



Official Guide to **SOUTH AFRICA** 2021/22

EDUCATION

Basic education

The mandate of the Department of Basic Education (DBE) is to monitor the standards of the provision, delivery and performance of education annually or at other specified intervals across South Africa, with the objective of assessing compliance with the provisions of the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996 and national education policy.

The department derives its mandate from the:

- **National Education Policy Act of 1996**, which inscribes into law the policies, legislative and monitoring responsibilities of the Minister of Basic Education, and the formal relations between national and provincial authorities.
- **South African Schools Act of 1996**, which promotes access to education, promotes quality and democratic governance in the schooling system, and makes schooling compulsory for children aged seven to 15 to ensure that all learners have access to quality education without discrimination.
- **Employment of Educators Act of 1998**, which regulates the professional, moral and ethical responsibilities of educators, and competency requirements for teachers.

Over the medium term, the department planned to focus on: improving school infrastructure; providing high-quality support materials for learners and teachers; facilitating the increase in supply of quality teachers while preparing serving teachers to teach new subjects that will prepare learners for a changing world; taking over the Early Childhood Development (ECD) function from the social development sector; and providing nutritious meals for learners through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP).

The department is committed to improving the physical infrastructure and environment at every public school in the basic education sector. Apart from accelerating the construction, maintenance, upgrading and rehabilitation of new and existing infrastructure, the department planned to provide schools with water and sanitation, and to replace schools constructed with inappropriate materials such as mud.

Over the medium, it planned to build 30 new schools, provide water to 50 schools and provide safe sanitation to 450 schools by the end of 2022/23.

The department aimed to ensure that all learners have access to quality support materials in languages, mathematics and life skills by printing and distributing to all public schools who request them; targeting 65 million workbooks for nine million learners in grades R to 9 each year over the medium period.

One of the ways the DBE is ensuring that young people leave the schooling system with the knowledge, skills, competencies and certification they need, is through the introduction of the General Education Certificate (GEC) in Grade 9. The GEC is being piloted in 268 schools nationally and in 2023 will be expanded to sampled schools in all the 75 districts.

Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme

The bursary scheme aims to address critical educator shortages in specified subject areas such as mathematics, science and technology in various school phases by providing bursaries to prospective teachers.

Over the period ahead, the department planned to introduce new subjects such as coding, robotics and data analytics in primary schools, and teachers will be trained in these subjects.

National School Nutrition Programme

As part of the NSNP, a targeted nine million learners in each year over the medium term will be provided with a meal on school days. Provinces were also required to ensure that meals were provided on school days when learners were not at school because of Coronavirus Disease restrictions.

Action Plan to 2024: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030

The department's Action Plan to 2024: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2030, gives expression to the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa of 1996, the National Development Plan, as well as continental and international conventions. It continues to provide the moral imperative and a mandate to government to make the social justice principles of access, redress, equity, efficiency, inclusivity and quality educational opportunities, widely available to all citizens.

Early Childhood Development

The ECD function was shifted from the Department of Social Development to the DBE on 1 April 2022. By mid-2022, the DBE was crafting and implementing innovative strategies to strengthen Foundations of Learning, looking at the continuum from birth to early grades in the foundation and intermediate phases.

A Service Delivery Model, which proposes the following five strategies for improving the quality of ECD in South Africa, has been developed:

- Curriculum-based early learning for all children from birth to five-year-olds;
- ECD programmes for all children from birth to five-year-olds;
- Training, education and development for all those working in ECD;
- Coordination of all ECD services in the country; and
- Developing a flexible funding and provisioning framework for ECD delivery.

The DBE embarked on the following critical projects:

- In collaboration with the World Bank and National Treasury, the DBE implemented a Public Expenditure and Institution Review, which determines

the funding that is being spent on ECD by the different spheres of government, and the different departments on the prioritised ECD outcomes;

- The Thrive by Five Index baseline study was conducted, with the cooperation of First National Bank, Innovation Edge, USAID and ECD Measure, to assess the quality of ECD programmes in a nationally representative sample. In years to come, the DBE will be able to monitor the quality of early learning outcomes, which is a critical input to the school education that follows; and will provide nationally representative early childhood outcomes data at three yearly intervals; and
- The National Census of Early Learning Programmes, which was conducted in 41 000 ECD programmes, in collaboration with the LEGO Foundation. The data collected from the Census will be used to map-out all early learning programmes in order to understand the full size and shape of the ECD sector; and to develop a national master list of ECD programmes, which will be incorporated into the Education Management Information System for ECD. The complete dataset will also inform planning, resourcing and support to ECD programmes.

Languages

The Incremental Introduction to African Languages Strategy, which was initiated in 2013 to strengthen the teaching of previously marginalised African languages in schools, targets 2 584 schools that are not offering African languages.

The department has since decided to expand the list of South African languages offered as Second Additional Languages (SAL) in curriculum. The additional languages are the Khoi, Nama and San languages, as well as the South African Sign Language, the latter which will soon become the country's 12th official language.

By mid-2022, the introduction of Kiswahili SAL in the curriculum was still in the pipeline.

School attendance

Nationally, almost two-thirds (64,6%) of children aged 0–4 stayed home with a parent or guardian, or with another adult, according to Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey (GHS) of 2021. This figure was most pronounced in North West (79,4%), Northern Cape (74,1%) and KwaZulu-Natal (74,0%).

Only 28,5% of children in this age group attended formal ECD facilities, nationally. Attendance of ECD facilities was most common in Western Cape (39,8%) and Free State (39,6%).

Almost one-third (31,5%) of individuals aged five years and older attended some kind of educational institution. Nationally, 87,6% of these individuals attended primary or secondary schools, while a further 5,6% attended tertiary institutions. Only 2,1% of individuals attended technical and vocational education and training (TVET) colleges.

The percentage of individuals aged five years and older and who attended school was the highest in Limpopo (92,7%) and Eastern Cape (92,4%), and lowest in Gauteng (80,2%). Attendance of higher education institutions was most common in Gauteng (9,5%), Free State (7,0%) and Western Cape (6,9%). The percentage of individuals aged 5–24 years that attended educational institutions by single ages shows very high school attendance in the age group 7–14 years, after which the attendance of educational facilities drops sharply.

By the age of 24 years, approximately 10,0% of individuals were still attending an educational facility. The figure also shows a noticeable representation of learners who were older than the ideal graduation age in primary and secondary schools.

Impact of COVID-19

The percentage of individuals aged 5–18 years who did not attend any educational institutions between 2019 and 2021 highlights the negative effect of COVID-19 on particularly young children by showing that a much higher percentage of children aged five and six years old were not attending educational institutions in 2020 and 2021 than in 2019, before COVID-19 started.

Amongst five year olds the percentage of children who did not attend any education institutions increased from 10,9% in 2019 to 37,7% in 2020, before declining to 19,4% in 2021. It is clear that the young age groups were worst affected by the closure of nursery schools and pre-school centres during this time.

The percentage of persons aged 7 to 24 who attended educational institutions increased from 73,1% in 2002 to 76,3% in 2021. Attendance increased across most provinces between 2002 and 2021, with the highest increase observed in Northern Cape (+7,8 percentage points) and Free State (+7,3 percentage points).

The main reasons provided by males and females in the age group 7–18 years for not attending any educational institutions are most commonly reported illness and disability (22,7%), poor academic performance (21,2%) and a lack of money for fees (19,5%). Although 7,8% of individuals left their studies as a result of family commitments (i.e. getting married, minding children and pregnancy), it is noticeable that females were much more likely to offer these as reasons than males (13,4% compared to 0,5%). Approximately 2,3% of individuals reported that education was useless. Males were more likely to share this sentiment than females in this instance.

Although inadequate access to money to pay for fees remains a major hurdle for learners, attendance of no-fee schools has increased notably since 2002. The percentage of learners aged 5 years and older who attended schools where no tuition fees were levied increased from 0,4% in 2002 to 65,9% in 2014, before increasing more slowly to 70,2% in 2021. Provincially, 92,8% of learners in Limpopo and 78,7% of learners in Eastern Cape attended no-fee schools, compared to 49,7% of learners in Western Cape and 56,4% in Gauteng.

Learners at school in 2021

There were approximately 15 million learners at school in 2021. The largest percentage of these learners attended schools in KwaZulu-Natal (21,5%) and Gauteng (21,3%).

Although only 5,6% of learners attended private schools, there were large variations between provinces. While 12,5% of learners in Gauteng attended private schools, only 2,4% of learners in North West and Eastern Cape attended such institutions.

More than three-quarters (77,3%) of learners who attended public schools benefitted from school feeding schemes in 2021, compared to 63,1% in 2009. Learners in Limpopo (91,9%) and Mpumalanga (89,1%) most commonly benefitted from this programme, while only 55,2% of learners in Western Cape and 61,2% of learners in Gauteng benefitted from this type of programme.

The percentage of individuals aged 20 years and older who have attained at least Grade 12 has been increasing consistently since 2002, expanding from 30,5% in 2002 to 50,5% in 2021. Over this period, the percentage of individuals with some post-school education increased from 9,2% to 14,6%. The percentage of individuals without any schooling decreased from 11,4% in 2002 to 3,2% in 2021.

Individuals without any formal education were most common in Limpopo (7,1%) and Mpumalanga (6,3%), and least common in Western Cape (0,7%) and Gauteng (1,0%). The figure shows that 21,3% of people aged 20 years or older have attained some academic qualifications that are equivalent to or less than Grade 9. Grade 9 is the final year of the senior phase and learners are allowed to leave school on its completion or when they turn 15 years old, whichever comes first. Individuals with lower secondary qualifications or less were most common in Eastern Cape (30,1%) and Northern Cape (29,6%).

Nationally, more than one-third (35,9%) of persons aged 20 years and older have attained Grade 12 while 14,6% have attained some post-school qualifications. Post-school qualifications were most common in Western Cape (20,2%) and Gauteng (19,9%) and least common in Mpumalanga and KwaZulu-Natal (both 9,7%).

Literacy levels

According to the GHS of 2021, the percentage of individuals over the age of 20 years who could be regarded as functionally illiterate (who have either received no schooling or who have not completed Grade 7 yet) has declined from 28,5% in 2002 to 10,5% in 2021. Individuals over the age of 60 years have consistently remained most likely to be functionally illiterate, followed by individuals in the age groups 40–59 and 20–39. Improved access to schooling has led to a significant decline in the percentage of functionally illiterate individuals in the 20–39 age group. Between 2002 and 2021, the prevalence of functional illiteracy in the age group 20–39 years declined noticeably for men (17,1% to 3,9%) and women

(15,8% to 2,5%). With the exception of women in the age group 20–39, women remain more likely to be functionally illiterate across all age groups.

The difference between men and women has, however, declined significantly over time. Although a higher percentage of women than men over the age of 60 years were functionally illiterate in 2021 (39,5% compared to 30,3%), the difference has declined in each successive age group, to the point that, in 2021, a smaller percentage of women in the age group 20–39 were functionally illiterate than their male peers (2,5% compared to 3,9%).

Role players

Provincial departments of basic education

The DBE shares a concurrent role with the provincial departments for basic schooling and ECD, but it is the responsibility of each provincial department to finance and manage its schools directly. District offices are the provincial departments' main interface with schools.

South African Council for Educators (SACE)

The SACE is mandated by the SACE Act of 2000 to enhance the status of the teaching profession by providing for the professional registration of all educators, promoting the continuing professional development of educators, and maintaining ethical and professional standards in the teaching profession.

Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training

Umalusi derives its mandate from the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) Act of 2008 and the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act of 2001. As an external and independent quality assurance body, the council's mandate is to set and maintain standards in general and further education and training through the development and management of the general and further education and training qualifications sub-framework.

Programmes and projects

Thutong portal

Through the Thutong Portal (www.thutong.doe.gov.za), the DBE aims to lead the drive to improve learning in the country through appropriate use of technology. The Thutong Portal is the online point of entry to a comprehensive array of free educational resources, policy information, and interactive services concerning all aspects of the South African schooling sector.

It provides relevant information and services about the South African school curriculum, teacher development, school administration, and management. Thutong's key focus is on creating strong and vibrant online communities of practice to facilitate discussion and sharing of information and ideas amongst

peer networks, and in an effort to encourage South African educators to develop and improve education by sharing the country's common intellectual capital.

Thutong – meaning “a place of learning” in Setswana – features a searchable database of web-based curriculum resources for various education sectors, grades and subjects.

School fees and exemption

School fees are set at annual public meetings of school governing bodies (SGBs), where parents vote on the amount to be paid. Parents who cannot afford to pay school fees can apply to the SGB for conditional, partial or full exemption from paying school fees.

Schools must not charge school fees for orphans. The right not to charge school fees is limited to the schools that have been declared no-fee schools. The names of the no-fee schools, which are determined based on the economic level of the community around the school, are published in a provincial gazette.

Higher education and training

The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) derives its mandate from the:

- **Higher Education Act of 1997**, which provides for a unified national system of higher education;
- **Skills Development Act of 1998**, which enables the creation of the National Skills Authority and sector education and training authorities (SETAs); the establishment of the Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO); and the regulation of apprenticeships, learnerships and other matters relating to skills development;
- **National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS) Act of 1999**, which provides for the granting of loans and bursaries to eligible students attending public higher education and training institutions, and the subsequent administration of such loans and bursaries;
- **Skills Development Levies Act of 1999**, which provides for the imposition of skills development levies;
- **Continuing Education and Training Act of 2006**, which provides for the regulation of continuing education and training, the establishment of governance structures for and the funding of public TVET colleges and community education and training (CET) colleges, the registration of private colleges, and the promotion of quality in continuing education and training
- **NQF Act of 2008**, which provides for the national qualifications framework, South African Qualifications Authority, and quality councils for the issuing and quality assurance of qualifications required by the sub-frameworks of the national qualifications framework.

Over the medium term, the department planned to continue focusing on expanding access to and enhancing performance at higher education institutions, and increasing their capacity.

Expanding access to higher education and facilitating the transition to work

By mid-2022, the department was updating the guidelines for the implementation of the bursary scheme for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. This is to strengthen funding criteria to ensure that only eligible students are funded, and thereby ensure that the scheme remains financially sustainable. The department will continue to implement plans to develop capacity at universities, eliminate the certification backlog in TVET colleges, and conduct advocacy campaigns on the use of open-access learning and teaching support materials in CET colleges.

Enhancing performance by upgrading infrastructure and increasing capacity at higher education institutions

The department planned to ensure that its institutions have appropriate infrastructure to accommodate students accessing higher education. It also planned to alleviate overcrowding and upgrade ailing infrastructure at universities, as well as enable infrastructure repairs and maintenance in priority areas such as bulk services, sanitation, teaching and learning facilities, and student accommodation.

Students enrolled at higher education institutions

According to the GHS of 2021, the total number of students enrolled at higher education institutions increased by almost 57,8% between 2002 and 2021, growing to 968 109. The percentage of black African students increased by 13,3 percentage points to 73,5% during this time, while the percentage of white students virtually halved to 14,8%.

Even though most students are black African, the education participation rate of this population group remained proportionally low in comparison with the Indian/Asian and white population groups.

The percentage of persons aged 18 to 29 that were enrolled at an institution of higher education in the country increased from 4,3% in 2002 to 6,5% in 2021. Enrolment at a higher education institution was most common among whites (24,6%) and Indian/Asians (16,2%), while only 6,2% of the coloured and 5,3% of the black African population groups were enrolled.

Institutions of higher learning

South Africa's higher education landscape comprises the following institutions:

- Cape Peninsula University of Technology
- Central University of Technology, Free State
- Durban Institute of Technology
- Mangosuthu University of Technology
- National Institute for Higher Education, Northern Cape
- National Institute for Higher Education, Mpumalanga
- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University

- North-West University
- Rhodes University
- Sol Plaatje University, Eastern Cape
- Tshwane University of Technology
- University of Cape Town
- University of Fort Hare
- University of the Free State
- University of Johannesburg
- University of KwaZulu-Natal
- University of Limpopo
- University of Mpumalanga
- University of Pretoria
- University of South Africa
- University of Stellenbosch
- University of Venda
- University of the Western Cape
- University of the Witwatersrand
- University of Zululand
- Vaal University of Technology
- Walter Sisulu University, Eastern Cape
- Sefako Makgatho Health Sciences University.

Technical and Vocational Education and Training

The DHET is mandated to provide quality skills programmes that address the need in the labour market for intermediate skills accompanied by practical training. TVET comprises vocational, occupational and artisan education and training as offered by TVET colleges. This band of education and training is also referred to as ‘post-school’, meaning that it refers to education and training that takes place after leaving school, even if only with a Grade 9 completed.

The only age restriction for a person wishing to study at the TVET level is that the person should be 16 years or older. There are 50 registered and accredited public TVET colleges in South Africa operating on more than 264 campuses spread across the rural and urban areas of the country.

Role players

South African Qualifications Authority

The SAQA is a statutory body established in terms of the SAQA Act of 1995 and exists under the NQF Act of 2008, as amended. Its mandate and goals are to advance the objectives of the national qualifications framework, coordinate the higher education qualifications and occupational qualifications sub-frameworks, and oversee the further development and implementation of the national qualifications framework.

Council on Higher Education (CHE)

The CHE is a statutory body established in terms of the Higher Education Act of 1997, as amended. The council is mandated to advise the minister responsible for higher education on all matters pertaining to higher education; develop and manage the higher education qualifications sub-framework; and develop and implement policies and criteria to facilitate the implementation of the framework and sub-framework, and protect their integrity.

Quality Council for Trades and Occupations

The QCTO was established through the Skills Development Act of 1998. It is mandated to oversee the development and maintenance of the occupational qualifications subframework in the national qualifications framework, and advise the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation on all policy matters concerning occupational standards and qualifications.

The council's quality assurance role and its management of the occupational qualifications sub-framework contribute to the post-school sector's broader imperative of providing access to education and training of the highest quality that leads to significantly improved learning outcomes.

Sector education and training authorities

The Skills Development Act of 1998 mandates SETAs to fund skills development; implement national, sector and workplace strategies to develop and improve skills in the South African workforce; and provide learnerships that lead to recognised occupational qualifications.

Over the medium term, SETAs were expected to continue to focus on providing workplace placement for unemployed graduates and internships for students; providing full bursaries to students from poor families to cover tuition, learning materials, accommodation and living allowances; and collaborating with TVET colleges to strengthen their capacity to deliver specific programmes. SETAs support artisan development through skills development centres, which aim to address skills shortages identified by occupational teams working on strategic infrastructure projects.

National Skills Authority

The NSA is a statutory body that was first established in 1999 in terms of Chapter 2 of the Skills Development Act of 1998. Its functions involves:

- policy, strategy, implementation and NSA allocations;
- liaising with SETAs about policy, strategy and sector-skills plans;
- implementing the National Skills Development Strategy;
- reviewing the accounts and balance sheet of NSA annually; and
- receiving and using information from the Skills Development Planning Unit.

National Student Financial Aid Scheme

The NSFAS was established in terms of the NSFAS Act of 1999, as amended. The scheme is responsible for:

- providing bursaries and loans to students;
- developing criteria and conditions for the granting of loans and bursaries to eligible students in consultation with the Minister of Higher Education, Science and Innovation;
- raising funds;
- recovering past loans from debtors;
- maintaining and analysing a database of funded students; undertaking research to improve the use of financial resources;
- advising the Minister on matters relating to student financial aid; and
- undertaking other functions assigned to it by the act or by the Minister.

To qualify, students must be from households with a combined annual income of less than R350 000, and less than R600 000 for students with disabilities. Bursaries cover tuition fees, prescribed study materials, meals, accommodation and transport costs.