

The concept of “failure” fascinates me. Over the years, our understanding of failure has changed. Failure used to be avoided, denied, not spoken about, and seen as a weakness. In more recent times, we have been told by management and leadership experts to embrace failure – and correctly so. There is sense in this. It is only through experimentation and risk taking that we progress. As an organisation we have failed on occasions, failed to deliver, failed to meet deadlines. We have also failed to see certain things and we have failed to anticipate certain events and outcomes.

Today, there is recognition that failing at some point is unavoidable. We have found that the best response to failure, large or small, is to acknowledge this, to apologise immediately and to make right. And failing on a programme will not cause an organisation to collapse.

Another aspect is that fear of failure can make organisation leaders risk averse, for example not taking on large-scale projects for fear of failing. We have found that, provided one is aware of the risk, ECD non-profits should be bold and brave to undertake programmes outside of their immediate geographic area, for example. Working on large-scale ECD projects in other provinces scared us at first but we assessed the risk and went ahead. Today, about 70 percent of our work is outside the Western Cape, and these are huge projects in ECD terms.

It is a truism that the only time we fail is when we give up. This is true in sport, in business and in the non-profit sector.

So, non-profit organisations should be adventurous. We should get involved in projects and programmes where we take a risk, provided it is a calculated risk and the chances of success are high.

Starting the Centre for Early Childhood Development in 1994 was a major risk. We were told by some in the early childhood sector that the organisation would fail. 28 years later, we are still around, we are strong, we are active nationally. Let us as ECD NPOs embrace failure as a normal part of organisation life, but let us learn when we fail.

Enjoy this edition of EARLY YEARS.

ERIC ATMORE
Director

"Those who dare
to fail miserably
can achieve
greatly"

- John F. Kennedy

PANDEMIC'S LINGERING EFFECT ON THE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT SECTOR

~ Murphy Nganga

With research demonstrating that the most significant learning and brain growth occurred in children by the age of six, the pandemic reportedly had a detrimental influence on the early childhood development (ECD) sector.

This comes after data released by StatsSA's General Household Survey revealed that the percentage of children in the 0-4 years age group that remained at home with a parent or guardian increased from 57.8% in 2019 to 64.6% in 2021, while the percentage of children that attended Grade R, pre-school, nursery school, crèche, and edu-care centres decreased from 36.8% in 2019 to 28.5% in 2021.



As the pandemic left many children emotionally, and mentally isolated, director of the Centre for Early Childhood Development, Eric Atmore, said the data presented by StatsSA should be a cause of concern because these children had lost out on significant early learning opportunities and experiences that they would have needed to carry over into formal schooling.

“Being out of an early learning programme for a significant period will present major challenges. These challenges include the developmental lag as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic and subsequent lockdown. For vulnerable children living in difficult circumstances, this is a particularly negative situation. These children need early learning opportunities to be prepared for schooling and life and they have missed out on these. They will face these challenges as they enter formal schooling.

“Our vulnerable young children’s development will be significantly impacted socially, emotionally, cognitively, and physically. They had not been at an ECD centre or programme for many months and will have lost out on their socialisation and emotional development which is so important and that is enhanced in early learning programmes. They also lost out on their early numeracy and literacy learning which is particularly significant in the early years when young children learn at an astounding rate. All of this will impact their formal schooling and their lives.

“We need to move forward from here with a large-scale national early childhood initiative that supports young children’s early learning and well-being. This can happen at early childhood development centres, in early learning programmes, and at home with parents. A significant way to mitigate the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic is to support parents with the information, guidance, and resources to provide learning opportunities and activities with children in the home environment,” said Atmore.

With other factors influencing the development of children such as loss of income and ECD centres closing due to a lack of finances to sustain the operation, WCED spokesperson Bronagh Hammond said that going forward, the department is hoping that more children can attend ECD centres and improve attendance with recent function shifts to education.

“Covid-19 did hurt the ECD sector. Overall attendance decreased as a result of the fluctuating lockdown levels and concerns by parents or caregivers to send their children to centres during the pandemic period influenced this. We are aware of the positive effects of children attending quality ECD centres and through our management of data strategy, we will be able to draw the ECD sector into our data systems to create a long-term record of a child’s progress through the system.

“With one of our strategic goals being to improve early grade language and mathematics, along with the curriculum and learning material, we now have an opportunity to create a standardised early learning curriculum and associated learning material – just as has been done for schools. In terms of health and wellbeing, we have extensive experience with large-scale school nutrition and health interventions in partnership with the Department of Health. In regards to training and development, ECD practitioners play a vital role in our children’s development, and the department plans on supporting them accordingly,” said Hammond.

Article first published and available at:

<https://www.iol.co.za/weekend-argus/news/data-shows-the-pandemics-lingering-effect-on-the-early-childhood-development-sector->

TWO YEARS LATER: OVER A THOUSAND CRÈCHES STILL NOT PAID COVID RELIEF FUNDS

~ Mary-Anne Gontsana

- Early childhood development (ECD) centre owners and educators protested on Thursday for their outstanding stimulus relief funds.

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- A foundation was contracted by the Western Cape Government as an intermediary organisation to assist ECDs with the verification and payment process of the funds.
- On Thursday the Foundation's director told protesters that the "challenging" application process had caused several delays.
- The Western Cape Education Department says 1,600 ECDs have been paid and 1,667 are yet to be paid. Over R25-million has been paid out.



About 50 early childhood development (ECD) centre owners and educators protested outside the Foundation for Community Works (FCW) building in Athlone on Thursday. They are demanding to be paid outstanding ECD stimulus relief funds.

The Foundation is contracted by the Western Cape Government as an intermediary organisation to assist ECDs with the verification and payment process of the funds.

The Early Childhood Development Stimulus Relief Fund was set up in 2021 to assist centres with the impact of the Covid pandemic. The once-off payment is R4,186 per staff member.

Dressed in yellow and black, the protesting educators, some of whom came from as far as Kayamandi in Stellenbosch and Worcester, held up placards as they sang outside the Foundation's gates. The protest was organised by the South African Congress for ECDs.

Theodora Lutuli, principal of two ECD centres in Nyanga and provincial chairperson of the Congress, said they have been fighting for the funds to be paid since 2020.

"At the time there was no criteria given [about who would be receiving the funds], as long as those people were in your employ and lost their income. When we went into lockdown, parents did not pay fees so practitioners had nothing to live on. We are now in 2022 and not even 60% have been paid," she said.

Lutuli said they just wanted answers from the Foundation and the state on what has delayed payments to all beneficiaries.

GroundUp reported in May that more than 1,700 ECDs in the Western Cape have still not received their Covid relief funds - and there was no time frame for when these payments are to be completed.

On Thursday, the group handed their memorandum to the Foundation's director Riedewhaan Allie. He told protesters that the "challenging" application process had caused several delays.

Allie described aspects of this complicated process to the protesters. It is dependent on multiple institutions for a payment to be approved and paid.

"Up to this point, we have paid just over 6,000 applicants and about 1,100 preschool centres. ... We have tried to ... and process as many payments as we could," said Allie.

"I apologise that you believe that we are sitting on the money. We are not. We are trying to make sure and expedite the process of ensuring that every practitioner benefits from the relief stimulus fund. We have nothing to hide," said Allie.

In May the Western Cape Education Department told GroundUp that 1,717 ECDs were yet to be paid and 1,550 sites had been paid over R25-million in total.

Department spokesperson, Bronagh Hammond, said, "As of 24 June, there are 1,600 ECDs that have been paid, with 1,667 yet to be paid. Over R25-million has been paid out to individual practitioners. An additional 522 sites have been processed and will be paid in July."

Article first published and available at:
<https://www.groundup.org.za/article/two-years-later-over-a-thousand-creches-still-have-not-been-paid-covid-relief-funds>

'STIPEND CAN'T FEED FAMILIES!'

~ Oris Mnisi

Workers from the Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres marched to the district office of the Department of Education in Bushbuckridge, Mpumalanga, on Wednesday, 20 July.

The protest of the 5 000 gatvol workers was lead by ECD regional chairlady, Masana Maluka, and other members of the ECD community who braved the hot sun to march from the old taxi rank to the district office.



"We are here to raise our concerns. We deserve to be treated better and fairly," said Maluka.

She said they want all partial care and programme certificates that expired to be reissued, registered ECD centres to be funded, and the process of registering outstanding centres to be sped up.

"We demand that all subsidies must be paid in full within 24 hours to all centres that get subsidies," said Maluka.

They said pre-schools won't open until these matters are resolved.

They want the department to engage both regional and Ehlanzeni District ECD centres for any changes and developments.

Annah Mathaila of South African Congress of Early Childhood Development said after they moved from the Department of Social Development to the Department of Education, they have never been paid since 13 June.

"Our workers depend on payment. We don't have food for the children at the centres... We are starving single parents and the R800 and R1 200 stipend is too little. We can't support our families," she said. "We received an email from the department saying they had verified everything and our payment was being made through its district office on 13 July. But they also sent us a list to say we don't comply with the South African Revenue Services (SARS)."

She said they will assist 300 ECD centres registered particularly in Bushbuckridge area to get funded.

Further Education and Training's chief education specialist Glory Ndlovu, who received the memorandum, said: "We will respond accordingly. But, you should update your documents, including your tax clearance certificates."

Article first published and available at:

<https://www.dailysun.co.za/dailysun/news/stipend-cant-feed-families>

GRADE R TEACHERS MARCH FOR FULLTIME BENEFITS

~ Marsha Dean

Hundreds of angry Grade R teachers from all over the Western Cape on Tuesday marched to Parliament, demanding permanent jobs.

The teachers say they've been on contract for years and are paid via school governing bodies, without access to benefits like

housing subsidies and pension funds.



During the protest, teachers shouted "enough is enough" while one placard read "25 years signing a contract every year".

Stacy Danxa said she has been teaching for 10 years and completed a diploma in teaching Grade R at CPUT.

"I pay tax but I am being paid a stipend. The stipend that I get I need to look after my family with because I am the breadwinner in a house of six," she says.

"I have no benefits, I do not even have a house, I stay in a small one room shack but I call myself a teacher."

"At our schools, we are being undermined by the principals and other teachers because they say we are not teachers because we are teaching Grade R. We are tired of abuse."

Vyon Fortuin has been teaching for 31 years but says she has no pension fund and all she can look forward to upon retirement is the Unemployed Insurance fund (UIF).

"We are known as klein skooltjie but we are laying the foundation for the children and develop them holistically, so without us they can do nothing but we are not recognised," she said.

Kerry Mauchline, spokesperson to Western Cape Education Minister David Maynier, said they were unable to respond to the teachers' plight.

"The practitioners are not employees of the department," she said.

A representative from the presidency's office received their memorandum but said a response will only be given after six weeks as Parliament is in recess.

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<https://www.dailyvoice.co.za/news/grade-r-teachers-march-for-fulltime-benefits>