

Learning losses during COVID

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South African learning losses

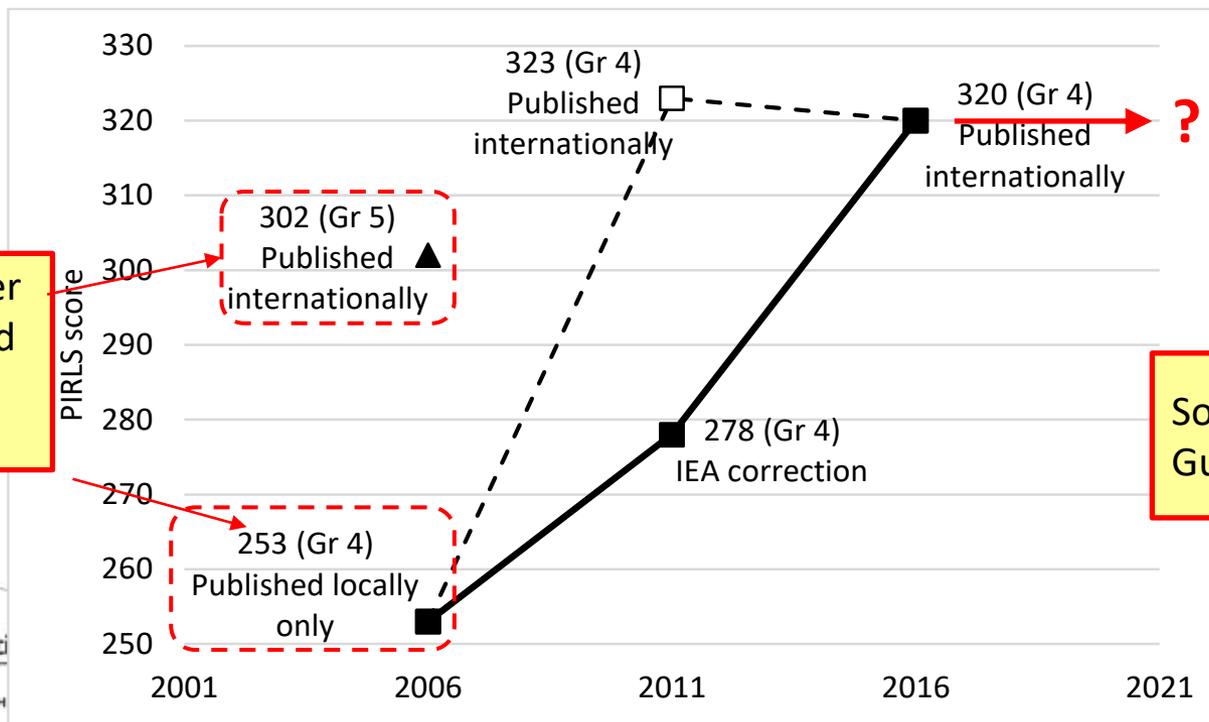
Where (all non- middle class)	When	How	Findings	Source
Eastern Cape, 57 schools, Funda Wandé	2019 T3 2021 T1	1-on-1 EGRA correct words grades 1 to 2 isiXhosa	57 to 70% of a year lost. Between 1.0 and 1.3 ratio learning lost to time lost. Could be under-estimated due to 2021 absenteeism.	Ardington <i>et al</i>, 2021; Ardington, 2021.
Mpumalanga, 180 schools, EGRS II	2019 T4 2020 T4	1-on-1 EGRA correct words grades 3 to 4 isiZulu, Siswati, English	62 to 81% of a year lost. Ratio of 1.0 to 1.4.	Ardington <i>et al</i>, 2021; Shepherd, Mohohlwane, Taylor <i>et al</i> , 2021.
North West, 230 schools, EGRS.	2018 T3 2021 T3	1-on-1 EGRA correct words Grade 4 Setswana.	130% of a year lost.	Kotze <i>et al</i> , 2022; DBE, 2019.

There are around **16,300** public schools schools with Grade 1. **84%** of these are in quintiles 1 to 3, and they accommodate **73%** of Grade 1 learners. The findings we have from these ±500 schools are valuable and probably representative of non-middle class schools, but there is a lot we do not know.

South African learning losses (contd.)

What can we expect to find out in future?

- New **Systemic Evaluation** (pencil-and-paper) has been conducted in 2021 in grades 3, 6 and 9. Results coming in February 2023. However, no pre-pandemic baseline (previous SE ended 2007).
- **PIRLS 2021** (also p-and-p), conducted in SA in Grade 4 in that year, will be critical. Results expected end 2022.



Annual learner gain of around 50 PIRLS points.

Sources: IEA, 2021; Gustafsson, 2020.

The historical and global context

- A learner loss of one year equals a loss of around **five years of historical system gains** (using PIRLS). It need not take us five years to e.g. make Grade 4 in 2024 as good as Grade 4 in 2019. Larger problems relate to **learners who were e.g. in Grade 2 in 2019**.
- The good thing is that South Africa's data are actually not that bad, despite the absence of a national assessment in recent years.

Table 1. Where do the studies come from?

Country Classification	Learning Loss	Dropout Rate	Studies Covering Both	Total
High income (percent of studies)	17 (68)	0 (0)	0 (0)	17 (43)
Low & middle income (percent of studies)	8 (32)	11 (100)	4 (100)	23 (58)
Total (percent of studies)	25 (100)	11 (100)	4 (100)	40 (100)

Two from SA

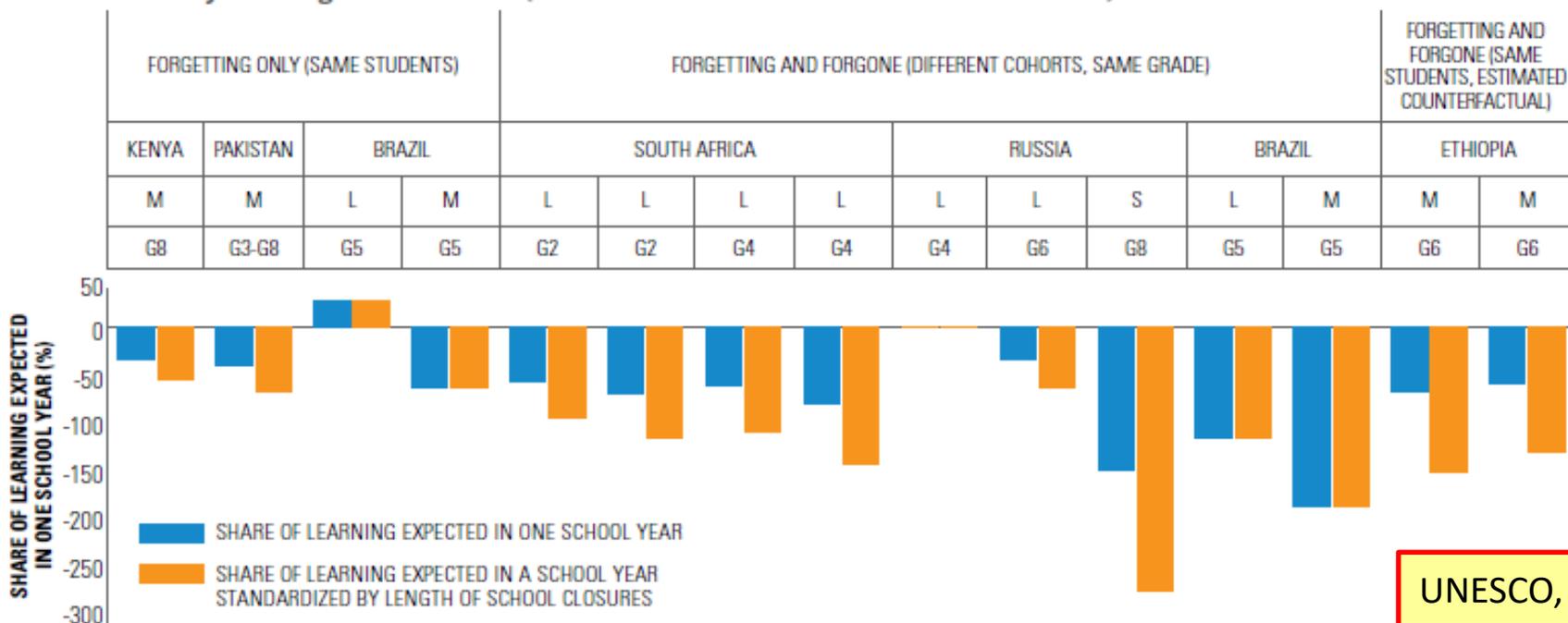
One from SA

Moscoviz
and Evans,
2022.



The historical and global context (contd.)

FIGURE 4. Changes in learning as shares of learning normally expected in one school year, non-standardized and standardized by the length of closures (selected Low- and Middle-Income countries)



UNESCO, 2021.

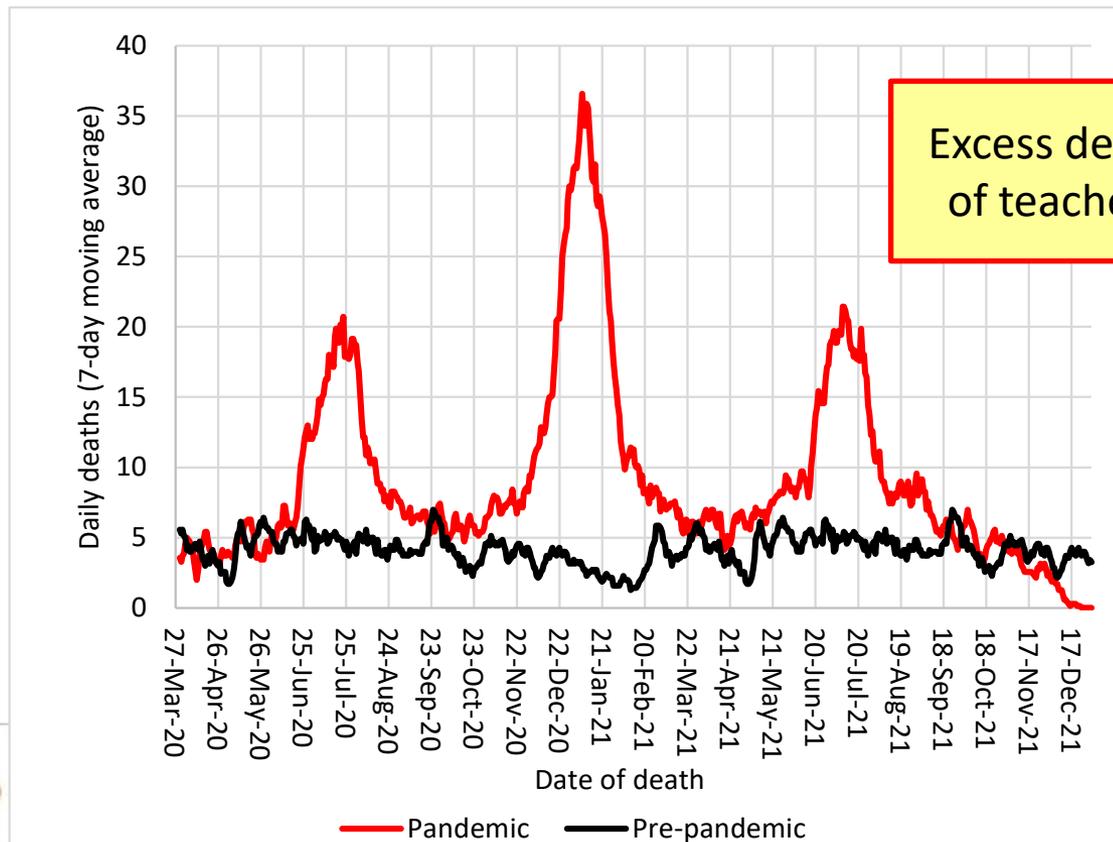
Taken from Ardington *et al* (2021).

The smaller the difference between the blue and orange, the longer the school disruptions.

Why learning losses happened

Justifiably, much emphasis on contact time lost. But other factors too:

- Economic and social trauma in the household.
- Teacher deaths – around 0.8% of South Africa's teachers were lost.

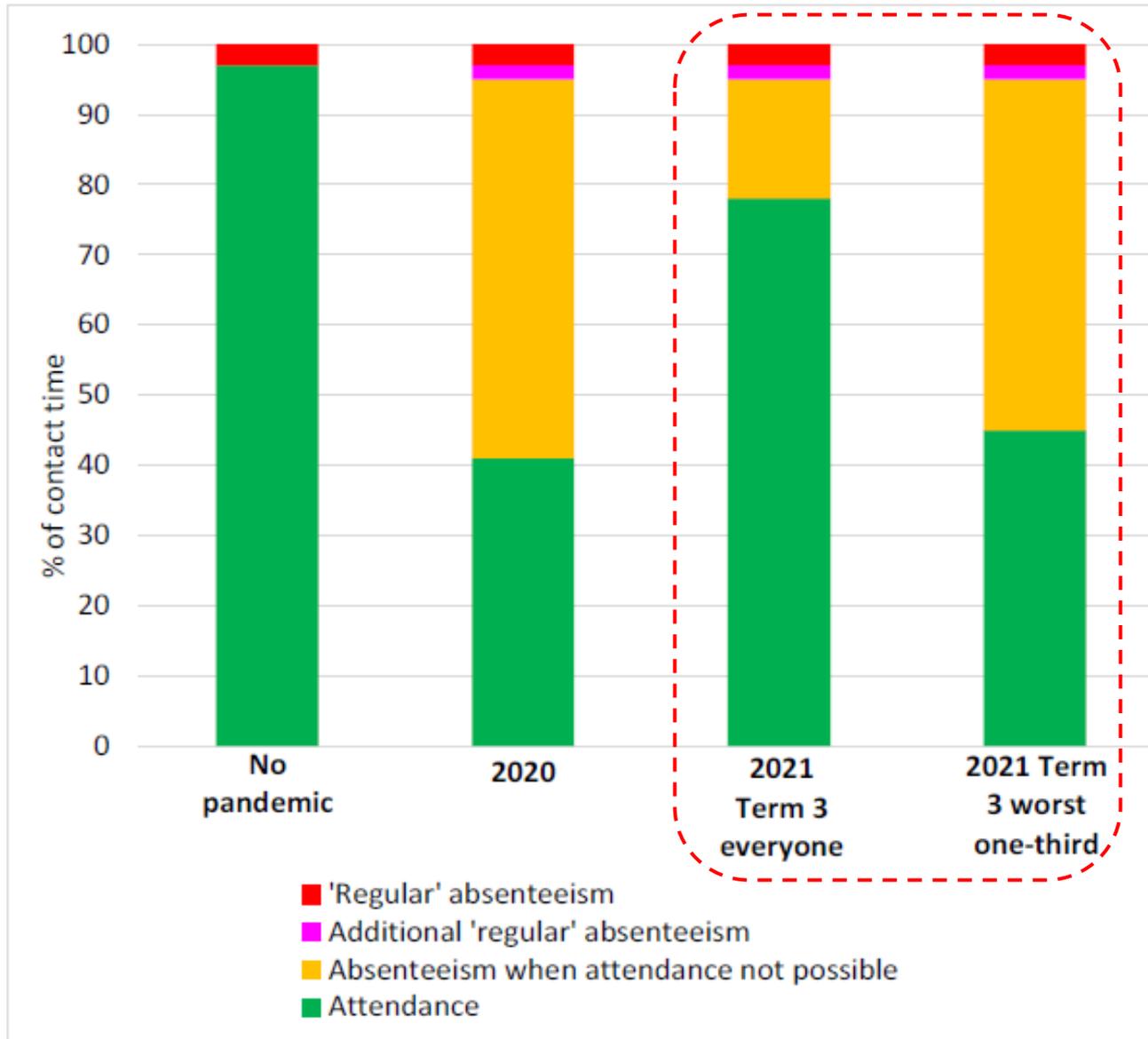


Excess deaths of teachers.

Maponya and Gustafsson, forthcoming.

School participation

Figure 3: Declines in attendance during the pandemic



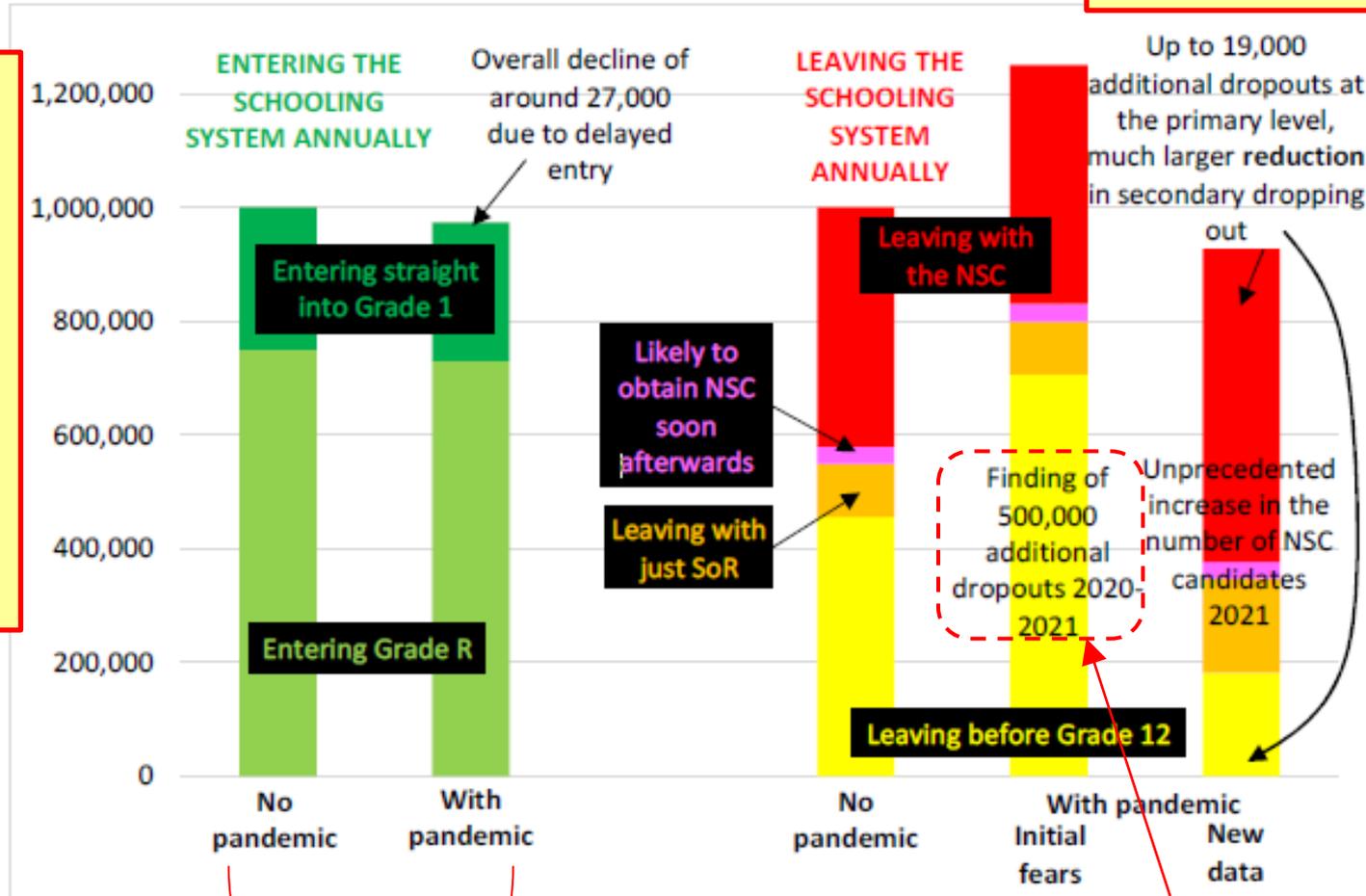
There are large inequalities in the degree of contact time loss, depending largely on factors such as school size and local politics relating to the pandemic.

Source: DBE, 2022.

School participation (contd.)

Source: DBE, 2022.

Figure 1: Leaving and entering the system



Surprisingly, overall participation, in the sense of some engagement with the school, increased during the pandemic. It did not decline. This is not what was expected.

DBE, 2021.

Much of this likely to be 'extended absenteeism' at the primary level – see Shepherd and Mohohlwane (2022).

School participation (contd.)

A sharp increase in secondary level enrolments that started already before the pandemic has continued unabated (DBE, 2022).

Figure 2: Enrolment change over time

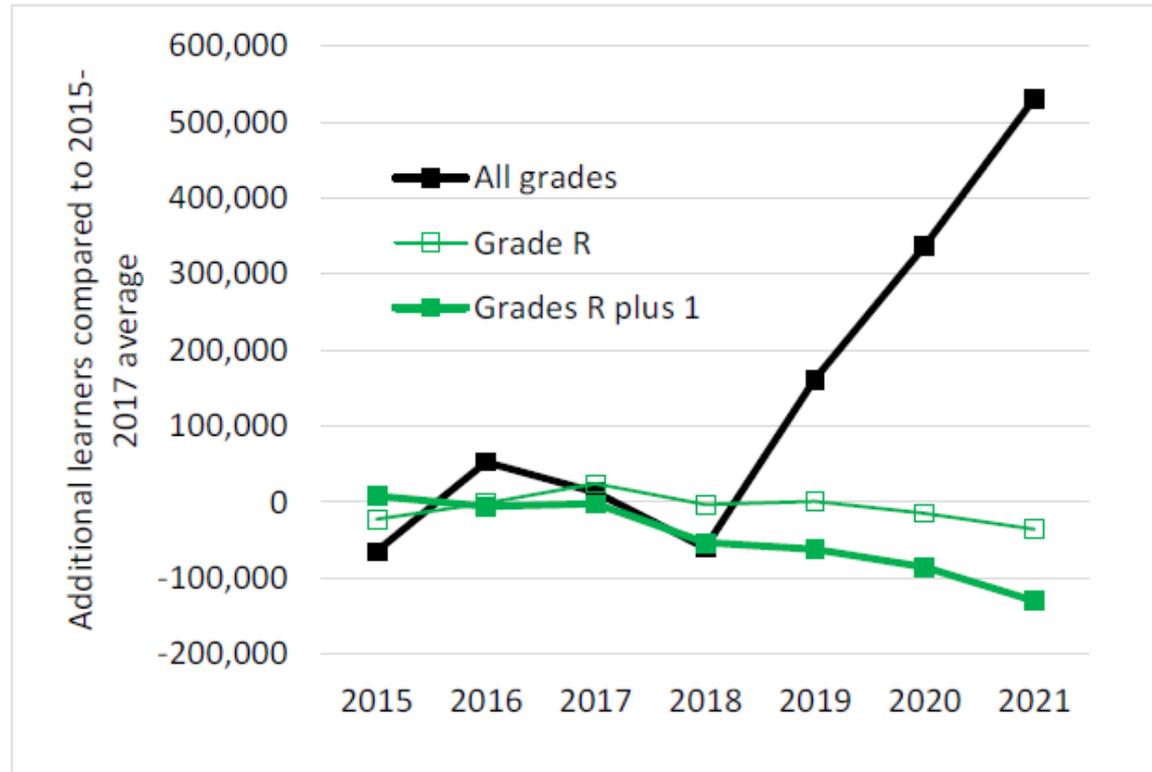
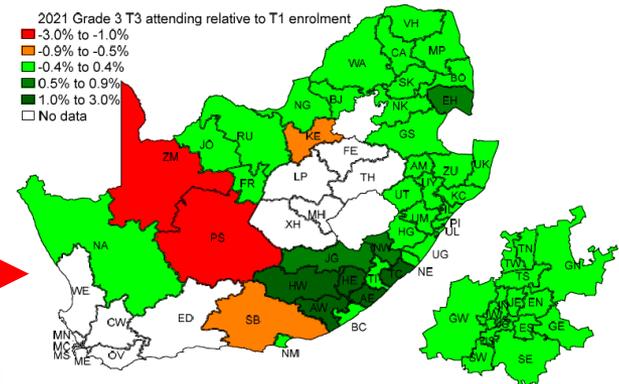


Figure 16: T1 enrolment to T3 attending change 2021

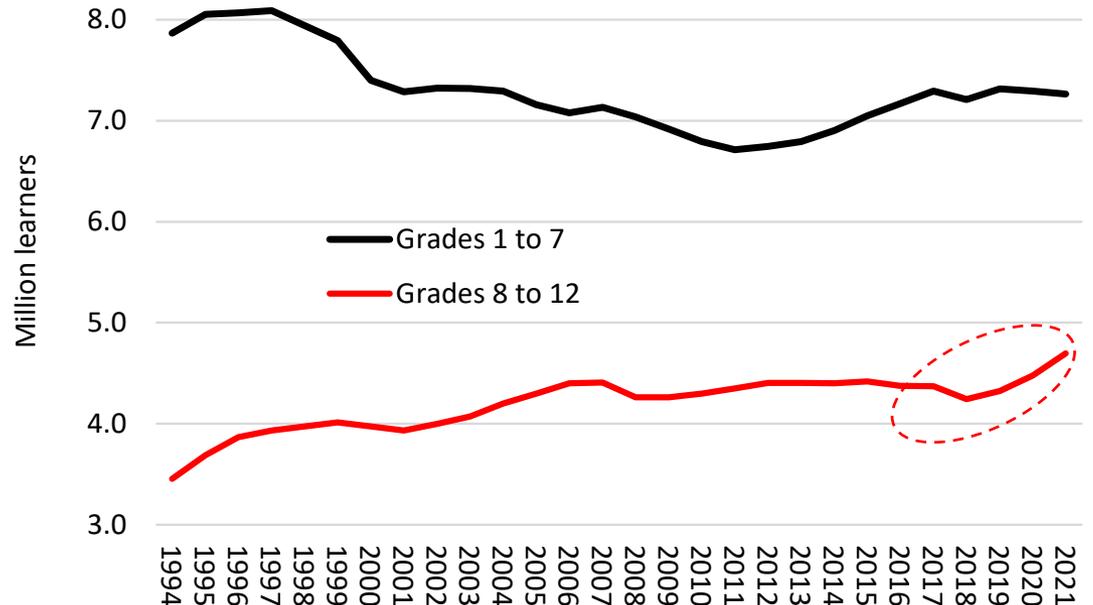
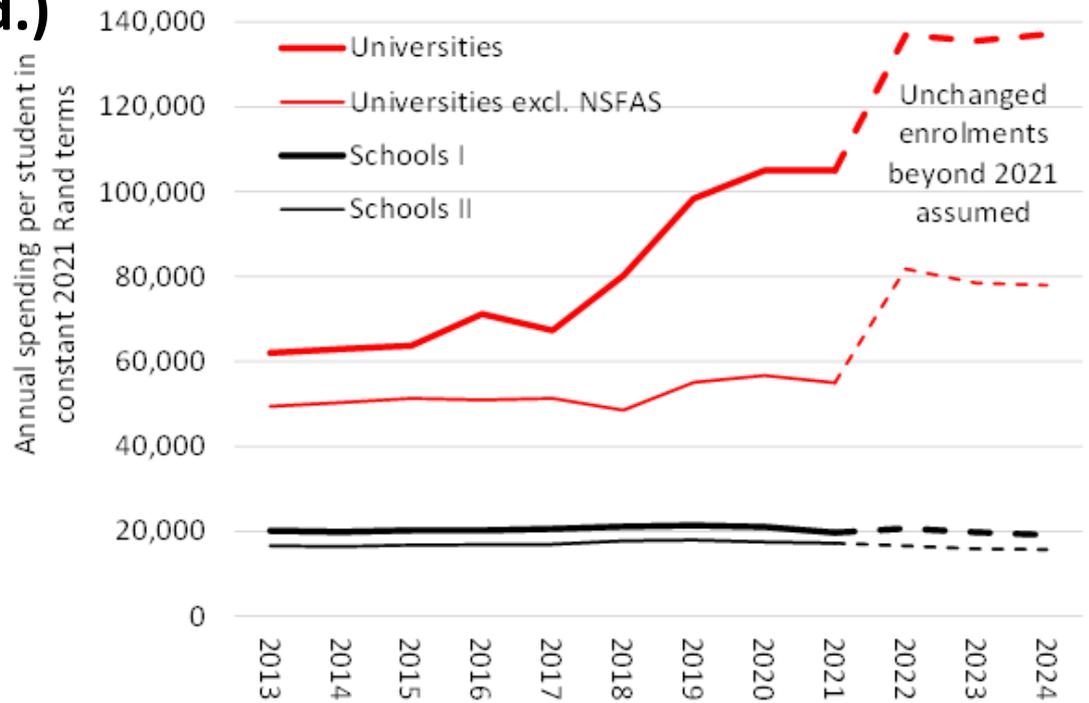


Addressing the risk of fraudulent enrolments. From Gustafsson (2022)

School participation (contd.)

In the current context of unprecedented budget pressures, a key challenge is to ensure that the spending system, which is already favouring post-schooling, does not unduly constrain spending at the primary level in the context of secondary level growth.

Public spending per student in schools and universities



Technologies in South African primary schools

The following all from *Action Plan to 2024*.

- Rapid improvements *outside* schools. E.g. access to the internet according to household surveys increased from 8% in 2007 to **56%** in 2017. Less progress in schools.
- According to the 2017 SMS, in primary schools, **72%**, **66%** and **36%** of principals, teachers and learners accessed the internet at school.
- TIMSS 2015 pointed to around **50%** of Grade 5 learners having access to a computer or tablet through the school. This in line with 2017 SMS finding that **48%** of Grade 6 learners are in a school with a computer lab.
- According to TALIS, in 2017 **20%** of lower secondary teachers reported having participated in online training, which is low for a middle income country (34% in Vietnam, 43% in Brazil, 55% in Mexico). Our figures likely to be worse in primary.

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