



NEW SCHOOLS OF H.O.P.E.

The importance of NGOs in early childhood education and the challenges they face

by Isabelle Botha and Nthabiseng Phalatse

“Education is our passport to the future, for tomorrow belongs only to the people who prepare for it today.” – Malcolm X

ACCESS TO quality education is a fundamental need that opens the doors to new opportunities and can pave the way to a successful future. Unfortunately, access to quality early education remains a distant, seemingly impossible, dream for many children. (Krishna, 2023)

The importance of early childhood education lies in setting children up for future academic and social success. Recent research shows that classroom-based, early childhood education programmes can lead to improved high school graduation rates as well as long-term positive individual and social benefits. (McCoy et al., 2017)

Unfortunately, access to education is not equally available, especially to those who need it the most. (Venter, 2022) Early childhood development programmes that exist, differ in quality and type

of education provided. In South Africa, early childhood education opportunities are often provided by NGOs (non-governmental organisations) and NPOs (non-profit organisations).

Alida Fourie, is the founder and CEO of New Schools of H.O.P.E. (Healing of Poverty through Education), an NGO/NPO that focuses on educating children and empowering community members in rural areas. New Schools of H.O.P.E. believes that educating children will bring change to the next generation. This organisation started on a small scale in 2013 in a community called Zama Zama, an informal settlement in Pretoria West, where they initiated a stimulation programme for children, providing toys, developmental activities, food and water. In 2015 the organisation built and opened a preschool in Zama Zama and officially registered New Schools of H.O.P.E. as an NPO/NGO. Since then, they have exponentially developed and have built 14 schools and have plans to keep expanding!

As an occupational therapist, Alida has a fundamental under-

standing of the critical role that quality education plays in early childhood development. Alida also emphasised the importance of play in their curriculum, as play is one of the most important occupations of a young child and can contribute significantly to the quality of their education.

Alida spoke specifically about the importance of and need for NGOs like New Schools of H.O.P.E. The team at New Schools of H.O.P.E. is dedicated to transforming education in rural South Africa, driven by the belief that every child deserves access to quality education. Another reason their organisation believes in the importance of their NGO and similar organisations, is that they believe in the power of education to heal poverty in South Africa.

Despite their drive and passion to make a difference in education in these rural areas, the organisation faces several challenges when implementing projects. One major challenge they encounter is opposition to the implementation of structure in these communities, especially from unfamiliar organisations. ➔

Lenelize van den Berg (left) with New Schools of H.O.P.E. founder Alida Fourie, pictured with two “graduates”.



Alida emphasises the importance of play in the curriculum.





Student Scribes

Alida emphasises that building trust and fostering a relationship with community members is an integral part of their implementation. They do this by working with and empowering the community members and using local community members to help them in the development and construction of the schools.

Another obstacle their organisation faces is the lack of qualified teachers in the communities where they develop these schools. New Schools of H.O.P.E. rolls out a curriculum to all of the schools with which they are involved, to ensure that children are on track with the national curriculum, and the shortage of qualified teachers makes the implementation of the curriculum difficult.

They overcame this hurdle by investing in training local educators, therefore equipping them to provide quality education and still empow-

ering community members to take ownership of these projects.

An ongoing concern for the organisation is a shortage of sufficient funding and resources for both current and future projects. Without financial security, the organisation is impacted in various ways, from the projects being sustainable to being able to implement new infrastructures.

The organisation is overcoming this by staying committed to finding donations, partnerships and stakeholders who can ensure that the programme continues to provide quality education opportunities.

This article was specifically written to emphasise the positive impact that NGOs/NPOs can have on the quality of education in low-resource communities in South Africa. Equal access to education is a basic human right.

Everyone is encouraged to advocate for this right and to recog-

nise the crucial role of NGOs and NPOs in the development of early childhood education programmes. ●

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Early intervention for ADHD

by Tarien Buys

ATTENTION DEFICIT hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) is the most common psychiatric disorder in children, affecting 8–9% of school learners worldwide (Crouch and Alers, 2014; Parekh, 2022). The DSM-5 describes ADHD as a condition that presents with patterns of behaviour that cause performance issues in various contexts and environments.

The DSM-5 further explains that the symptoms are divided into inattention and hyperactivity with impulsivity. Children with ADHD, therefore, struggle with sustaining attention to a specific task, often have difficulty organising tasks, lose personal belongings, fail to complete tasks and do not seem to listen when spoken to directly (Crouch and Alers, 2014).

This disorder is ongoing and requires continuous management throughout the child's life. These

challenges can significantly impact their daily life, including participation in school, activities of daily living, play, and social interaction.

According to Stark et al., 2022, 5% of children in South Africa are diagnosed with ADHD. Health professionals and parents at Daspoort Poli Clinic have expressed concern about the high number of children diagnosed with ADHD, however, the clinic does not have an occupational therapist to provide the necessary support. This often leads to late diagnosis and delayed intervention for the children. As a result, parents have reported that their children struggle in their school, social, and home environments. Some parents at the clinic even expressed that their children get suspended from school due to them presenting with severe hyperactivity and inability to follow instructions.

Final year OT students are placed at Daspoort Poli Clinic for work-integrated learning (WIL), however, students do not provide individual intervention for children at the clinic.

While some children are seen during group therapy sessions at the preschools where students are placed, the lack of consistent individual intervention remains a significant gap. Other health professionals, such as speech and language therapy students, provide individual interventions, when necessary, but these services are mostly driven by students, meaning that once WIL is completed, the service is no longer available. This highlights the critical need for a full-time occupational therapist at the clinic, as consistent intervention is vital for children with ADHD to thrive.

The Daspoort community faces further challenges due to the lack ➔

