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A Study of the Microdynamics of Early Childhood Learning

4 November 2025 (Tue)
16:30–18:00

WYL314, 3/F, Dorothy Y. L. Wong
Building, Lingnan University



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BIOGRAPHY

Jin Zhou currently works at the Department of Economics and Finance at the City University of Hong Kong. Her primary fields are Applied Microeconomics, Applied Econometrics, and Development Economics. She currently focuses on research on one of the largest early childhood interventions in the world, the China REACH project, especially on understanding the child skill development process and designing and studying interventions aimed at accelerating the child learning process. She received her Ph.D. in economics from the University of Western Ontario and worked as a postdoctoral scholar at the University of Chicago. Her research work has been published in the Journal of Political Economy, Journal of Labor Economics, Journal of Econometrics, Review Economic Dynamics, and Pediatrics.

ABSTRACT

This paper investigates the weekly evolution of child skills as measured by unique data from a widely-emulated early childhood home-visiting program developed in Jamaica, adapted to rural China, and applied in different versions worldwide. The design of the study avoids problems of endogeneity of inputs and lack of truly comparable measures of skills across children that plague previous econometric studies of child development. Skills that are nominally classified as the same, in fact, do not appear to share a common unit scale across levels. They are produced by skill-specific, lifecycle-stage-specific technologies. We formulate and estimate a new dynamic stochastic skill production model for multiple skills that is consistent with the evidence. We quantify the dynamics of early life learning. The model explains the “fadeout” of measures of learning sometimes attributed to forgetting or depreciation of skills. We investigate the role of ability in learning. We find important differences in learning patterns between boys and girls.