2011 report on progress in the schooling sector

November 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The basic education sector is at a critical juncture. A number of large-scale new initiatives have been introduced in the last three or four years to address under-performance in schools. Current reforms form part of a larger effort by government to improve the delivery of government services in the interests of a better life for all. 'Improved quality of basic education' is Outcome 1 of twelve central outcomes declared by President Zuma. In 2010 a Delivery Agreement for Outcome 1 was signed. The outputs and sub-outputs of this agreement form the basis for this report, which focuses on progress made in 2011 and the preceding years towards the realisation of the sector's goals.

Educational outcomes

Key enrolment trends which continued during 2011 included growth in Grade R enrolments in public ordinary schools (more than a doubling between 2003 and 2011) and a reduction in Grades 1 to 7 enrolments due to lower levels of grade repetition. Enrolment of children in the compulsory schooling age band (7 to 15) had reached over 98% in 2010. The trends are all positive ones that can be expected to lead to a better quality of basic education for South Africa's children. Moreover, it is in the poorest provinces that the Grade R enrolment ratios are highest.

Completion of Grade 9 has been improving. Youths with at least this level of schooling improved from 80% in 2003 to 88% in 2010. Thus more young South Africans are obtaining a basic level of education. Also between 2003 and 2010, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of youths completing Grade 12, from 44% to 46%. Progress against this indicator must clearly improve. At the same, there has been considerable success in ensuring that learners complete Grade 9 and Grade 12 at earlier points in their lives. Apart from the benefits of this for individual learners, this reduces the learning and teaching problems typically associated with over-aged learners in school.

At the Grade 12 level, there has been progress with respect to the number of examination passes qualifying for Bachelors studies. A steady increase in this regard occurred between 2008 and 2010, from around 107 000 to 128 000. However, declines have been seen in the number of mathematics and physical science passes.

Below Grade 12, data limitations do not permit an analysis of the exact learner performance trend after 2007, a period when a number of new interventions were introduced. However, as indicated by the DBE's new Annual National Assessments programme in 2011, learner performance is below what it should be by any standards. What the analysis presented here reveals is the importance of focussing on inter-provincial differences. For instance, the data we do have suggest that if learners in the less well performing provinces were to perform at the level of similarly disadvantaged learners in North West (a province more or less in the middle of the provincial rankings), then South Africa's average reading score in SACMEQ would increase from the current 486 to 499. This would represent a major step forward for the country. These kinds of opportunities must inform current efforts to improve the quality of basic education.

Sub-output 1.1: Improve teacher capacity and practices

2011 saw important steps being taken towards better teacher capacity and practices. New guides for implementing the curriculum, in the form of the CAPS, were finalised and will be phased in during 2012 to 2014. These guides, and the accompanying training, resolve longstanding problems and gaps in the curriculum delivery process. Specifically, teachers,

and in particular teachers with the greatest capacity problems, will receive much clearer guidance on what to teach and how. Also in 2011, a long-term agreement with teacher unions was formulated which will see teacher unions become directly involved in teacher development. This will help to strengthen the social pact for better quality schooling. During 2011, under-performing schools were increasingly involved in departmentally-led training programmes aimed at strengthening educational outcomes. Finally, 2011 saw the finalisation of a teacher development plan that will frame teacher capacity building in the coming years and introduce a more multi-pronged approach to training. The schooling system is on a better footing than it has ever been to deal decisively with teacher capacity and to ensure that existing initiatives are properly positioned to achieve intended goals.

Sub-output 1.2: Increase access to high quality learning materials

Apart from ANA, the second large change implemented in schools during 2011 was the distribution of national workbooks in two key subjects (language and mathematics) to all learners in Grades 1 to 6. This was a major undertaking to tackle a serious problem of inadequate access to quality texts amongst learners. For instance, before 2011 only around one-third of Grade 6 learners had access to their own mathematics textbooks. Clearly, the national workbooks initiative has the potential to fundamentally alter the way learning and teaching takes place in the classroom. Despite teething problems relating to the logistics of getting the right numbers of workbooks in the right languages to all schools, overall the workbooks have been well received. Experts have provided very positive feedback on the design of the books. 2011 thus sees the beginning of a new strategy whereby every year learners will receive their own workbooks to guide progress through key subjects. During 2011, enhancements to the 2011 workbooks were implemented following an extensive process of user feedbacks and additional workbooks, to be introduced during 2012 in Grades 7 to 9, were designed. In partnership with UNICEF, the DBE is conducting an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of the workbooks in the classroom.

Workbooks do not replace textbooks. In order to strengthen quality criteria relating to textbooks used in schools, during 2011 the DBE led a process whereby textbooks were evaluated and put on a more comprehensive National Catalogue for Textbooks. This catalogue is expected to reduce the purchasing of poor quality or poorly focussed textbooks for schools.

Sub-output 2.1: Establish a world class system of standardised national assessments

During 2011, the first full-scale run of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) programme occurred. A key aim of this programme is to use standardised testing to monitor progress below Grade 12. But the programme also serves as a basis for action to improve the quality of schooling, for instance through more informed parent involvement in the school's education quality debates and better targeting of the right support to under-performing schools. Testing occurred in February and proceeded largely as planned. Learners wrote tests on what they should have learnt in the previous year, meaning Grades 2 to 7 learners wrote tests set at the Grades 1 to 6 levels. The so-called verification ANA exercise involved a re-marking of test scripts by an external service provider in the case of around 1 800 schools. This occurred in order to produce more reliable provincial average scores than would be possible from the programme as a whole, or 'universal' ANA. A national ANA report was released in June. This report found, as had been expected, that on average learner performance, in particular in the case of poorer communities, was much lower than it should be. However, it also pointed out that amongst schools facing similar socio-economic challenges, there was a large variation in results, confirming that internal school factors such as school management are to a large degree behind poor performance. The report pointed to important lessons learnt from the 2011 ANA exercise, including the need for better standardisation, even within the verification ANA sample. There is also a need to link intervention strategies more directly to ANA in 2012 and

beyond. ANA is not a 'world class' programme yet, though 2011 saw important steps being taken towards the achievement of such a programme.

Sub-output 2.2: Extract key lessons from ongoing participation in international assessments

The key event with respect to this sub-output during 2011 was the release of the 2007 SACMEQ data, which has led to a number of research reports, by government and non-government researchers, which assist policymakers and the public to understand better the causes of under-performance in schools and ways of improving school outcomes.

Sub-output 3.1: Universalise access to Grade R* and *Sub-output 3.2: Improve the quality of early childhood development

The data indicate that South Africa is close to achieving universal Grade R. By 2010, according to household data around 93% of learners were receiving Grade R before proceeding to Grade 1. The fact that over four-fifths of Grade R enrolment is now in schools can be considered good for the quality of this grade. Factors such as the co-existence of Grade R and Grade 1 in the same school help to ensure that the right kind of pre-schooling is offered in Grade R. During 2011, the DBE made progress on policy reforms focussed on overcoming obstacles to the quality of Grade R, including insufficient per learner funding and the fact that many Grade R teachers are under-qualified.

Sub-output 4.1: Strengthen school management and promote functional schools

The General Household Survey of Stats SA indicates that there has been a decline in the complaints made by households about schools between 2004 and 2010, for instance with respect to high fees, a lack of books and a lack of teachers. However, these statistics should not detract from the enormity of the task that still remains of improving the functionality of the country's schools. Key recent interventions aimed at improving learning and life generally in schools include the roll-out of publicly funded lunches in the poorest 60% of secondary schools. Household data indicate that this initiative is on track, with 41% of secondary level learners in 2010 indicating that they received a lunch every day. This initiative is expected to improve attendance and reduce dropping out. The year 2011 saw a major reorganisation of the way in which infrastructure development for schools is funded and planned. The DBE now carries greater planning and monitoring responsibilities. This is expected to encourage more cost-effective and faster infrastructure development. As part of a process to bring more transparency and accountability into the infrastructure development process, lists of schools targeted for building work up to 2014 have been published on the internet. 2011 was the third year in which DBE-employed 'IQMS monitors' visited schools to monitor and provide support. Classroom observations to assist teachers improve their methodologies form part of this initiative. The number of schools visited per year is around 7 000. Reports indicate this work is assisting to promote a culture of accountability and professionalism in schools. 2011 also saw the development of new performance management rules for school managers. These rules will introduce performance contracts for school principals and deputy principals similar to the contracts applicable in offices in the public sector. This is expected to provide an additional and important instrument for holding principals accountable for the development of their schools. Through the introduction of clearer rules around the principal's role in the school, for instance with respect to teachers and parents, the contracts are also expected to make it easier for principals to manage their schools effectively. Implementation of the new contracts is expected to begin in 2012.

Sub-output 4.2: Strengthen the capacity of district offices

Two key developments occurred during 2011 that will strengthen the capacity of district offices. The newly established Planning and Delivery Oversight Unit in the Ministry of Basic Education has begun a process of providing intensive support to 18 districts where Grade 12 learner performance has been particularly poor. The multi-stakeholder 'Nedlac Accord' provides a new and promising framework for partners to bring about innovation in schools through an adopt-a-school process. This is expected to arrive at best practices that will inform school interventions planned by district offices.

INTRODUCTION

The basic education sector is at a critical juncture. A number of large-scale new initiatives have been introduced in the last three or four years to address under-performance in schools. Current reforms form part of a larger effort by government to improve the delivery of government services in the interests of a better life for all. 'Improved quality of basic education' is Outcome 1 of twelve central outcomes declared by President Zuma. In 2010 a Delivery Agreement for Outcome 1 was signed. The outputs and sub-outputs of this agreement form the basis for this report. The Delivery Agreement for basic education draws key elements from the longer *Action Plan to 2014: Towards the realisation of Schooling 2025* (the 'Action Plan') being championed by the Department of Basic Education (DBE).

This report focuses on progress made in 2011 and the preceding years towards the realisation of the sector's goals. An initial section titled 'Educational outcomes' reports on trends with respect to enrolments, grade attainment and learner performance. Thereafter, progress with respect to the eight sub-outputs of the Delivery Agreement is described. Although the current report is a progress report, challenges are also discussed. Moreover, as far as possible the report assesses whether what seems to be progress, is indeed progress and is indeed contributing towards the realisation of better quality basic education.

In line with government's drive for more evidence-based reporting and policymaking, this report makes critical use of a wide range of data sources. The report acknowledges the limitations of many of the data sources and assesses improvements currently under way to improve the situation. At the same time, it seems clear that there is room for better use of the available data in order to generate a more accurate picture of the challenges facing the various stakeholders in the sector. This report should be seen as part of a larger process, occurring inside and outside government, towards a more evidence-based education discourse.

EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

Progress with respect to educational outcomes must be monitored with respect to both quantitative indicators such as enrolment ratios and grade attainment statistics and more qualitative indicators such Grade 12 pass rates and results from standardised assessments below Grade 12.

Enrolment and attainment trends

Key enrolment trends which continued during 2011 included growth in Grade R enrolments in public ordinary schools (more than a doubling between 2003 and 2011) and a reduction in Grades 1 to 7 enrolments due to lower levels of grade repetition. Enrolment of children in the compulsory schooling age band (7 to 15) had reached over 98% in 2010. The trends are all positive ones that can be expected to lead to a better quality of basic education for South Africa's children. Moreover, it is in the poorest provinces that the Grade R enrolment ratios are highest.

Completion of Grade 9 has been improving. Youths with at least this level of schooling improved from 80% in 2003 to 88% in 2010. Thus more young South Africans are obtaining a basic level of education. Also between 2003 and 2010, there has been a slight increase in the percentage of youths completing Grade 12, from 44% to 46%. Progress against this indicator must clearly improve. At the same, there has been considerable success in ensuring that learners complete Grade 9 and Grade 12 at earlier points in their lives. Apart from the benefits of this for individual learners, this reduces the learning and teaching problems typically associated with over-aged learners in school.

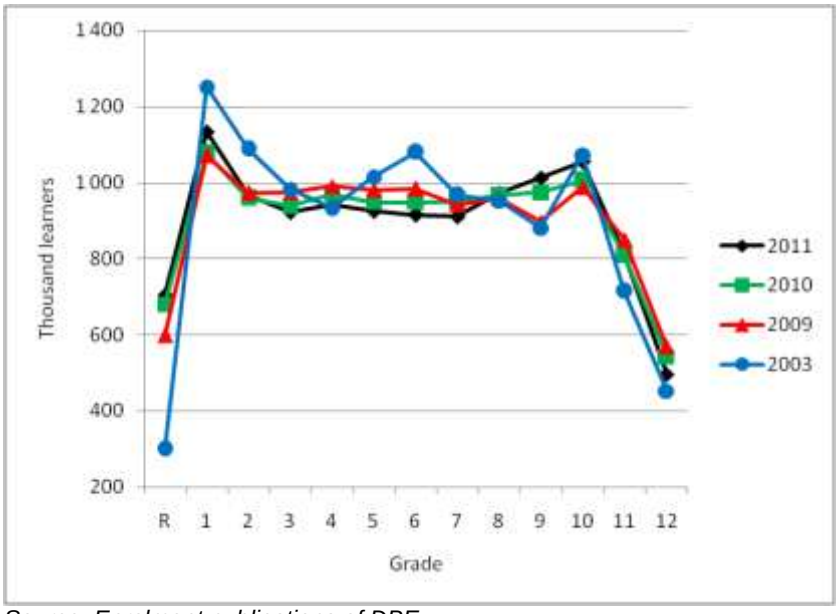
The South African Schools Act requires all children to attend school from the year in which they turn seven to the end of the year in which they turn fifteen. In addition, various government programmes are designed to promote enrolment below age seven and above age fifteen. Attendance for the critical 7 to 15 age range continues to be high and has been improving. As pointed out in the DBE's 'macro indicator' report[1] of 2011, since 2003 at least 97% of children aged 7 to 15 have been enrolled in a school according to Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey (GHS). According to the 2010 GHS, 98.7% of children in the 7 to 15 age range were attending school. This means that in 2010 there were around 110 000 out-of-school children aged 7 to 15, and 80 000 such children aged 7 to 14 (it is legal for a child to leave school when aged 15 as long as the child turned 15 in the previous year).

The following graph illustrates the enrolment trend in public ordinary schools since 2003. Two clear trends stand out. One is the increase in Grade R enrolment, which more than doubled between 2003 and 2011, from around 300 000 to 705 000. As indicated by Figure 10 in the appendix, much of the expansion in Grade R has been concentrated in Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, which together account for just over half of the 2003 to 2011 growth. It should be noted that the national increase in public ordinary school Grade R enrolments between 2010 and 2011 was just 4% and slower than in any previous year since 2003. It is possible that constraints within schools (such as a lack of classrooms), provincial budgetary constraints and a slowing down of the demand for Grade R from households may have contributed towards this slowing down. The situation in 2012 will need to be carefully monitored.

The second trend seen in Figure 1 is a decrease in enrolments in Grades 1 to 7. In the 2003 to 2011 period, the number of learners enrolled in these grades declined from around 7,3 million to 6,7 million. The bulk of this decline is due to a reduction in grade repetition. As discussed above, enrolment of children one would expect to see in these grades increased slightly over the period. The decline in enrolments in Grades 1 to 7 is clearly not an indication of more out-of-school children. This decline has facilitated the expansion in Grade R, for instance because classrooms have been freed up for Grade R. Various government interventions, such as increased spending on Grade R, have also contributed to enrolment growth in this grade.

[1] DBE (2011a).

Figure 1: Public school enrolment patterns 2003-2011

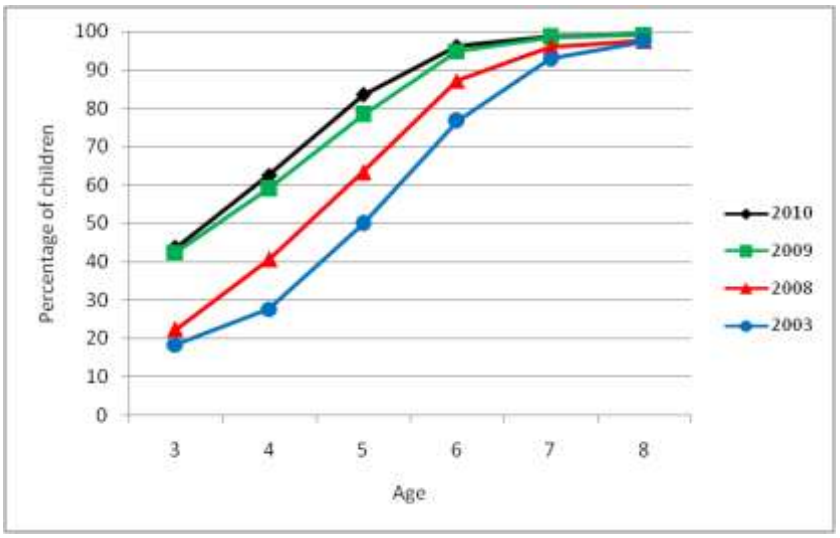


Source: Enrolment publications of DBE.

The enrolment trend in Grades 8 to 12 has been an uneven one. Overall, there was a relatively small increase in enrolments between 2003 and 2007, from 4,1 million to 4,3 million. Underlying these shift are two opposing trends. On the one hand, enrolment of over-aged learners in Grades 8 to 12 has declined, partly through a reduction in grade repetition. This has tended to reduce learner numbers. To illustrate, the GHS indicates that the percentage of 25 year olds enrolled in Grades 8 to 12 declined from 8% to 2% between 2003 and 2011. On the other hand, there has been an improvement in the percentage of youths completing Grade 12. This is discussed below.

Grade R enrolment improvements seen in the data submitted by schools are confirmed in Stats SA's household surveys. In the case of children aged five and six, enrolment in an education institution has been steadily increasing, for instance from 50% in 2003 to 83% in 2010 for children aged five on the day of the household survey (the GHS is conducted in the middle of the year). This can be seen in the following graph. Census 2011 data will be able to confirm whether this trend has continued into 2011. Importantly, enrolment in an institution has increased even at ages below age 5. In part, this can be considered a result of the expansion of Grade R. As anticipated by the original 2001 White Paper on early childhood development (ECD), more publicly funded Grade R allows households to spend more on education and childcare below Grade R. The household data suggest that the number of children aged three to six enrolled in an institution increased by around 820 000 in the 2003 to 2010 period.

Figure 2: Enrolment ratios ages 3 to 8

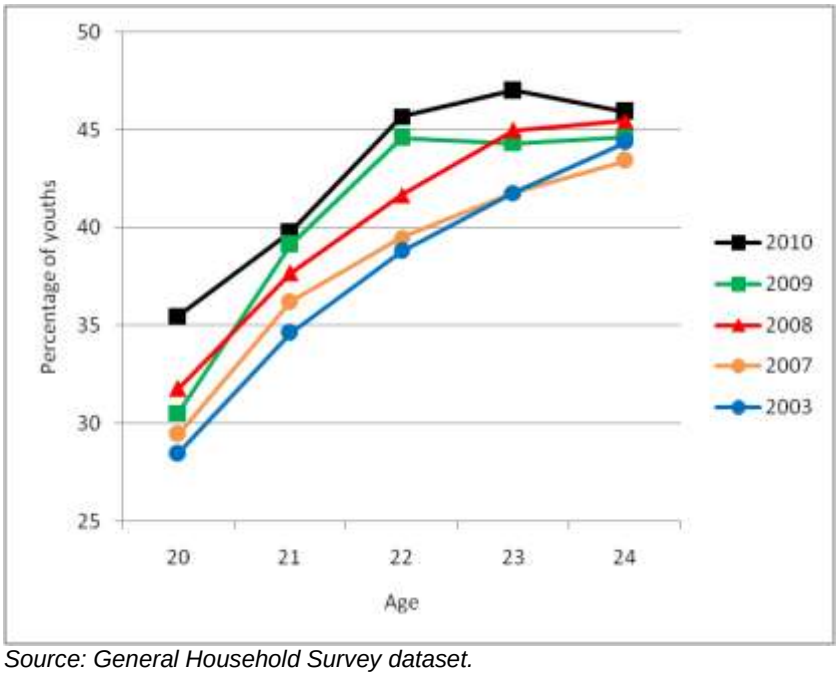


Source: General Household Survey dataset.

Table 2 in the appendix indicates that the provincial range for the enrolment ratio of children aged five or six lies between 81% (Western Cape) and 97% (Limpopo). The national figure is 89%. What is reassuring from a poverty alleviation angle is that poorer provinces tend to have the highest enrolment ratios. The greatest improvement with respect to the enrolment of the age five to six cohorts in the 2003 to 2010 period has occurred in KwaZulu-Natal.

Turning to the question of the highest grade attained by learners in the schooling system, the next graph indicates that there has been progress in getting more youths to attain Grade 12 and, in particular, to do so sooner. For instance, the percentage of youths aged 20 who have completed Grade 12, according to the GHS, improved from 28% to 35% between 2003 and 2010. Yet youths continue to obtain their Grade 12 later than they should. Figure 3 suggests that in 2010 it was only at age 23 that all those who would obtain a Grade 12 had done so. Obtaining a Grade 12 as soon as possible after age 18 improves allows for earlier entry into higher education and employment and thus improves the overall earnings that someone can expect. At the same time, in South Africa's context of high unemployment, lowering the age of exit from Grade 12 can have the effect of exacerbating the demand for jobs and places in higher education institutions. Changes in the age patterns of secondary level learners are a complex matter that must be assessed and planned for carefully.

Figure 3: Grade 12 attainment amongst youths

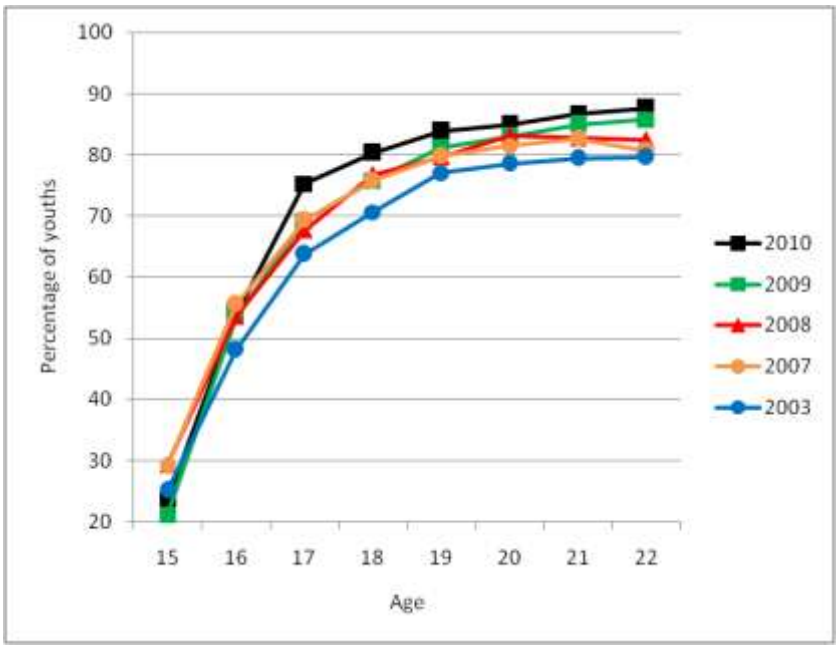


Source: General Household Survey dataset.
Note: For the above graph youths with FET college qualifications were all considered to have a Grade 12 certificate. In reality some do not, though the figures in this regard cannot be extracted from the GHS. However FET graduates are treated in the analysis, the overall picture shown by the graph remains (in the age range in question only around 2% of youths say they have an FET college qualification).

At age 24 in the above graph attainment of Grade 12 improved slightly, from 44% in 2003 to 46% in 2010. At age 22 this increase was much larger, from 39% to 46%. The major trend is thus not so much that more youths get to complete Grade 12, but that this has been occurring at a progressively younger age. Though South Africa's upper secondary level completion rate is relatively good by world standards, the Action Plan emphasises the need to improve performance against this indicator. Specifically, the Action Plan envisages the percentage of youths who obtain some qualification at the Grade 12 level, either from a school or from a college, reaching 65% in the medium term (from the 2010 level of around 46%). This recognises the importance placed in the labour market and higher education institutions on a Further Education and Training (FET) certificate of some kind (the Grade 12 National Senior Certificate is one such certificate). Umalusi's proposals on two new FET certificates, the National Independent Certificate (NIC) and the National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA), are important developments as part of government's efforts to ensure that more youths receive a formal qualification.

Grade 9 is the end of the General Education and Training (GET) band of the curriculum and implicit in the South African Schools Act is that every learner should complete at least Grade 9. Whilst close to 100% of learners stay in school until the age of 15, the percentage of learners who complete Grade 9 is lower. However, the situation in this regard has been improving. As illustrated in the following graph, the percentage of youths who by age 22 had completed Grade 9 improved from 80% in 2003 to 88% in 2010. At age 17 the figure improved from 64% to 75% over the same period. These are important signs of progress. As Figure 11 in the appendix shows, the improvement has occurred in all provinces, with Free State displaying exceptionally rapid progress. However, the situation is still highly dependent on the province in which a youth finds himself or herself. Grade 9 remains in 2010 far more attainable for youths in Limpopo than in Eastern Cape, for instance. Moreover, as shown by Figure 4, youths are attaining Grade 9 too late in life.

Figure 4: Grade 9 attainment amongst youths



Source: General Household Survey dataset.

Progress with respect to grade attainment at the secondary level can be attributed to a number of government initiatives aimed at improving learner retention at this level. In particular, the declaration of no fee schools has removed important financial barriers to attendance. The extension of publicly funded school nutrition to the secondary level and policies aimed at ensuring that pregnancy amongst female learners does not lead to permanent dropping out, have also played a role.

Learner performance

At the Grade 12 level, there has been progress with respect to the number of examination passes qualifying for Bachelors studies. A steady increase in this regard occurred between 2008 and 2010, from around 107 000 to 128 000. However, declines have been seen in the number of mathematics and physical science passes.

Below Grade 12, data limitations do not permit an analysis of the exact learner performance trend after 2007, a period when a number of new interventions were introduced. However, as indicated by the DBE's new Annual National Assessments programme in 2011, learner performance is below what it should be by any standards. What the analysis presented here reveals is the importance of focussing on inter-provincial differences. For instance, the data we do have suggest that if learners in the less well performing provinces were to perform at the level of similarly disadvantaged learners in North West (a province more or less in the middle of the provincial rankings), then South Africa's average reading score in SACMEQ would increase from the current 486 to 499. This would represent a major step forward for the country. These kinds of opportunities must inform current efforts to improve the quality of basic education.

Table 1 indicates the percentage of candidates who wrote Grade 12 examinations who also obtained the National Senior Certificate (NSC). The figures in Table 1 are the ones obtained after the completion of the supplementary examinations at the start of subsequent year. The 2010 pass rate of almost 70% stands out as a key recent success of the schooling system.

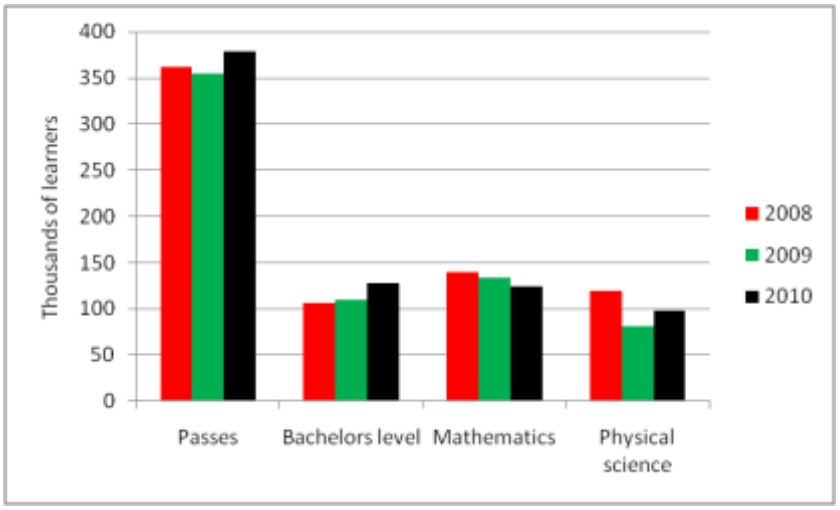
Table 1: Grade 12 examination pass rate 2008-2010

2008	64.2
2009	62.7
2010	69.8

As seen in the next graph, 2010 also saw an exceptionally high number of Grade 12 passes. The provinces Eastern Cape and Limpopo saw the largest percentage increases in the number of learners obtaining the NSC between 2008 and 2010. Specifically, these provinces experienced increases of 22% and 12 % respectively (see Table 3 in the appendix). The fact that these two provinces have the lowest levels of Grade 12 attainment indicates that the improvement is in the direction of greater inter-provincial equity.

Several indicators in the Action Plan deal with the need to increase the numbers of Grade 12 learners fulfilling certain requirements, specifically a pass allowing for entry into Bachelors studies and passes in the subjects mathematics and physical science. Figure 5 indicates that notable success was made in increasing the number of learners with a Bachelors level pass. The decline in the number of mathematics and physical science passes is a disappointment, however, and points to the need to strengthen teaching in these subjects and attract more learners.

Figure 5: Grade 12 examination results 2008-2010



Source: Published examinations reports with post-supplementary figures included.

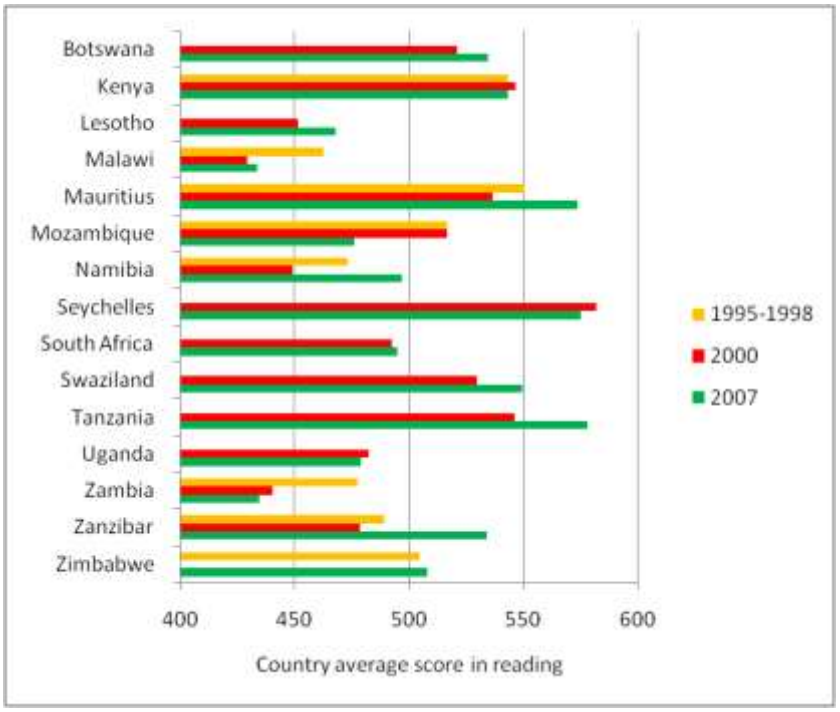
All provinces except for Free State, Northern Cape and Western Cape experienced a substantial increase in the number of Grade 12 learners qualifying for Bachelors studies between 2008 and 2010. Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo experienced particularly large improvements and accounted for around 15 000 of the 21 000 additional learners between 2008 and 2010 (see Figure 12 in the appendix).

Future improvements at the Grade 12 level depend on a sufficient level of educational quality in the GET band. As indicated by the 2011 Annual National Assessments (ANA) report[2], the level of performance at the Grades 1 to 6 level remains below satisfactory, in particular as far as schools serving the poorest communities are concerned. At the same time, the report also points out that there are great differences in the performances of schools serving similar communities. In other words, there are schools that can serve as role models. The ANA 2011

[2] DBE (2011b).

results are not fully comparable to previous performance averages. The most comparable measures over time are still the SACMEQ[3] scores. These indicate that between 2000 and 2007 there was a small improvement in Grade 6 mathematics in South Africa but virtually no improvement in the case of reading. The available data are unable to confirm what the exact learner performance trend has been after 2007, a period when a number of new quality improvement initiatives were introduced, such as the Foundations for Learning programme.

Figure 6: SACMEQ reading averages by country

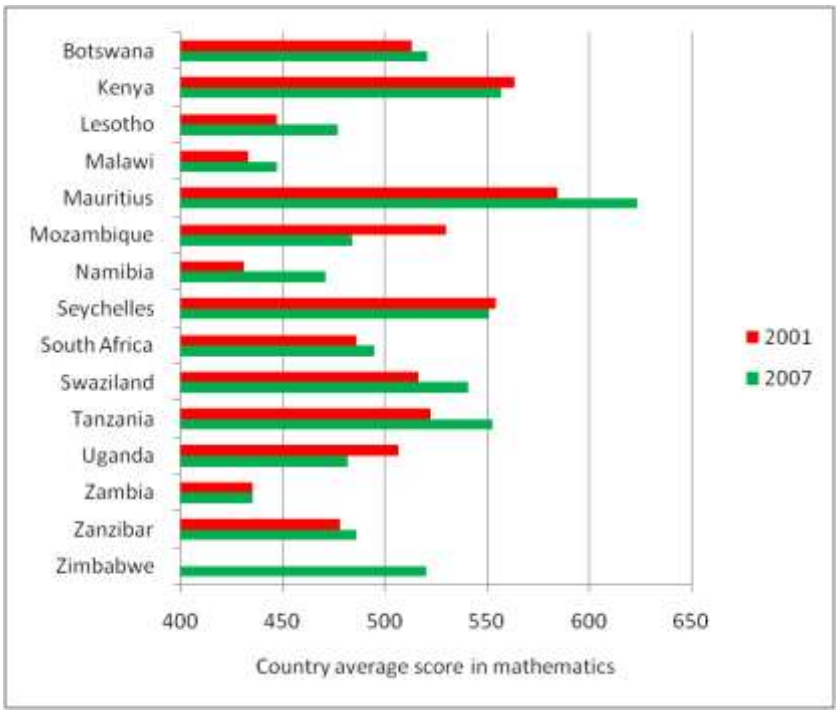


Source: Makuwa (2010) plus http://www.sacmeq.org/indicators.htm for SACMEQ I (1995-1998) results.

The previous and the next graphs indicate that South Africa's level of learner performance is far below what it should be within the regional context. They also point to the size of the improvements that we should expect. The 2000 to 2008 improvements considered statistically significant, taking into account the size of the SACMEQ sample, by the IIEP are those of: Lesotho, Mauritius, Namibia, Swaziland, Tanzania (all with respect to both subjects), Malawi (mathematics only) and Botswana (reading only). If South Africa were to achieve improvements comparable to those of Tanzania, our average reading score would rise from 495 to 527, a substantial improvement.

[3] Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality.

Figure 7: SACMEQ mathematics averages by country



Source: See Figure 6.

The appendix includes a number of graphs on pre-Grade 12 learner performance at the provincial level. Perhaps the two clearest patterns are that Western Cape obtains average scores that are considerably above those of the other provinces whilst Limpopo is nearly always the worst performing province. The relative positions of the remaining provinces vary across different assessments in a manner that is not obviously systematic.

Given the very strong relationship between socio-economic status and learner performance, a key question is the degree to which learners with the same socio-economic status perform better or worse depending on the province they find themselves in.

Figure 15 in the appendix provides an important illustration of the relationship between socio-economic status and learner performance. The graph is based on the SACMEQ 2007 reading scores, but other datasets would provide a similar picture. What is clear is that Limpopo performs poorly not just because of barriers imposed by poverty. Provinces with similar barriers perform considerably better than Limpopo. Western Cape and Gauteng clearly offer learners from poor backgrounds better educational opportunities. Northern Cape, North West and Free State perform slightly better than Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga when it comes to offering poorer communities a quality basic education.

Information on how well or poorly provinces perform relative to socio-economic status is important for evaluating the opportunities for improving the situation nationally. For instance, if learners in Limpopo performed as well as similarly disadvantaged learners in Eastern Cape (a province that performs only slightly better), just this would push up South Africa's average reading score in SACMEQ by 4 points. Alternatively, if interventions succeed in getting learners to perform at least at the 2007 North West level (North West is a relatively well performing province, though it is far from the best) at each level of socio-economic disadvantage, the overall South African reading score in SACMEQ would increase by around 13 points, which would represent a substantial national improvement.

The sections that follow describe concrete steps, informed by local evidence and consultation as well as international best practices, taken by government during recent years, but especially 2011, to ensure that improvements are seen in future learner assessments such as SACMEQ (the next run of SACMEQ is currently expected to occur in 2013).

OUTPUT 1: IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING

Sub-output 1.1: Improve teacher capacity and practices

2011 saw important steps being taken towards better teacher capacity and practices. New guides for implementing the curriculum, in the form of the CAPS, were finalised and will be phased in during 2012 to 2014. These guides, and the accompanying training, resolve longstanding problems and gaps in the curriculum delivery process. Specifically, teachers, and in particular teachers with the greatest capacity problems, will receive much clearer guidance on what to teach and how. Also in 2011, a long-term agreement with teacher unions was formulated which will see teacher unions become directly involved in teacher development. This will help to strengthen the social pact for better quality schooling. During 2011, under-performing schools were increasingly involved in departmentally-led training programmes aimed at strengthening educational outcomes. Finally, 2011 saw the finalisation of a teacher development plan that will frame teacher capacity building in the coming years and introduce a more multi-pronged approach to training. The schooling system is on a better footing than it has ever been to deal decisively with teacher capacity and to ensure that existing initiatives are properly positioned to achieve intended goals.

The new 'CAPS'. A key development during 2011 aimed at improving teacher practices was the finalisation of the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), which clarify what teachers should focus on and how the lesson planning, actual teaching and assessment should occur[4]. The CAPS will be phased in during the years 2012 to 2014, the emphasis in 2012 falling on Grades R to 3 and 10. The CAPS fill a number of critical gaps identified by the official 2009 review of curriculum implementation in South Africa[5], in particular the gap of insufficient content and methodological guidance to teachers. Moreover, the curriculum changes address critical language concerns by making it obligatory for all learners in Grades 1 to 3 to take a first additional language, which for most learners will be English. This will ease the transition to English as a medium of instruction that most learners experience in Grade 4. The CAPS are detailed and practical. As an example, the document for mathematics in the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6) is 227 pages long, with a strong emphasis on examples of class exercises and advice for teachers. The reception to the CAPS from teachers has mostly been a positive one. It is important to emphasise that the CAPS do not represent a new curriculum, but are instead detailed specifications in line with the curriculum that existed previously.

During 2011, extensive preparation for the implementation of the CAPS has occurred. Much of this preparation has been in the form of DBE-led training of provincial and district subject advisors. The DBE took 336 advisors working at the Foundation Phase and around 2 500 advisors working with Grades 10 to 12 through structured training lasting 4 to 5 days per trainee. Around 110 000 teachers were targeted for training by the subject advisors during 2011. As at November 2011, the DBE was satisfied that this training of teachers been completed according to plan in four provinces: Eastern Cape, Free State, Northern Cape and North West. In the remaining provinces there were delays and the DBE is paying special attention to ensuring that training is completed in time for implementation in the 2012 school year. Apart from training, various issues of the DBE's *Curriculum News* letter have been disseminated in order to clarify the changes and prevent policy conclusion amongst teachers,

[4] See Government Notices 722 and 723 of 2011.
[5] DBE (2009).

a problem that according to the 2009 review has clearly hampered the delivery of the curriculum in the past.

New teacher development plan. The release of the country's first comprehensive and long-term plan for teacher development[6] during 2011 marked an important milestone towards a more effective system of capacity building amongst teachers. Features of the new plan include a points system to encourage teachers to engage in ongoing professional development as well as diversification from the traditional top-down mode of in-service development, for instance through the promotion of locally driven professional learning communities.

Teacher performance appraisal. A new instrument was finalised during 2011 to appraise the performance of teachers at schools. This is the new Teacher Performance Appraisal, or TPA, instrument. Part of its purpose is to determine whether the performance of individual teachers warrants a salary progression in line with the official salary structure. The new instrument responds to a need, identified by amongst others teacher unions, to draw a clearer separation between the determination of professional growth needs and appraisals linked to salary increments. The expected result is a more effective system of accountability within schools and the raising of the professional status of teachers.

Department-led in-service training of teachers. 2011 saw a continuation of the trend towards more practically focussed and prescriptive in-service training, in particular for teachers is worse performing schools. This is especially true for teachers teaching Grades 10 to 12. Gauteng's Secondary Schools Improvement Programme (SSIP) serves as example of this trend. In this programme, 6 000 secondary school teachers from around 400 poorly performing schools were brought together in a central training venue during weekends and the school holidays.

Innovative partnerships with teacher unions. Following good practice in countries such as Canada, during 2011 DBE has negotiated with teacher unions agreements whereby the unions would use public funding in order to provide in-service training to teachers. A memorandum of understanding is close to being signed and implementation of this innovative model is expected to begin in 2012, specifically in relation to orientating teachers with respect to the new CAPS. The advantage of this model, which will supplement but not replace existing models of training, is that unions will become more active stakeholders in the quality improvement process in schools. Experiences in other countries suggest that this type of collaboration can greatly assist in cementing a social pact for better schooling.

Sub-output 1.2: Increase access to high quality learning materials

Apart from ANA, the second large change implemented in schools during 2011 was the distribution of national workbooks in two key subjects (language and mathematics) to all learners in Grades 1 to 6. This was a major undertaking to tackle a serious problem of inadequate access to quality texts amongst learners. For instance, before 2011 only around one-third of Grade 6 learners had access to their own mathematics textbooks. Clearly, the national workbooks initiative has the potential to fundamentally alter the way learning and teaching takes place in the classroom. Despite teething problems relating to the logistics of getting the right numbers of workbooks in the right languages to all schools, overall the workbooks have been well received. Experts have provided very positive feedback on the design of the books. 2011 thus sees the beginning of a new strategy whereby every year learners will receive their own workbooks to guide progress through key subjects. During 2011, enhancements to the 2011 workbooks were implemented following an extensive process of user feedbacks and additional workbooks, to be introduced during 2012 in Grades

[6] The full title of the plan is *Integrated strategic planning framework for teacher education and development in South Africa.* It is available on the DBE website.

7 to 9, were designed. In partnership with UNICEF, the DBE is conducting an in-depth evaluation of the effectiveness of the workbooks in the classroom.

Workbooks do not replace textbooks. In order to strengthen quality criteria relating to textbooks used in schools, during 2011 the DBE led a process whereby textbooks were evaluated and put on a more comprehensive National Catalogue for Textbooks. This catalogue is expected to reduce the purchasing of poor quality or poorly focussed textbooks for schools.

The first year of the national workbooks initiative. The 2011 school year was a milestone year insofar as schools offering Grade 1 to 7 saw the start of two new programmes with a high potential improve learner performance. The first programme, described here, was the national workbooks initiative. The second, described below, was the first full-scale run of ANA. The national workbooks initiative saw workbooks for key subjects being distributed to all Grades R to 6 learners in order to tackle the legacy of a serious under-availability of texts for learners. The seriousness of the pre-2011 situation is illustrated by SACMEQ data which indicate that in 2007 only 36% of Grade 6 learners had unshared access to a mathematics textbook and the ratio of mathematics textbooks to Grade 6 learners, once sharing had been taken into account, was around 1 is to 2. There is no reason to believe that the situation improved significantly between 2007 and 2010. Other data sources moreover suggest that the situation was similarly serious for other subjects and other primary level grades[7]. Given the importance attached to the availability of good texts in the classroom as a means of improving learner performance, by numerous academic studies and the 2009 review of curriculum implementation, the low level of access to quality-assured and standardised texts before 2011 was indeed a serious problem. Improvements in non-personnel funding for schools starting in around 2003 appear to have improved the availability of texts in the classroom. However, as pointed out by the 2009 review of the implementation of the curriculum, signals to schools and teachers around the importance of texts were not strong enough (but have been considerably strengthened through the new CAPS).

During 2011, two sets of workbooks were distributed to learners, known as Book 1 and Book 2. All workbooks are available on the DBE and Thutong[8] websites. Each set of workbooks consists of a grade-specific mathematics and a language workbook for each learner, the emphasis in the language workbooks being on the mother tongue. The mathematics workbooks were available in the mother tongue for Grades 1 to 3 but only in English and Afrikaans in for Grades 4 to 6, in line with the language of instruction practice in the great majority of schools. Book 1 concentrated on activities for the first half of the year, and Book 2 on the second half of the year. Each workbook consists of at least 128 pages of explanations and exercises, accompanied by illustrations in colour. The Grade 6 mathematics workbooks are each almost 250 pages long. Each workbook is explicitly designed to assist pacing within the classroom. Exercises are allocated to weeks in the school year.

The Grade R workbooks were produced and distributed through a separate process which resulted in black-and-white and not colour workbooks. The DBE intends to streamline the two processes and ensure that Grade R workbooks also appear in colour, in order to provide better stimulation for learners.

Initial reactions to the workbooks themselves from, for instance, teacher unions and education experts have been very positive. A formal evaluation of the workbooks was begun late in 2011 by the DBE, in collaboration with UNICEF. This evaluation will focus on both the quality of the books themselves and how they were actually utilised within schools. With regard to workbooks utilisation, current reports indicate a wide range of experiences. In some

[7] The other prominent data source is the 2007 to 2009 National School Effectiveness (NSES) datasets.
[8] See http://www.thutong.doe.gov.za/.

schools, workbooks have become a central feature of learning and teaching, whilst in others the workbooks have been more peripherally used, for a number of reasons. Some schools may have other materials which they prefer to use. However, what is a problem is that there are also schools where no good texts are used and teachers are not using the workbooks because they do not feel confident in doing so.

Problems in the distribution of the Book 1 workbooks to schools at the start of the year received wide media coverage. Whilst the extent of these problems was often exaggerated, the DBE acknowledged that there were problems and took measures to ensure that a more successful distribution occurred for Book 2 before the start of the third school term in July. A review of the process by the DBE revealed that around 900 000 of the approximately 12 million Grades 1 to 6 Book 1 workbooks distributed at the start of the year did not reach their intended destination at the start of the year, mainly due to information problems relating to number of learners by language. In response to this situation, as far as possible misplaced workbooks were re-allocated to schools where they were needed. In the case of Book 2, an improved distribution methodology was employed where multiple sources of data were used to produce a more accurate picture of enrolment by language distributions. Reports from schools and provinces indicated that the number of learners without the required books at the start of the third term was around 170 000, compared to the 900 000 figure for Book 1. The worst problems were clearly overcome, though there is obviously a need for further improvements to the delivery methodology in 2012.

Preparations for 2012 workbooks. During 2011 investments were made by the DBE into workbooks for more subjects and grades, to be made available to learners in 2012. Specifically, in 2012 workbooks for English as a first additional language in Grades 1 to 6, for life orientation in Grades 1 to 3 and for mathematics and English in Grades 7 to 9 will become available in 2012. This will raise the total number of titles from 210 in 2011 to 312 in 2012 (here Book 1 and Book 2 are counted as separate titles). Moreover, the workbooks distributed in 2011 have been improved, in readiness for 2012, following a review process that involved the processing of around 4 000 inputs on the design of the 2011 workbooks.

New textbook specifications for 2012. Following concerns expressed in the 2009 review of curriculum implementation that there were insufficient controls over the quality of textbooks procured by provinces for schools, during 2011 the DBE began phasing in a National Catalogue for Textbooks that will eventually encompass all grades. Importantly, the national workbooks do not remove the need for textbooks. In fact, the CAPS emphasise the importance of using textbooks in all subjects, especially in Grades 4 to 12. During 2011, the DBE focussed on evaluating CAPS-compliant textbooks for Grades 1 to 3 and Grade 10 and placing compliant titles on the National Catalogue for Textbooks. Whilst Grades 10 to 12 have been covered through national textbook catalogues in the past, this is the first time that grades below Grade 10 are being covered. The new catalogue, which includes prices that publishers have agreed to, has been used by the nine provinces to plan procurements of textbooks that learners will use in 2012. Beyond 2011, the DBE will concentrate on expanding the National Catalogue for Textbooks to include all grades.

Monitoring access to texts amongst learners. Despite being vital resources in the schooling process, access to textbooks and workbooks by learners has been poorly monitored in the past. The Delivery Agreement requires stronger monitoring of these resources. Specifically, one of the indicators of the agreement is the percentage of learners having access to the required textbooks and workbooks for the entire school year. The DBE is in the process of refining criteria for minimum requirements, based on specifications in the CAPS. Moreover, in the last quarter of 2011 a major sample-based data collection, the School Monitoring Survey, was conducted for the DBE by Pearson Education in order to provide the most detailed and accurate information to date relating not just to the indicator just mentioned, but also related matters such as reasons for non-access to texts, utilisation of textbooks and

workbooks and satisfaction with the quality of the 2011 national workbooks. Furthermore, the School Monitoring Survey concentrates on all Action Plan indicators for which data are not available through regular data collections such as the Annual Survey of Schools. The data from the survey, which encompasses around 2 000 schools, is expected to be ready in January 2012. Whether this survey should become a permanent feature within the DBE is still a matter being considered, partly through a re-evaluation of the whole range of data collection instruments that the DBE has at its disposal.

OUTPUT 2: UNDERTAKE REGULAR ASSESSMENT TO TRACK PROGRESS

Sub-output 2.1: Establish a world class system of standardised national assessments

During 2011, the first full-scale run of the Annual National Assessments (ANA) programme occurred. A key aim of this programme is to use standardised testing to monitor progress below Grade 12. But the programme also serves as a basis for action to improve the quality of schooling, for instance through more informed parent involvement in the school's education quality debates and better targeting of the right support to under-performing schools. Testing occurred in February and proceeded largely as planned. Learners wrote tests on what they should have learnt in the previous year, meaning Grades 2 to 7 learners wrote tests set at the Grades 1 to 6 levels. The so-called verification ANA exercise involved a re-marking of test scripts by an external service provider in the case of around 1 800 schools. This occurred in order to produce more reliable provincial average scores than would be possible from the programme as a whole, or 'universal' ANA. A national ANA report was released in June. This report found, as had been expected, that on average learner performance, in particular in the case of poorer communities, was much lower than it should be. However, it also pointed out that amongst schools facing similar socio-economic challenges, there was a large variation in results, confirming that internal school factors such as school management are to a large degree behind poor performance. The report pointed to important lessons learnt from the 2011 ANA exercise, including the need for better standardisation, even within the verification ANA sample. There is also a need to link intervention strategies more directly to ANA in 2012 and beyond. ANA is not a 'world class' programme yet, though 2011 saw important steps being taken towards the achievement of such a programme.

The decision to proceed with the full-scale 2011 Annual National Assessments. Standardised testing for a large portion of Grades 1 to 6 learners had occurred in 2008 and 2009. However, it was only in 2011 that the Annual National Assessments took the form of a highly publicised programme with a public national report. Moreover, 2011 saw, for the first time, a combination of tests for all learners with relatively stringent controls ('universal ANA') together with a sample-based verification of the marking performed by teachers ('verification ANA'). ANA, which has its South African origins in the Systemic Evaluation programme (run 2001, 2004 and 2007) and the 2008 Foundations for Learning initiative, is informed by experiences in other countries which indicate that, if implemented correctly and in a way that is sensitive to the local context, these kinds of assessment programmes can greatly assist a schooling system to achieve qualitative improvements. As described in the Action Plan, in South Africa the emphasis should lie on getting teachers to become more familiar with appropriate learning standards and modes of assessment, getting parents to engage in the school's quality of learning debates in a more informed manner, and using ANA results to target the right district office support to the right schools.

The process of 2011 ANA. The universal ANA tests, which were piloted during 2010 and cover language and mathematics in Grades 1 to 6, were distributed through provincial departments to schools, together with supplementary materials such as marking instructions and a letter explaining the purpose of ANA. These materials as well as examples of ANA-type test questions are available on the DBE website. Tests for Grades 1 to 3 were available in all eleven official languages, whilst tests for Grades 4 to 6 were available in English and

Afrikaans only. The official days for administering the universal ANA tests was 8 to 11 February, though several schools had to deviate from these dates for a variety of logistical reasons. Learners were tested with respect to what they should have learnt in the previous year. Thus learners who were in Grade 7 in February 2011 were given Grade 6 tests, and so on. Learners in Grade 1 in February 2011 did not write tests as there were no Grade R tests. Around six million learners in over 19 000 schools participated in the testing. The exercise attracted large-scale public and media attention, partly as a result of an active publicity campaign on the part of the DBE. The types of controls used in the administration and marking of the tests varied across schools and districts. In certain districts, departmental officials were present during the administration of tests and moderated the marking done by teachers. In other schools quality control in the test administration and marking stages remained in the hands of the school principal, though principals were guided by clear written instructions and many had attended ANA workshops. The ANA pack sent to each school included the instruction that individual learner results should be reported to parents. The fact that in some schools tests were written on non-official days, is one of several characteristics that imply that controls in ANA were weaker than in, for instance, the Grade 12 examinations or the sample-based Systemic Evaluation. Experiences in other countries indicate that at least at the initial stages of a programme such as ANA, this is not necessarily a serious problem, as long as a sample of schools undergo a more rigorous process. The aim of ANA was not to produce a high-stakes testing environment covering all schools, but rather to raise the awareness amongst teachers, school principals and parents about the importance of assessing learners according to correct national standards. Partly through the use of the same systems that gather Grade 12 examinations results, a national database of ANA results, at the level of the individual learner, was populated. This in itself has been a major operational undertaking involving both the provincial education departments and DBE.

Verification ANA was conducted in partnership with the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) and involved removing just Grades 3 and 6 test scripts from a representative sample of around 1 800 schools after the teachers had already marked the tests. Verification ANA also involved more stringent and external controls during the administration of the tests. The sample was designed to provide sufficiently reliable provincial values. The HSRC then re-marked the tests and captured the original and new marks into a database. Moreover, to assist the analysis, re-marked results per test item (or question) were captured into the database.

Interpretation of ANA results. In June 2011, a national ANA report, the first of its kind, was released by the DBE[9]. The report relied almost entirely on the data from the sample-based verification ANA exercise as 'universal' ANA data had not been fully captured into the national database by the time the report was due. Results were poor, as had been expected. However, the report also pointed out that amongst schools facing similar socio-economic challenges, there was a large variation in results, confirming that internal school factors such as school management are to a large degree behind poor performance. Due to comparability problems, it was not possible to use the results to establish whether there had been any improvement relative to previous years. Although this was carefully explained in the report, some newspapers created the impression that performance in schools had declined, by making selective comparisons of values that were in fact incomparable. However, the general perception created by the report was that the quality of schooling remained low and that the country continued to face a serious educational crisis. The report included pointers for the way forward. In particular, the need for establishing rigorous annual statistics that would be comparable across provinces and across years using verification ANA was emphasised. Given the nature of basic education, improvements, when they occur, will not be large, at least not from one year to the next. Yet small improvements are highly significant as they suggest that over time large improvements of the kind seen in more successful developing countries are

[9] *Report on the Annual National Assessments of 2011.* Available on the DBE website.

occurring. ANA must be able to detect these small changes so that we can know whether our interventions are having the desired effect.

The impact of ANA 2011. Reports indicate that ANA has assisted the education process in a number of practical ways in 2011. For example, ANA has allowed parents to engage more actively with schools with respect to teaching and learning issues, it has assisted school principals in determining which teachers are most in need of support and it has undoubtedly provided strong signals to teachers on what acceptable levels of performance are. Moreover, ANA has helped to drive the message home across society that a successful basic education is not just about attending school regularly and moving from one grade to the next. It is also a question of acquiring basic language and numeracy competencies. Moving forward, there are clearly elements within ANA which can be improved. In particular, there is a need for more tools that districts and schools can use to incorporate ANA into their improvement strategies. Clear policies and strategies are needed on how ANA is used to direct the right kinds of support to schools whose performance is exceptionally poor. Moreover, the impact of ANA on behaviour within schools must be researched. These are issues the DBE is dealing with in preparation for ANA 2012.

ANA cannot be described as 'world class' yet. However, 2011 can be said to represent a major step in the right direction.

Upholding the credibility of the Grade 12 examinations. The substantial increase in the Grade 12 pass rate, from 61% in 2009 to 68% in 2010, was widely reported in the media following the release of the examinations report in January 2011. However, the reliability of the 2010 results was also questioned. An access to information legal dispute between the media and government resulted in the release of the details of the adjustments process by Umalusi, the examinations quality assurance body, for the first time ever. The information released by Umalusi confirmed the credibility of the 2010 results. However, they also indicated that despite the large increase in the pass rate, there were no large performance improvements in individual subjects. The increase in the pass rate was largely due to factors such as subject choice changes. However, this should not detract from the success of ensuring that more learners leave school with a Grade 12 National Senior Certificate. 2011 thus saw the Grade 12 examinations system emerge from a process of media and public inquiry with its credibility intact and probably enhanced. This, and the improved public understanding of how the Grade 12 examinations work that resulted from the process, can be considered a victory.

Sub-output 2.2: Extract key lessons from ongoing participation in international assessments

The key event with respect to this sub-output during 2011 was the release of the 2007 SACMEQ data, which has led to a number of research reports, by government and non-government researchers, which assist policymakers and the public to understand better the causes of under-performance in schools and ways of improving school outcomes.

A key development during 2011 was the finalisation of the 2007 SACMEQ data, for South Africa and other participating countries. The 2007 South Africa sample covered 392 schools, which was over twice the number of schools covered in SACMEQ 2000. This allowed better analysis using the 2007 data and the extraction of better provincial statistics. Researchers, inside and outside the DBE, have used the data to investigate the factors behind under-performance in schools, and to compare the situation in South Africa to that in neighbouring countries. Much of the research has emerged as a result of the Presidency's Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development in South Africa (PSPPD)[10]. SACMEQ 2007 yielded the first ever national statistics in South Africa on teacher subject knowledge. The teachers of

[10] See http://www.psppd.org.za.

tested learners sat for language and mathematics tests which to some extent were the same as the tests taken by learners. The research indicated, as one might expect, that improving teacher knowledge is an important part of improving learner results. Yet it is also clear that some other SACMEQ countries achieve better learner results with similar levels of teacher knowledge (see Figure 16 in the appendix). A key feature of the 2007 SACMEQ data is moreover new information on how learners and teachers view HIV and AIDS.

Two international data collections occurred in samples of South African schools during 2011. The one was TIMSS (Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study) and the other was PIRLS (Progress in International Reading Literacy Study). The results for both of these programmes are expected to be made public at the end of 2012. These studies are important both in terms of the opportunities they offer for understanding the factors contributing towards better learning and because they send out the signal that South Africa is serious about dealing with its human resource development challenges.

OUTPUT 3. IMPROVE EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT

The data indicate that South Africa is close to achieving universal Grade R. By 2010, according to household data around 93% of learners were receiving Grade R before proceeding to Grade 1. The fact that over four-fifths of Grade R enrolment is now in schools can be considered good for the quality of this grade. Factors such as the co-existence of Grade R and Grade 1 in the same school help to ensure that the right kind of pre-schooling is offered in Grade R. During 2011, the DBE made progress on policy reforms focussed on overcoming obstacles to the quality of Grade R, including insufficient per learner funding and the fact that many Grade R teachers are under-qualified.

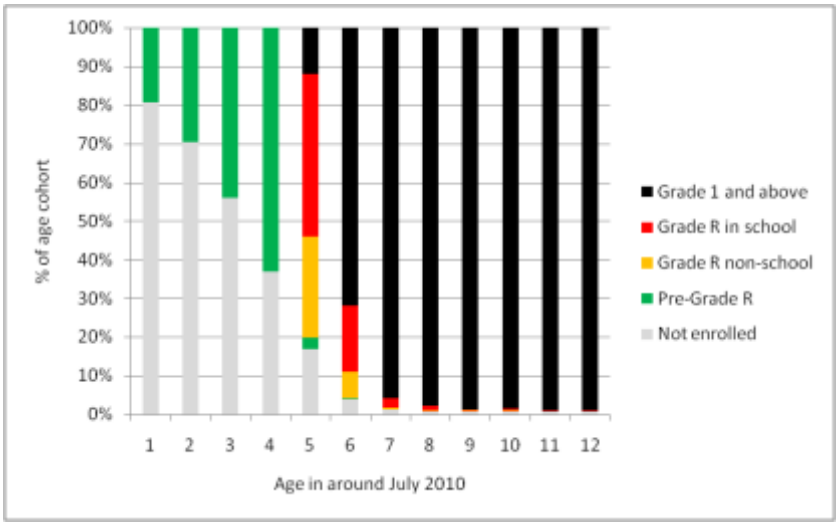
Sub-output 3.1: Universalise access to Grade R

As pointed out in the earlier section on education outcomes, Grade R enrolment in ordinary schools (meaning schools that would also have at least Grade 1) more than doubled between 2003 and 2011, from around 300 000 to 705 000. However, the most recent 2010 to 2011 annual increase is the smallest for the entire period, suggesting that there is a slowing down of the trend. This can partly be explained by the fact that we are close to achieving universal Grade R and as one gets closer to 100% it becomes increasingly difficult to include more children due to, for instance, remoteness of households, learner disability and other special needs (these are reasons why even for children aged 7 to 15, 100% coverage has not been reached yet). The move towards universal Grade R has been a key achievement in the education system which is likely to have positive impacts on learning in Grade 1 and above, given what research from South Africa and beyond tells us about the positive impact of Grade R and pre-Grade R attendance on learning throughout a learner's subsequent school grades. As pointed out in an earlier section, the expansion of publicly funded Grade R has had a ripple effect of expanding even pre-Grade R enrolments as household spending was redirected from Grade R to pre-Grade R.

How close are we to achieving universal Grade R? It is not a simple matter of comparing Grade 1 enrolments to Grade R enrolments in schools, partly because some Grade R occurs outside schools and partly because Grade 1 enrolments include grade repeaters. The General Household Survey, which since 2009 includes questions on the current grade of learners (including Grade R), provides a basis for answering the question. The following graph illustrates enrolment in Grade R in 2010, by age. Clearly the bulk of Grade R enrolment is amongst children aged 5 and 6. Moreover, most of it is in schools, as opposed to non-school centres such as stand-alone pre-schools and community-based sites. The GHS indicates that grade repletion amongst Grade R learners exists, though it is low, at 2.7%. Non-repeating Grade R learners in 2010 divided by the age five population cohort 5 gives a percentage of 93%. We can say that by 2010, around 93% of South Africa's children were receiving Grade

R before entering Grade 1. The provincial breakdown for this national statistic is provided in Table 4. As was indicated earlier, coverage in Eastern Cape and Limpopo is exceptionally high. All provinces have a statistic of at least 84% Grade R coverage.

Figure 8: Grade R access according to 2010 GHS



The 2010 Annual Survey of Schools indicates that nationally around 79% of children were receiving Grade R in a school. This is considerably higher than the 61% suggested by the above graph (see also Table 4). The most likely explanation for this difference is that respondents to the General Household Survey are reporting that children are receiving Grade R outside an ordinary school when they are in fact receiving it within such a school. In other words, there are differences in people's understanding of the terms 'school' and 'pre-school'.

Sub-output 3.2: Improve the quality of early childhood development

Not only has Grade R been expanding. The data also suggest that there has been a shrinkage in Grade R in non-school sites as learners have shifted towards schools-based Grade R. As suggested by the age three and four statistics discussed above, non-school sites have responded by expanding their enrolments at the pre-Grade R level. Though many non-school sites do offer quality Grade R, on the whole the movement towards schools can be considered good for the quality of Grade R. Researchers tend to agree that schools offer an advantageous setting for this grade. Quality control exercised by the education department is stronger and where Grade R and Grade 1 co-exist in the same institution, Grade 1 teachers have an interest in ensuring that their colleagues teaching Grade R cover what they should in the curriculum.

During 2011, the DBE has developed proposals on how policies governing the funding and staffing of Grade R education in schools can be revised in the interests of quality Grade R. Closely related to this is a research project being conducted jointly with the ETDP-SETA[11] training authority to ascertain the qualifications profiles of Grade R teachers. Currently, Grade R in schools continues to be under-funded on a per learner basis and many teachers are clearly under-qualified. In some ways, this situation has been the price of a very rapid expansion of this service. However, as we approach universal Grade R, increasingly attention will have to shift towards ensuring that Grade R is of a sufficient quality.

[11] Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and Training Authority.

OUTPUT 4. ENSURE A CREDIBLE OUTCOMES-FOCUSSED PLANNING AND ACCOUNTABILITY SYSTEM

Sub-output 4.1: Strengthen school management and promote functional schools

The General Household Survey of Stats SA indicates that there has been a decline in the complaints made by households about schools between 2004 and 2010, for instance with respect to high fees, a lack of books and a lack of teachers. However, these statistics should not detract from the enormity of the task that still remains of improving the functionality of the country's schools. Key recent interventions aimed at improving learning and life generally in schools include the roll-out of publicly funded lunches in the poorest 60% of secondary schools. Household data indicate that this initiative is on track, with 41% of secondary level learners in 2010 indicating that they received a lunch every day. This initiative is expected to improve attendance and reduce dropping out. The year 2011 saw a major reorganisation of the way in which infrastructure development for schools is funded and planned. The DBE now carries greater planning and monitoring responsibilities. This is expected to encourage more cost-effective and faster infrastructure development. As part of a process to bring more transparency and accountability into the infrastructure development process, lists of schools targeted for building work up to 2014 have been published on the internet. 2011 was the third year in which DBE-employed 'IQMS monitors' visited schools to monitor and provide support. Classroom observations to assist teachers improve their methodologies form part of this initiative. The number of schools visited per year is around 7 000. Reports indicate this work is assisting to promote a culture of accountability and professionalism in schools. 2011 also saw the development of new performance management rules for school managers. These rules will introduce performance contracts for school principals and deputy principals similar to the contracts applicable in offices in the public sector. This is expected to provide an additional and important instrument for holding principals accountable for the development of their schools. Through the introduction of clearer rules around the principal's role in the school, for instance with respect to teachers and parents, the contracts are also expected to make it easier for principals to manage their schools effectively. Implementation of the new contracts is expected to begin in 2012.

Apart from ANA and the national workbooks, interventions that have been described above, several other developments contributed towards the mammoth task of moving South Africa's schools to a point where they will all be fully functional.

School nutrition and learner attendance. One development that affected schools very directly was the continued expansion during 2011 of the reach of publicly funded lunches at schools. The 2011/12 financial year saw the inclusion of quintile 3 secondary schools in the National School Nutrition Programme, which is funded through the DBE by means of a conditional grant. School lunches are known to improve attendance and expansion of the programme at the secondary level provides an additional mechanism whereby the problem of secondary level dropping out by learners is combated. Household data confirm that the increased spending is reaching the intended recipients. Specifically, according to the GHS, the percentage of secondary level learners receiving a school lunch every day increased from 27% to 41% between 2009 and 2010. It is expected that the figure for 2011 will be around 60%. These increases are of course substantial. A further development during 2011 aimed at improving the attendance of learners was the introduction of a new national attendance policy[12]. This policy includes, for instance, improved tools for schools to monitor attendance.

School infrastructure. Improvements to the basic infrastructure of schools continued during 2011. As an example, in the period 2008 to 2010, an additional 1 001 schools were electrified. There are now fewer than 3 000 schools without electricity – in 1996 there were 15 000 such

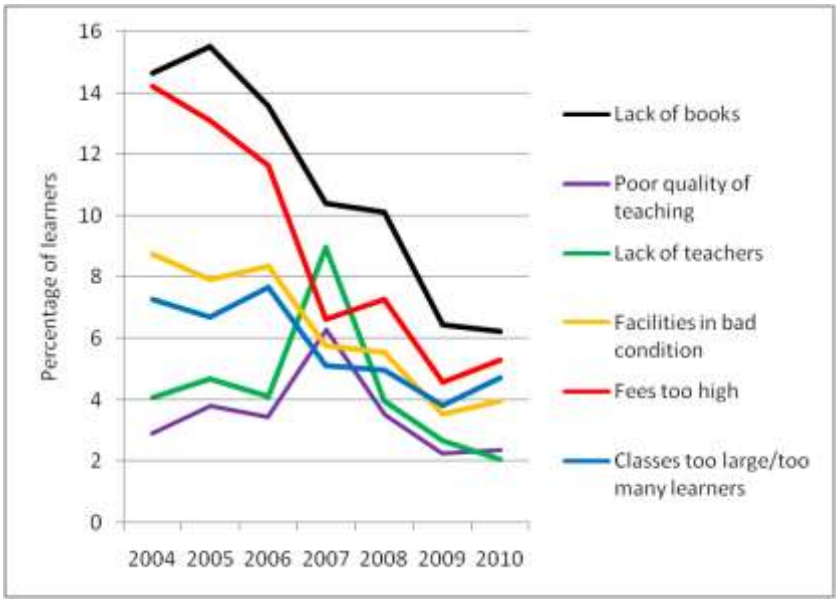
[12] Government Notice 361 of 2010.

schools. The 2011/12 financial year saw a major change in the way physical infrastructure development in the schooling system occurs. For the first time, the bulk of infrastructure spending on schools fell under the budget of the DBE, with the national department assuming new planning and monitoring responsibilities linked to the transfer of funds from the national to the provincial level. Specifically, the Infrastructure Grant to Provinces, budgeted for by National Treasury, came to an end in 2010/11 and was replaced by the Education Infrastructure Grant, budgeted for by the DBE and amounting to R5,5bn in 2011/12 (rising to R6,2bn in 2013/14). The Education Infrastructure Grant accounts for around 71% of all provincial education department infrastructure spending in 2011/12. The more direct involvement by the DBE in the planning of school infrastructure is expected to improve efficiencies and make this planning more sensitive to the strengthening of educational outcomes. In 2011, for the first time, all provincial infrastructure investment plans, with details on which schools will benefit when, up to 2014, were placed on the internet as part of a process of making infrastructure development more transparent and clarifying to school principals and school governing bodies what investments they can expect[13]. This will strengthen the accountability of provincial departments and make it easier for schools to plan.

Household complaints about schools. The General Household Survey has included questions since 2004 on aspects of schooling that households might experience as problematic. The 2010 GHS indicated that the trend of fewer complaints continues. The trend, and the fact that more respondents do not complain, should not lead to a false sense of complacency. The challenge of making all schools functional is larger than the household response statistics suggest. Yet the fact that the trend has been in direction of fewer complaints seems to confirm that recent efforts to improve schooling are having an impact that is noticed by communities. Specifically, as shown in the next graph, most of the six complaints covered since 2004 show a downward trend, in particular complaints relating to a lack of books and high fees. The overall picture is of a movement towards better functioning schools.

[13] This occurred in terms of Government Notice 528 of 2011. The lists of schools are available on the DBE website (under 'Documents Library » Publications').

Figure 9: Household complaints about schooling



Source: General Household Survey.
Note: Households are asked about problems with respect to each learner. For each learner it is possible to say yes to all six problems. Smaller increases or decreases in the curves should not be considered meaningful. What is important are the larger and sustained trends.

IQMS school visits. The Integrated Quality Management System school visits, conducted by a team of almost 100 monitoring officials employed by the DBE and started in 2009, continued during 2011. This relatively new intervention is designed to monitor and support schools and teachers with respect to the identification of professional development needs and the planning of capacity building. A stocktaking, completed in 2011, of the activities of the intervention so far revealed that the intervention is making a contribution to a general trend towards more accountability in schools and a stronger emphasis on developing educators. The over 7 000 school visits undertaken by the team during 2010 included about 600 classroom observations aimed at assisting teachers in their assessment of improvements needed. This is a significant development given the history of opposition to classroom observations amongst teacher organisations in the past. The IQMS monitors have shown themselves capable of generating the level of professional trust required for this type of work. The stocktaking exercise also pointed to the need for certain improvements in the intervention, such as better collaboration with district offices. Reports indicate that for many schools the visits by the IQMS officials are the first visits for development and support purposes that the schools have experienced in many years and that these types of visits are welcomed. Clearly one role of the IQMS visits is to demonstrate the importance of face-to-face support to schools and specific ways in which more such support can be organised, in particular by district offices.

Training of school principals. The two-year part-time studies leading to the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) for school managers continued to be an important vehicle in 2011 for improving school management. In 2011, 1 488 school principals entered this programme.

Performance management in schools. In the area of policy development aimed at improving school functionality, a key process during 2011 was the formulation and negotiation of new rules governing the performance management of teachers and managers in schools. The new Teacher Performance Appraisal system was discussed under sub-output 1.1. With respect to

school managers, specifically school principals and deputy principals, the new EMS: PMDS[14] policy, approved by teacher unions within the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) in September, establishes a completely new system of performance contracts for managers, in keeping with what occurs elsewhere in the public service (even Ministers now have performance agreements, starting in 2010). Introduction of the new performance contracts is expected to occur in 2012.

Sub-output 4.2: Strengthen the capacity of district offices

Two key developments occurred during 2011 that will strengthen the capacity of district offices. The newly established Planning and Delivery Oversight Unit in the Ministry of Basic Education has begun a process of providing intensive support to 18 districts where Grade 12 learner performance has been particularly poor. The multi-stakeholder 'Nedlac Accord' provides a new and promising framework for partners to bring about innovation in schools through an adopt-a-school process. This is expected to arrive at best practices that will inform school interventions planned by district offices.

Two key developments in 2011 are highlighted with respect to this sub-output. The first is the establishment of the Planning and Delivery Oversight Unit in the Office of Minister of Basic Education. The second is the 2011 Nedlac multi-stakeholder accord on strengthening the basic education system.

The Planning and Delivery Oversight Unit, or 'Delivery Unit', was established in 2011 with a view to promoting a more direct and interventionist relationship between the national level, on the one hand, and provinces and districts, on the other. The Delivery Unit is designed to focus strongly on supporting district offices and bases its work in this area on the recently formulated *Guideline document on roles and responsibilities of districts*, which was adopted by the DBE and the nine provincial education departments after extensive consultation. Currently, the Unit is focussing on providing intensive management support to 18 district offices in the provinces Eastern Cape, Limpopo and Mpumalanga. These districts were selected on the basis of their consistent under-performance in the Grade 12 examinations. This work is partly aimed at identifying best practices and effective turnaround strategies that can be applied across the system (there are 82 education districts in the country in total).

In October 2011, stakeholders from government, organised labour, business and civil society finalised a successful process of consultations which resulted in 'Accord 2' of government's New Growth Path, where this accord deals with basic education[15]. Consultations were facilitated by Nedlac[16] and the accord is hence widely referred to as the Nedlac Accord. The accord focuses on the adoption of schools by stakeholders other than government for the purposes of providing support in improving education outcomes. Envisaged areas of support include governance and management support, support to teachers and the provision of critical materials not supplied by government. As part of the accord, the DBE agrees to provide information and tools to partners that will facilitate the adoption process. The accord moreover establishes important principles that should be adhered to, such as that support should be based on a proper diagnosis of a school's problems. The accord, which is the first of its kind, can be seen as a product of the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC), a multi-stakeholder movement that was founded in 2008. In many ways, the accord implies providing support to schools where districts are unable to do so on their own. The accord is thus an initiative focussed on assisting district offices in their work, partly by bringing innovative approaches and individuals to schools, but also partly by discovering novel intervention methods that districts can learn from and implement on a wider scale. The accord

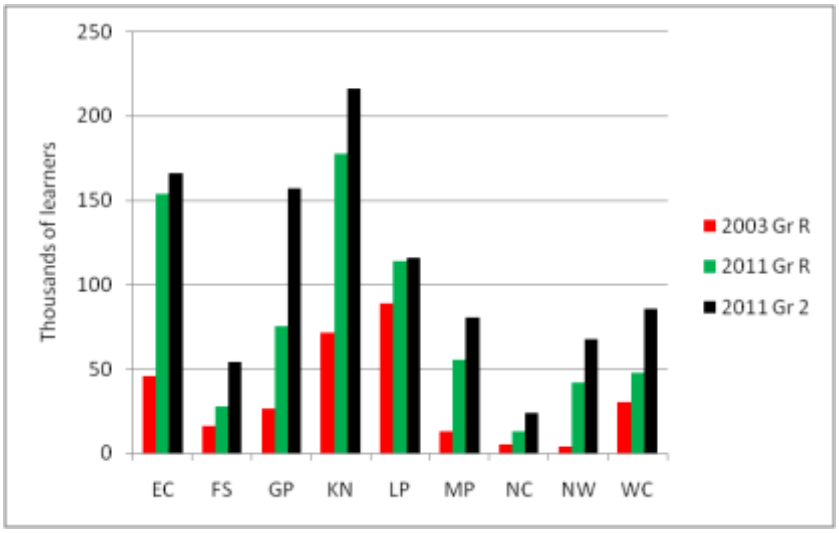
[14] Education Management Service: Performance Management and Development System.
[15] Available at http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=149080.
[16] National Economic Development and Labour Council.

envisages that the adoption of the first 100 to 200 schools would occur in 2011, with the number of adopted schools increasing to between 500 and 1 000 in 2012.

APPENDIX

This appendix provides, above all, province-level information to supplement the discussions in the main body of the report.

Figure 10: Progress with respect to Grade R enrolments



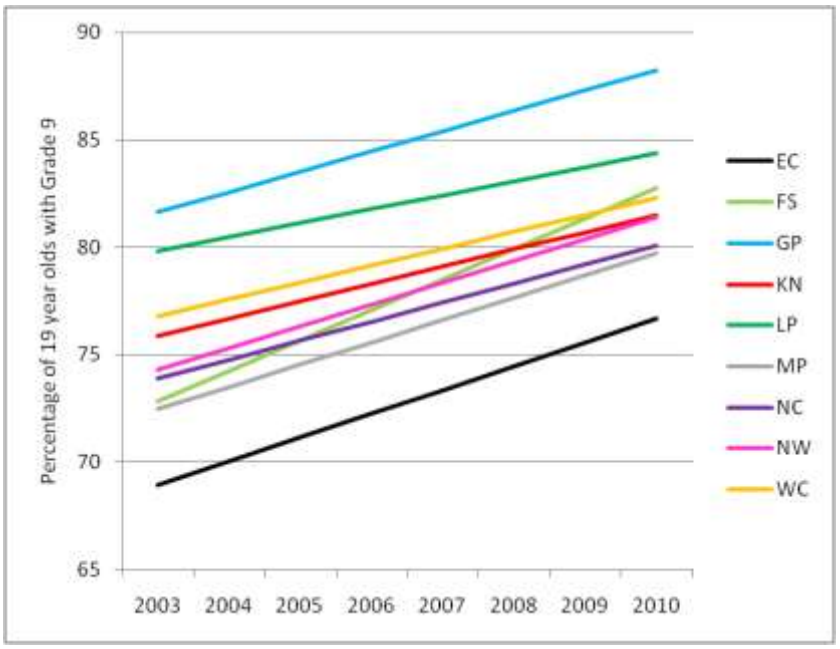
Source: Enrolment publications of DBE.
Note: Grade 2 is used as a reference grade as it has fewer repeaters than Grade 1 and therefore serves as a better indication of the size of a single cohort.

Table 2: Percentage of children aged 5 to 6 enrolled in an education institution

	2003	*2008*	*2010*
EC	64	86	95
FS	70	73	86
GP	70	74	91
KN	56	70	89
LP	73	85	97
MP	52	71	83
NC	48	69	88
NW	57	68	84
WC	69	70	81
SA	63	75	89

Source: General Household Survey dataset.

Figure 11: Grade 9 attainment of 19 year olds



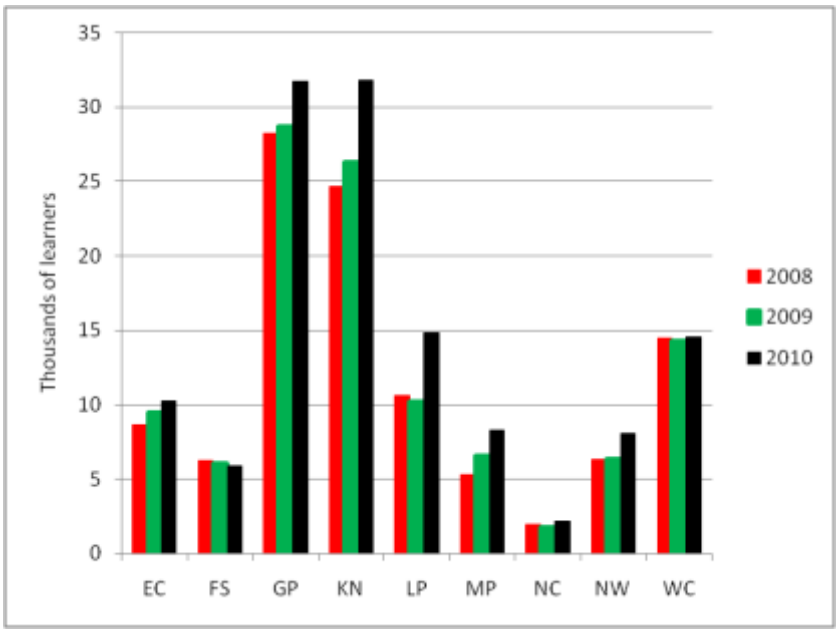
Source: General Household Survey dataset.
Note: Lines are trendlines across the eight annual points.

Table 3: Grade 12 attainment by province

	% of youths with Grade 12 (2009-2010)	Grade 12 passes (post-supplementary)			% change 2008-2010
		2008	2009	2010	
EC	45	31 575	36 377	38 594	22
FS	48	22 183	21 158	19 980	-10
GP	61	74 856	73 237	74 838	0
KN	53	85 721	85 605	90 576	6
LP	38	51 326	47 770	57 662	12
MP	46	29 254	26 990	31 083	6
NC	45	7 488	6 775	7 581	1
NW	48	23 379	21 413	22 376	-4
WC	55	35 480	35 348	36 223	2
SA	48	361 262	354 673	378 913	5

Sources: General Household Survey datasets for the first column, official DBE reports for the remaining columns.
Note: Values in the first column reflect the statistics for 24 year olds.

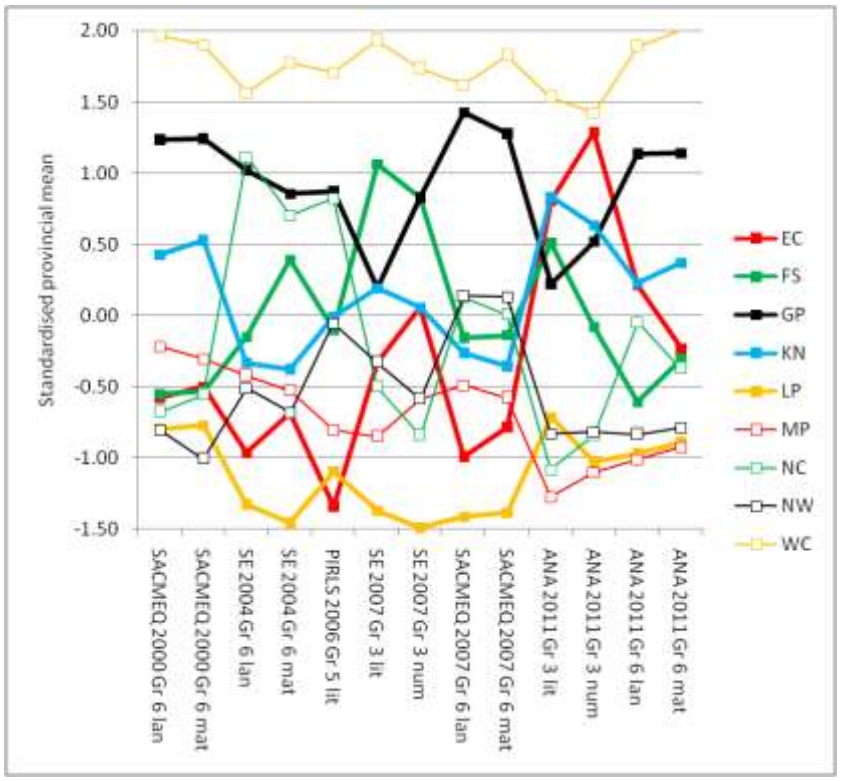
Figure 12: Learners obtaining a Bachelors level pass



Source: Published examinations reports.

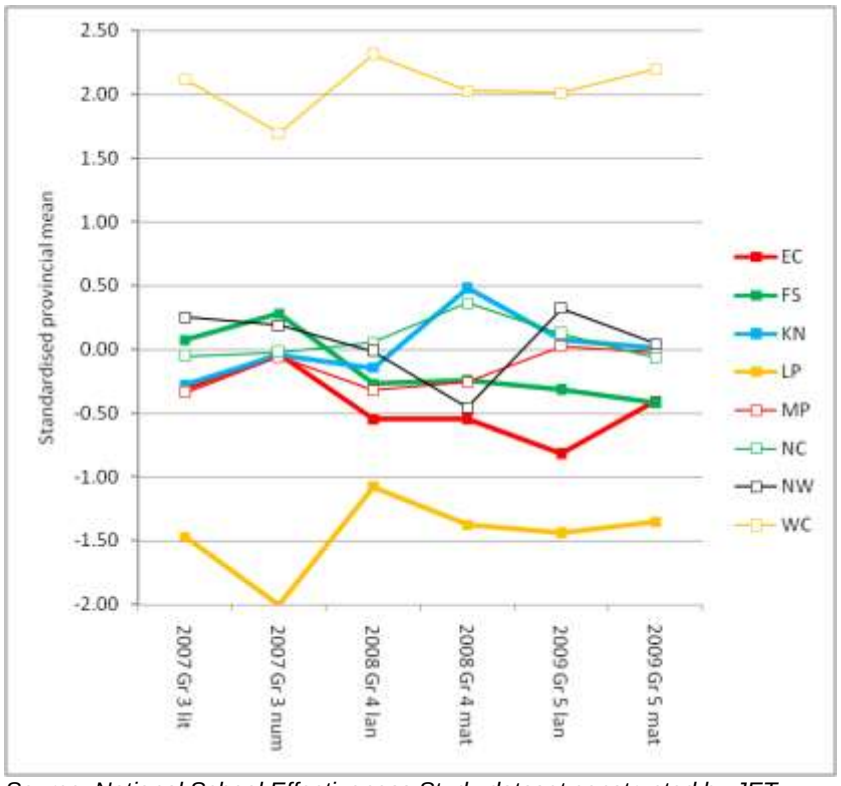
The following two graphs sum up provincial performance in various standardised assessment runs that have occurred since 2000. The graphs confirm that Western Cape consistently performs at a level above that of the other provinces and that Limpopo is a province that consistently under-performs. This pattern is especially clear in Figure 14, which uses data from the 2007 to 2009 National School Effectiveness Study. But the graphs also confirm that provincial performance cannot be assessed through just one assessment. The relative positions of provinces vary greatly from one assessment to the next.

Figure 13: Provincial performance across various assessments



Source: SACMEQ II dataset; DoE (2005) for Systemic Evaluation 2004; PIRLS 2006 dataset; DoE (2009) for Systemic Evaluation 2007; SACMEQ III dataset; DBE (2011) for Annual National Assessments 2011.
Note: The standardised provincial mean is a re-calculated provincial value where the mean across provincial means is zero and the standard deviation across provincial means is 1.0.

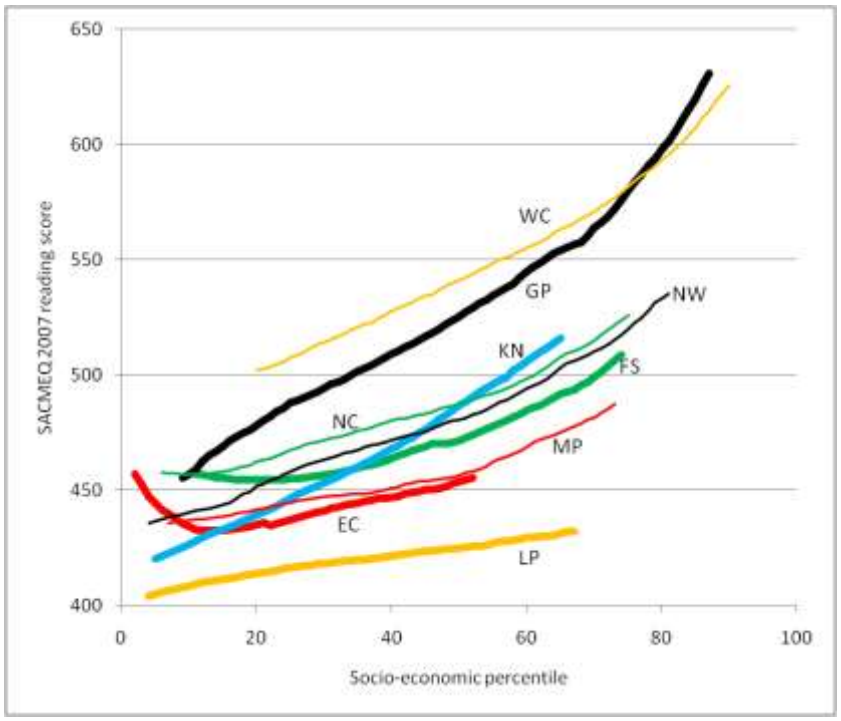
Figure 14: Performance in the NSES by eight provinces



Source: National School Effectiveness Study dataset constructed by JET Education Services.
Note: Gauteng did not participate in the NSES.

In many ways, a more meaningful inter-provincial comparison is made possible by a graph like the following, where the relationship between learner performance and socio-economic background by province is sketched. It is clear that similarly poor learners perform very differently depending on which province they find themselves in. Horizontal comparisons are also interesting. For instance, such a comparison indicates that learners in the poorest quintile in Gauteng perform as well as learners in the fourth quintile (percentile range 61 to 80) in Mpumalanga. One would expect quintile four learners in Mpumalanga to perform much better than this, given the strong relationship that generally applies between socio-economic status (and particularly parent education) on the one hand, and learner performance on the other.

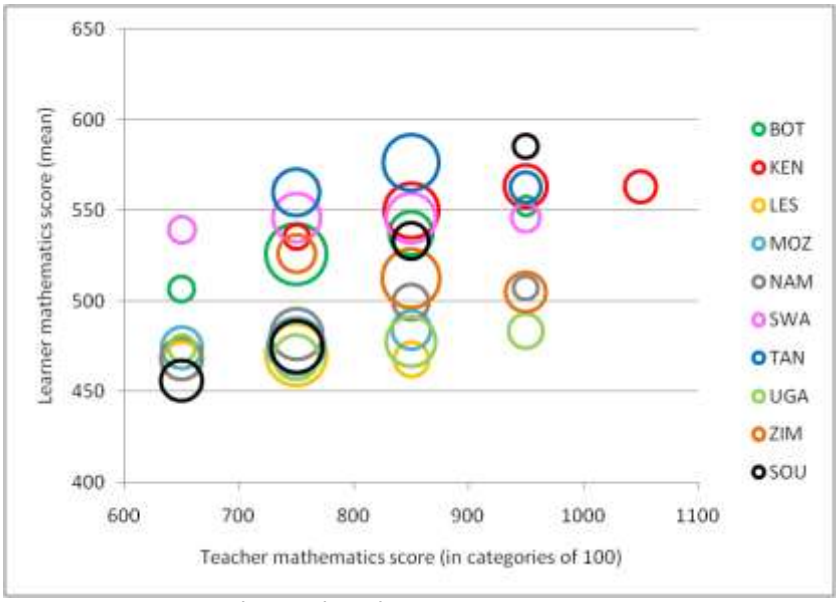
Figure 15: Relationship between reading and SES across provinces



Source: SACMEQ III dataset (2007).
Note: Percentiles 1 to 20 represent the poorest one-fifth (or quintile) of learners, percentiles 21 to 40 represent the next poorest one-fifth, and so on. Socio-economic status is based on assets in the home reported by learners. Within each province, the curve excludes the left-hand 5% of the SES range and the top 30% in order to exclude outliers and focus on the more disadvantaged. Smoothing of curves occurs using lowess smoothing.

The following graph illustrates the relationship between teacher and learner scores across ten of the countries participating in SACMEQ. The area of the circles in the graph show, for instance, that a particularly large percentage of South African teachers obtained a score of between 700 and 800 in mathematics (the actual percentage of teachers is 39%). The average score of the learners taught by these teachers was 475. It is clear that in a number of other countries a large percentage of teachers fell into the same test score range of 700 and 800. This can be said for Tanzania, Swaziland, Botswana, Lesotho and Namibia. Yet it is clear that the learners taught by these teachers performed better in Tanzania, Swaziland and Botswana, compared to South Africa, Namibia and Lesotho. What this suggests is that whilst improving teacher knowledge must be a priority, it is also important to focus on better ways of making use of the existing levels of teacher knowledge, through for instance more effective school management.

Figure 16: Relationship between learner and teacher test scores in SACMEQ



Source: SACMEQ III dataset (2007).
Note: Teachers were grouped according to their test scores for the purposes of this graph. For instance, teachers with scores from 700 and less than 800 are pegged at the 750 level on the horizontal axis, those with scores from 800 and less than 900 are pegged at the 850 level, and so on. The area of the circles is in proportion to the percentage of learners in the country taught by these teachers.

Table 4: Non-repeating Grade R learners as a percentage of an age cohort (2010)

	% in non-school Grade R	*% in schools-based Grade R*	*Total*
EC	30	68	98
FS	41	44	84
GP	39	50	89
KN	31	60	91
LP	12	90	103
MP	30	62	92
NC	50	43	93
NW	31	57	88
WC	43	52	95
SA	32	61	93

Source: 2010 General Household Survey dataset.

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