



The reading literacy crisis in South Africa - What can an Academy of Science do?

Date: 19 June 2023

Time: 12:00—15:00

Venue: Stellenbosch Institute for Advanced Studies (STIAS) Marais Rd, Mostertsdraai, Stellenbosch

RSVP: [Click here](#) to indicate your attendance

You are probably aware of the alarming results of the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) which found that 81% of grade 4 children in South Africa cannot read and understand the content of a grade-appropriate text; this result is actually worse than the 2016 PIRLS report which observed that 78% of children in grade 4 were unable to read for comprehension. In 2016 on the eve of International Literacy Day, the United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stated that Literacy stands at the heart of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

He elaborated further saying that Literacy serves as a foundation for sustainable societies, gender equality, and human rights as well as initiatives to eradicate severe poverty and advance everyone's wellbeing and therefore, the objective of one of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) is to ensure that everyone has access to opportunities for quality education throughout their life (SDG Goal 4: Quality Education).

The Academy of Science of South Africa has in its membership some of the most accomplished scholars and scientists in the world whose collective wisdom could assist in understanding this crisis and provide some useful solutions to deal with the issue. After all, the literacy crisis has substantial and long-term ramifications for schools, institutions, and society that go far beyond grade 4 reading. The deteriorating literacy level has the potential to hinder South Africa's socio-economic endeavors, including the reduction of inequality and is therefore a priority issue for the youth as well as the future of the country.

On behalf of ASSAf, I would like to cordially invite you to a roundtable discussion on the nature of the issue, its underlying causes, and possible solutions from the vantage point of an academy of science. I will facilitate the discussion with expert inputs from reading experts but most of the time will be open for your contributions to understanding and resolving the reading literacy crisis.

Prof Jonathan D Jansen, President, Academy of Science of South Africa



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