

# **Education in Economic Development: South Africa**

# Author

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# Abstract

Education is a major aspect in every country. In South Africa, it has been praised, encouraged and respected, and this is due to the fact that many of our parents (Black parents) were never allowed access to a decent education system.

Post 1994, almost every parent wanted to see their children in school. Grade 1 is still joy to many parents. However, for some the joy fades as their children move a grade up, and this is because of the challenges in our education system.

This paper highlights some critical statistics concerning the system, issues in the system and provides recommendations that may be possible solutions to this predicament.

# Research Methodology

The methodology is based on secondary data that includes existing literature, documents, relevant research reports and relevant journal articles in education.

# South Africa spends a higher proportion of its budget towards education than the U.S and U.K

# 15%

of the total budget was spent on basic education in the last 12 months that ended March 2016. That's about R213.7bn of the total budget.

# 7.4%

Annually

is the rate at which the National Treasury projects the rise of the allocation in the next 3 fiscal years.

South Africa's primary education system was rated 126<sup>th</sup> out of 138 countries in the World Economic Forum's 2016-17 Global Competitiveness Report, while its higher education and training system is ranked 134<sup>th</sup>.

**Within Africa the country performs worse than poorer nations: Zimbabwe, Kenya and Swaziland.**

58.6%

of South African children that should be in grade six are numerate. In this regard South Africa is ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, behind Kenya, Swaziland, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

71.2%

of children that should be in grade six are literate. It is ranked sixth out of the ten countries, behind Swaziland, Kenya, Tanzania, Namibia, and Zimbabwe.

South Africa consistently scores below countries such as Kenya and Swaziland, which spend considerably less on education than it does.

## Statistics S.A's 2013 general household survey cited teacher related issues as the top challenge facing public schools.

### A STUDY BY:

The Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality found that **60%** of People teaching Math to grade 1 through 6 failed to pass tests for Math at the grade level.

### “PERSPECTIVE IN EDUCATION JOURNAL”:

A research carried out with 253 teachers in KZN, to investigate their knowledge of the subject they are teaching – Matric Math. Teachers got an average **57%**. A quarter of them got below **39%**.

*“We still have teachers who were not trained for the future”*  
- Angie Motshekga

**Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ 2007): found that South Africa had the highest rate of teacher absenteeism of all 14 African countries that participated in the study.**

- ▶ The Stellenbosch study found that in many schools, less than half of the official curriculum was being covered by the end of the school year and fewer than half of the officially scheduled lessons were being taught.
- ▶ The researchers identified inadequate teaching time, teacher absenteeism, and insufficient opportunity for students to learn as the reasons behind these statistics, the blame of which can be placed squarely on the teachers' shoulders (Masondo, 2016).

**20 days** is the South African average days a grade 6 teacher was absent. i.e. an entire month.

**12 days** was due to teacher strikes.



There are many schools in the townships and the government has built more schools in these areas, **but the quality of teaching and proper structured learning processes are lacking.**

A World Bank study conducted in Limpopo province back in 2010 showed some shocking results.

The study asked 400 12 year old students to work out the answer for  $7 \times 17$ . To work it out, the pupils first drew 17 sticks and counted them seven times. 130 of the 400 got the right answer.

The same question was presented in word form in English. Researchers asked the students: "If there are seven rows of 17 chairs how many chairs are there?" None of the children answered correctly.

A closer analysis of the 2016 matric results **has revealed that there is an extremely high rate of school pupils dropping out before reaching grade 12. The Department of Basic Education's figures, show that;**

**1,100,877**

Learners enrolled for Grade 10 in 2014.

**610,178**

Learners enrolled for Grade 12 in 2016.

**44.6%**

of learners either dropping out of the system altogether or remain stuck in Grade 10 and 11.

This pattern is visible across every province in the country, where the drop-out rate reaches as high as 54.4% in the Northern Cape.

**QS World University Rankings 2016/2017: 17 universities from African countries have made it on the QS World University Rankings, a list of the world's top institutions of higher learning.**

**4** universities on the African continent were ranked in the top 500

**3** of those universities are from South Africa. UCT top ranked in African.

The ranking is based on four major categories: research, teaching, employability and internationalisation. The methodology comprises of six weighted indicators: academic reputation (40%), employer reputation (10%), student to faculty ratio (20%), citations per faculty (20%), international students ratio (5%), and international faculty ration (5%).

# Education playing a major role in the labor market.

59%

of the unemployed is contributed by those with education level less than matric.

Chances of being absorbed in the workforce with matric is 51.1%

405 000

is the number of unemployed South African with tertiary education.

Chances of being absorbed in the workforce with tertiary education is 76.7%

# Conclusion

The Department Of Basic Education needs to thoroughly assess the spending of the budget they receive, perhaps in exclusion to the teacher's salaries. If so much is spent on education, a question needs to be asked about the nature in which the funds are used.

If the purpose is to improve the education system, then it clearly shows that the money isn't adding any sustainable value.

# Conclusion

In business, when your competitor produces the same product as you at a very low price and that product is able to reach the targeted market, you're in big trouble.

Countries like Kenya, Zimbabwe and Swaziland spend much lesser than South Africa on Education, yet our country continues to score below these countries. It's a sign that, the system doesn't have to be wealthy, it has to be efficient.

# Conclusion

Teacher related challenges are one of the issues facing our education system. They range from absenteeism to low knowledge and content of the subject they teach.

Some learners walk into a classroom feeling dependent to the teacher. They understand a topic better when a teacher explains it. This would, and actually does result in a classroom that consists of clueless learners.

# Conclusion

In 2014 there were 24 060 public schools in South Africa, and our government continued and still continues to build more schools. In my view building more and more schools doesn't necessary improve the education system. It's understood and acknowledged that our government is trying to make sure that each and every child is in school. However, it is no use to put kids in a system that will actually make them unemployed after 10 to 12 years.

The department of education seemed to have spent a lot of money and resources thinking about where to put their next school rather than thinking about how they can improve the current schools.



# Conclusion

When 44.6% of learners who started grade 10 don't reach grade 12 either by dropping out or being stuck in grade 10 and/or grade 11, a question needs to be asked about the nature in which the department deals with these learners. How is the system supporting these learners?

With this stats, the Matric results have been put into question. If we could include the 44.6% that started grade 10 with the rest of the percentage we would have different results.

# Conclusion

The low performance by learners is not solely from teachers and the system. The black community doesn't have that culture of reading. This in turn makes it harder for kids to learn a certain topic being taught in English, which is the medium language.

Children in the black community are not born into a system of reading, parents are not doing enough, actually many seem to be doing nothing to change this narrative.

# Conclusion

If universities like UCT continue to lead African universities in the world rankings, and having being followed by other South African institutes, is the department perhaps taking notes?

Regardless of the fees that these universities have, they seem to be providing value for money.

# Conclusion

In economics, economic indicators are used to predict future trends in a nation's economy.

When 59% of the unemployed (People who are actively looking for a job) is contributed by people with education level less than matric, what does it tell us about our economy in future? Shouldn't this warn our government that if things continue in this manner, we are going to end up with a population that is not employable.

It's even worse when we have a large number of people with tertiary education being unemployed.

# Recommendations

- ▶ The department of education should consult with our leading Universities, on the nature of education in this modern world. The department should also look into franchising the curriculum used by independent institutes, it's no secret that independent schools excel and they only make up about 5% of the schools in South Africa.
- ▶ How well does the department know about the education system in Kenya, Zimbabwe and Swaziland? Instead of researching our own, more research has to be put towards studying African countries that lead us in education.
- ▶ Re-open teacher training institutes that were closed post 1994. Prioritise the education qualification, for instance; in Finland teachers are expected to acquire a master's degree. The qualification is more prestigious than other qualifications.

# Recommendations

- ▶ Create a system that supports the kids that dropout and/or stay stuck in certain grades.
- ▶ The education department should build a system that integrates a relationship between them and parents. A system that will create home based programs that parents can utilise in order to encourage a reading culture. Libraries are not enough if learners spend most of their time at home, parents need to be more involved, and the department needs to reach out to them.
- ▶ Our education system doesn't drive students towards scarce qualifications, like Actuarial Science and Mathematics Statistics. Limit entry to qualifications that are over crowded.
- ▶ Introduce an entrepreneurial system within the education that will support and sustain those who drop out for entrepreneurial reasons. Entrepreneurship is a fuel to any economy. If and when people are not employable, they should at least be the ones who employ.