Investing in Early Learning

Venue: Auditorium, The Egg, GPE Replenishment Pledging Conference

Time: 14:45 – 15:55

Learning begins at birth. Investing in the early years leads to some of the highest rates of return to families, societies and countries. 2009 PISA results demonstrate that fifteen-year-old students who had attended pre-primary education performed better (33 points higher) on PISA than those who did not, even after accounting for their socio-economic backgrounds.[1] Young children, especially the most marginalized, who benefit from quality early childhood care and education (ECCE) are more likely to start primary school at the right age, be healthy, be ready to learn, stay in school longer, and perform well throughout their schooling. Hence, investing quality and timely resources in the youngest children is one of the most cost-effective financial and policy commitments a government can make to build stronger foundations, not only for children's own wellbeing but also for the long term socio-economic development of societies.

Globally, the gross enrolment ratio in pre-primary education is only 48%, with rates as low as 15% in low-income countries and less than 17% in sub-Saharan Africa. Evidence shows that the most disadvantaged children – their disadvantage due to poverty, ethnic and linguistic minority status, gender discrimination, remoteness, disability, violence, and HIV/AIDS status – experience the most dramatic gains from good quality Early Childhood Care and Education (ECCE) programs. Yet it is exactly these children who are least likely to participate in these programs.[2]

During the early years of life, the brain is growing at the fastest pace, making almost 700-1,000 connections per second. Early brain development is best nurtured in quality child environments that are supportive, stimulating and safe. Neuroscience studies illustrate that the plasticity of the brain and the pace of development in the first few years of life are never again repeated. Also, these early connections form the basis of a lifelong capacity to learn and adapt to change.

Investments in ECCE should be prioritized based on evidence on the returns on investment and particularly on the cost of not acting at the right time. Intervening earlier requires fewer resources and less effort while achieving greater effectiveness.

The return on investment in programs that build human capital starting at birth, commonly known as the "Heckman Curve" (Figure 1), demonstrates the steepest gradient in the early years leading to primary school. A simulation on increasing pre-school enrolment in 73 countries found benefits in terms of higher future wages of $6.4-$17.6 per dollar invested.[3]

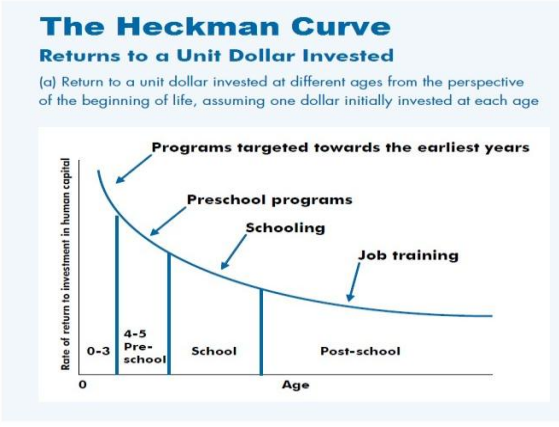


Figure 1. "The Heckman Curve": Rates of Return to Human Capital

Moreover, access to quality ECCE interventions at the right age can improve education outcomes by reducing repetition and drop-out rates, improving school readiness and learning outcomes, and increasing

[1] PISA 2009 Results, Overcoming Social Background: Equity in Learning Opportunities and Outcomes (Volume II) and PISA 2009 Results, What Makes a School Successful? Resources, Policies and Practices (Volume IV).
[2] Child Development Lancet Series (2007/2011)
[3] http://www.thelancet.com/series/child-development-in-developing-countries-2

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school achievement. Crucially, ECCE has the potential of breaking down inequalities in education from the very early stages. Science has demonstrated that early childhood interventions, early in life are important because they help mitigate the impact of adverse early experiences which if not addressed lead to poor health, poor educational attainment, economic dependency, increased violence and crime, greater substance abuse and depression – all of which add to the cost and burden in society. Evidence shows that providing children with early learning opportunities at the right time in their development is a smart, equitable and pro-poor approach.

Investing in Early Childhood Care and Education

This parallel session will bring together key stakeholders interested in accelerating access to good quality Early Childhood Care and Education that support young children to thrive and reach their full potential, with particular attention to the most marginalized children. Additionally, the session will focus on engaging more countries in the pursuit of a common agenda which focuses on improving the quality of early childhood services and guaranteeing at least one year of quality pre-primary education.

The panel will focus on:

- **Investing Early:** Understanding why investing in the early years is essential for child well-being, development and learning.
- **Investing Equitably:** Demonstrating why pro-poor investments make the biggest impact.
- **Investing in Quality:** Making the case for investing adequate resources in quality ECCE interventions.
- **Investing in Results:** Showcasing successful ECCE interventions and results achieved.

Expected outcome:

GPE partners, donors, developing countries, private sectors and foundations and other supportive participants in the panel, endorse or commit to subscribe to a '**Call to Action for Early Childhood Care and Education'**:

- To increase access for girls and boys to quality ECCE, including at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education, with particular focus on the most marginalized children.
- To increase international and domestic investment in ECCE for Global Partnership for Education countries.
- To promote new and innovative partnerships that:
  i. Leverage investments in ECCE from public and private partners;
  ii. Improve the availability and delivery of quality ECCE services.
- To strengthen the evidence-base of effective and quality ECCE programming and the development of ECCE indicators that support countries to monitor children's readiness to learn and the quality of learning environments.
- To ensure the inclusion of ECCE in the post-2015 development agenda and in the Global Partnership for Education's next Strategic Plan through:
  - The inclusion of a post-2015 target on ECCE, supported by appropriate indicators, under an education post-2015 goal.
  - The integration of ECCE as a cross-cutting issue in other post-2015 development goals related to child development.
  - The inclusion of ECCE as a Strategic Priority in the Global Partnerships for Education's 2015-2018 Strategic Plan.

Topics and Speakers:

Topic	Speaker
Opening Remarks	Anthony Lake, Executive Director, UNICEF
The importance of a partnership in achieving early childhood (TBC)	Alice Albright, Chief Executive Officer, Global Partnership for Education
Why invest?	Professor Steven Barnett, Rutgers University Jacob Kragh, Chief Executive Officer, Lego Education
Investing Equitably	HE Shukuru Jumanne Kawambwa, Minister of Education and Vocational Training, Tanzania
Investing in Quality: the case of Brazil	Claudia Costin, Former Secretary of Education of the Municipality of Rio de Janeiro, Brazil Municipal Secretary of Education
Investing in Results	[HE Paul Rabary, Minister of Education, Madagascar]
Actions to reach all children with Early Childhood and Education	Michael Anderson, CEO, Children's Investment Fund Foundation

Henry Bonsu invites all panelists to endorse 'Call to Action to Invest in Early Childhood Care and Education'. Interventions from the floor can be in support of the Call to Action.

Respondents include:

- HE Maia Sandu, Minister of Education, Republic of Moldova
- Louise Zimanyi, Consultative Group on ECCD
- Caroline Arnold, Director of Education, Aga Khan Foundation
- Chernor Bah, Chair, Youth Advocacy Group – Global Education First Initiative