotional growth, McCoy says. “But at the same time, the results of several recent studies have tempered enthusiasm over public investments, as they have shown smaller-than-expected impacts or fade-out over time.”

It's important to recognise, though, that contemporary studies will likely never show the same dramatic impacts that historical studies did, since those older studies were comparing “preschool” to “no preschool.” Instead, today's studies are comparing different types of early education programs to one another - apples to apples.



And these are just the right comparisons to be making, McCoy says, to help us “move beyond questions of ‘does it work?’ to

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zero in on more meaningful and nuanced questions of 'how, where, and for whom does it work best?' There is already a sea change toward these more nuanced questions in the field, which is very encouraging."

Article available at

<https://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/uk/17/11/lasting-payoff-early-ed?>

WHERE CYRIL RAMAPHOSA'S SALARY IS GOING

~ Vuyo Mkize

In 1995, a year into his presidency, Nelson Mandela announced he would be donating a third of his presidential salary to the Nelson Mandela Children's Fund.

Prompted by the sight of street children near Parliament in the Cape Town winter, Mandela aimed to improve the lives of children whose parents had died of Aids-related illnesses, children who had been abandoned on the streets, and the poor and disabled.



Fast-forward 23 years, and current president Cyril Ramaphosa has followed suit, announcing in May this year during his Presidency Budget Vote that he would donate half his R3.6m annual salary to a fund that will be managed by the Nelson Mandela Foundation, directing the proceeds to worthy community-based projects.

After being presented with options, City Press learnt, Ramaphosa has also chosen children. The fund will be launched on Mandela Day on Wednesday.

Early childhood development

However, the foundation has already made some headway through The Mandela Initiative in earmarking some development areas to prioritise, one of which is early childhood development (ECD).

The foundation roped in the expertise of dialogue analyst Sumaya Hendricks, who helped set up its new poverty and inequality unit, which also encompasses early childhood development in its key focus areas.



"Research has shown that the cognitive, emotional and social development of children all happens before the age of six," Hendricks says.

"According to the South African Early Childhood Review from last year, if a four-year-old child is in one of the 20% of poorest households, there's only a 50% chance of them attending some sort of education programme.

"Universal access to schooling in South Africa unfortunately only starts in Grade 1 with free schooling. That means a child from a poor family would already be entering at a disadvantage," she says.

"Schools assume a child will come in with a form of basic competency, but many children are entering at a disadvantage." The Mandela Initiative Report, which will also be launched next week, states that while some early childhood services, notably in the areas of health, are mainly provided by the government, others have relied heavily on not-for-profit organisations (NPOs) for childcare and group learning programmes.

NPO sector 'overstretched'

The NPO sector delivering services to young children is, according to the report "overstretched and under-resourced", and even where subsidies are available, there are problems with registration and compliance.

Hendricks and her team have been conducting research in Diepsloot, an informal settlement in northern Johannesburg, and in Bekkersdal in Westonaria, western Gauteng. There they have met with ECD forums representing informal crèches in childcare centres to access the needs on the ground, and their barriers to accessing registration and funding to create more conducive areas of learning and development for children.

"Our focus is answering how we give children from poor and working class families the best chance at a prosperous future," Hendricks says.

"Our five objectives are highlighting the field of ECD as a tool for fighting intergenerational poverty, advocating policy changes that need to happen, improving the conditions at the centres, bringing exposure to the challenges that informal centres experience, and increasing awareness with parents and caregivers on the importance of early childhood development.

"A key part of what we want to do is elevating the voices of grass roots and community organisations, and connecting them with government. We have ECD practitioners who will be recognised by our chief executive, Sello Hatang, in the Nelson Mandela Annual Lecture for active citizenship. Both are from Diepsloot, and both saw a need in their community to create centres to stimulate children during the day."

Registration

But it is hard going for most of these centres. They struggle to become registered because they don't have title deeds to the land on which their centres are built, and they therefore cannot receive funding from the department of social development. In addition, most of these crèches do not meet the regulation standards for space, without features such as designated "sick rooms", for example.



"Some of the centres are small and really cramped. They're really not getting any support," says Hendricks.

"If one gets funding from the state, it's R15 per child per day but it's unlikely those centres will get that registration and funding because of the stringent requirements.



"Obviously, the requirements are important to make sure the children are safe, but if you know, as a caring government, that informal settlement centres have no way to meet the requirements, particularly from a space point of view, why not create an enabling environment?"

Hendricks said it was significant that Ramaphosa will be investing his earnings in the early childhood development programme.

"If the president can say, 'Early childhood development is important to me and I'm willing to put my money towards it', we're hoping it shows leadership in the sector and inspires others to also give it priority."



Article available at
<https://www.news24.com/SouthAfrica/News/where-cyril-ramaphosas-salary-is-going-20180715>