

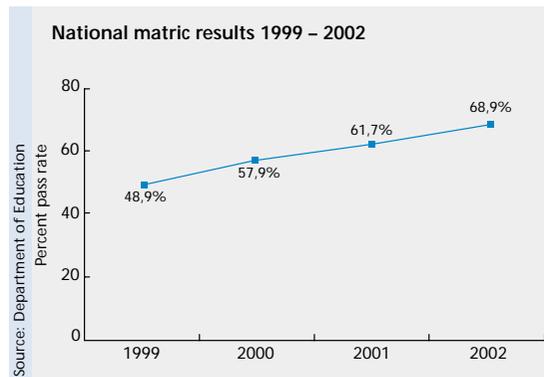


Education is not only pivotal to economic prosperity but it also plays a crucial role in enabling South Africans to improve the quality of their lives and contribute to a peaceful, productive and democratic nation.

Education is one of the most important long-term investments a country can make. In South Africa, the Bill of Rights directs that everyone has the right to a basic education. The State has a responsibility to make adult education and further education progressively more available and accessible.

There has been a significant increase in the education budget allocation under the post-apartheid democratic Government, from R31,8 billion in 1994 to R59,7 billion in 2002. At almost 6% of gross domestic product, South Africa has one of the highest rates of government investment in education in the world.

In 2002, the South African public education system accommodated more than 11,6 million school learners, 407 401 university students, 202 730 technikon students, and 125 000 technical college students. There were 26 789 primary and secondary schools with 348 362 educators.



The country has a single national education system, which is managed by the national Department of Education and the nine provincial departments. The Constitution has vested substantial powers in the provincial legislatures and governments to run educational affairs (other than universities and technikons), subject to a national policy framework.

In the 2002/03 financial year, the budget allocation to education totalled R59,669 billion. This amount included R7,469 billion for universities and technikons and R50,865 billion for college and school education. Conditional grants are also available to provinces to, for instance, improve school safety and administration and achieve improvements in the matric (school-leaving) results.

Remarkable progress has been made with regard to allocation of bursaries and loans through the National Students Financial Aid Scheme. During 2001/02, R635 million was administered by the Scheme in partnership with 21 universities and 15 technikons to 93 532 beneficiaries.

The highest proportion of the awards was allocated to commerce degrees and diplomas (22%), 13% to administration, 11% to engineering and 10% to science.

In January 2000, the *Tirisano* plan (meaning working together) became operational. Through it, the Depart-

ment has achieved greater stability in the education system, enhanced basic school functionality, improved the ability of provincial education systems to manage human and financial resources and ensured a clear focus on delivery.

Since 2001, the Department has shifted its focus from creating an integrated education framework and providing basic systemic functionality. The focus today is on institutional renewal and enhanced effectiveness, focusing on teaching, learning, curriculum and whole-school development, learner performance, increased participation in further and higher education, mathematics, science and technology, building good citizenship through the promotion of values, and targeting those communities that are part of government-wide programmes for rural and urban development.

At the secondary school level there was significant improvement in participation rates and learners' performance in science subjects that will enhance the quality of the intake of matriculants to science and engineering studies at higher education levels. In 2002, the Department recorded a significant improvement in the proportion of learners performing well in mathematics and science. In 2001, 46,7% candidates passed mathematics, which increased to 56,1% in 2002. The proportion of candidates who passed physical science in 2001 was 68,6%, which increased to 76,4% in 2002.

With regard to pass rates there has been a drastic turnaround in South Africa's education system from 48,9% in 1999 to 68,9% in 2002, an increase of 22,1%.

Curriculum 2005

Curriculum 2005 is the brand name of the National Curriculum Framework introduced into schools in 1998, based on the concept of Outcomes-based Education (OBE).

OBE regards learning as an interactive process between and among educators and learners. The focus is on what learners should know and be able to do

(knowledge, skills, attitudes and values). It places strong emphasis on co-operative learning, especially group work involving common tasks. The goal is to produce active and lifelong learners with a thirst for knowledge and a love of learning.

In May 2000, it was recommended that the existing curriculum design features be reduced from eight elements to three. These elements should be critical and developmental outcomes, learning outcomes and assessment outcomes.

A Revised National Curriculum Statement released in April 2002 adopted a more gradual and carefully planned approach to implementing the new Curriculum which will be phased in starting with the earliest grades in 2004.

School admission policy

Pupils normally enrol for Grade 1 education at the beginning of the year in which they turn seven years of age although earlier entry at the age of six is allowed if the child meets specified criteria indicating that he/she has reached a stage of school readiness.

Parents who cannot afford to pay school fees, or who cannot pay the full amount, may be granted an exemption from paying school fees. Public schools are not allowed to refuse admission, suspend pupils from classes, deny them access to cultural, sporting or social activities, or refuse to issue school reports if parents are unable to pay school fees.

Higher education

Universities and technikons in South Africa are autonomous institutions, meaning that their respective councils are fully responsible for their management.

The National Plan for Higher Education was released in March 2001. The key proposals of the Plan are that the percentage of school-leavers receiving higher education be increased from 15% to 20% within 15 years.

DID YOU KNOW?

South Africa spends a huge amount of money on improving the country's education system. Since 1994, the education budget has increased from R31,8 billion to R59,7 billion in 2002.

It also proposes that there should be a shift in enrolments from the humanities, business and commerce to science, engineering and technology. It is also envisaged that student and staff compositions should more accurately reflect the country's demographics.

Increasing the percentage of pupils becoming students will mean an additional 200 000 students.

Recently government announced a restructuring of higher education which will allow for the expansion of the system and for it to face the challenges of the African century. In terms of restructuring, the existing 36 tertiary institutions will be reduced to 23; 11 universities, six technikons and six new institutions formed through the merger of universities and technikons.

Adult education

Government is determined to take education to the people, including adults. New legislation and the establishment of the National Adult Basic Education and Training Board provide a legal framework for the establishment and running of adult education centres.

In 2000, the Department launched the South African National Literacy Initiative (SANLI), which oversees the establishment of a voluntary service to reach the estimated 3,3 million illiterate adults.

The Department also established the South African Literacy Agency to significantly reduce adult illiteracy.

Improving schools

According to the Review of the Financing, Resourcing and Costs of Education, released for public comment in March 2003, remarkable advances have been made in access, funding and equity in the schooling system since







Education infrastructure

Financial year	Classrooms built	Toilets built	Schools supplied with water
1999 – 2000	1 936	1 345	252
2000 – 2001	2 267	1 211	253
2001 – 2002	2 660	4 173	181

Future infrastructure for the next MTEF cycle

Financial year	No. of schools to be built	No. of toilets to be built	Schools to be supplied with water
2002 – 2003	3 750	6 562	202
2003 – 2004	4 330	6 909	171
2004 – 2005	4 748	7 473	182

Source: Seventh Report to the President from the Minister of Education, 2003

the advent of democracy in 1994. There has been a reduction of about 60% in a key index of inequality between provinces, between 1995 and 2001.

The School Register of Needs reported less overcrowding in institutions overall, with a decline in the average number of learners in a classroom from 43 (in 1996) to 35 (in 2000). This ratio declined in eight out of nine provinces. Classroom shortages decreased from 49% (1996) to 40% (2000). In 1996, 40% of all schools nationwide had no access to water. By 2000, this was reduced to 34%. There was a 68% improvement in the provision of sanitation, although 16,6% of learners continued to be without toilet facilities. Fifty-nine percent of schools had no telephones in 1996. This was reduced to 34% in 2000.

On the other hand, the biggest decline was in the number of schools in excellent and good condition, indicating that investment in infrastructure had not been adequately maintained. The number of buildings in good condition declined from 9 000 to 4 000, with at least 12 000 buildings in need of repair. Government has committed itself to an additional R1,5 billion over three years for infrastructural development in key rural and urban nodal points.



Partnerships

Government recognises that a high-quality education sector cannot be built by government alone. It depends on creative and dynamic partnerships between the public sector, civil society and international partners. Several working partnerships have been and are being consolidated as the capacities of various sectors to contribute to educational development are better understood.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are emerging as important partners in educational transformation and are often a source of creativity and innovation. The Department of Education is working with NGOs and the private sector, particularly in the areas of educator training, school improvement, adult education, early childhood development and further training and education. Other important areas of co-operation are evaluation, research and monitoring.

The international community's contribution to education transformation is important. The Department co-operates with United Nations' agencies and with numerous donors to improve access to basic, further and higher education.