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CEA Newsletter

Centre for Evaluation and Assessment

Faculty of Education

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The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA)

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

The CEA can proudly look back on a very busy but successful year. We can look forward to an even more productive 2020, with preparations for the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2021 kicking off, the continuation of the Western Cape systemic testing project, and possibilities of extending the Teacher Assessment Resources for Monitoring and Improving Instruction (TARMII) project. We hope to collaborate with new partners on the Success for All project, Lightsail and Assure in community development work. Meanwhile, our postgraduate Assessment and Quality assurance programmes are flourishing, with more applicants every year. We expect two more graduates in the coming year and four submissions of completed dissertations early next year. A highlight for the new academic year is a book contract with Brill Publishers, a project we have been anticipating for a long time in collaboration with international authors.

The centre's vision continues for it to be a hub of specialist and expert knowledge in the fields of educational research and assessment. Through the application of assessment evidence, we hope that teaching and learning practices can be enhanced for the benefit of learners and society.

Dr Surette van Staden

Director: Centre for Evaluation and Assessment



Staff members of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment

The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) is an autonomous research unit within the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria which is supported by the Department of Science, Mathematics and Technology.

One of the Centre's flagship projects is the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) on which it works closely with the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), as well as several international research organisations that

coordinate and collaborate across the globe. The study has assessed fourth year reading comprehension in over 60 countries since 2001 and has set international benchmarks for reading comprehension. Staff at the Centre has been involved with the project since 2005.

Dr van Staden's television Interview on PIRLS



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LleHEN0ZdL0&feature=youtu.be>

*The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment would like to wish you
a merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year*

CEA HOSTS A SERIES OF PIRLS SEMINARS



The Centre for evaluation and Assessment (CEA) hosted a series of seminars from 28 June 2019 to further explore the findings of the international study Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2016). South Africa is one of over 50 countries world-wide who participated in the PIRLS 2016, conducted under the auspices of the International Association for the Evaluation for Educational Achievement (IEA). PIRLS assesses reading comprehension and monitors trends in reading literacy at five-year intervals.

Dr Surette van Staden's made the first presentation of the continuing PIRLS conversations entitled "*Moving beyond league table standings: How Measures of Opportunity to Learn (OTL) can inform educational quality and policy directives.*"

CEA researchers attend ECER 2019 in Hamburg

The European Educational Research Association (EERA) hosted their 2019 conference in Hamburg with the theme: "Education in an Era of Risk – the Role of Educational Research for the Future". The conference was attended by Dr Surette van Staden and Dr Celeste Combrinck from the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA). Dr van Staden was a discussant for a session entitled 'Growing up with a Heritage Language in Germany: Effects on further language skills'.

Dr Combrinck received the WERA-DiVER IEA visiting researcher award during a keynote session. The award is a joint collaboration by the World Education Research Association (WERA) and the International Association for research.

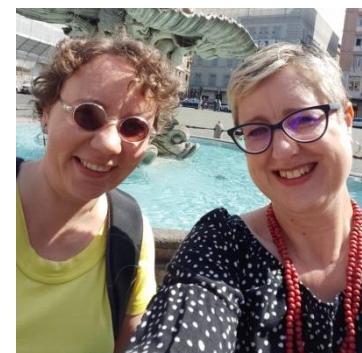


Teacher Professionalisation for Teaching Practice in Multilingual School Contexts

Dr Tobias Schoedler from the University of Hamburg visited the CEA and hosted a seminar to explore the teacher professionalization for teaching practice in multilingual school contexts. Dr Schroedler shared experiences from Hamburg on the preparation of teachers for multilingual classroom realities. Dr Schroedler looked at sociological and statistical knowledge on migration and multilingualism knowledge on how the German language works from the linguistic point of view.

The 3rd National Research Coordinators' meeting for PIRLS 2021 in Rome

The Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) Dr Surette van Staden attended the 3rd National Research Coordinators' meeting for the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2021). The meeting was held at the NH Collection Vittorio Veneto from the 2nd to the 7th June 2019. The purpose of the meeting was to review proposed reading passages and items, draft questionnaires and survey operations for the PIRLS 2021 PIRLS field tests. All countries participating in PIRLS 2021 will administer the same reading passages and items, but the rate at which different test forms are distributed in a country will be tailored to the population. This innovative design is meant to improve PIRLS' measurement of reading at all levels of the distribution for countries with varying reading proficiency while also increasing student engagement.



ITEMS DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR CURRO HOLDINGS

The Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) hosted a seminar to discuss the selection and development of English Home Language passages and items. Representatives from Curro Holdings also attended the seminar which took place on 21 June at the University of Pretoria's Groenkloof Research Commons. The purpose of the seminar, which was led by Mrs Karen Roux and Mr Gabriel Mokoena was to identify high quality passages for items development project. The CEA entered into an agreement with Curro Holdings to develop CAPS aligned assessment

items. The assessment items were developed with a formative assessment purpose in mind, that is, assessment resources meant to support teaching and learning. The assessment items are aligned to the Foundation Phase, Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase Home language. These items have information that will assist teachers to understand learners' misconceptions and challenges in learning with regard to the acquisition of knowledge and skills during the teaching and learning process.



THE SCHOOLS MONITORING SURVEY (SMS) PROJECT



The Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), Dr Surette van Staden expressed pride in the CEA's contribution towards the School Monitoring Survey (SMS) report which was released by the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga in April 2019. The SMS is a national survey that was commissioned by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in 2017 to measure South African ordinary public schools' progress towards achieving the key goals and indicators set out in Action Plan 2019 and in the Medium Term Strategic Framework 2014-2019.

PROGRESS IN INTERNATIONAL READING LITERACY STUDY (PIRLS) 2021

Over the last year, South Africa has been getting ready for participation in PIRLS 2021, the next cycle of the reading literacy assessment. In February 2019, the Questionnaire Development Group meeting was held in Liege, Belgium. A representative from South Africa forms part of the committee where items for inclusion in the context questionnaires were scrutinised before further discussion at June 2019 at the third National Research Coordinator Meeting which was held in Rome. At this meeting, achievement passages for inclusion in the field test were also discussed.

The PIRLS team prepared the sampling framework that was submitted to StatsCan by end of October. The data management seminar took place from 22-25 October in Hamburg, where representatives from the CEA and DBE learnt a lot about the data management for PIRLS. We can happily report that we tested four Grade 4 classes for purposes of assisting Boston College to populate the PIRLS 2021 field test scoring materials. English testing countries are invited to participate in this activity voluntarily. We regard it as a dry run for things to come!

THE WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT SYSTEMIC TESTING PROJECT



The CEA has also been involved in assisting the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) with the development and refinement of their systemic testing. The WCED systemic testing comprise Language and Mathematics test instruments for Grades 3, 6 and 9 in English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. The Centre's WCED team focuses on item development, analysis and refinement. The CEA uses sophisticated Item Response Theory analysis in the form of Rasch modeling to evaluate the functioning of the items, and teams of subject specialists refine the items based on the statistics and specialist knowledge. The collaboration has been on-going from 2010 with the latest contract ending in 2022.

Last Sinandawa receives training in quantitative methods

Last Sinandawa is an MEd student in Assessment and Quality assurance and his study uses the Trends in Mathematics and Science (TIMSS) 2015 study and the role parents play in valuing mathematics education for their children. Last was selected to attend quantitative analysis training during November 2019 at the Research in Economic Policy (ReSEP) institute at the Faculty of Economics at the University of Stellenbosch. This valuable training provided an opportunity for him to grow his skills and will certainly enable him to complete his analyses effectively.



Ms Nomahlubi Sitsha received her Masters' degree in Assessment and Quality Assurance in Education and Training at the Faculty of Education's autumn graduation ceremony held at the Hillcrest campus on the 16 of April 2019. Her Master's dissertation entitled "*Foundation phase reading and the transition into English in Grade 4: Teacher experiences and perceptions*" dealt with the perceptions and experiences of foundation phase and grade 4 teachers who teach English to learners whose mother tongue is not English. Nomahlubi deeply valued the guidance she received from her supervisors, Dr Surette van Staden (*Director of the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment*) and Dr Celeste Combrinck from the Science, Mathematics and Technology Education Department when conducting her research which focused on the teachers' perceptions and experiences when learners transition from learning in a home language – particularly an African language – into learning in English from Grade 4.

The CEA's postgraduate contribution to the Faculty's AQA teaching and learning

Assessment and Quality Assurance (AQA) honours, Masters, and PhD packages are housed in the CEA. Over and above supervising the Masters' and Doctoral students, the CEA is also involved with the teaching of honours modules. Mrs Karen Roux from the CEA teaches two honours-level modules. She is involved in the BEd Hons Assessment and Quality Assurance programme lecturing and supervising NMQ 755, a research module that assist students in writing and completing a research proposal. This research proposal then becomes part of the students' research module, namely AQA 780, also taught by Mrs Roux where students are required to practically apply what they have learned in the previous research methodology modules. This module focuses on the practical application of knowledge, skills, values and attitudes in order to conduct quantitative data analysis using the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) 2016 results.



Mary-Antoinette Dliwayo receives her PhD in Assessment and Quality Assurance

Mary-Antoinette Dliwayo received her PhD in Assessment and Quality Assurance on 6 September 2019. Her study explored the role of examinations as a tool for effective formative assessment practices in schools. She selected five schools and two districts in Gauteng involving more than 15 teachers in the Further Education and Training Phase. A pertinent finding of the study is that participating schools were committed to using standardised common examination question papers to prepare their learners for the final examinations without paying much attention to formative assessments. Another finding illustrated that teachers were not supported enough on how to use balanced assessment to transform classrooms. Dr Nelladee Palane Mcleod and dr Surette van Staden supervised Mary-Antoinette and her dissertation was favourably received by three international examiners from Brazil, Poland and Germany.

LANGUAGE CONUNDRUM IN EDUCATION FROM AN EMPIRICAL PERSPECTIVE

Colleagues from the Centre for Evaluation and Assessment (CEA), Dr Surette van Staden (Director) and Mishack Tshele (Data Manager) were invited to attend an early reading workshop hosted by the Research on Socio Economic Policy (RESEP) at the Faculty of Economics, University of Stellenbosch on the 4th and 5th July 2019. During the workshop, they presented their work, titled "The language in education conundrum from an empirical perspective: Using evidence to inform policy" which is based on Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS 2016) analyses that focuses on performance by language when controlling for different contextual factors.

While this work is still being developed, the issue of African language testing as a continuation of prePIRLS 2011 analyses showed that African children stand to be disadvantaged most when testing takes place in an African language. Among critical questions asked in the presentation was the question "What are the differences in reading literacy achievement of Grade 4 learners between home language and language of the test across the 11 official languages with English test language as reference category?" the workshop was attended by academics from different universities across the country and government officials from different directorates.

Dr Surette van Staden appointed as associate editor for Reading and Writing

In April 2019, dr Surette van Staden was appointed as associate editor for Reading and Writing. Reading, an open access, peer reviewed interdisciplinary and inter-professional scholarly journal that explores how literacy is defined, enacted and promoted in a range of institutional, socio-cultural and disciplinary contexts. The journal focuses particularly within Africa and other developing countries and relates to transnational and translocal literacies associated with immigrants and mobile people in African settings. The journal is DHET accredited and is indexed in Web of Science among others.

CEA'S DATA MANAGER ATTENDS A PIRLS 2021 DATA SEMINAR IN HAMBURG, GERMANY



Mr Mishack Tshele attended the PIRLS 2021 Field Test Data Management Seminar at Holiday Inn Hotel Hamburg, Germany on 22 – 25 October 2019. The purpose of the seminar was to provide participating countries with information necessary to conduct the PIRLS 20201 field test within-school sampling, to make national adaptations codebooks and online questionnaires as well as to manage data entry tasks.



CEA DIRECTOR'S MEDIA CONVERSATIONS ON MOTHER-TONGUE EDUCATION

The debate around the value of mother-tongue education, specifically with regard to the development of cognitive function and reading ability in young children, has once again been making headlines. This following president Ramaphosa's promise to prioritise mother-tongue education and early literacy during his state of the nation address. We ventured out to find out more. <https://youtu.be/TRhnVD9NcAc>

Is there room for minority languages, like Afrikaans, in South-Africa? Has Afrikaans dropped the label of language of the oppressor? What lessons are to be learnt from Afrikaans' development which might guide and enable the development of other indigenous South African languages?

<https://youtu.be/W9vnC0VSMYA>

We discuss the value of mother-tongue education. What should the department of basic education do with regard to language and language policy with regard to education in South Africa?

<https://youtu.be/bpHjgzTEYKI>



RESEARCH OUTPUTS

CEA'S PUBLICATIONS FOR 2019

- Van Staden, S., Combrinck, C., Roux, K., Tshele, M. & Mcleod Palane, N. (2019). Moving beyond league table standings: How Measures of Opportunity to Learn (OTL) can inform educational quality and policy directives. *South African Journal of Childhood Education*. doi.org/10.4102/sajce.v9i1.712.
- Mihai, M. & van Staden, S. (2019). Experiences, challenges and successes: Early reading comprehension practices in resource-constrained settings with children from linguistically diverse backgrounds. *Journal of humanities*, 3(59), 436-450. doi.org/10.17159/2224-7912/2019/v59n3a8.
- Van Staden, S. & Palane Mcleod, N. (2019). The Language in Education conundrum from an empirical perspective: Using evidence to inform policy. In M. Omidire. *Multilingualism in the classroom*. Cape Town: UCT press.
- McLeod Palane, N. & Howie, S. (2018). *Comparing higher-order reading comprehension performance for different language of instruction models in primary schools*. Perspectives in Education 37(1).
- Roux, K., Mtsatse, N. & Long, C. (2018). A comparison of text difficulty in systemic assessment using Lexile theory, *Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies*, 36:4, 291-300, doi/abs/10.2989/16073614.2018.1548290
- Combrinck, C. & Mtsatse, N. (2019). Reading on Paper or Reading digitally? Reflections and implications of ePIRLS 2016 in South Africa. *South African Journal of Education*, 39(4).