



Education and Skills Development  
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## EARLY LEARNING: GETTING THE BEST START POSSIBLE

Engaging in learning activities at home and in preschool, prior to entering Grade 1, is crucial for children's cognitive, development and impacts on their achievement in school. A child's early experiences contributes to the development of learning skills as well as social and emotional abilities. The April 2017 issue of the TIMSS newsletter focuses on the early learning experiences of South African children.

### TIMSS South Africa Spotlight on Early Learning

We are pleased to introduce a new publication format called *TIMSS-SA Spotlight*. In these publications we will focus on factors which affect achievement. Our first TIMSS-SA [Spotlight](#) focuses on the early learning experiences of Grade 5 children as reported by their parents. Using data from TIMSS Numeracy 2015, we explore early learning at home and school and the impact thereof on the learners' achievement.



### Quality Early Childcare as a Tool to Overcome Poverty

Linda Zuze explores the ground-breaking work of Nobel Laureate James Heckman who conducted a study on the benefits of quality childcare. Through this [analysis](#), she identifies important lessons for South African early childhood strategies.

### Early Learning: A Personal Experience

In the most recent blog, Ncamisile Zulu draws on her [personal experiences](#) of early learning at home to highlight the importance of early learning activities for children.

### The Impact of the Introduction of Grade R on Learning Outcomes

In 2012, a [study](#) was conducted by Prof Servaas van der Berg and colleagues for the Department of Performance Monitoring and Evaluation in the Presidency and the Department of Basic Education, which evaluated the impact of Grade R on test performance in Mathematics and Home Language for Grade 1 to 6 learners.

## What's Happening in Education Research?



### Wits University SARCHI

The [Wits Math's Connect-Primary Project](#) encompasses a suite of numeracy focused interventions which focus on both learners and teachers. Prof Hamsa Venkat, South African Numeracy Chair at Wits University, highlights a number of interventions which within this project.

### Rhodes University SARCHI

The Rhodes University South African Numeracy Chair Project (SANCP) runs several teacher, learner, family and community intervention projects. Prof Mellony Graven and Dr Debbie Stott outline two of their [flagship projects](#).

### Improving Primary Mathematics Education, Teaching and Learning

Building on two large numeracy projects in South Africa, this [book](#) edited by Prof Mellony Graven and Prof Hamsa Venkat, focuses on ways to improve the teaching and learning of primary level mathematics education within resource-constrained contexts.

## TIMSS Policy Roundtable

In March 2017, a HSRC policy roundtable was hosted titled *"Towards a more equal society: Perspectives of educational inequality in South Africa - A conversation between evidence and policy"*.

Using data from the 2011 and 2015 rounds of TIMSS, the aim was to contextualise Mathematics and Science achievement within the broader landscape of inequality and poverty. Key stakeholders came together to critically discuss key policy areas and emerging policy debates.

The presentations can be found [here](#).

## DBE Roadshow

The Department of Basic Education is currently hosting 27 roadshows across the country to provide detailed province specific analysis of both the 2015 Trends In Mathematics Science Study (TIMSS) report and the 2016 National Senior Certificate results. The aim is to provide the different role players in the education system with information that will allow them to develop credible plans to improve educational outcomes for their respective provinces. The DBE's Director General is engaging with 25,000 primary and secondary school principals, as well as provincial education officials. You can find more information on the provincial engagements [here](#).

## Interested in using TIMSS data for research?

If you are interested in working with us on publications based on the TIMSS data, please [contact us](#).

[www.timss-sa.org.za](http://www.timss-sa.org.za)