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Preschool year and improved school attainment : study of Birth-to-Twenty cohort.

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ABSTRACT

The demand for access to education for all children has in recent years become a focus for many countries, including South Africa. In this context, preschool attendance has also gained prominence, tagged conspicuously to attempts for improving the system's internal efficiency. There is, however, little empirically based work done in South Africa that has made a case for quantifiable educational benefits of early childhood development (ECD).

This study has made use of the largest and longest longitudinal birth cohort study dataset on the continent of Africa (Birth to Twenty), to measure statistically significant correlations between attendance at preschool and grade repetition. Although preschool attendance made a statistical significant point difference of 6.6%, in-depth analysis of the data show that this difference is arguably too little for effecting systemic changes.

The study recommends that further research is required to identify those factors affecting preschool effectiveness. It also recommends the need for strategies that can be used to manage the transition from preschool to grade 1.