

THE DEVELOPMENT OF EDUCATION

Country Report of South Africa



Department of Education

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1. Introduction

The 47th International Conference on Education is an opportunity for the nations of the world to collectively assess the progress being made on achieving the promise of quality education for all young people. The Dakar Declaration committed countries to provide basic education for all, and ensure that young people from 12 to 20 gain access to quality and relevant educational experiences that prepare them for the challenges they face in their futures. It reminded policy-makers that democratic participation in both social and economic life requires that larger numbers of young people gain access to education beyond the basic minimum. The Millennium Declaration, and more recently, declarations on Sustainable Development, continue to challenge governments, the private sector, and civil society to invest in the education and training of young people. These declarations are driven by the understanding that education is a key factor of economic growth as well as holistic social development. For instance, sustainable development needs citizens that are able and willing to address a range of complex economic, social, and environmental challenges.

This challenge comes at an opportune moment; South Africa is celebrating the tenth anniversary of its democracy. Since 1994 the government - and the country as a whole - has been engaged in a national project of transformation aimed at transforming government, civil society, and the economy. Education for young people, in particular, has undergone dramatic change: a single unified system based on the principles of equity and redress has been built from the formerly fragmented and racially divided education system. In the last ten years the new government has established a new legal and policy framework for education and training within the overarching Reconstruction and Development Programme.

In South Africa, children between about 6 and 13 are educated in primary schools, while the majority of young people between 14 and about 18 are enrolled in secondary schools. In 2000, 6 162 706 young people aged 12 to 18 attended 16 863 primary schools, 5 624 secondary schools, and 4 302 combined or middle schools. Young people in the upper age range attend public and private further education and training institutions or are enrolled in work related learnerships.

South Africa has experience with both policy development and the rigours of implementation. In the first five years of democratic government, significant gains were made in policy formulation and the establishment of necessary implementation systems. In 1999 there was a shift away from a focus on policy development towards an emphasis on delivery. Education departments (national and provincial) focused their attention more strongly on improving the teaching environment and enhancing learning achievement. *Tirisano* - a programme of action that called on all stakeholders to work together for a quality education for all - formed the core of the new emphasis on service delivery in education.

This country report outlines the key challenges South Africa faces in providing quality education for all young people. It describes the innovative new policies that have been developed since 1994, the configuration of institutions providing education, and the extent of access by young people to those institutions. The substantial gains that have been made in improving output and transforming poorly performing or dysfunctional schools are highlighted, along with achievements in reducing levels of inequality generally, and for young women in particular.

While substantial progress has been made in the last decade towards providing quality education for all young people, a number of serious challenges lie ahead. Unemployment - particularly for young people first entering the labour market - remains one of the most vexing problems facing South Africa in the age of globalisation. This problem challenges education institutions serving young people to provide the kinds of education and training necessary to meet the complexities of this information age. Poverty and AIDS also affect schooling profoundly.

Aside from these societal challenges, there are also educationally specific problems that have to be addressed. In the next decade, the basic knowledge and skills of many young people entering the secondary education and training sector will need to be improved, as will the output in mathematics and science. To remain globally competitive, it is imperative that the system produces more young people with high levels of knowledge and skills in mathematics, science, and technology. It must also ensure that all graduates of the vocationally-oriented further education and training sector are equipped with mathematics and science literacy. While

these learning areas are an important focus in the age of globalisation, it is also acknowledged that culture, language, and values are vital to building societies with social cohesion and entrenching a commitment to cultural, religious, and linguistic diversity.

These are some of the challenges that South Africa will have to overcome in order to improve the political and economic development of young people in our country.

1.1 The Social, Economic, Political, and Cultural Context of Young People

Young people have played a leading part in the transformation of South Africa. From the role that today's leaders played in the ANC Youth League in the 1940s, to the student uprisings in 1976, young people both in and out of school have carried a disproportionate share of the burden of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid. The first democratic elections in 1994, which culminated in the installation of Nelson Mandela as the new President, marked a turning point for young people and for the country as a whole.

Under apartheid, young people were divided along racial lines and social exclusion. In fact, the neglect of the majority of young people was part of state policy. In addition, the country was isolated and economically moribund. Growth had declined to below 1% per annum in the decade before 1994 and by the early 1990s had come to a standstill. Public sector debt had ballooned out of control. Young people's human and civil rights were routinely abused by the police and the justice system, while the South African Defence Force fought a clandestine war against the liberation movement, often targeting youth and student movements.

After the 1994 election, the new South African government undertook a wide range of initiatives - of both a policy and programmatic nature - to improve the lives of young people. Under the banner of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), the new government committed itself to:

- Meeting basic needs,
- Building the economy,
- Democratising the State and society more generally,
- Developing human resources,
- Nation-building.

An important part of this reconstruction were new education policies, particularly within the area of secondary education. At the core was the establishment of a high-quality and integrated education and training system. The goal was that young people would be able to gain access to a broad set of knowledge, skills, and values but that the system would also facilitate access to the specialised training relevant needed to function within a dynamic and rapidly globalising economy.

2. Trends

This section examines some major trends related to the quality of education for young people.

In the past ten years South Africa has expended considerable energy on developing a new legislative and policy framework. Although not fully realised, the framework provides a clear vision for the development of a system built on the principles of democracy, human rights, and equality. This framework is a core component of the national human resource development strategy.

This section also briefly describes the institutional landscape. South Africans are justifiably proud of the high level of secondary school enrolment. However, the poor quality of this education - a problem inherited from the apartheid government - is a problem that the new government had to address. Significant strides have been made in transforming dysfunctional schools into learning centres, and in increasing the number of young people who complete secondary education.

In addition, there has been substantial progress in reducing the levels of inequality in the

school system. Financial inequities - both inter- and intra-provincial - have been reduced and there has been a dramatic improvement in the delivery of basic infrastructure to historically disadvantaged communities. One of the most striking improvements has been in ensuring that girls and young women gain access to secondary education.

2.1 Policy

Since the first democratic elections in 1994 the South African government has put in place policies that are specifically designed to address the legacies of Apartheid. *The South African Schools Act*, *the Further Education and Training Act*, and, in particular, *the South African Qualifications Authority Act* have transformed the education policy environment. In addition, the new curriculum framework and the Revised National Curriculum Statement have addressed the complex and multifaceted education needs of young people.

The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996), which is often cited as one of the most progressive in the world, provides the legal and moral basis for education. It emphatically grounds the new system in principles of democracy, equality, human rights and freedoms, non-racialism, and non-sexism. The Constitution guarantees that everyone has a right to a basic education. This right has been defined, in subordinate legislation, as compulsory education for all children from the age of seven to fifteen. The Constitution also requires government to take reasonable measures to make secondary education progressively available to all.

The promulgation of the *South African Schools Act* was an important milestone in the transformation of education as it laid the foundation for a unitary and non-racial system of school governance and funding. The law incorporated provisions for the promotion of access, quality, and democratic governance of schools and laid down the legal framework for equalisation and redress of historical patterns of school financing. In line with the strong commitment to promoting democratic participation, the South African parliament boldly ruled that young people in secondary schools should have a statutory right to participate in the governance of their schools. *The South African Schools Act* made provision for elected representative councils of learners to give voice to young people.

Of particular relevance to young people preparing to make the transition from school to the world of work was the *Further Education and Training Act*, the Education White Paper 4 on Further Education and Training, and the National Strategy for Further Education and Training. These progressive policy directives provide the basis for the development of a nationally coordinated further education and training system that brings together senior secondary components of schools and institutions focused on technical and vocational training. The new policy framework requires these institutions to become responsive to the curricula and related needs of young people.

The South African Qualifications Authority Act draws the various legislative threads together through the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework. Designed to establish a scaffold for a new national learning system, the National Qualifications Framework facilitates the integration of education and training programmes and qualifications at all educational levels. This policy innovation was both a key component of the national human resource strategy (a means of maintaining standards and assuring quality), and a guarantor that the historical inequities in access education would be eliminated. By allowing for the portability of qualifications, the flexibility of learning programmes, and by providing a variety of access points to learning, the National Qualifications Framework is an important part of the wider enabling environment in which young people can gain access to quality and relevant education and training.

Although education and training specific legislation and policies have a direct and immediate impact on the quality of education for young people, policies emanating from Department of Labour are playing an increasingly important role in ensuring an effective transition from education and training to the world of work. In particular, the introduction of the *Skills Development Act* (1998) and more recently the National Skills Development Strategy is having, and will continue to have, a substantial impact on the lives of young people.

The National Skills Development Strategy is designed to address the incongruity of skills shortages in some sectors of the economy and existence of a large number of unemployed job

seekers who do not have the necessary skills or experience to work. The objectives of the strategy include:

- Developing a culture of high-quality, life-long, learning,
- Fostering skills development in the formal economy to increase productivity and foster employment growth,
- Stimulating and supporting skills development in small businesses,
- Promoting skills development for employability and sustainable livelihoods through social development initiatives,
- Assisting new job seekers become employed.

The policy is funded by a skills development levy on registered employers, most of which can be reclaimed by conducting appropriate training. Twenty per cent of the levy is paid into a National Skills Fund to address priority skills needs, and train unemployed people and other vulnerable people in areas where there is a strong potential for growth and employment. The levy also funds the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs) which are key partners in the implementation of the National Skills Development Strategy. These sector-specific training authorities are responsible for incorporating accredited learning into real-world working sites through "learnerships". These learnerships are registered with specific economic sector agencies and offers new workers opportunities for workplace-based learning. This will, it is believed, provide the necessary intermediate and higher vocational skills required for economic growth and social development.

2.2 Institutional Landscape

All children in South Africa are expected to complete nine years of basic education culminating with the award of a General Education and Training Certificate (GETC) at the end of Grade 9. After completion of the GETC a number of options are available to young people. They may

- Enter the world of work either directly or through one of the proposed 60 000 learner ships to be offered in the next few years,
- Pursue technically and vocationally oriented study at a specialised Further Education and Training College,
- Continue their further education in more traditional academic secondary schools.

While the vast majority of learners attend public schools after Grade 9, South Africa has a small independent (private) school system that serves about 3% of the nation's young. In addition to traditional secondary schools (i.e. comprehensive, technical and special), an increasing number of young people over 16 are enrolled in public and private further education and training colleges. These institutions are primarily designed to equip young people with technical and vocational skills directly related to the labour market.

In 2000, 34 of every 100 pupils in public schools were enrolled in secondary grades (Grade 8-12). Of the 27 760 institutions nationally, 971 were registered as independent schools and 26 789 as public schools. Within the public sector 16 863 schools were registered as primary, 5624 as secondary, and the remaining 4 302 were registered as combined, intermediate or middle schools (Department of Education, 2002a).

Table 1. Number of Learners in Public and Independent Schools by Grade in 2000

Average Age	Grade	Students	Phase
12	Grade 6	100 8782	Intermediate Phase General Education and Training
13	Grade 7	936 454	
14	Grade 8	1 039 547	
15	Grade 9	922 566	Senior Phase General Education and Training
16	Grade 10	936 962	
17	Grade 11	724 192	
18	Grade 12	594 203	Further Education and Training
	TOTAL	6 162 706	

Source: Department of Education, 2001

In the past five years, the provincial education departments have been actively involved in transforming the further education and training institutional landscape. Fifty revamped and multi-campus further education and training (FET) colleges are now mandated to offer new and relevant technical and vocational programmes. The FET college sector is an important source of education and training for young people but also plays a vital role in the training and re-training of adults. (In fact, only 34% of college students in 1998 were younger than 19).

While the majority of the 350 000 college students register in formal programmes leading to national certificates in engineering (mechanical, civil and electrical) and business studies, the colleges offer a wide range of study opportunities, like Aviation Metal Theory, Aircraft Theory, Motor Machining Theory, Metalliferous Mining, Animal Production, Dairy Production, Jewellery Design and Jewellery Manufacturing. The large number of National Certificates and National N Diplomas issued in 2003 is indicative of the contribution of the Further Education and Training Colleges towards the development of the intermediate skills needed for economy.

The newly established learnership programme, while small in terms of the number of young people served (64 000 people since the 2003 Growth and Development Summit), will increasingly become an important component in the wider configuration of institutional types for young people. Learnerships will provide young people with work-related experience and accredited training.

Higher education is clearly an important component in the configuration of institutions serving young people. Under apartheid, higher education students were predominately white. By 2000 this situation had changed dramatically; over 60% of registered higher education students were black. Of the 345 403 students in higher education in 2000:

- 178 654 were African,
- 122 461 were white,
- 15 853 were coloured, and
- 28 054 were Indian.

South Africa continues to restructure the higher education landscape. The aim of the restructuring process is to eliminate unnecessary institutional duplication, increase student numbers in the next 10 to 15 years, increase access for black and female students in under-represented areas, and establish university centres of excellence. The number of higher education institutions has been reduced from 36 to 23 through institutional mergers. The new system will be comprised of 11 universities, six universities of technology, and six comprehensive institutions (offering both university and vocationally-oriented programmes). A new funding formula for higher education is being implemented which will reward higher throughput rates and provide earmarked funding for academic development initiatives designed to improve the success rates of students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

In 1994, the new government inherited a skewed system that not only disadvantaged black students, but also failed to meet the social and economic needs of the country. In the past ten years, the Department of Education (which is constitutionally accountable for higher education), has engaged stakeholders in developing policies to make the sector more equitable, transform the size and shape of the sector, and ensure that it addresses the human resource requirements of the country. To enhance access for poorer students, the government established the National Student Financial Aid Scheme. By 2004, the Scheme has awarded R4 billion in loans to 360 000 students.

2.3 Access

One of the most robust features of the South African education and training sector is the high level of access and participation of young people. Access and participation - particularly of appropriately aged learners - improved dramatically from the situation in the late 1980s, when protests against the inequities of apartheid disrupted schools massively.

Participation rates for primary and secondary education increased in the years immediately prior to 1994. In the past ten years both primary and secondary enrolment has stabilised. While the net enrolment ratios in secondary schools have stabilised to around 65% (Table 3), improved throughput rates and a normalisation of the age grade structure have translated into

lower gross enrolment ratios (Department of Education, 2003b). Given only nominal projected growth of the 14-18 aged population in the period 2005-2015, it is unlikely that South Africa will experience another dramatic expansion in secondary enrolment in the near future, although most recent data suggests a further increase in enrolment.

Table 2. Number of Learners and Growth Rates in Public Schools: 1997 and 2000

Level	1997	2000	Total percentage growth	Average annual percentage growth
Primary	8 088 979	7 399 913	-8.5	-2.9
Secondary	3 933 341	3 974 935	1.1	0.4
Total	12 022 320	11 374 848	-5.4	-1.8

Source: Adapted from Perry, 2004

Table 3. Net Enrolment Rates for Secondary Schools: 1997 to 2001

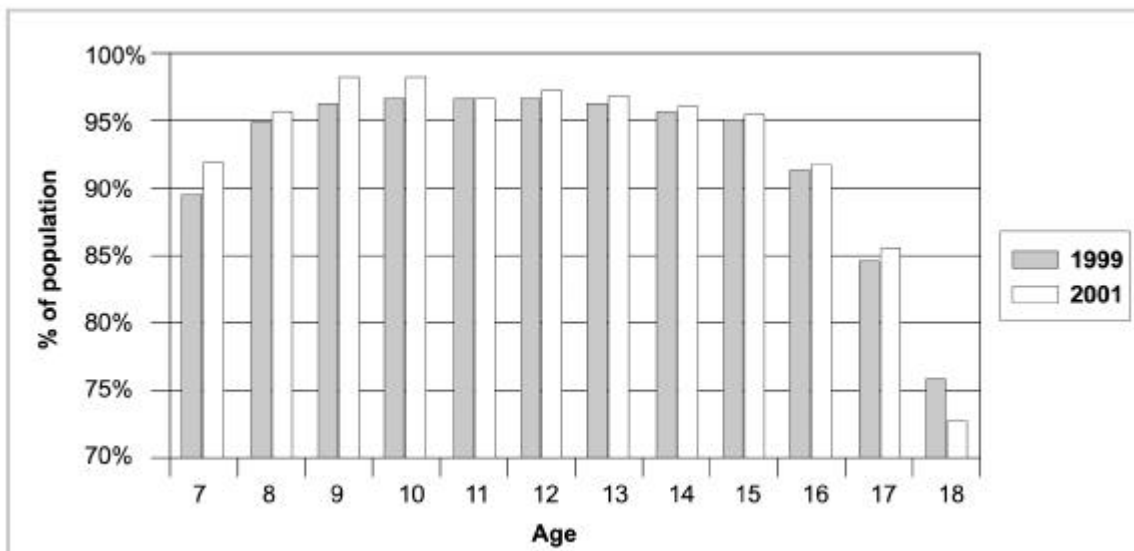
Year	Both	Male	Female
1997	59%	56%	63%
1998	61%	58%	65%
1999	61%	58%	64%
2000	60%	56%	62%
2001	56%	61%	68%

Source: Department of Education, 2004

International comparisons suggest that South Africa's secondary enrolment is high (UNESCO, 2003). Enrolment of young people from 12 to 20 years in South Africa compares favourably, not only with the median gross and net enrolment rates in Sub-Saharan Africa, but with the median for developing countries as a whole. Possibly the most impressive part of the access has to do with the high participation of young women.

Within this mainly positive picture, however, a new and disconcerting trend is emerging. Figure 2 below shows the change in the age specific enrolment rates between 1999-2001. There is increasing evidence of a decline in participation among learners aged between 16 and 18. This may be linked to pressures from teachers and principals for learners to leave school if it seems that they will not pass the secondary school-leaving examinations. While further education is not guaranteed in the same way as basic education, and as such the government is not obliged to ensure universal enrolment, these declines are viewed as unacceptable (Department of Education, 2003a). The department has initiated action to identify institutions that condone such practices because it recognises that the intermediate- and mid-level skills targets will not be attained if this pattern persists. .

Figure 1. Age-specific Enrolment Rates: 1999 to 2001



Recently, Human Rights Watch (2004) identified the difficulties faced by children and teenagers attending schools on commercial farms, which constitutes 3% of children in the public school system. These schools generally have the least resources, and more often than not have no electricity, drinking water, or sanitation. The buildings in which schooling occurs are often inadequate for learning, and learning materials are often absent. In addition, children who attend these schools frequently face harassment from farm owners, who use children to harvest crops, or assist with farm activities.

The government has addressed these problems by facilitating the conversion of schools on commercial farms to ordinary government-managed public schools - with limited farmer responsibility - through a process of contracts with the farm owners. Unfortunately, the process of concluding these contracts has sometimes been slow. A Ministerial Committee on Rural Education has been appointed, which will advise on possible approaches to such schools.

2.4 School Improvement and Education Quality

One of the most significant (and positive) trends in the quality of education for young South Africans is the improvement in the output rate of the secondary school system in the past ten years. The improvements are evidenced in both the number of students passing their secondary certificate examinations overall, and in the growth in the number of students that receive university entrance passes:

- In 1996, approximately 280 000 passed their secondary school examinations. By 2003 the number had increased to over 320 000.
- In 1999, 63 725 students received university-entrance passes. By 2003 this number had risen to 82 010 (Perry, 2004).

The overall pass rate in the Grade 12 secondary certificate examinations has risen significantly, from 49% in 1999 to 73% in 2003. A similar trend is apparent with students awarded university entrance passes; from 12.5% in 1997 to 18.6% in 2003.

Secondary School Improvement

Secondary school improvement, as reflected in the better examinations results, must be viewed against the prevailing conditions of secondary education less than a decade ago. A leading researcher (Christie, 1998: 291) commented in her 1998 study of the culture of learning and teaching in South Africa's secondary schools:

The schools we visited showed clear signs of organisational breakdown in both structures and processes. There were problems with management and administration, including weak and unaccountable authority structures. For example, in one of the schools, the principal had not attended regularly for the past 18 months and the school was run by a deputy who was reluctant to take full authority. In another school, the principal, who portrayed himself to us as a dynamic leader, was resented by staff for his lack of accountability.

In most of the schools in the COLT studies, information was poorly communicated, disciplinary and grievance procedures were vague or non-existent, staff meetings were not held regularly and there was evidence that meetings procedure, record keeping and general administration were poor. Furthermore, in the COLT schools, time boundaries were not maintained. Schools were unable to enforce a full working day or week for students and staff, and students, staff and principals themselves often came late to school and left early. A common practice was for numbers of students to leave school premises at lunch break and not return for the rest of the day. Whole school days were cancelled for sporting activities and schools readily closed early for sporting events. Unnecessary timetable confusions accentuated the sense of unpredictability about the school day. Difficulties in scheduling and keeping appointments with us as researchers provided further evidence of the haphazard timetabling and cancellation of classes in these schools.

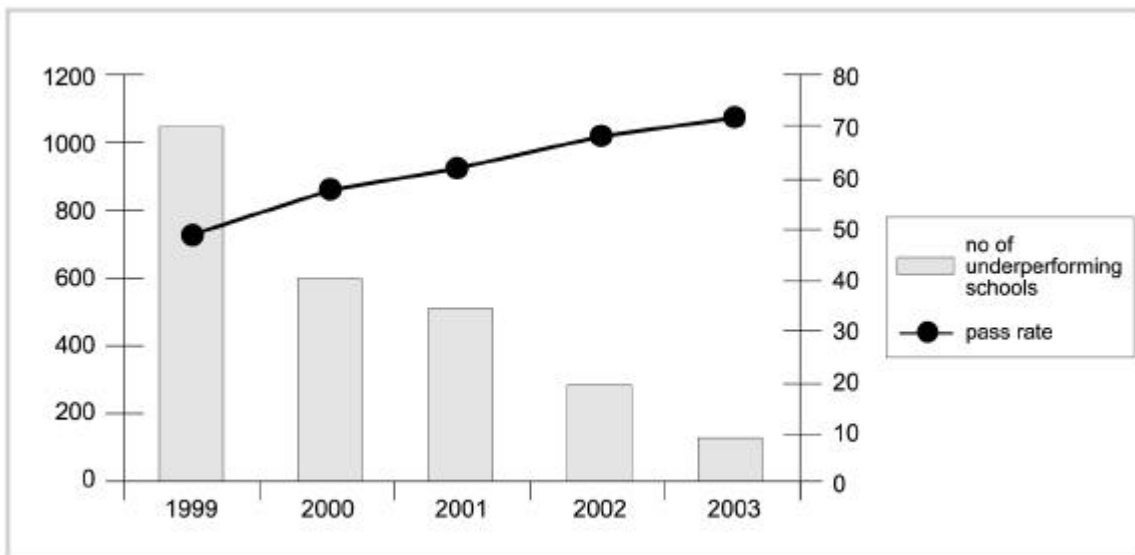
In short, boundaries of time no longer acted as stable predictors for school activities or reliable predicates for discipline.

Space boundaries were also transgressed. Problems from local communities spilt over into schools; violence of all sorts threatened the safety of students, teachers and principals, alcohol and drugs were peddled through fences and the authority of the principal and staff did not prevail over the symbolic or material space of the school. In short, organisational rituals, discipline and boundaries were simply not working and their dysfunction was part of the culture - the 'informal logic' of daily life of these schools.

In 1999, the Tirisano Programme of Action prioritised transforming these dysfunctional schools. The success of this programme can be measured by the dramatic decline in the number of schools that performed extremely poorly in the secondary certificate examinations. The number of dysfunctional secondary schools (defined as those schools with pass rates below 20%) decreased as follows:

- In 2000, the number dropped from 1034 in 1999 to 559,
- In 2001, the number decreased by a further 87,
- In 2003 the number of schools with pass rates below 20% dropped to 154 out of 6 045 secondary schools. This represents a decline in the proportion of failing schools dropped from about 20% of the total number of secondary schools in 1999 to 2.5% of the total number in 2003.

Figure 2. Secondary Certificate Examination Pass Rate and Number of Under Performing Schools: 1999 to 2003



The success achieved in transforming dysfunctional schools is largely due to the energetic commitment of students, teachers, school managers, parents, and provincial and national education officials to various government-initiated activities. Provincial departments of education began applying stricter accountability measures to these schools while providing specific intervention programmes to support improvement initiatives within the schools. For example, after 1999 all Grade 12 learners in dysfunctional schools were required to write additional preparatory examinations between June and September and were offered additional classes after school hours, on weekends, and during holidays.

Although the application of strong forms of accountability has produced some unanticipated side-effects - for instance, some schools use subtle forms of student exclusion in attempt to artificially boost pass rates, as we suggested earlier - the overall success with poorly performing schools is remarkable. Even critics concede that there is little doubt that the unprecedented political pressure on the school system to perform has translated into system-wide secondary school improvement (Taylor, 2003). The trend towards continued improvement in the next few years will be reinforced with the following new policies and interventions:

- An **Integrated Quality Management System** has been developed to strengthen the link between teacher performance appraisal and the functionality of schools.
- **Budgets re-prioritised towards quality improvement.** Provincial and national governments have adopted budgetary targets to promote increased spending on non-personnel education inputs such as teacher development, resource materials, learner support materials, and infrastructure.

Reading and Mathematics Competence

Despite the improvements, the low levels of achievement in reading and mathematics continue to be a concern.

During the past decade, concerns about quality have primarily focused on the performance of students in the secondary certificate examinations. In recent years, a number of systemic evaluations and cross-national studies of quality in primary schools have raised other concerns. Since 1999, the Department of Education has put in motion a new set of systemic evaluations that occur at the end of Grades 3, 6 and 9. In addition, South Africa has participated in three cross-national studies of quality and achievement:

- The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (Repeat) TIMMS (R),
- The Monitoring of Learning Achievement (MLA) project,
- The Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Quality (SACMEQ).

In the Third International Mathematics and Science Study, South Africa scored below the international average for the 38 countries that participated in the study. Of concern, South Africa's average score for both mathematics and science was well below that of countries with comparable economic and education profiles, such as Tunisia, Chile and the Philippines. Some researchers have suggested that South Africa's open access and high participation rates are higher by twenty to forty percentage points at least than comparable countries. A secondary analysis of the same results also found that school level, rather than classroom factors, played a highly significant role in the pupils' mathematics achievement, and those pupils who performed poorly on language of instruction tests would also be likely to perform poorly in the mathematics test. Subsequent studies have consistently pointed to poor aggregated performance of young people in both the language of school teaching and mathematics, although assessing these results in terms of expected performance given resources and context, remains an important point in tracking actual performance levels.

The results of the SACMEQ (2004) study show similar results. While the cross-national studies have a number of methodological problems, and the national and province systemic evaluations are primarily designed to establish base-line levels of performance, the studies' results are a major concern particularly given the high levels of state expenditure on education. The pattern in the various studies of achievement suggest that many of South Africa's students, particularly amongst the most disadvantaged learners, enter secondary education without being equipped with the reading and mathematics competence to succeed at more demanding levels of schooling.

There are deep-seated reasons for this poor performance. Historically, the past government had a deliberate policy to suppress the quality of education provided to the majority of learners. The legacy of this policy is the many teachers were never allowed to acquire the necessary skills and expertise to teach these skills adequately with the consequence that this poor learner performance in reading and mathematics endures (Department of Education, 2003a).

Concerns about Mathematics and Science Output

The proportion of young people completing secondary schools with a relatively high-level knowledge of, and skills in, mathematics and science is insufficient to meet the demands of an increasingly technologically-dependent economy, as stated in the National Human Resource Development Strategy.

Table 4. Number of Senior Certificate Candidates who Wrote and Passed, in Total and at Higher Grade: 1997, 1999, and 2001

Subject	Year	Total number of candidates writing	Total number of candidates passing	% pass rate	HG candidates only	HG candidates passing	% HG pass rate
	1997	252617	116836	46.3	68451	22798	33.3
	1999	281304	122225	43.4	50105	19854	39.6
Mathematics	2001	263945	123149	46.7	34870	19504	55.9
	1997	141278	91538	64.8	76086	26971	35.4
	1999	160949	102896	63.9	66486	24191	36.4
Physical science	2001	153847	105552	68.6	48996	24280	49.6

Table 4 shows that while the total number of students passing their final examinations in mathematics and science is on the increase, those students writing and passing the subjects on a higher grade (the standard required for entry into engineering, natural and health science, and commerce degrees at universities) has declined since 1997. Put another way, only 4.3% of the total number of students who entered the secondary certificate examinations in 2001 passed mathematics at higher grade, and only 5.4% passed high-grade physical science.

The areas of mathematics and science have been identified as key economic development drivers for the country and the National Strategy for Mathematics, Science and Technology, developed by the Department of Education aims to address the problem.

2.5 Reducing Inequality and Addressing Backlogs

The nature of budgeting and financial reporting systems makes it difficult to estimate the extent to which spending on young people (aged 12-20), specifically, is more equitable now than ever before. However, there has been a substantial equalisation of overall expenditure per learner. Before 1994, the public education sector - primary and secondary schools, and technical colleges - was extremely unequal in terms of finance and staffing. In the past decade this situation has been corrected through new policies.

At a national level, the Equitable Shares Formula redirects larger funding allocations to needy provinces. 'Neediness' is defined in terms of existing infrastructure, other backlogs, and size of the province's school-aged population. This has improved inter-provincial equality.

At the provincial level, the Norms and Standards for School Funding now ensure redress in the funding of schools within each province. This formula-driven financial policy relies on a resource-targeting table (a school index of need) to determine the allocation per learner and per institution. The poorest learners receive seven times more non-personnel funding per head than the least poor in a province.

Finally, a new teaching post provisioning policy has been implemented to ensure that all schools have an equitable share of the available teacher posts, and that a redress pool of posts is established to distribute additional posts to the poorest schools. These mechanisms have resulted in the substantial equalisation of education expenditure.

Public funding for education inputs - such as infrastructure, textbooks, and nutrition programmes - has increased in real terms by about 7% per year (from R46.7 billion in 1999 to just under R60 billion in 2002/3.) This has enabled:

- An increase in per capita spending in schools, from R3 237 in 1999/2000 to R4 437 in 2002/3,
- An improvement in the learner/classroom ratio, from 43:1 to 38:1 in the five years up to 2000.

One of the key barometers for measuring the extent to which the government is addressing the educational needs of young people is the quality of the facilities at their disposal. Between 1996 and 2000 there has been a dramatic improvement in the proportion of young people in schools with telephones, water, electricity and water and sufficient number of classrooms. These improvements are recorded in Table 5.

Table 5. Percentage of Schools with Telephones, Water, Electricity, Toilets and Classrooms

Province	Telephone		Water		Electricity		Toilets		Schools with classroom shortages	
	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000	1996	2000
Eastern Cape	19	59	57	59	22	40	75	81	65	47
Free State	26	59	61	68	42	54	83	87	24	16
Gauteng	91	96	94	97	86	93	98	99	26	26
KwaZulu-Natal	35	68	65	68	38	43	90	94	61	48
Mpumalanga	39	52	73	62	51	51	88	93	50	55
Northern Cape	76	92	90	97	81	88	98	98	16	10
Limpopo	38	49	34	63	21	51	91	93	66	49
North West	37	57	82	89	45	64	95	92	42	28
Western Cape	94	98	94	98	88	95	100	100	16	17
National	40	64	65	71	42	55	88	91	50	40

The Department of Education (2003a) has also identified a number of specific financial and cost-related challenges.

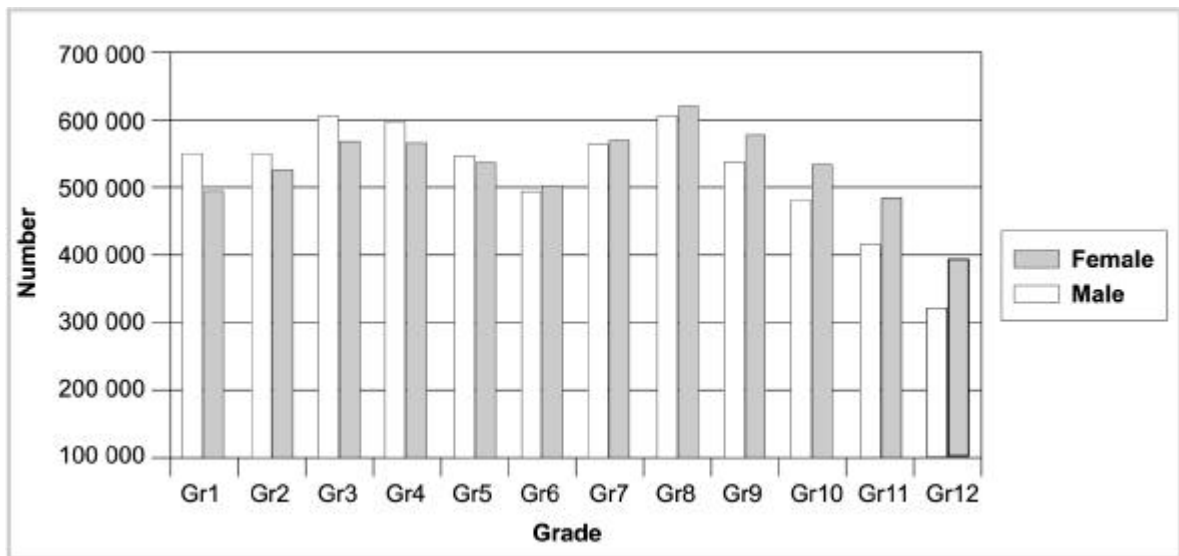
- The policy that permitted schools to levy compulsory school fees has had an overall net positive effect on the financial resources available to the system as a whole. However, there is recognition that for students in the poorest schools, eliminating the fee requirement and making up the shortfall from state allocations would enhance access and participation for the poorest segment of the population at a minimal cost to the State, given the lower fee levels in these schools.
- The Norms and Standards for School Funding are also being adjusted to reflect the national profile of schools in relation to poverty.
- Finally, the Department is undertaking research to determine the cost of funding basic curriculum packages, including learning support materials and learning related infrastructure (Department of Education, 2003b).

The share of State expenditure on secondary education is set to increase from 37.1% in 1999/00 to 43.3% in 2005/06. Expenditure on the secondary school system amounted to R19 billion in 2002/03 and is expected to increase by an average annual rate of 8.6%, rising to R24.3 billion in 2005/06 (National Treasury, 2003).

2.6 Quality Education for Young Women

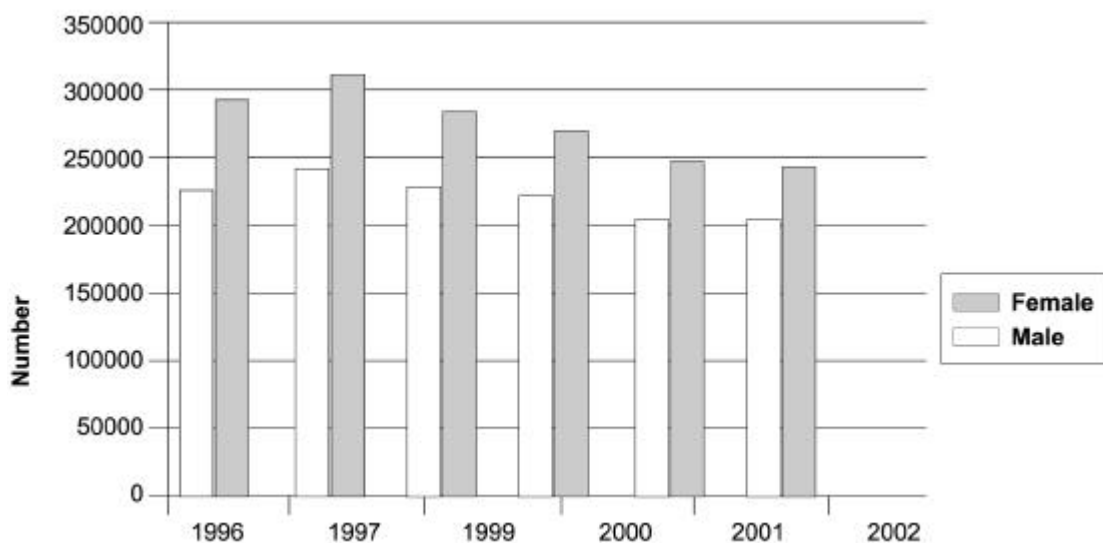
Over the last decade more girls than boys have enrolled in South Africa's educational institutions. In 2000, for example, there were 2.1 million girls in secondary schools compared to 1.8 million boys. Higher repeater rates for female learners cannot account for this trend, as female learners are, on average, a quarter to a half year younger than their male counterparts, and more closely cluster around the appropriate age for the particular secondary school grade. The trend is partly explained by higher dropout rates for young men in the senior secondary grades. Historically, this pattern is related to the labour market for unskilled and semi-skilled men, with fewer employment opportunities for women.

Figure 3. Number of Male and Female Learners by Grade: 2000



The higher enrolment of young women is also reflected in the number of female learners registering for secondary certificate examinations. While there has been a net decline in enrolment in the final examinations for both male and female students, female students continue to outnumber males and, as a cohort, perform better in the exams.

Figure 4. Male and Female Enrolment in Secondary Certificate Examinations, 1996-2002



Not only do more young women complete their secondary education and gain symbols that allow them access to higher education institutions, the proportion of young women who earn merit passes (Cs and Bs) and distinctions (As) exceeds that of young men. Of the 8 412 learners who were awarded A aggregates in 2002, 60% were female. The overall pattern of female success is consistent in all but one of the nine provinces.

Table 6. Number of Learners who Passed, and Endorsements: 1999-2002

Year	Gender	Passes	% of total	Endorsement	% of total
1999	Male	118441	47.4%	30304	47.6%
	Female	131390	52.6%	33421	52.4%
2000	Male	134622	47.5%	32969	48.0%
	Female	148672	52.5%	35657	52.0%
2001	Male	128629	46.4%	31539	46.6%
	Female	148577	53.6%	36168	53.4%
2002	Male	143289	46.9%	35392	47.2%
	Female	162485	53.1%	39656	52.8%

Source: Perry 2003

However, closer examination of gender performance in mathematics and physical science shows the opposite pattern. While the number of women choosing to study higher grade mathematics and science at senior secondary level increased more significantly than men between 1996 and 2002 (an annual growth of 3.6% and 3.1% for women in science and

Table 7. Performance in Mathematics and Physical Science by Gender for 1996 and 2002

Subject	Gender	1996	2002	Average annual growth	Pass rate 1996	Pass rate 2002
Maths candidates	Male	103056	122902	2.5%		
	Female	111677	138087	3.1%		
Maths passes	Male	48701	63299	3.8%	47.3%	51.5%
	Female	42625	58518	4.6%	38.2%	42.4%
Physical science candidates	Male	65121	80422	3.1%		
	Female	57400	73433	3.6%		
Physical science passes	Male	42899	52668	3.0%	65.9%	65.5%
	Female	31211	42983	4.7%	54.4%	58.5%

Source: Sujee, 2004

There is, however, a dark side to the experience of schooling for young women. A report (Human Rights Watch, 2001) found that the majority of South African girls of every race and economic class encounter sexual violence and harassment across the country. While all schools report some form of violence, poverty often renders young women more vulnerable to assault, particularly those forced to walk long distances to school, and where transport is either unaffordable or unsafe. Alcohol and drugs on school premises also contribute to sexual violence. Violence reflects continued power imbalances between sexes. Male teachers sometimes contribute to this phenomenon by abusing their position in relation to learners, particularly female learners. This phenomenon has been reported in other studies with similarly disturbing findings.

While the overall achievement of young women is noteworthy, the violence against women within schools continues to be a major challenge. The violence reflects the continued power imbalances between genders which play themselves out in wider society and spills over into schools and institutions of learning. The Department of Education's Campaign on Gender Violence on Learning Sites, and the Safe Schools Project, have both been designed to address this problem. The Campaign involves partnerships with traditional and religious leaders, student leadership, teacher organisations, and non-governmental organisations. The Campaign has had some success but challenges at a school level still persist.

It is acknowledged that in order to address the problem of sexual violence it is critical to come to terms with the lived worlds of young men. The Department of Education has put in place a series of workshops with older boys in all the nine provinces. A total of 900 boys have attended workshops that have addressed issues that affect them as young men. The focus was on Gender, Masculinity, and HIV and AIDS. The workshops also addressed relationships and

gender violence. These discussions have pointed to the extent of the problems in schools and communities and highlighted the need for broader training programmes and awareness campaigns. Following the successful launch of the Girls Education Movement in 2003, the Department of Education launched the Girls Education Movement Website, which provides a platform for learners to debate issues affecting them. The site provides general information on issues affecting learners, including children's rights and information on sexual abuse and sexual harassment (Department of Education, 2004).

A Safe Schools Programme has been implemented to build safer school environments for both educators and learners at all levels. The programme works by facilitating partnerships, and is succeeding in combating crime in schools. For example, an increasing number of schools have benefited from a successful partnership with the South African Police Services. The two government departments, Safety and Security and Education have jointly produced a workbook, ***Signposts to Safe Schools***, that guides the work of both the police and education stakeholders on a range of issues related to safety in schools such as bullying, substance abuse, sexual abuse etc.

3. Challenges

The wider context of globalisation presents the South African government with a number of serious educational challenges. In addition, the legacy of apartheid makes the deracialisation of the school system an important challenge. Chronic unemployment, particularly among youth, remains a difficulty; despite increased access and improved output, the majority of secondary school graduates are unlikely to move directly into employment. Next to unemployment and poverty, the impact of AIDS is likely to have a profound effect on the quality of education for young people.

We deal with these some of these challenges in this section.

3.1 Race, Values, and Culture

Although the predicament of marginalized young people is at the top of the government's agenda, the deracialisation of schools remains an important challenge. Despite the high profile racial incidents at some schools, there has been a steady movement towards deracialising the school system.

In the more urbanised provinces like Gauteng and the Western Cape there has been a progressive deracialisation of the formerly privileged 'whites-only' schools (see Table 7). This pattern of deracialisation is also evident in the former Indian and Coloured schools. However, as Table 8 shows, there has been no deracialisation of schools that have historically served black students.

Table 8. Percentage of Learners by Race in formerly White Schools: Gauteng

	96	97	98	99	00	01	02
African	19.6	22.1	25.1	27.8	29.8	31.6	34.2
Coloured	3.2	3.4	3.9	4.2	4.5	4.7	4.8
Indian	1.4	1.8	2.1	2.1	2.8	4.3	3.4
White	75.9	72.2	67.4	65.4	62.6	58.1	57.1
Other	-	0.6	1.1	0.5	0.4	0.5	0.5

Source: Sujee, 2004

Table 9. Percentage of Learners by Race in formerly Black schools: Gauteng

	96	97	98	99	00	01	02
African	99.9	100	99.8	99.7	99.7	99.3	99.6
Coloured	0.1	0.2	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.7	0.3
Indian	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
White	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Sujee, 2004

While the deracialisation of formerly privileged schools is significant, Soudien (2004) points out that the dominant model of integration in these schools is that of assimilation. As Carter notes:

Assimilation and acculturation signify processes that in themselves suggest a melting away of non-dominant cultural features and the emulation of privileged or dominant groups' cultural practices. Thus, the question remains whether the intention of school integration is to fully prepare historically subordinated groups to acquire the skills and knowledge of the dominant group and/or to promote radical cultural pluralism, akin to the vision that is egalitarian and respectful of differences.

Mda (2004) points out that one of the risks in the current trend of school integration in South Africa is that indigenous languages are weakened in the face of the power of the dominant language. The newly desegregated schools are not opening themselves up to linguistically diverse practices. The great challenge is how to achieve linguistic equality in South Africa and at the same time ensure that all learners are adequately prepared to participate in an economy that privileges English speakers.

Advocacy materials and guidelines have been distributed to all schools to help schools and educators achieve social justice and unity in diversity. A strategy for racial integration in schools has been developed and training of selected managers, school management team members, and classroom-based educators to support schools to reflect the values of the Constitution has begun. The Department has increased the awareness and engagement of learners and educators around issues of national and continental identity, heritage, and freedom through its advocacy materials and activities.

The question of how to promote democratic, social, and spiritual values in schools has been an important focus of national education policy makers in the past five years.

In 2000, the Minister of Education released a *Manifesto on Values, Education and Democracy*. It contained a number of strategies designed to promote the values of democracy, equity, non-racism and non-sexism, human dignity, accountability, the rule of law, respect, and reconciliation. These strategies included:

- Infusing classrooms with the culture of human rights,
- Re-asserting the central place of history in the school curriculum
- The introduction of religious education (Ministry of Education, 2001).

Since the publication of the *Manifesto*, considerable progress has been made. A special panel was established to examine the role of history and archaeology in school learning and the recently established South African History Project has commissioned the writing of new history books for schools.

In 2003, the Department of Education issued a new policy on religion in education. The South African government has adopted a co-operative model with respect to the potentially divisive issue of schooling and religion. In this model, the State and religious institutions work in harmony; they exist separately in their specific spheres, but work collectively in shared spheres of interest, like education. This is unlike those countries that have drawn a sharp and absolute line between religion and the State, and those that have adopted and promoted a particular State religion. There is a general consensus in South Africa that spirituality is a profound matter that needs to be taken seriously within the school system.

3.2 Youth Unemployment

One of the assumptions that permeate popular belief and policymaking is that secondary education will enable young people to find work. Moreover, this kind of education is regarded as the path to a decent wage and a general improvement in the quality of life.

In recent years these assumptions have been questioned in many developing countries as well as in South Africa. Despite consistent economic growth and the creation of millions of new jobs, young people with secondary education continue to be disproportionately unemployed.

The paradox of South Africa's economy is that while unemployment is high and has continued to grow, there has also been growth in the number of new jobs. In 1995, a total of 9.6 million people were employed in South Africa (based on household survey data). By 2002 the number had increased to 11.2 million. This represents an increase of 1.5 million jobs in less than eight years, a net increase of 2.1% a year. This growth outstrips the growth in population in this period (1.6%) and is marginally below the average annual GDP growth (2.8%), but it lags behind the growth of new entrants onto the job market (*Business Day*, 2003). Thus, unemployment has risen from 16% in 1995 to about 31% in 2003 (Department of Finance), with 5.25 million potential workers now unemployed.

In other words, South Africa has experienced a coincidental growth in jobs and unemployment. This is possible because the economically active population (individuals between 15 and 65 years of age who are either employed or seeking employment) has grown at a faster rate than the general population and new job opportunities. This group has grown from 11.4 million in 1995 to 16.8 million in 2003.

Studies have suggested that this could be due to the fact that many African women who had previously thought of themselves as outside the job market, are now seeking work. This is in part a result of strong patterns of urban migration, the social liberation of women, and the simple fact that women are now being employed more frequently than men.

Economists point to the long-term trend in employment away from unskilled employment in the mining and agricultural sectors towards semi-skilled and highly skilled employment in financial, communication, and service sectors - those sectors most closely associated with the new economy (Bhorat, 2004). Despite this trend in the past decade, there has been a disproportionate rise in unemployment levels for individuals with some secondary education, completed secondary certificates, and post-secondary education. One estimate put the level of unemployment of youth (defined as young people aged 15-35) at 70% or roughly 5.5 million individuals. In other words, even with relatively high levels of education, young South Africans are not being absorbed into the labour market.

The supply and demand picture shows the clear mismatch. Of an estimated 1 011 000 school leavers in an annual cohort:

- 65 000 go on to higher education,
- Between 90 000 and 120 000 are enrolled in public and private further education institutions or pre-employment training,
- The vast majority of the estimated 826 000 of school leavers become job seekers.

Table 10. Estimated Number of School Leavers entering the Labour Market for the First Time and Getting Jobs: 2002

Race	Percentage distribution of the South African population	Total number of school-leaving first-time entrants into the labour market	Employment rate of school leaving first-time entrants into the labour market (percentage)
African	77	636020	29
Coloured	9	74340	50
Indian	3	24780	70
White	11	90860	75
Total	100	826000	37

Source: Kraak, 2003

However, it is estimated that only 307 107 first time job seekers find employment. In other words, only 37% of school leavers enter the job market in a given year, with African learners faring far worse; fewer than one in three African learners find a job (Kraak, 2003).

In an economy that is increasingly oriented to high skill production, this pattern is predictable; individuals with little or no schooling fair poorly. Table 11 shows that in 2002, prospective workers with some secondary education were less likely to be employed than individuals with fewer years of schooling. Overall however, graduates with higher education are consistently more likely to find employment than those with less education.

Table 11. Unemployment Rates by Education Level:

Education level	1995	2002
No schooling	33.1%	32.3%
Primary	35.5%	41.1%
Incomplete secondary	33.9%	48.4%
Secondary certificate	25.3%	39.5%
Higher education	6.4%	15.4%
Total	29.2%	39.5%

Source: Bhorat, 2004. Based on October Household Survey 1995 and Labour Force Survey 2002

Table 11 also suggests that unemployment across all levels has increased (except for those with no schooling). The growth of unemployment among young, educated, individuals suggests that there might be a mismatch between education programmes and the needs of the labour market. For example, while many graduates are qualified in teaching and other public sector related fields, the growing needs of the economy are in more technical and scientifically oriented areas.

3.3 Labour Market Absorption

There are a number of additional interrelated reasons for the poor labour market absorption levels (Kraak, 2003). First, and fundamentally, is the country's modest growth coupled with an expanded pool of jobseekers. Second, the problem of youth unemployment is exacerbated by the perceived and real problem of the poor quality of many South African schools, particularly those serving poorer communities. Third, young people in South Africa have often made poor subject choices at secondary schools. Fourthly, the levels of practical experience to which poorer learners are exposed remains quite low. These choices hinder their employability and close higher education pathways in areas where the economy has a shortage of skills. For instance, too few learners study technical and vocationally oriented subjects, opting instead for general school subjects. A concerted effort on the part of the Departments of Education and Labour to improve career counselling in schools and to young people has seen an improvement in this area. Newly developed internships will address the problem of graduates with little or no work experience as they gain work experience in public and parastatal organisations in order to improve their employability. This intervention is also starting to yield results.

3.4 Poverty

A consequence of the poor articulation of education and work (and thus increasing unemployment) is an unacceptably high level of poverty. To ameliorate this, child grants are provided to poor families with young children, and a range of social services have now become available to all. For example, pregnant mothers and children under five years old receive free health care.

In the medium term, social assistance specifically earmarked for older children and young adults living in poverty is being expanded. The AIDS pandemic has exacerbated this situation and a growing number of poor and marginalized families have been devastated by chronic sickness and the premature death of caregivers. Teenagers are vulnerable to infection and/or are often expected to take on increasing responsibilities as heads of households.

Using a monthly income of R1 489 (around \$200) per household of 4.7 people as the minimum living level (or \$1.62 rather than the \$1-a-day poverty measure) researchers estimate that approximately 40% (or 20 million out of 45 million South Africans) live in poverty (EFSA, 2003). This confirms earlier findings (Republic of South Africa, 1998) that put the poverty rate at close to 45%. The 2001 Household Survey showed that the poorest South African households rely heavily on pensions or social remittances for their livelihoods. Half of all African households in the poorest quintile have no income earners at all, and a relatively large number of households rely heavily on one income earner. This indicates the extreme vulnerability of such households in the event of a family losing the wage earner or the grandparent who receives a pension (UNDP, 2004).

A disproportionate number of the poorest households are in rural areas. The poverty rate for rural areas is estimated at 71%. Poverty levels also differ according to geographic region with the highest poverty rates found in the Eastern Cape (71%), Free State (63%), North West (62%), and Limpopo (59%). Given South Africa's apartheid history, it is unsurprising that it is concentrated amongst Africans (61%). Women are also more likely than men to be poor.

It is estimated that three in five children live in poor households which has significant implications for achieving a quality education for all. Young people in poor households often experience high levels of public and domestic violence, malnutrition, inconsistent parenting, and a lack of support for schooling. Research has confirmed the strong correlations between poverty and low school attainment.

Statistics, however, tell us little about what living in poverty actually means. Qualitative studies consistently show that poverty is linked to poor health, arduous and hazardous work for low wages, feelings of powerlessness, and high levels of anxiety and stress (Republic of South Africa, 1998).

Poverty is a continuing problem and has an impact on the quality of education for young people. Nevertheless, substantial progress has been made on a number of fronts to alleviate poverty. Table 12 reflects the changes in a number of social service indicators in the five years between 1996 and 2001.

Table 12. Access to Social Services: 1996 and 2001

Access to Social Services	1996	2001
Households with access to clean water	80%	85%
Households using electricity for lighting	57,6%	69,7%
People who have completed Grade 12 schooling	16,3%	20,4%
Households in formal housing	57,5%	63,8%
Households with chemical or flush toilets	50,5%	51,9%

Source: Republic of South Africa, 2003

Social grants, formerly allocated on a racial basis, have also now been equalised and substantially extended. Between 1994 and the 2002 the number of beneficiaries grew, from 2.6 million

to 5.1 million. Table 13 records the successes in a number of other social programmes.

Table 13. Output of Government Social Programmes

		1994-1998	1999-2002	Since 1994
Water (people gaining access via community programme)		3m	5,4m	8,4m
Electricity (grid connections)		2,3m	1,5m	3,8m
Housing (Subsidised houses built or under construction)		0,74m	0.72m	1,46m
Land Redistribution	Hectares distributed	0,44m	1,36m	1,8m
	Households in transfers	30,061	107,417	137,478

Source: Republic of South Africa, 2003

3.5 HIV and AIDS

It is widely recognised that HIV and AIDS is one of the most serious threats to the South African education system and to quality education for young people. It is estimated that the HIV-positive population in 2004 is approximately 3.83 million, which translates to an HIV-prevalence rate of 15.2% of the adult population. Infection rates for young women aged 15 to 24 stands at 25% (World Bank, 2002). Accumulated AIDS deaths up to 2004 were estimated to be 1.49 million (Statistics South Africa, 2004).

Infection is certainly of major concern to young people. However, many are also affected by the wider impact of the pandemic. For instance, an increasing number of schoolgoers are forced to care for sick and dying parents and assume roles as heads of households.

Young people, particularly young teenage women, need special attention because they have the highest rate of new HIV infections in the developing world. Reducing new infections in this age group is without doubt one of the most effective strategies for slowing the spread of the epidemic. However, young people require specially designed programmes that are non-stigmatising, non-discriminatory, and user-friendly.

HIV and AIDS impacts upon education reform in a number of ways. First, it erodes gains in access to both primary and secondary education. While the number of young people that will die in secondary school is likely to remain relatively low - given the relatively long gestation period of the disease - the strain on family and support systems is likely to mean that young people are either forced out of school, or choose not to continue with their education. Second, the pandemic will inevitably have an impact on teaching quality as an increasing number of teachers become sick and die. Third, it impacts negatively on equity gains as the disease affects poorer communities and women disproportionately (World, Bank, 2002).

The Health Economics and HIV and AIDS Research Division (2004) has suggested that while considerable work has been done in schools around prevention, treatment, care and support, insufficient attention has been given to the wider questions of management and planning to mitigate the impact of the disease on the system. The government has accepted these criticisms, and responded to them by:

- Publishing comprehensive HIV and AIDS regulations for schools,
- Developed and produced resource guides on HIV and AIDS that are used to train school management teams and governing bodies,
- Implemented comprehensive training programmes.

In addition:

- All schools are preparing action plans to respond to the pandemic,
- The Department of Education has commissioned a study to determine factors affecting the demand and supply of educators.
- An important focus for conditional grants to provinces has been linkages to HIV and AIDS and Life Skills education.

A household survey carried out by the Human Sciences Research Council in 2002 found that 85.9% of primary school children had received information on HIV and AIDS from schools. In addition, a sizeable proportion of older people (23.8% of 25 to 29 year-olds) had also received this information. Further, it seems that this information is making young people change their behaviour with more of them engaging in safer sexual practices than in previous years.

Research suggests that these actions - as well as other campaigns - are changing the sexual behaviour; there are higher levels of abstinence and condom use among young people. The nationwide rollout of anti-retroviral drugs will have a significantly positive effect on the education system, directly and indirectly.

4. Priorities

Over the course of the past ten years a sound policy framework has been put in place. The overall priority for the next five years will be to focus on implementation and delivery. Within the political mandate popularly referred to as the People's Contract, the following education and training priorities for young people will take precedence:

- Career choices,
- Teaching,
- Internships (experience),
- Focusing on skills development relevant for employment,
- Ameliorating the effects of poverty on young people's access to education,
- Improving the quality of education,
- Improving health interventions in the education sector and preventing the spread of HIV among learners and educators,
- Enhancing government's support and management systems.

4.1 Developing Appropriate Skills for the Labour Market

The appropriateness and the quantity of skills being developed in South Africa at present is a critical issue for government given the high levels of youth unemployment, the mismatch between the skills of our graduates and the needs of the labour market, the obvious links between unemployment and poverty, and the central role of human resources in a highly competitive global economy.

Thus, human resource development and skills formation for young people is a priority and takes a number of forms linked to quality education. These include:

- An emphasis on career choices, mathematics, science and technology in secondary schools,
- The upgrading of further education and training colleges,
- The fast-tracking of learnerships and increased collaboration with the Department of Labour on a number of youth training and employment initiatives.

Career Choices

There is a growing recognition that the secondary school system needs to play a central role in providing information and guidance about employment, careers, subject choices, and courses of study. Such career guidance will assist learners in making informed decisions, not only on the basis of individual aptitude but also on the basis of genuine career opportunities. More informed choices of school subjects and further education and training courses would go some way towards alleviating skills shortages in some sectors and unemployment more broadly.

Mathematics, Science and Technology

Mathematics, science, and technology open up a range of career opportunities in a globalizing economy. As such, since 1999 there has been a concerted effort to improve teaching and output in secondary school mathematics, science, and technology. These initiatives will be consolidated and additional resources will be provided where necessary to promote the teaching of these subjects in many more schools, at both primary and secondary levels. Also, from 2005 all learners will do mathematical literacy as part of the curriculum which augurs well for human resource development in the country.

In the next five years the government's prioritization of mathematics, science, and technology education should gradually improve the performance of poor and marginalized students in general, and girls in particular. Improved output in these key learning areas will ensure that more young women gain access to careers in the sciences, in technology, and in engineering. It is important to stress that this focus will not be at the cost of the arts and humanities; the South African government believes these learning areas are vital for the full development of all young people.

Improving Further Education and Training (FET) Colleges

The merger of the former 152 technical colleges into 50 comprehensive FET institutions has set a solid platform for the creation of a vibrant, responsive, and flexible further education and training college sector. There has been a steady increase in the number of students at the 50 new colleges and new programmes are emerging. The colleges themselves are under new management and governing structures. In addition, incentive schemes - in the form of ministerial awards - have been introduced to recognize good practice and thus encourage the sector achieve its objectives

Government has encouraged individual colleges to become more strategic in their responsiveness to labour market trends. The provincial governments, who are directly responsible for funding the college sector, have undertaken to support the new strategic directions that colleges are taking in meeting the needs of each region. The purchase of new equipment and the construction of related infrastructure is critical if the sector is to remain at the cutting edge of high-level skills development. Emphasis will also need to be placed on improved alignment at programmatic and quality assurance levels between the Sector Education and Training Agencies and the colleges. The Department of Education will therefore be approaching the National Treasury with a proposal for a major recapitalisation of these institutions.

Learnerships

The provincial education departments focus their attention on young people in schools and colleges and the Department of Labour's primary concern has been the skills development of employed workers. The education and training needs of unemployed young people has, thus, been largely been neglected.

A joint education and labour initiative attempts to address this problem. Learnerships offer a unique combination of work experience and training, and may prove to be a key entry point into the labour market. Young people are targeted as the key beneficiaries of these learning opportunities. While initially slow in development, the Department of Labour anticipates the establishment of 60 000 new learnerships by 2007. The *Skills Development Act* provides the legal framework and funding for the learnerships. In addition to funding provided to the employer and tax incentives, the advantage of the initiative is that learners will have access to accredited workplace training providers, who will offer structured and relevant courses. The whole process works as a partnership between government, training service providers, and employers.

National Youth Service

Like the learnerships, the National Youth Service programme is designed to provide both training and work experience for young people outside of the education and training systems, and also outside the labour market. The programme is a partnership between the National Youth Commission, the Umsobomvu Youth Fund, the South African Youth Council, the Department of Labour, and the Department of Education.

The goal of the National Youth Service programme is to increase the quality and scope of government services by unleashing the potential of young people - particularly unemployed young people. A range of related objectives will be achieved, including developing integrated

approaches to community services (young people will serve as community workers), skills development, and access to employment opportunities. As part of the National Youth Services programme, employed young people will receive personal development (life skills) training and have the opportunity to develop career paths.

Government at all levels - local, provincial and national - will determine the nature of the community projects and provide the necessary infrastructure to support the programmes.

Accredited service providers will be employed to ensure that young people are adequately trained and qualified for the designated work assignments.

Along with appropriate training, young people will receive formal recognition (certification) on the successful completion of their training.

Expanded Public Works Programme

The government has established an expanded public works programme as a key short-term initiative to increase employability, provide work experience for people, and create opportunity for the development of entrepreneurial skills. Young people have been designated as a group for labour-intensive projects. Some of these projects will attempt to improve the delivery of educational services. For instance, Early Childhood Development, Adult Basic Education and Training, and school construction and maintenance have all been identified for these Public Works programmes.

Youth Entrepreneurship

As with the National Youth Service, this initiative to develop youth entrepreneurs is spearheaded by the Umsobomvu Youth Fund, but will be undertaken by non-governmental organisations. The Umsobomvu Youth Fund is an agency created by government to fund skills development and employment-creation for young people. As part of its work, the fund has created a special micro-loan initiative for young entrepreneurs, a venture capital fund, and a voucher programme for access to business development services. All of these are critical in developing small and medium scale business skills for young people.

Youth Advisory Centres

The Youth Advisory Centres, which are largely funded by the National Youth Service, provide training, contact, information, and counselling services to young people. Located in communities with large youth populations, these Centres will be run by non-governmental organisations. Each Centre will be equipped with computers and have online capacity, as well as the usual resource centre with materials on careers and job opportunities. The Centres will provide life skills and other training to equip young people with skills required for entering the world of work.

4.2 Ameliorating the Effects of Poverty on Young People's Access to Education

While the vast majority of young people attend secondary schools, there is a growing concern that many drop out before completing Grade 12. For the poorest, school fees, transport and other related expenses have been identified as significant factors inhibiting school attendance and school success. Achieving greater access and success for the poor will require the injection of additional funding to the education sector. Over the past few years there has been a gradual erosion of the education budget, as a percentage of total government expenditure and as a percentage of GDP. This erosion of spending on education is also evident at provincial level where education budgets have not matched the nationally agreed imperatives (Minister of Education, 2004).

Financial exclusion of poor pupils is one of the biggest challenges facing young people. Existing legislation protects poor learners from exclusion by allowing for school fee exemption. (It is the approach of government that parents and guardians should never be expected to use social grants to pay for a basic education). Government also now allocates seven-times more funding per learner to the poorest than to the least poor, and ensures that teaching resources are distributed in favour of the poorer schools.

However, the recently published report on the costs of education suggests that hidden costs of textbooks, school lunches, and school uniforms are still presenting a relatively "expensive"

education for the poor (Department of Education, 2003b). The Department is committed to abolishing school fees for the poorest of our society and provinces are currently looking closely at their budgets and priorities in order to determine who should be exempted from fees. Where pupils are exempted from fees, schools will be guaranteed a basic minimum funding package that will be sufficient to provide a quality education without the need to collect fees. Government recognizes that their approach has the potential to create a two-tier schools system - one fee-paying and the other not. This will be avoided by ensuring that schools that do not charge fees are enabled in other ways to become centres of educational quality.

Along with the direct and indirect costs of education for young people, the government has undertaken, as a matter of urgency, to eliminate the backlogs in school infrastructure. The President has made it a national undertaking that no young person will be forced to attend classes under trees or in unsafe buildings. Additional funds have been requested from the National Treasury to eradicate the infrastructure backlogs.

4.3 Improving the Quality of Education

There is wide agreement that a good quality general education is the foundation for effective life-long learning and skills development. Recent results from systemic and cross-national studies have raised serious concerns about the degree to which young people entering secondary education have achieved the level of competence required by the revised National Curriculum Statements. The achievement of a quality education for all requires a sustained emphasis on teacher development, language policy, and curriculum reform.

Teacher Development

To achieve the national learning standards as specified in the revised National Curriculum Statements, government is committed to enhancing learning materials and teacher development as part of the larger effort to improve the quality of secondary education via the new curriculum. The budget for further education and training has been increased to support the materials rewriting process required for the effective implementation of the further education and training curriculum (Grades 10-12). The Department will monitor the training of teachers and district managers.

More broadly, the government is committed to promoting teaching as a profession. It plans to do this by:

- Instituting a salary incentive package for teachers who work in difficult circumstances, like remote rural schools,
- Continuing to ensure that teachers' conditions of service properly reward their commitment,
- Introducing a new career structure for teachers that will allow educators who are promoted to remain teaching in classrooms,
- Establishing a performance-related salary system designed to recognise hard work,
- Developing the National Framework for Teacher Education with its proposed system of professional development points that will act as a practical incentive for ongoing professional development.

Language Policy

The Department of Education has undertaken to make the teaching of indigenous languages and English a priority because, they believe, the issue of language straddles concerns about quality and about inclusion.

One of the intentions of South Africa's school language policy is to encourage the use of the home language as a language of learning. This intention is based on overwhelming evidence that the effective use of a young person's home language is a significant factor in future academic achievement. However, there is also a recognition that the educational imperatives of using indigenous languages as the language of learning for young children needs to be balanced with the political and economic imperative for competence in English. Consequently, the government is committed to improve the teaching of indigenous languages to provide a strong foundation for all future learning while, at the same time, strengthening the teaching of English as a second language at all levels of schooling.

Curriculum Development

The final stage of South Africa curriculum reform strategy for secondary education is the implementation in 2006 of the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10-12 (General) as well as the Qualifications and Assessment Policy Framework Grades 10-12 (General).

Common Tasks for Assessment for Grade 9 have been developed and implemented in 2003 and 2004 as part of the rollout in General Education (Grades 1-9). 'Common Tasks' is a external summative assessment tool that is administered to learners in Grade 9. It provides 25% of the final promotion mark and also moderates the school-based continuous assessment, which provides 75% of the final result of the learner. For learners to be promoted to Grade 10, they need to demonstrate minimum levels of competence in both continuous assessment and on the Common Assessment Tasks. The new Grade 9 assessment tool also serves as a capacity-building instrument for teachers as it provides examples of performance-based assessment tasks that should be used throughout the year.

Through the 102 Dinaledi Schools, the National Strategy for Mathematics and Science is expressed in its most immediate form and is dedicated to increasing both the performance and participation rate in gateway subjects particularly for black and female students. Achievement in physical science and mathematics has increased by 30% and 22% respectively in the past three years in targeted schools. .

4.4 Making the System Work

A key educational priority is the improvement of sector-wide management systems. This will strengthen the national and provincial departments' capacity to monitor, evaluate, and report. Three components of this are:

- The full and effective implementation of systemic evaluations in Grades 6 and 9,
- The use of data from cross-national studies,
- The provincial use of the whole-school evaluation processes.

The effective use of various monitoring, evaluation, and reporting processes has become an integral part of policy review, implementation assessment, and, ultimately, understanding system outcomes and impact.

Conclusion

In South Africa, the Ministry of Education aims to make massive gains in the achievement of quality education and training opportunities for all young people in the next decade of democracy. This will be in terms of quality inputs, quality processes and quality outputs which are not necessarily only measured in terms of learner achievement, but also in terms of the way that learners participate in social, civic and economic life during the time they spend in schooling as well as the time they spend outside the school walls. This will not only be important for the country's development trajectory, but increasingly, in the context of NEPAD initiatives, it is important in terms of continental development imperatives.

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