9

Education and Training

Introduction

The provision of quality education in South Africa has always been the goal of the post-apartheid government and other education stakeholders in the country. The main reason for this is that, as Gumede[244]puts it, if the democratic South Africa is to produce informed, productive and progressive citizens who not only value, but also practise the principles treasured in the Constitution, then it must have an educational system that matches the goal. A lot has been achieved since the dawn of democracy, especially in the first decade. According to Kraak,[245] this is evident in the increased number of school-going adults and children in South Africa, increased number of investments by both government and the private sector in education, as well as the improvement in the institutionalisation processes and regulations. However, the provision of quality education is still facing many challenges.

While access to education in South Africa has significantly improved, the quality of education is a hotly debated issue. Education in South African, as it is in so many parts of the developing world, is continuously being confronted by extreme pressures to change. This is attributed to the need to address the continuously changing social and economic dynamics of the world. The failures in education in South Africa are in primary school literacy, mathematics and science education which are the cornerstone for the development of modern economies. In addition, poor school management systems, inappropriate curriculum changes as well as poor performing teachers, which have consequently resulted in low academic standards, are some of the critical issues confronting education in South Africa.

The quality of primary, secondary and tertiary education has an inevitable effect not only on the job markets, but also on the prospect of the country emerging as a democratic developmental state. This chapter contends that serious challenges remain, especially with regard to those brought about by the implementation of the policy reform. Also, it identifies and discusses a few of

the qualitative challenges that are found in South Africa's education, namely that while primary and secondary enrolment has greatly improved and teacher-pupil ratio decreased, the lack of performing and happy teachers and the constant changing of education curriculum has led to a decline in the quality of education provided.

The chapter begins with a background on the history of South Africa's education system. It then discusses education in the post-1994 dispensation, identifying the inherent challenges faced by the post-1994 government in developing an education system that ensure that human resources are developed to their full capacity. Before concluding, the chapter explores the policy reform measures that can be undertaken to address the quality of education in South Africa.

Background

During the nineteenth century, an ever-increasing number of foreign missionary societies began arriving in South Africa, and by the twentieth century they all had considerable impact on both church and society. It is reported that the first European school to be founded in South Africa was by the Dutch Reform Church in the Cape Colony during the 1970s, for the sole purpose of establishing biblical instruction and salvation; civilisation was simply an impor tant by-product and a sign of redemption.

Missionaries facilitated a cultural re-orientation by undermining traditional customs and structures through evangelisation and education. Missionaries rejected African cultures not only because of their own sense of European supremacy, but primarily through the reading of the Bible, convincing Africans that they are heathens and they need to turn away from superstition and unevangelical lifestyles, and embrace an entirely new way of life. So, education was not simply a matter of literacy but it was also part of a comprehensive strategy to reconstruct African culture (see works of Ngugi waThiong'o, for instance). They separated converts from their cultural roots and traditional structures which had previously supported and controlled their lives, by introducing new agricultural techniques and technologies, and fostering entrepreneurial skills consistent with the emerging capitalism of the mining and industrial revolution and its urban setting. Missionary stations were rapidly becoming centres of education where literacy and numeracy skills necessary for economic progress in colonial society could be learned, while simultaneously taming the wilderness of African communities.

Nonetheless, missionary education provided the only access into broader society; however, even so, the doors of opportunity were limited, based on the assumption that Africans were culturally not prepared to participate as adults in the society. By the mid-1900s, the education system was characterised by strong British

influence, following the victory of whites in the South African War. Language soon became a sensitive issue in education, which saw the installation of the English language and cultural values across the country.

Hungwe[246] argues that British settlers were influenced by a persistent and deeply held belief in white supremacy. This therefore resulted in the development of a complex educational policy which sought to guarantee white privilege, while promoting limited and segregated African development. Fundamental to the educational policy of the colonial authorities and the missionaries, then, was a social Darwinism which assumed that Africans were culturally unprepared yet to take their place as adults in society. This placed African communities in a dependent position on the education offered by the missionaries as the only access into the new colonial order. They increasingly believed in the dignity of labour and laziness as a form of positive sin, thereby fitting and contributing to the economic expansion of the empire. The decision to focus on education encouraged Africans to work for white societies rather than their own African communities. This, Hungwe[247] argues, not only established clear boundaries of social behaviours between blacks and whites but also reinforced the racism which was so inherent in settler society, providing a new ideological basis for the redefining of the missionaries' role. Based on this, Ruddell[248] argues that 'concepts such as racial superiority were primary influences which were at work in the formation of colonial education policies'. Evangelisation and education of Africans did not imply immediate social equality; their aim – so they claimed – was more long-term. Africans, it was argued, were members of an adolescent race in need of missionary guidance and discipline in order to reach their potential. The missionaries were in this regard, the creators of a new class of Africans.

Before the Bantu Education Act of 1954, Africans were subjected to what was known as 'Native Education'. This, as Tabata[249] puts it, meant inferior institutions, poor conditions and pitifully low allocations. Throughout the colonial regime in South Africa, the Missionaries, the Dutch and the British used colonial powers in institutions of education to drive and uphold patterns of domination and exploitation. For centuries, the education system was not only segregated based on racial differences to the advantage of whites, but rather, Gumede[250] argues, also deprived Africans of equal access to educational opportunities, and subjected them to inferior systems which were designed to perpetuate the oppressive power relations. Therefore, it would be a big mistake to assume that educational marginalisation of African only began with the introduction of apartheid. The system of segregation and unequal education was already in place long before the National Party (NP) assumed power in 1948. By the 1990s, the South African education system was characterised by an educational policy that further entrenched racial fragmentation into the education system.

Brian Lapping[251] quotes a speech outlining the policy on Bantu Education by Hendrik Verwoerd, stating that:

> There is no place for the African in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour…. Until now he has been subjected to a school system which drew him away from his own community and misled him by showing him the green pastures of European society in which he was not allowed to graze. Therefore, My Department's policy (i.e., the Department of Native Affairs) 'is that education should stand with both feet in the Reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society…. The basis of the provision and organisation of education in a Bantu Community should, where possible, be the tribal organisation.

Furthermore, according to Tabata,[252] a report of the Departmental Committee on Native Education (1935) sums up the policy on Bantu Education as follows:

> The Education of the White child prepares him for life in a dominant society and the Education of the Black child for a subordinate society…. The limits (of Native Education) form part of the social and economic structure of the country.

Indeed, the apartheid government formulated a system to separate all races, creating a form of educational hierarchy with whites assuming supremacy. The adoption and implementation of the Bantu Education Act created untold damage to the African. On the one hand, white schooling was free, compulsory and growing while, on the other hand, education for Africans was severely neglected. And such neglect manifested in financial under-provision and urban influx, which then led to insufficient schooling facilities, teachers and educational materials, and student absenteeism or non-enrolment. In addition to this, Tabata[253] highlights that, the curriculum of Bantu Education was also altered and separated from that of whites. According to Tabata,[254] an excessive amount of time is given to religious instruction and devotional activities as well as manual training.

Post-apartheid Dispensation

According to Ali-Dinar,[255] the education and training system under apartheid was characterised by three key features: first, a system fragmented along racial and ethnic lines, which was also saturated with the racial ideology and educational doctrines of apartheid. Second, it was characterised by unequal access to education and training at all levels of the system. Ali-Dinar[256] argues that extreme educational inequalities existed between black and white and large numbers of people, in particular, adults, out-of-school youth and children of pre-school age, had little or no access to education and training. Lastly, it was characterised by a lack of

democratic control within the education and training system. Students, teachers, parents, and workers had been excluded from decision-making processes.

The post-apartheid government of 1994 inherited one of the most unequal societies in the world. According to Jansen and Taylor,[257] decades of social and economic discrimination against black South Africans left a legacy of not only income inequality, but also educational inequality along racial lines. The challenge faced by the post-apartheid government was to create an education and training system that will ensure that the human resources in our society were developed to their full capacity. According to Ali-Dinar,[258] this is the challenge posed by the vision of the Freedom Charter: to open the doors of learning and culture to all.

The number of school-going children in South Africa has increased. As Table 9.1 shows, there has been an increase in enrolment ratio of Africans from 115.4 in the year 2010 to 117.2 in the year 2013. According to Twenty Year Review,[259] the gross secondary school enrolment improved from 51 per cent in 1994 to 89 per cent in 2012, and the gross primary school enrolment in 2012 was high, at approximately 98 per cent. The Twenty Year Review[260] also acknowledges that the learner-teacher ratio also improved from 33:1 in 2000 to 30:1 in 2012 and as a result the number of schools has also increased with improved infrastructure and higher proportions. Furthermore, South Africa's education has seen more and more matriculates passing their exams. This is illustrated in the matriculation pass rate of 78.2 per cent in the year 2013 – this being the highest pass rate in the history of post-1994 education in South Africa, after the 2012 rate of 73.9 per cent. The government also implemented a number of programmes, such as Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) and mass literacy campaigns which were all geared towards eradicating illiteracy, and have been made available to adults seeking to finish off their basic education by offering learning tools, knowledge and skills under nationally recognised qualifications.

There are still challenges regarding literacy, numeracy and enrolment rates in general. To measure progress on literacy and enrolments, certain calculations are done. Literacy refers to the ability to read and write while the Gross Enrolment Ratio is calculated as total enrolment in a specific level of education, regardless of age, expressed as a percentage of the eligible official school age (i.e. 7–18 years) population. As Table 9.1 shows, looking at 2010–2013, there are about 7 per cent of South Africans who cannot read and write at all and the gross enrolment ratios suggest that there are either a large number of those outside the standard schooling years that are at school or that repetition of classes is high. According to the National Department of Education,[261] a policy to transform the education sector was effected in 2001 through the publication of the Education White Paper on Special Needs Education, all of this being in line with the ANC's

Table 9.1: Literacy and Gross Enrolments

	Literacy				Gross Enrolment Ratios			
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2010	2011	2012	2013
Male	94.1	94.3	95.0	94.9	113.8	115.4	115.6	115.6
Female	91.7	92.1	92.6	92.6	111.5	113.2	112.0	113.7
African	91.3	91.6	92.4	92.3	115.4	117.1	116.3	117.2
Coloured	95.9	96.3	96.8	96.9	99.2	99.3	102.0	101.0
Indian/Asian	98.5	98.4	98.6	98.2	101.8	101.7	103.5	107.5
White	99.8	99.7	99.8	99.9	98.5	100.8	98.4	100.7
Western Cape	97.2	97.7	98.0	97.9	102.5	101.6	102.8	106.3
Eastern Cape	90.9	91.3	92.1	91.9	117.6	120.8	118.0	118.1
Northern Cape	85.5	86.4	88.7	89.6	109.3	108.8	107.9	108.5
Free State	92.6	92.1	94.2	93.9	109.2	113.3	115.8	113.2
KwaZulu-Natal	91.8	92.5	92.5	92.1	113.2	116.6	114.9	117.4
North West	89.2	87.9	89.4	89.2	108.3	115.9	112.1	113.0
Gauteng	98.0	97.3	98.0	97.9	105.4	107.5	107.2	108.0
Mpumalanga	88.5	89.3	89.0	89.4	114.4	116.1	117.7	115.1
Limpopo	87.1	88.7	89.3	90.1	127.8	122.0	124.1	125.0
Total	**92.9**	**93.1**	**93.7**	**93.7**	**112.7**	**114.3**	**113.8**	**114.7**

Source: Own Calculations Using Statistics South Africa's General Household Surveys (2010–2013)

commitment to improve access to public education as well as being on track with Millennium Development Goal (MDG) of achieving universal primary education by 2015.

According to Pottinger,[262] education in South Africa may have improved quantitatively; however it has not improved qualitatively, either in absolute terms or in comparison with other developing countries. Despite the fact that South Africa spends 18.5 per cent of its annual budget on education, Modisaotile[263] acknowledges that the education system remains largely in a poor state of affairs. South Africa has a high-cost, low-performance education system that does not compare favourably with education systems in other African countries, or in similar developing economies.

There are many who argue that the quality of education is a challenge in South Africa. So, even though access has significantly improved, the quality of education is not satisfactory.[264] Modisaotsile[265]argues, like many others, that more attention needs to be focused on the quality of education. Quantity should, however, also be considered when the majority of those learners who pass matric do not meet the minimum requirements for university entrance. In addition, Modisaotsile[266] identifies that only half of the number of learners enrolled in Grade 1 eventually makes it to Grade 12.

Without a doubt, the purported poor quality of South Africa's education has had a knock-on effect on skills creation. Just as South Africa's education might be swamped with ideological over-reach, so too is the workplace skills crisis infinitely compounded by the worst administrative decisions: the imposition of costly, ideological, corrupt, bureaucratic and ineffectual skills development processes on South African industry.[267]

The other significant intervention in the education and training sector in the post-apartheid dispensation are the Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs). According to Pottinger,[268] SETAs are seen as the central mechanism for mediating the relationship between training (supply side) and economic and social requirements (demand side). According to the Twenty Year Review,[269] SETAs were established with the aim of linking skills development more closely to the needs of economic sectors and providing opportunities for experiential learning through learnerships. SETAs are, according to Brown,[270] central to interpreting the skills requirements in the context of economic demand, but they do not create demand. There are 23 SETAs, each funded by 1 per cent levy on the national payroll.

Many argue that SETAs have not worked well. According to the Twenty Year Review, [271] the number of unemployed people completing learnerships reached over 22,000 per annum in 2013, but there have been challenges in placing

learners in experiential learning and sustainable employment. Furthermore, the funds that have been accumulated for the purpose of identifying and meeting sector specific scarce and critical skills have either not been spent or have been spent inappropriately. Also, most private sector companies are reported to have simply discounted the SETA levy as another tax and have gone back to doing their own internal training. A report by the Construction Industry Development Board (CIDB), for instance, found that most SETA trainees were only at basic levels of training, and this made no significant contribution to the specialised skills required by industries. It is therefore not surprising that there is so-called mismatch between the skills potential employees possess and the skills expected by the employers. It would be important that a robust conversation takes place between government and industry, as well as organised labour and the broader civil society, in order to find ways to reduce unemployment.

Perspective Box: Skills Development

Pros	Cons
SETAs provide work experience and nationally recognised qualification within the national qualifications framework	The challenge of placing learners in experiential learning and sustainable employment.
Develop skills of SA workforce	Require a large amount of *paperwork*
Increase global economic competitiveness	Companies with staff payroll of over R500 000
Promote self-employment and entrepreneurship	Monitored and controlled by government – no education and training priority
Improve delivery of social services	Many service providers are not SAQA accredited
Increase investment in education and training	Many organisations do not support this
Improve the return on investment on education	Difficult to monitor and control
Improve employment opportunities for new entrants	Many people who go through SETAs do not readily find work

Another notable education sub-sector is Further Education and Training (FET), whose transformation is articulated by the National Department of Education[272] as the desire for 'coordinated, comprehensive, interlocking sectors that provide meaningful experiences to learn at a post-compulsory phase'. A clear role was identified for the FET sector with the economy, which was soon followed by the introduction of the FET Act (No. 98) of 1998.

The South African FET sector is also confronted by a number of challenges. These challenges, Hoekel[273] argues, include the perception that FET colleges are inferior institutions producing low-status qualification. According to Akoojee and McGrath,[274] despite significant attempt by DHET to recapitalise and turn around the FET college sector, the uncertainty remains in the country about the extent to which FET colleges should be viewed as suitable alternatives to higher education. Another challenge that facing the FET sector is that a significant number of teaching staff at FET colleges are either 'under-qualified or unqualified.'[275]

Much has been said about the various education and training policies and relevant pieces of legislation since their introduction and during their years of implementation. Suffice it to say here that the argument that government has made progress in the expansion of the educational opportunities is persuasive. This, according to Kraak,[276] is evident in the increase access, headcount enrolment, investment by government and other private sector, and institutional rationalisation processes and regulations respectively. However, there is also literature pointing to a correlation between the quality of educators and students and, by extension, the quality of the education system.

Another area worth highlighting in the context of South Africa's education and training landscape is the Technical Vocational Education and Training (TVET) College system. Given the challenges with education in general in South Africa, the TVET colleges have also had to undergo numerous reforms, in the main, in order to prepare the youths in South Africa for the world of work. However, the unemployment challenge remains pronounced, especially for the youth, and there is a phenomenon of large numbers of the youth that are not in employment, not in education or not getting training. Kgobe and Baates (2014) estimate that 3.4 million youths between the ages of fifteen and twenty-four were neither in employment or education or training (otherwise known as NEET).[277] Although the President Jacob Zuma government maintains that the TVET colleges are better placed to train young school leavers, providing them with the skills, knowledge and attitudes necessary for employment in the labour market, others argue that government's view perpetuates unrealistic and false hopes.[278]

Policy Reforms

Since 1994, the vision for a transformed education system that would reflect the values and practices of a democratic South Africa have been clearly articulated in a number of policy documents. According to the 1997 Education White Paper, the structure of educational institutions should create conditions that ensure the development of coherent and flexible national systems that redress past inequality, eliminate inequalities through the use of policy resources and ensure an improvement in the quality of education across the system.

The National Development Plan[279] provides the vision for South Africa's future as well as useful ideas that will guide us towards the attainment of that vision. The NDP[280] takes forward government's commitment to seeing education as an apex priority. It recognises that the South African education system needs urgent action. It suggests that building national capabilities requires focus on early childhood development, basic education, further and higher education. Therefore, priorities such as human capacity, school management, infrastructure and results-oriented mutual accountability between schools and communities are, according to the NDP,[281] critical for the improvement of South Africa's education system.

Teacher development

One of the keys to a successful education system is the recruitment of quality teachers. According to Pottinger,[282] the South African education systems has ceased to recruit quality teachers and quality teachers that remain in the education system are uncertain about their own future in education as well as the future of education in South Africa. Some of their fears and concerns emanate from the political and economic climate in the country, changes in policies, changes in the curriculum, high rates of teacher attrition, unsafe school environments and unsatisfactory working conditions. This has therefore resulted in poor teacher morale and declining quality of education. According to Lumby,[283] 'if motivation and morale are low, then teaching and learning suffer'. Therefore, in order to achieve educational progress, van der Berg et al[284] argue that South Africa needs an institutional structure that consists of teacher pay, bursary programmes and other interventions aimed at promoting good teaching as well as attracting and retaining the best teachers.

In addition to this, teacher development is also critical in ensuring high quality education in South Africa's education system. According to the National Education Collaboration Trust,[285] improving the quality of education can also be achieved through pre-service and continuous teacher development. Teachers need to be developed to deal with the school, classroom and community challenges effectively. According to the National Education Collaboration Trust,[286] teacher development can be achieved if the following conditions are put in place:

- The appointment of principals and school management teams based on merit;
- Development of coordinated training plans;
- Integration of professional development time into the school calendar and timetables;
- Improved quality of teacher training, including more practical on-the-job training;
- Teaching techniques that keep up with the latest trends to meet the demands of the twenty-first century, including the use of technology in teaching;
- Acknowledgement of good performances by school and district officials;
- Performance measurement and development of teachers by linking academic success of learners directly with teacher success.

Leadership

According to Pottinger,[287] South Africa's education system is characterised by weak school management. Van der Berg[288] further argue that effective schools require well selected individuals as principals, together with management teams that understand and fulfil their roles as leaders of the curriculum, towards ensuring that an organised environment conducive to learning is present. Therefore, in order to ensure effective leadership in schools, the National Education Collaboration Trust[289] suggests the following:

- Delivering widespread training on good governance at school, district and provincial levels;
- Assisting leaders to set examples and provide models of behaviour for officials and learners to follow;
- Reviewing the institutional governance framework which includes school principals, school management teams (SMTs) and school governing bodies (SGBs).

Textbooks and Infrastructure

Even though it's not a new phenomenon, the Limpopo textbook crisis in the year 2012 placed a much needed national spotlight on systematic difficulties in the delivery of resources that ensure quality education. This is one of the many operational inefficiencies which contribute to poor teacher capacity and ultimately the continued weaknesses in the South African education system. It goes without saying that school infrastructure, in its various facets, is critical.

Community and Parent Support

The community has an influence on what is happening at school and the school is a mirror image of the community within which it is situated. According to Ngqela and Lewis,[290] it is crucial that the focus should be on positive relationships and that issues of better security measures, parental roles and community involvement in schools should be addressed. Indeed, the involvement of parents and the wider community in schools is very important.

Learner Support and Wellbeing

The National Development Plan recognises the importance of learner wellbeing to achieve quality learning and teaching.[291] The holistic approach to learning would include such aspects as health, nutrition, psychosocial support, sport and culture, and catering for children with special needs. The government of South Africa has many initiatives regarding learner support and advancing learners' wellbeing. However, more can be done to eliminate the challenges, such as very long distances to schools.

Access to education has improved, but education remains untransformed

Bloch[292] is of the view that although many challenges still remain, there were significant achievements in turning apartheid education around in the first decade of democracy. This has, according to Kraak,[293] been evident in increased access to education, headcount enrolment in schools, investment by government and the private sector in education, and institutional rationalisation processes and regulation.

The changes pursued in the education sector have resulted in great strides. Government has made some progress in the expansion of education access, particularly improving access for disadvantaged groups. Progress is also visible in the different sectors, as presented in the 2008 Review of National Policies for Education in South Africa by the OECD.[294] For instance, the OECD noted that what government had been able to achieve in the space of fourteen years is commendable and that it is understandable that some of the policy goals had not yet been realised.

In this instance, data from the Towards a Fifteen Year Review[295] indicates that education participation has increased since 1994, especially in the case of primary schooling. This is attributed to those interventions geared towards increased access. In terms of the growth in enrolments for the age group 7–15 years between 2002 and 2007, the enrolment of 6-year-olds had improved from 40 per cent to 60 per cent; for 6-year-olds the improvement was from 70 per cent to 88 per cent, and for 15-year-olds the improvement was from 96 per cent to 98 per cent.

Data from the Department of Basic Education's 2010 Education Statistics in South Africa report,[296] according to Table 9.2, show relatively high gross enrolment rates: 94 per cent for the foundation phase (Grades 1–7), 86 per cent for the senior phase (Grades 8–12) and an overall 91 per cent for Grades 1–12. In essence, South Africa has been successful in facilitating access to primary and tertiary education, particularly for the girl child. Based on the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) target for 2015, the country has achieved its goal.

Table 9.2: Gross Enrolment Ratios by Gender and Level of Education

Gender	Primary phase (Grade 1 – 7) %	Secondary phase (Grade 8 – 12) %	Total (Grade 1- 12) %
Female	92	89	91
Male	96	83	91
Total	**94**	**86**	**91**

Source: Department of Basic Education (2012) in Gumede (2013b, p. 73)

Further corroborating this point, the OECD report[297] (referred to above) indicates that South Africa is close to achieving universal basic education with 96.6 per cent enrolment for the age group 7–15 years, with almost all children of school-going age entering school and the majority reaching the end of Grade 9.

In support of the OECD report and others, Table 9.3 shows improved access to education between 2001 and 2011. Although the number of those not attending school is still high, the percentage of those attending has increased from 71.5 per cent in 2001 to 73.4 per cent in 2011, while the percentage of those not attending school has decreased from 28.5 per cent in 2001 to 26.6 per cent in 2011. There are also increases in percentage shares, in terms of attendance, for all types of educational institutions except pre-school, as Table 9.3 shows. In the ten-year period 2001–2011, there has been an increase of about 100,000 attendance for universities. This reiterates the point that the number of those seeking higher education increases over time in any society and, as such, more universities are needed.

Table 9.3: Access to Education in South Africa (2001–2011)

Education	2001		2011	
	Number	%	Number	%
School attendance				
Yes	13,727,893	71.5	13,837,961	73.4
No	5,463,823	28.5	5,023,110	26.6
Type of educational institution				
Pre-school	575,936	4.2	128,719	0.9
School	12,584,818	91.7	12,862,961	92.9
FET College	191,234	1.4	359,228	2.6
University/ Technikon	315,592	2.3	410,063	3.0
ABET	26,505	0.2	22,730	0.2
Other	33,809	0.2	57,883	0.4
Public or Private				
Public	13,028,486	94.9	11,924,285	92.7
Private	699,407	5.1	934,480	7.3

Source: Statistics South Africa (2012) in Gumede (2013:71)

Other important areas are literacy and numeracy. Various datasets and publications show a steady increase in the literacy rate in South Africa. Development Indicators[298] show that, according to General Household Surveys, literacy rate has increased from 70.7 per cent in 2002 to approximately 80 per cent in 2009. Although there are improvements, there is still a long way to go in ensuring that the 20 per cent that is classified as illiterate may be literate. Bloch[299] shows that despite the fact that South Africa has high levels of educational spending than most countries, it is amongst the worst performing countries internationally on literacy and numeracy.

Despite improved literacy rates and access to education, it remains evident that key historical factors have continued to constrain and limit the successful transformation of the education sector. Over the past year and a half, it has become increasingly evident that South Africa's education institutions remain

untransformed. There is emerging consensus that the quality of education is poor and the curriculum is not well structured as part of the legacy of the Bantu education system.

Data from the latest census highlights the reality that access to education, not to mention the quality of the education system, remains a challenge. For instance, the number (at above five million) and the share of those not attending school remains very high. Also, there is slow progress with rolling out early learning. Lastly, although the enrolment of Africans in higher education institutions has increased, detailed analysis of data reveals historical disparity in participation rates among population groups. The total gross participation rate remains more or less the same, at approximately 15.7 per cent, in early to mid-2000 and it increased marginally to 16.18 per cent in 2007. The number of those enrolled in higher education has been increasing. However, participation rates for the African student population do not seem to be increasing at any significant rate.

Of concern is that even qualified graduates are struggling to find employment. Moleke[300] found that the majority of the unemployed fall under the categories of Africans, females, graduates of humanities and the arts, and graduates from the so-called historically black universities. The unification of the education system and standards also remains an issue. The two-tier education system is accentuated by an increasing share of those attending the private education system. Also, it remains to be seen whether the approach adopted while restructuring the higher education landscape was appropriate or not. The Higher Education Monitor of the Council on Higher Education reflects on a number of issues pertaining to the challenges confronting the South African higher education landscape. Overall, the picture looks bleak but there is some progress, especially in the context of proposals contained in the 2012 Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training.[301]

The higher education sector has also gone through (and continues to go through) transformation. Education White Paper Three: A Programme for the Transformation of Higher Education[302] outlines a framework for transforming the higher education system to serve a new social order, meet pressing national needs, and respond to new realities and opportunities. In line with the vision in the National Plan on Higher Education,[303] achieving equity and diversity in the South African higher education system; producing graduates needed for the social and economic development of South Africa; promoting research; and restructuring the institutional landscape are important objectives. Again, this mirrors the objectives of government's broader PSRs described above. The most recent thinking on further transforming the higher education sector (and perhaps correcting errors committed earlier) is contained in a Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training.[304]

Similar to other education sub-sectors, Breier and Mabizela[305]argue that the higher education system inherited from the apartheid era was one characterised by inequity, fragmentation and inefficiency, with 36 public higher education institutions (21 universities and 15 technikons), separated along racial lines. For some reason, government opted for restructuring the higher education landscape through merging institutions. Two phases of restructuring occurred between 2004 and 2005, which saw the emergence of new terms of reference and institutional arrangements for the institutions. For instance, universities not required to merge with any other institution remained 'universities' (like those that merged with or rather incorporated other universities); some technikons were transformed into 'universities of technology'; some universities were merged with technikons and became 'comprehensive institutions'; and two national institutes for higher education were established in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape. The Green Paper for Post-School Education and Training[306] recommends, among other things, that the two national institutes for higher education in Mpumalanga and Northern Cape should be converted to two new universities.

In terms of enrolments, it is noted by Breier and Mabizela[307] that the extent to which the higher education system can actually produce highly skilled graduates is predicated on three important factors: the number of school 'graduates' that qualify for entry into higher education institutions, the number that choose to enter higher education institutions, and the number that complete their qualifications. However, as discussed in the schooling section above, the quality of Grade 12 school-leaving passes is questionable. Bloch[308] elaborates the issues bedevilling the education system in South in detail.

Although the enrolment of Africans in higher education institutions has increased, detailed analysis of data reveals historical disparity in participation rates among population groups. Table 9.4 illustrates, from the latest data available, participation rates in the years 2002, 2004 and 2007. The total gross participation rate remained more-or-less the same in early to mid-2000, at about 15.7 per cent, and it increased marginally to 16.18 per cent in 2007. The number of those enrolled in higher education has been increasing. However, participation rates for African student population do not seem to be increasing in any significant rate – it was 11.4 per cent in 2002, 11.5 per cent in 2004 and 12.29 per cent in 2007. These improvements, however pedestrian, suggest that government plans – though seemingly farfetched – are yielding some results.

Table 9.4: Gross Participation Rates in Higher Education

Year	Population Group	Enrolment in Higher Education	Gross Participation Rate (per cent)
2002	African	405 914	11.4
	Coloured	38 965	11.0
	Indian	48 717	47.7
	White	181 999	61.9
	Total	**675 595**	**15.7**
2004	African	453 639	11.5
	Coloured	46 090	12.1
	Indian	54 315	50.2
	White	188 957	59.5
	Total	**743 001**	**15.7**
2007	African	478 146	12.29
	Coloured	49 211	12.99
	Indian	52 748	45.38
	White	180 985	56.77
	Total	**761 090**	**16.18**

Source: Kraak, A. (2008:283) and Steyn, A. (2009:67)

However, on the other hand, Breier and Mabizela[309] also note that graduation rates have recently been declining. Although strides in encouraging access are yielding some positive results, graduation numbers and rates show a continual decline. This is starkly reflected in graduation ratios by field of study in relation to national targets. Breier and Mabizela[310] estimated that if 2004 graduation targets were to be consistent with enrolment targets, the percentage ratio of graduates for human sciences, commerce and science, and engineering and technology should have been 40:30:30. However, the ratio was 48:25:27.

The declining trend with regard to graduation rates is largely attributed to the difficulty of subjects, depending on the preparedness of individual students by the schooling system. Importantly, however, it has been noted that higher education faces a serious challenge of student attrition. It is reported that 30 per cent of the year 2000 first-time entrants into the system dropped out within the first year

while 20 per cent dropped out after two or three years of study. Of the group, 50 per cent was out of the system before attaining their qualification. This is obviously worrisome, in the light of the country's unemployment challenge. Also of concern is that even qualified graduates are struggling to find employment. For instance, Moleke[311] found that the majority of the unemployed fall under the categories of Africans, females, those who studied humanities and art, and those who studied at so-called historically black universities.

Overall, it remains to be seen whether the approach adopted with restructuring the higher education landscape was appropriate or not; South Africa, during the early years of democratic government, collapsed many tertiary education institutions to a few. There remains an imbalance between the numbers in universities and those in technical universities and FET colleges. It could be argued that further education will not flourish and benefit society until appropriate structural features have been put in place. The issue of access to higher education remains one of the major challenges too.

Conclusion

Reforms that have taken place in South Africa's education system since 1994, in the context of reforms in the public sector, were necessary for a newly democratic country that had inherited a racially segregated and dysfunctional education system. These reforms have happened at many levels, such as early learning and development, general schooling, further education and training, basic education and training, and higher education. Although the reforms undertaken since 1994 have accomplished some of their intended objectives, they have not gone far enough. The quality of education in South Africa is one of the most hotly debated issues in the post-apartheid dispensation.

Key Terms

Experiential Learning: A process of learning through experience.

Further Education and Training (FET): Vocational or occupational by nature implying that the student receives education and training with a view to getting a specific range of jobs or employment possibilities.

Learnerships: A work-based learning programme.

Literacy: Ability to use written language actively and passively; ability to 'read, write, spell, listen, and speak'.

Numeracy: Ability to work with numbers.

Sector Education and Training Authorities (SETAs): Training and education institutions aimed at developing and improving the skills of the South African workforce.