



OFFICIAL GUIDE TO  
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**Education**

## Basic education

All South Africans have a right to basic education and the Bill of Rights obliges the government to progressively make education available and accessible through reasonable measures. The Department of Basic Education (DBE) is responsible for Outcome 1 (quality basic education) of government's Medium Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) 2014-2019.

The aim of the DBE, which deals with all schools from Grade R to Grade 12, is to develop, maintain and support a South African school education system for the 21st century.

Schooling 2025, the overarching plan for the basic education sector, encapsulates the long-term vision of education priorities, targets and programmes articulated for the sector in the National Development Plan (NDP). The department continues to focus on:

- accelerating delivery and improving school infrastructure; enhancing teaching and learning by ensuring access to high quality learner and teacher support materials;
- improving grade 12 completion rates; providing educational opportunities to learners with severe to profound intellectual disabilities;
- increasing the supply of quality teachers; monitoring performance; and providing nutritious meals to learners in schools through the National School Nutrition Programme (NSNP).

The DBE contributes to the NDP's priority of eliminating poverty and supporting food security through the NSNP. As part of the programme, the department plans to provide meals to more than nine million learners each year over the medium term in over 20 000 quintile 1 to 3 schools.

## Providing school infrastructure

The DBE is committed to providing appropriate and adequate basic education infrastructure and its ongoing infrastructure programme includes maintaining existing and building new infrastructure.

It aims to eradicate and replace inappropriate school infrastructure and provide basic services to schools, such as water and sanitation.

The objective of the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative is to eradicate the backlog in schools without water, sanitation and electricity, and to replace

schools constructed from inappropriate material such as mud, and asbestos to contribute towards levels of optimum learning and teaching.

## School attendance

According to Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey (GHS) of 2018, there were approximately 14,2 million learners at school in 2018. Participation in education institutions was virtually universal (97,4%) by the age of 15 years (the last compulsory school age) and approximately three-quarters (74,5%) of learners were still in school by the age of 18, which usually represents the age at which learners exit grade 12.

A notable percentage of learners, however, remained in primary and secondary schools long after they should have exited those institutions. Almost one-quarter (24,7%) of 20-year olds were, for instance, still attending secondary school.

While the percentage of learners who have achieved grade 12 has been increasing, the survey shows that the percentage of individuals who attended post-school education has remained relatively low for youth aged 19 to 22 years of age.

The percentage of persons aged seven to 24 who attended educational institutions remained consistent at approximately 75% between 2002 and 2018. The highest increases in enrolment rates are observed in Free State (+3,2 percentage points), Northern Cape (+3,0 percentage points) and KwaZulu-Natal (+2,4 percentage points), while Mpumalanga experienced a decrease of 3,4 percentage points over the period.

In terms of the percentage of learners aged 7 to 24 years who attended educational institutions by metropolitan area, the highest percentage was observed in Buffalo City (82,0%), followed by Nelson Mandela Bay (80,6%), and Mangaung (78,7%). The lowest attendance was observed in Cape Town (67,2%) and eThekweni (70,5%).

The percentage of students attending universities, technical and vocational colleges remain very similar throughout the reference period.

In 2018, 32,2% of individuals aged five years and older attended an educational institution. Nationally, 87,7% of individuals aged five years and older and who attended educational institutions, attended school, while a further 4,5%

attended tertiary institutions. By comparison, only 2,3% of individuals attended Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) colleges.

While the percentage of individuals aged five years and older and who attended school was particularly high in Limpopo (93,2%), much lower figures were noted in Gauteng (79,8%) and Western Cape (84,3%).

Attendance of higher education institutions was most common in Gauteng (8,7%) and Western Cape (5,8%). This is reflecting the higher number of post school educational institutions, such as universities, in those provinces.

The percentage of learners that attended no-fee schools increased from 21,4% in 2007 to 67,2% by 2018. Almost one-quarter (24,2%) of learners who have dropped out of school before the age of 18 years, however, put forward a lack of money ('no money for fees') as the main reason. Other reasons included poor academic performance (22,9%), family commitments (7,9%) and a feeling that education is useless (7,5%).

## Educational attainment

The percentage of individuals aged 20 years and older who did not have any education decreased from 11,4% in 2002 to 4,5% in 2018, while those with at least a grade 12 qualification increased from 30,5% to 45,2% over the same period.

Inter-generational functional literacy has also decreased markedly. While 57,8% of South Africans over the age of 60 years did not at least complete a Grade 7 qualification, this figure dropped to only 4,4% for those aged 20- 39 years of age. Less than six per cent (5,5%) of adults over the age of 20 years were considered illiterate.

## Enhancing teaching and learning

Central to providing quality basic education is ensuring the delivery of an improved curriculum and access to learning and teaching support material of high quality, and ensuring this material is used effectively.

Accordingly, the department expects to print and deliver an estimated 61 million workbooks for grades R to 9 in each year over the medium term in life skills, languages and mathematics. These workbooks are expected to be distributed to more than 24 000 public schools across South Africa.

The department intends to promote teaching and learning in, and improving the learner pass rates of, mathematics, science and technology.

To achieve this, the DBE plans to support:

- 50 000 learners in co-curricular services related to mathematics, science and technology;
- 1 500 teachers and subject advisers in curriculum assessment policy statement training;
- 1 000 teachers in structured teacher development programmes specific to these subjects, and train
- 1 000 mathematics subject advisers on the mathematics framework.

To provide appropriate teaching and learning facilities at schools, the department plans to support 300 teachers in information and communications technology integration training; supply 300 schools with subject-specific computer hardware and software; repair, maintain or replace workshop equipment and machinery at 200 technical schools, and provide 1 000 schools with laboratory equipment, apparatus and consumables.

The department aims to increase the supply of newly qualified teachers in mathematics, science and technology in different phases by providing 38 000 Funza Lushaka bursaries to prospective teachers over the medium term. Funza Lushaka bursary recipients qualify for fee-free funding at universities.

## **Expanding access to Early Childhood Development (ECD)**

The DBE continues to work with the Department of Social Development in expanding access to ECD. ECD programmes are offered at day-care centres, crèches, playgroups, nursery schools and in pre-primary schools.

By end of 2018, about 38,4% of the 0-4-year-olds attended these kinds of facilities and access to these facilities was highest in Gauteng (49,8%) and Western Cape (43,7%).

Although 49,2% of children aged 0-4 years stayed at home with parents or guardians, the survey suggests that stimulation might be lacking. Almost one-half (46,8%) of parent or guardians never read books with children while 43,1% never drew or coloured with the children.

## Improving matric completion rates

The Second Chance programme, which is in its third year of implementation, aims to increase the number of young people obtaining a matric qualification.

Over the medium term, the department expects 135 000 learners to gain subject passes through the programme, and will provide support to these learners by means of face-to-face classes, broadcast media, online and offline facilities, and printed materials.

The development and distribution of online psychosocial programmes to support learners in their preparations for the matric examinations include tutoring, access to resources, one-on-one career guidance, life orientation and telephonic counselling.

## Support for learners with intellectual disabilities

In its second year of implementation, the Learners with Profound Intellectual Disabilities Grant aims to improve the provision of quality education to learners with severe to profound intellectual disabilities.

Over the MTEF period, funds from the grant are intended to provide access to quality, publicly funded education to more than 10 000 such learners by recruiting nine provincial coordinators for the grant and 230 outreach team members.

While the provincial coordinators will ensure the effective management of the grant, the outreach team members will strengthen the capacity of district-based support teams and provide support to caregivers and learners.

The nine provincial coordinators, 230 outreach team members, 900 caregivers from 500 care centres, and 919 teachers in 104 selected schools that have enrolled learners will be provided with training on the learners with severe to profound intellectual disability policy and learning programme.

## Monitoring performance

The department aims to ensure that the education sector assesses the quality of teaching and learning, and provides remedial action in identified areas to improve learning outcomes in numeracy and literacy.

As such, the national assessment programme has been redesigned to enable the implementation of a three-tier model that involves systemic evaluation, diagnostic assessment and summative examination.

As part of the redesign, over the medium term, the department intended to focus on conducting the first cycle of systemic evaluation by providing all schools with a series of diagnostic instruments for teachers to use in their classroom teaching, and setting up national and provincial systems for the phasing in of a universal external examination at the end of Grade 9.

To assist teachers in measuring the reading progress of learners at different intervals in grades 1 to 3, the department continues to print, distribute and implement the Early Grade Reading Assessment toolkit.

The use of the toolkit has been incorporated in the teacher training programme in the primary school reading intervention programme, and teacher training workshops on how to use the toolkits were expected to be held in all provinces over the MTEF period.

In 2019, the programme was expected to be implemented in 4 700 schools, to be expanded incrementally to 20 000 schools over the medium term. An estimated 700 000 learners in grades 1 to 3 were expected to benefit from the programme over the same period.

## **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 aims to enhance the status of the teaching profession through registering educators appropriately, managing professional development and promoting a code of ethics for all educators.

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

Umalusi sets and maintains standards in general and further education and training through the development and management of the general and further education and training qualifications sub-framework. The Nguni name means "herder" or "shepherd."

## **Programmes and projects**

### **Learning and teaching support material**

#### **Educational portal**

Through the Thutong Portal ([www.thutong.doe.gov.za](http://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.

To help develop and improve the quality of education in South Africa, the curriculum resources contained in the Thutong Portal describes the teaching and learning pathways and processes that learners should work through in order to achieve identified Learning Outcomes and/or Assessment Standards as set out in the South African National Curriculum Statements.

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 will be 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, will be published in a provincial gazette.

## Higher education and training

The DHET continues to focus on creating a transformed higher education sector that is of high quality, is demographically representative, and provides students and staff with opportunities through the implementation of the university capacity development programme.

The NDP envisages that by 2030, South Africans should have access to a post-school education system that empowers them to fulfil their potential. Outcome 5 (a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path) of government's MTSF gives effect to this vision, stating that graduates of the post-school system should possess the skills and knowledge that allow them to meet the current and future needs of society and the economy.

Outcome 5 also highlights the need to expand access to programmes that address the labour market's need for intermediate skills and include a practical component.

The DHET is responsible for post-school education and training in universities, colleges and adult education centres.

The objective of the Post-School Education and Training function is that all South Africans have equitable access to relevant and quality post-school education and training.

## 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 (SAQA)

SAQA is a statutory body that oversees the development of the NQF by formulating and publishing policies and criteria for the registration of organisations. It also oversees the implementation of the national framework by ensuring the registration, accreditation and assignment of functions.

## Council on Higher Education (CHE)

The CHE is an independent statutory body to advise the Minister, monitor trends in the higher education system and assure and promote the quality of higher education. The CHE also has the mandate to audit higher education institutions,

accredit programmes offered, develop a higher education qualifications framework and set standards.

## **Quality Council for Trades and Occupations (QCTO)**

The primary functions of the QCTO are to design and develop occupational standards and qualifications and to submit these to SAQA for registration on the NQF, establish and maintain occupational standards and qualifications, ensure the quality of occupational standards and qualifications and learning in and for the workplace, promote the objectives of the NQF, liaise with the National Skills Authority (NSA) on the suitability and adequacy of occupational standards and qualifications, and on the quality of learning in and for the workplace.

## **Sector education and training authorities (SETAs)**

SETAs continue to strengthen and deliver relevant priority skills to South Africa's labour market, with particular emphasis on artisan development, apprenticeships, learnerships, internships and bursaries; and partnerships with TVET colleges, universities and the market to provide work experience opportunities

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

The authorities derive their objectives directly from the third National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS), which aims to: increase access to occupationally directed programmes; promote the growth of public TVET colleges; address low levels of youth and adult literacy and numeracy skills; and encourage the better use of workplace-based skills development.

These objectives are in line with Outcome 5 (a skilled and capable workforce to support an inclusive growth path) of government's MTSF 2014-2019.

## National Skills Authority

The NSA is an advisory body to give guidance on:

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

## National Student Financial Aid Scheme (NSFAS)

The NSFAS is responsible for providing loans and bursaries, developing criteria and conditions for the granting of loans and bursaries to eligible students, raising funds, recovering loans, maintaining and analysing a database of funded students, undertaking research for the better use of financial resources and advising the Minister on matters relating to student financial aid.

In March 2019, the DHET allocated an additional R967 million to the NSFAS to settle the historic debt owed to universities by 52 514 NSFAS-funded continuing students.

