



Education

The right to education is enshrined in South Africa's Bill of Rights – not only for children but also for adults.

Learners

By mid-2006, the South African public education system had 12 million learners, 366 000 educators and about 28 000 schools, including 390 special-needs schools and 1 000 registered private schools. Of all schools, 6 000 were high schools (grades 7 to 12) and the rest were primary (grades 1 to 6) schools.

Learners attend school for 13 years. The first year of education, Grade 0 or reception year, and the last three are not compulsory. Many primary schools offer Grade 0, which can also be completed at nursery school.

In January 2006, President Thabo Mbeki granted scholarships to 18 youngsters through the newly established Thabo Mbeki Matric Award Programme, which recognises academic excellence in matric examinations.

Administered by the Thabo Mbeki Education Trust, the programme prioritises two of the most outstanding matric learners from each province.

The learners will pursue studies in the fields of finance, law, physiotherapy, engineering, theology, medicine and accountancy. They received financial grants covering tuition, books and accommodation costs for the academic year.

Each learner was also presented with a laptop and 3G communications card.

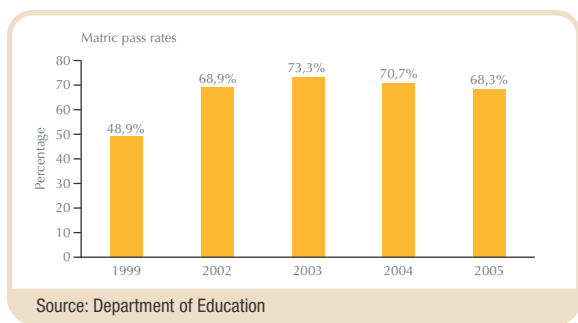
The combined value of the scholarships over the duration of the 18 learners' studies is about R4 million.

As a condition for the scholarship, learners are required to become 'ambassadors' of the trust by encouraging future matriculants in striving for academic excellence.

The matric exam pass rate in 2005 was 68,3%. Although this represented a slight decrease in pass rate, the number of learners writing and passing the Senior Certificate increased substantially. A total of 347 184 learners passed the Senior Certificate, which was 16 367 more than in 2004.

In 2005, 86 531 candidates achieved university endorsement compared with 85 117 in 2004. A total of 32 112 learners passed Mathematics on the Higher Grade (HG) and 45 652 passed Physical Science HG. A total of 40 952 learners passed with merit and 9 339 passed with distinction.

Major transformation of the Further Education and Training (FET) college sector took place during 2002/03, in which the existing 152 technical colleges were merged to form 50 multisite-campus FET colleges.



The South African Council for Educators has a register of approximately 495 000 educators of which 19 000 are registered provisionally.

Each new college operates under a single governing council appointed to oversee effective and accountable management across and within the various FET college campuses and sites.

The recorded increase in student intake, the development of new programmes and increased participation in learnerships bear testimony to the potential for growth in this sector.

From 2006/07 to 2008/09, government is expected to invest R1,9 billion for the recapitalisation of the 50 public FET colleges.

Structures

South Africa has a single national education system, which is organised and managed by the national Department of Education and the nine provincial departments. Statutory bodies include the Council of Education Ministers, Heads of Education Department's Committee, General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Council, South African Qualifications Authority, Council on Higher Education, South African Council for Educators, National Board for Further Education and Training, Education Labour Relations Council and the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

Policy

Schooling is compulsory between the ages of seven and 15. All learners are guaranteed access to quality learning. There are two types of schools: independent (private) and public.

At public schools, parents vote on the level of school fees. Poor parents are given exemption or reductions.

Over five million learners at 16 000 schools benefited from the R200-million primary school nutrition programme in nodal districts which has also created opportunities for women's co-operatives and small, medium and micro enterprises in KwaZulu-Natal, the Northern Cape and North West provinces in particular.

By September 2006, more than R7 million schools were implementing a voluntary no-fee policy. Some 2,6 million learners were not required to pay school fees. Policies are expected to be in place in 2007 to ensure that fees for the poorest primary schools are eliminated.

Quality Improvement and Development Strategy

Government plans to invest some R12,5 billion over the next five years to improve and develop education by means of a programme that will concentrate on addressing apartheid's legacy in education. Five thousand schools that do not perform well and are located in the least able districts will be identified and provided with resources such as libraries, laboratories and teaching material. Their teachers will get support in the form of high-quality school-based education development programmes, and better district development teams.

Teaching and learning will focus on the acquisition of important contents and academic skills and on equipping learners with literacy and numeracy skills.

The progress made by learners and their schools will be monitored and assessed regularly.

Curriculum development

The new National Curriculum Statement was expected to be introduced into schools as follows:

- Grade 10 in 2006
- Grade 11 in 2007
- Grade 12 in 2008.

In 2005, the Department of Education gazetted the new National Senior Certificate to replace the Senior Certificate, widely known as 'matric'. The National Senior Certificate will be awarded for the first time in 2008.

Number of farm school learners by province, 1996 and 2000

	1996	2000	% decrease 1996 – 2000
Eastern Cape	50 307	18 333	-64
Free State	104 268	56 618	-46
Gauteng	25 297	12 576	-50
KwaZulu-Natal	192 615	55 304	-71
Limpopo	48 294	24 877	-48
Mpumalanga	93 352	32 847	-65
Northern Cape	16 528	8 321	-50
North West	61 107	35 503	-42
Western Cape	47 264	11 769	-75
Total	639 032	256 148	-60

Source: Department of Education

It requires learners to do four compulsory subjects, namely two official languages, Mathematical Literacy or Mathematics and Life Orientation. In addition, a learner must select three approved subjects.

The department also developed the guidelines for teaching and assessment that were distributed to schools in 2005. Provincial departments of education ran one-week workshops to orientate Grade 10 educators.

Further Education and Training

FET provides learning and training from National Qualifications Framework (NQF) levels 2 to 4, or the equivalent of grades 10 to 12 in the school system, and Further Education and Training Certificate (FETC) General Vocational and FETC Trade Occupational, on NQF levels 2 to 4 in FET colleges. The FETC will replace the current Senior Certificate in 2008.

In 2006, over R1,3 billion was available for loans and bursaries through the National Student Financial Aid Scheme.

Higher Education (HE) transformation

According to a strategic plan for HE, enrolment at these institutions will rise from 15% to 20% of school leavers within 15 years. Within five years, enrolments in the humanities will decline, while those in Business and Commerce, and Science, Engineering and Technology will rise.

The 2001 National Plan for HE also envisaged:

- research being funded through a separate formula based on research output
- targets being set to increase the numbers of black and female students and academic staff.

The total cost for the restructuring of the HE system is estimated at R1,9 billion for the period 2001/02 to 2006/07.

The HE landscape consists of the following institutions:

- University of the Witwatersrand
- University of Cape Town
- University of Stellenbosch
- Rhodes University
- University of the Western Cape (which incorporated the Dental Faculty of Stellenbosch University)
- University of Zululand
- University of Venda
- University of the Free State (which incorporated the QwaQwa Campus of the University of the North and the Bloemfontein Campus of Vista)

- North West University (which incorporated the University of Potchefstroom and Vista Sebokeng Campus)
- University of Pretoria (retained its name after incorporating the Mamelodi Campus of Vista University)
- University of South Africa (retained its name after merging with the Vista University Distance Education Campus and Technikon SA)
- Tshwane University of Technology (from the merger of technikons Pretoria, North West and Northern Gauteng)
- Durban Institute of Technology (from the merger of Natal Technikon and Technikon ML Sultan)
- Central University of Technology (formerly Technikon Free State)
- Mangosuthu Technikon
- University of Johannesburg (from the merger of the Rand Afrikaans University with Technikon Witwatersrand, which incorporated the Soweto and East Rand campuses of Vista University)
- University of Limpopo (from the merger of the Medical University of South Africa [Medunsa] and the University of the North)
- Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University (from the merger of the University of Port Elizabeth, Port Elizabeth Technikon and Port Elizabeth Campus of Vista)
- Eastern Cape University of Technology (from the merger of the University of Transkei, Border Technikon and the Eastern Cape Technikon)
- University of Fort Hare (which incorporated the East London Campus of Rhodes University)
- Cape Peninsula University of Technology (from the merger of the Cape Technikon and Peninsula Technikon)

- Vaal University of Technology
- Walter Sisulu University for Technology and Science (from the merger of the University of Transkei, Border Technikon and Eastern Cape Technikon)
- Northern Cape Institute of Learning
- Mpumalanga Institute of Learning.

The National Mathematics, Science and Technology Strategy was launched in 2001. As part of this strategy, government identified 102 dedicated Mathematics and Physical Science schools (Dinaledi schools).

The Dinaledi schools are mainly located in previously disadvantaged communities and primarily serve disadvantaged learners. Many of the pupils attending these schools live in poverty and daily face social and economic challenges.

In May 2005, the Council of Education Ministers approved the expansion of the Mathematics, Science and Technology dedicated schools to 400 in 2006.

The aim is to double the number of learners passing higher grade Mathematics and Science in Grade 12 by 2008.

The Dinaledi initiative is part of the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative for South Africa.