

# Press Release



SOUTH AFRICAN  
INSTITUTE OF  
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## South Africa's literacy level lower than other emerging markets despite spending more

Despite spending more money on education, South Africa's adult literacy level remains lower than those of various other emerging markets, according to the latest *South Africa Survey*, published by the South African Institute of Race Relations in Johannesburg this week.

South Africa's public education spending as a proportion of total government spending amounted to 18% in 2009/10.

Data sourced from the United Nations Development Programme's *Human Development Report* shows that South Africa has an adult literacy rate of 89%. The UN defines the adult literacy rate as the proportion of people aged 15 years and above who can read, write, and speak.

Chile and Indonesia, whose education expenditure as a proportion of total government spending was also 18%, had adult literacy rates of 98.6% and 92% respectively. Lithuania and Poland recorded among the highest adult literacy rates for emerging markets at 99.7% and 99.5%, with their expenditure amounting to only 13% and 12% respectively. Hungary and Bulgaria both had an education expenditure of only 10% and achieved adult literacy rates of 99% and 98% respectively.

Of the BRICS grouping, Brazil, Russia and China all had higher adult literacy rates than South Africa. Brazil's adult literacy rate stood at 90% although its education expenditure was only 16% of total government expenditure. There was no data on Russia, China, or India's education expenditure. However, both Russia and China have higher adult literacy rates at 99.5% and 93.7% respectively. Of the BRICS grouping, India has the lowest adult literacy rate at 62.8%.

According to Mr Jonathan Snyman, a researcher at the Institute, South Africa's relatively high education expenditure is not enough to address the issue of poor education results. 'Despite spending more on education, South Africa is not yielding the same results as other emerging markets. The way forward relies on strengthening the quality of teaching at school level and focusing on the commitment of teachers and principals,' he said.

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