



**Consortium for Research on
Educational Access,
Transitions and Equity**

Educational Access in South Africa

Country Analytic Report

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August 2007



**University of the Witwatersrand
Education Policy Unit**



Consortium for Research on
Educational Access, Transitions & Equity

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The Consortium for Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) is a Research Programme Consortium supported by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). Its purpose is to undertake research designed to improve access to basic education in developing countries. It seeks to achieve this through generating new knowledge and encouraging its application through effective communication and dissemination to national and international development agencies, national governments, education and development professionals, non-government organisations and other interested stakeholders.

Access to basic education lies at the heart of development. Lack of educational access, and securely acquired knowledge and skill, is both a part of the definition of poverty, and a means for its diminution. Sustained access to meaningful learning that has value is critical to long term improvements in productivity, the reduction of inter-generational cycles of poverty, demographic transition, preventive health care, the empowerment of women, and reductions in inequality.

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CREATE is developing its research collaboratively with partners in Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia. The lead partner of CREATE is the Centre for International Education at the University of Sussex. The partners are:

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Acronyms

ABET	Adult Basic Education and Training
ASER	Age Specific Enrolment Ratio
CSG	Child Support Grant
CREATE	Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity
DFID	Department for International Development (United Kingdom)
DoE	Department of Education (National)
DoF	Department of Finance (National)
DoH	Department of Health (National)
ECD	Early Childhood Development
EFA	Education for All
ELRC	Education Labour Relations Council
ELSEN	Education for Learners with Special Needs
EMIS	Education Management Information System
EPC	Education Policy Consortium
EPU	Education Policy Unit (University of the Witwatersrand)
ERP	Education Rights Project
ESF	Equitable Shares Formula
FET	Further Education and Training
FFC	Financial and Fiscal Commission
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GET	General Education and Training
GPI	Gender Parity Index
HSRC	Human Sciences Research Council
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
INEXSA	Education Inclusion and Exclusion in India and South Africa project
LOLT	Language of Learning and Teaching
LSEN	Learners with Special Educational Needs
LSM	Learner Support Materials

MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
Model C	Pre-1994 white public school permitted to admit other races
MTEF	Medium Term Expenditure Framework
NEIMS	National Education Infrastructure Management System
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
NMF	Nelson Mandela Foundation
NNSSF	National Norms and Standards for School Funding
NQF	National Qualifications Framework
POS	Public Ordinary Schools
OHS	October Household Survey
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SACMEQ	Southern & Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality
SALSS	Statistics on Living Standards and Development Study
SASA	South African Schools Act
SAYP	Survey of Activities of Young People
SGB	School Governing Body

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Foreword

This review of educational development in South Africa has been developed to explore key issues in access to education, capture recent research, and to identify gaps in knowledge and understanding. It is part of a programme of research developed collaboratively by partners in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa and the UK within the Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE). The research has several purposes and seeks to identify children who are excluded from basic education, establish the causes of their exclusion, and identify ways of ensuring that all children complete a full cycle of basic education successfully.

CREATE conceives of access to basic education in several zones of exclusion – children who never attend, children who enrol in primary school but drop out before completion, children in school but attending irregularly and learning little, and children who fail to transit to secondary school or progress successfully through to the end of the cycle. There are problems in all these zones in South Africa. Though very considerable progress has been made since 1994 and many achievements are impressive much remains to be done to achieve both the spirit and the letter of the commitments reflected in the Millennium Development Goals.

This analysis builds on insights from recent reports and academic papers. It notes that simple access indicators show that the great majority of 5 to 15 year olds in South Africa are enrolled in schools, albeit that significant numbers enter late and repeat grades as they progress. Meaningful access as CREATE defines it includes regular attendance, levels of achievement consistent with curriculum objectives, and completion at or near appropriate age levels. Using these criteria there are concerns that too often schooling is interrupted and learning days are lost, levels of achievement on national assessments and international comparative studies suggest that many learners fall well short of expected outcomes, and over age enrolment and progression remains significant. More needs to be understood about the reasons for these problems and the mechanisms that can ameliorate under achievement and missed opportunities. Different parts of the education system and different geographic regions have widely different characteristics despite actions to equalise public funding and direct subsidies preferentially to those most in need.

The challenge this report takes up is to develop a research agenda which can inform policy and practice in ways that will make a difference to access, equity and the transitions that investment in education seeks to deliver. It identifies several key dimensions that will be explored through fieldwork, secondary data analysis, and policy dialogue. The agenda includes needs to:

- Undertake further analysis of secondary data at and below the national level to explore a disaggregated picture of which sub-populations experience late entry, drop-out and repetition, where they are located geographically.
- Illuminate the explanatory variables that are related to different forms of

exclusion through school and develop community case studies tracking the processes around loss of meaningful access in schools.

- Develop thematic studies on topics that may include
 - age-grade norms, repetition and progression;
 - the introduction of Grade R;
 - the introduction of fee-free schooling; and
 - the exclusion of particular sub-groups of children, such as those who lack access to ECD, those in HIV/AIDS-affected households, those in detention or on the streets, those who live far from schools, those who become pregnant, those who are victims of violence or discrimination, and children of migrants.

This is an ambitious agenda and one that it is very important to pursue. This review has had contributions from many team members and much advice from its reference group. It includes a lot of work in progress and there are needs to refine and confirm its insights. CREATE is appreciative of the efforts made to consolidate analysis and insights from a complex arena of evidence and concerns into this Review. The research offers the possibility of new insights that can improve the lives of those children whose basic right to education is yet to be fully realised.

Professor Keith Lewin
Director of CREATE

Preface

This *Review* of access and participation issues for children in the five to fifteen years age group in South Africa is a product of the inception phase of the five year multi-institution, international research consortium supported by DFID. The age group under consideration corresponds approximately to the primary and early secondary years of education in South Africa. This study is concerned with various aspects of exclusion and participation in primary and secondary schooling. Similar country analyses are being undertaken through the CREATE research programme in Ghana, India and Bangladesh.

Since 1994, South Africa has undertaken the vital task of transforming the inequitable political, economic and social system that characterised the apartheid era into a democratic society which aims to equalise opportunity for all its citizens. Central to this transformation is the establishment of a quality, equitable and democratic education system. A major focus in the post-apartheid period has been on access: both in relation to increased enrolments in schools and in terms of meaningful access to quality education. Much attention has been given in the last ten years to how and whether equity and access have been achieved. It is hoped that this *Review* will contribute to this discussion and body of knowledge, both in a South African and a comparative context.

A cooperative process has been undertaken in the production of this *Review*. Various individuals have contributed, the issues under examination and how they are to be conceptualised have been vigorously debated, and, together with our international partners, we have collectively developed an understanding of a range of educational ‘zones of exclusion’ and their relevance in our country context.

At the country level, the Wits Education Policy Unit, the Education Policy Unit at the University of Fort Hare, the Centre for Education Policy Development and individual academics in the Wits School of Education contributed to the writing of the *Review*. It has been an intense process with many drafts produced. Creating a coherent set of ideas from many disparate documents and sometimes conflicting statistical data sources has been a challenge. A National Reference Group was formed early on to assist the South Africa CREATE research team in various ways. This included determining the scope and focus of the study, considering the methodology and data sources and reviewing the findings and conclusions. The Group, ably chaired by Dr Trevor Coombe, representing senior researchers, academics and the National Department of Education, has at all times supported and encouraged the work and provided intellectual inputs.

The research team and the members of the National Reference Group hope that this *Review* will make a contribution to a better understanding of access and exclusion, and help expand the notion of meaningful access so that the causes of exclusion can be substantively addressed.

Shireen Motala
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Executive Summary

Introduction

The Consortium for Research on Educational Access, Transitions and Equity (CREATE) is concerned with understanding educational access for children between the ages of 5 and 15 years in four countries: Bangladesh, Ghana, India and South Africa.

CREATE understands educational access more broadly than simple physical access to school. True access includes equitable access to education that is meaningful.

- Meaningful access to education requires more than full enrolment; it requires high attendance rates, progression through grades with little or no repetition, and learning outcomes that confirm that basic skills are being mastered.

Education will add more value to people's lives when their freedom to choose is enhanced by meaningful access.

Until most learners are able to progress consistently from grade to grade, without a jolting stop-start journey or frequent repetition, it will remain of the utmost importance to clarify the scale and distribution of exclusion, delayed access, multiple access and chronic absenteeism. Exclusion includes those who are in the vulnerable zone of the silently excluded – those who are physically present in classes but who do not learn anything meaningful or gain the requisite skills. Such lack of epistemic access could be the result of individual learning barriers, lack of concentration because of hunger or because the quality of teaching is poor. This *Review* also considers factors such as negative schooling experiences, HIV/AIDS, sexual harassment, racism and xenophobia as contributing to repetition, absenteeism, low achievement and drop-out.

Educational access is examined in this *Review* in terms of a model that describes seven zones of exclusion. Zone 0 is Grade R, the (as yet non-compulsory) entry point for learners aged 5 years (or turning 5 before the end of June) into the schooling system. Zone 1 includes children who have never gone to school. The second zone includes those who drop out before the end of primary education (Grade 7), and Zone 3 contains learners who are at risk of dropping out in this same period. Zone 4 is the transition between Grades 7 and 8, or between primary and secondary school. Zone 5 contains those learners who drop-out of Grades 8 or 9 and Zone 6 refers to young people of any age who are at risk of exclusion in these two years of lower secondary school.

This *Review* describes and explains patterns of access to schools in South Africa according to these zones of exclusion. It outlines policy and legislation on access to education and provides a statistical analysis of the seven zones of access, vulnerability and exclusion. The quantitative data is supported by a review of research which explains the patterns of access and exclusion. The *Review* also analyses the way in which

educational access is conceptualised, and identifies gaps in these accounts which suggest areas for future research.

The policy context

Under apartheid, significant numbers of children went to school, especially in the primary grades, but Bantu Education also severely limited the quality of education, and the apartheid regime consistently under-resourced black schools. During the 1980s, however, there was considerable expansion of secondary schools for black learners.

- In 1994, South Africa was able to provide near universal access to basic education, but in a system fractured by racial inequality and offering poor quality for the majority of learners.

Following from the 1996 Constitution, compulsory education extended from Grades 1 to 9, or from ages 6 to 15. This period of basic education is also referred to as the General Education and Training (GET) phase and covers seven years of primary school and two years in secondary school. The final three years of secondary school are not compulsory but government is constitutionally obliged to make this Further Education and Training (FET) phase progressively available. Learners can acquire a FET qualification by completing Grade 12 in the schooling system or attaining an equivalent certification from one of 50 public FET colleges or through opportunities offered by the private sector. Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) offers an alternative route to both GET and FET qualifications, especially for young people and adults older than the 15-year compulsory age limit.

Responsibility for schooling (GET and FET) is concurrent between national and provincial government. The national Department of Education takes the lead on developing national norms and standards and creates the main policy and legislative frameworks, while provinces take executive responsibility and make the funding decisions. Access differentials can therefore be studied between and within the nine provinces. Provision of schooling is mainly public, with independent schools accommodating under 4% of learners in Grades 1 to 9 in 2004.

Post-apartheid education policy was informed by its commitment to the fundamental right of all citizens to education, equity, redress, and the improvement of quality. New policies were designed to create an inclusive and efficient system. Attention was given to ensuring access of marginalised learners, children infected with HIV/AIDS and learners with special educational needs (LSEN). A progressive outcomes based curriculum was introduced, as well as measures to monitor educational quality. Education governance was devolved to schools, among other things permitting School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to charge fees, with significant implications for educational access (see below). The policy on LSEN emphasizes mainstreaming of learners with mild learning disabilities into ordinary schools. The reception year, Grade R (for children aged 4 turning 5) is being implemented and the target is to reach full coverage of Grade R by

2010. Pro-poor finance policies, school fee exemptions and, most recently, fee-free schools assisted indigent learners into classes. But while policy hoped to net all children in realising their Constitutional right to education, it also aimed to create a more efficient system by regulating repetition and applying age-grade norms in order to minimise under-age and over-age learners.

Financing equitable access to education

Education has consistently enjoyed the largest share of the state budget. Expenditure has increased from R31.1 billion in 1995 to R59.6 billion in 2002, though in real terms it declined as a share of both total government expenditure (from 19.2% in 1996 to 18.8% in 2002) and Gross Domestic Product (from 5.7% in 1996 to 4.9% in 2002). Per capita learner expenditure in post-apartheid education has increased and levelled off between the race groups.

- In 1993, R5500 was spent on each white learner and R1700 on each black learner. By 2005, an average of R4930 was being spent on every learner by the state.

Nevertheless, policy implementation has been constrained by the scale of the historic backlogs inherited from apartheid and the effects of inflation on education costs. Expenditure has also prioritised public ordinary schools, with the effect of crowding out spending on other services like Inclusive Education, Early Childhood Development and Adult Basic Education.

Some headway towards equalization was achieved through efforts at educator redistribution (post-provisioning), where many educators in previously advantaged schools were given the option to teach at previously disadvantaged schools or apply for early retirement. However, this also resulted in large numbers of highly qualified educators leaving the profession.

Partly as a result of the financial pressures, the South African Schools Act (1996) allowed for School Governing Bodies to raise additional capital, among other measures by charging fees. One of the intended outcomes of charging school fees was to encourage children from middle class families to stay in public schools because those schools were able to hire additional educators, and acquire other features that enhanced the provision of quality education. But fees act as a barrier to school access and they allowed for vast differentials to continue between schools because wealthier communities could raise substantially more funds than poor schools.

Equity mechanisms, therefore, sought to redistribute state funding towards the poorest schools. The National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF), which took effect on 1 January 2000 (DoE, 1998a), dealt with public funding of schools, exemption of parents who were unable to pay school fees, and subsidies to independent schools. It required each provincial education department to rank all its schools from 'poorest' to 'least poor', and then to allocate funding for non-personnel purposes progressively. The

NNSSF required that 60% of the available funds be allocated to the poorest 40% of schools.

However, this policy has had a marginal impact on schools for two reasons: first, since the poorest schools did not have the financial capacity to handle large sums of money, the provincial Department of Education sent them a paper budget. Poor schools had to requisition their requirements from the provincial Department, which, however, failed to supply these schools yet continued to pay for services (such as electricity, water, photocopying, gardening and scholar transport) to the least poor schools, eventually exhausting the budget. Meanwhile, schools in the least poor quintiles continue to compensate for reduced funding by charging higher school fees, thus maintaining existing differentials.

Technical targeting processes are no doubt important but it became clear that they were not sufficient to eliminate the deep structural disparities in South African education provision. Because of the substantial economic differences among provinces, better off schools in one province could receive more state funding than the poorest schools in another. The resource targeting system was designed to address intra-provincial inequities but could not take account of inequalities among provinces which resulted in different funding allocations to the same quintiles in different provinces. To address these concerns, the NNSSF was completely overhauled in 2006 and a national poverty ranking model was put in place.

Patterns of exclusion

Access to basic education in South Africa is expansive when compared with other developing countries.

- Age-specific school enrolment rates for 6 to 15 year olds in South Africa stand at over 95%.

However, lower Net Enrolment Rates – 87.4% for primary schools in 2004 – suggest that learners are not in the correct grade for their age (most likely they are over-age).

Almost all school-age children enrol in schools, with just under 2% of learners never entering a school. Zone 1 is, therefore, statistically less of a concern than the other zones of exclusion. Most learners stay in school through to the end of primary school, with 88% of learners completing Grade 7 in 2003. This figure does not take into account repetition and drop-out in Zone 2 which is calculated in this *Review* to average 4%.

Zone 4 refers to the transition from primary to secondary school. The 2004 data shows that 90% of learners moved from Grade 7 to Grade 8 for the last two years of compulsory education. The data suggests that there has been significant improvement in the completion rate of basic education between 1997 and 2003, with an increase from 78% in 1997 to 92% in 2003 in Zone 5. Beyond CREATE's zones of exclusion lie the post-

compulsory, final three years of secondary school, which many young people battle to complete.

Zone 3 (Grades 1-7) and Zone 6 (Grades 8 and 9) include learners who are at risk of dropping out. These zones of exclusion are characterised by a range of endogenous and exogenous factors which limit learners' abilities to contend with schooling.

- Exogenous excluding factors include poverty, rates of orphanhood, the environment in which schooling takes place and the impact of HIV/AIDS.
- Endogenous excluding factors include erratic attendance, overage enrolment and repetition.

These zones are also zones of silent exclusion, affecting learners who are present in class but under-achieving.

Zones 3 and 6 are difficult to quantify, though the following statistics reveal the scope of the problem and point to these zones as the most important for further research:

- In the national Department of Education's systemic evaluation of Grade 6 learners obtained a national mean score of 38% in Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), 27% in Mathematics, and 41% in Natural Sciences.
- 32.8% of households received a government grant in 2003 based on poverty.
- 22% of children (aged 0 to 19) eligible to receive the Child Support Grant are not receiving the grant.
- 7% of children are always or often hungry and just over 17% of children are sometimes hungry.
- The impact of HIV/AIDS is evident in the growing number of orphans. In 2003, 17.4% of children had lost one parent and 3% of children had lost both parents (371 000 children).

The causes behind exclusion

South Africa's enrolment rate is high even in circumstances where households have experienced economic or social stress. There is little evidence in the South African context that child labour disrupts enrolment in school (though it may nonetheless impact on performance), despite the fact that child labour is widespread in the country. Neither is there a Cinderella effect on the schooling of fostered children: fostered children are just as likely as the blood-related children of a household to be in school, though they may be behind in terms of their age. HIV/AIDS seems to have a greater impact on the school attendance of older teenagers rather than younger children. There appears to be a routine of school going in South Africa which may even provide a measure of stability for households in times of crisis.

However, while enrolment is high, vulnerability to drop-out or silent exclusion is a major problem (Zones 3 and 6). The quality of education for the majority of learners is still substandard and, pressurised by poverty and illness (which is not limited to HIV/AIDS), many are susceptible to dropping-out. Protracted poverty appears to be the most important reason for learners being out of school. The depth of poverty – in terms of material deprivation, social isolation and their psychological consequences – distinguished the children who were not in school from their peers in the same poor community.

Difficulties in paying school fees should be alleviated as the fee-free school policy is implemented in the poorest schools, but the costs of transport, school uniforms, books and stationery add extra burdens to already-stretched household budgets.

- Among the costs of schooling, transport expenses are the single greatest impediment to educational access for those who do not walk to school.

A number of studies have gauged that cash transfers to poor families, such as the Child Support Grant, have a positive effect on enrolment, especially in ensuring learners begin Grade 1 at the appropriate age.

The impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic affects both supply (because teachers are affected) and demand for education. HIV prevalence amongst children aged 2 to 18 years is approximately 5.4%. The safety nets provided by extended families and community networks, as well as the potential support given by schools, may prove crucial in enabling affected children to stay in school.

Schools themselves play a big role in encouraging or discouraging access. Many learners who have structural access to schooling do not have ‘epistemic access’, or access to the content knowledge and skills needed to reach the required levels of achievement and competency.

- All learners in South Africa, and especially those in township and rural schools, are not competitive in comparison with international levels of achievement.
- Learners in Foundation Phase classes are unable to read and write adequately, and their educators are unable to adequately teach how to do so.
- Educators spend too little time at school, and, when at school, spend too much time on administrative tasks.

Racism, sexism, bullying and xenophobia contribute to unwelcoming conditions in schools. Given apartheid’s legacy, the problem of racial integration in schools has received a great deal of attention – although proportionately multi-racial schools are a minority. While schools are no longer allowed to discriminate on the basis of race, a number of exclusionary devices have limited access to comparatively better resourced ex-whites-only schools: their geographic location, far from where most black learners live; their high fees; and their often unwelcoming cultural ethos.

The gender of learners has a direct impact on educational access and performance. Patriarchal male attitudes and behaviour towards schoolgirls is a matter of serious concern, with girls frequently encountering rape, abuse, harassment and assault by male classmates and educators. There are more girls than boys in the system from Grades 6 to 12, and girls are less likely than boys to regard education as irrelevant. Pregnancy is an important factor in schoolgirls dropping out.

Poor performance or silent exclusion may be a result of learning disabilities – though this is likely to affect a small minority of children. While policy emphasises mainstreaming children with learning barriers into ordinary schools, no additional financing has been allocated to support this, so children with learning barriers do not receive the necessary support.

Parents and guardians are not always able to provide the necessary background and knowledge of schooling to support their children – and this may provide at least one clue to why many learners fail and repeat. Correlations between mothers' and children's educational levels are really only significant if mothers have been substantially schooled. Not unexpectedly, educated parents are more likely to provide support for learning and to send their children to better schools.

Individual learners' and parents' assessment of the relevance of education is a key motivating influence in continued attendance at school.

- After fees, the most important reason why learners remain out of school is their perception that it is useless or uninteresting: almost 10% of learners overall, and more boys than girls (13.5% as against 6.5%), hold this depressing view of the value of education.

Researchers appear undecided about how much schooling is required before high rates of return, in the form of expected improved earnings, can be said to be probable, with some suggesting that the economic rewards for completing only basic education are negligible.

Future research

The conclusion to this *Review* of educational access in South Africa suggests several possible areas for future research:

- National averages provide an overall picture of educational access, but the reliability and validity of available statistics is debateable, and their interpretation is made difficult by learners repeating grades, transferring between schools, and enrolling late, by schools inflating numbers, and by regional and local disparities.

Closer scrutiny of the statistics, further analysis of secondary data, and district-scale statistics, would help provide a disaggregated picture of which sub-populations experience high drop-out rates and repetition, where they are located

geographically, and at which points in their school career learners are most likely to drop out.

- The specific relationships between, and the order of priority of, the explanatory variables identified here as hindering access to schools are still unclear. What is the particular mix of factors that eventually result in a learner dropping-out? What are the historical precedents in the process to dropping-out? What factors push learners out of schools, and what factors in the home and community act to pull them out?

More answers to these questions could be provided through community-school surveys, examining the interaction between households and schools, tracking both those learners who are out of school and those who are vulnerable to dropping out because they are over-age or performing poorly or frequently absent. A better understanding of what happens in classrooms – and the impact of learner and educator absenteeism – could also be gleaned.

- Further research on the impact of the following recent policies on access would be useful:
 - Progression, repetition and age-grade norms;
 - The introduction of Grade R;
 - The Department of Education's (2003b) plan of action, *Improving Access to Free and Quality Basic Education for All*, which aims to contain uniform and transport costs; and
 - The introduction of fee-free schooling;
 - Finally, studies need to be undertaken of particular sub-groups of excluded children, such as those who lack access to ECD, those in HIV/AIDS-affected households, those in detention or on the streets, those who live far from schools, immigrants, those who become pregnant and those who are victims of violence or discrimination.

1. Introduction

This *Review* forms part of the broader CREATE programme, funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID), to investigate access, transitions, and equity in basic education in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia.

CREATE addresses the problem of increasing meaningful access to basic education for children from the ages of 5 to 15. Access in the form of initial enrolment has little meaning unless it results in secure enrolment and regular attendance, progression through grades at appropriate ages, meaningful learning which has utility, and reasonable access to lower secondary education (Lewin, 2007:20). Meaningful access thus implies that all children should not only get access to basic education but, in most if not all cases, complete and go beyond it, having mastered in reasonable time the appropriate range of skills.

Arguing that ‘exclusion from basic education is a process culminating in an event with multiple causalities’ (Lewin, 2007:20), the CREATE project identifies seven ‘zones of exclusion’ containing groups of children who are losing, have lost or never had educational access:

- Zone 0 contains children who have little or no access to organised pre-schooling;
- Zone 1 contains children who are denied access to conventional schools;
- Zone 2 contains children who enter primary school but do not complete it;
- Zone 3 contains children who enter and remain in primary school but who are at risk of dropping out or being silently excluded;
- Zone 4 contains children who complete primary school but are denied access to lower secondary school;
- Zone 5 contains learners who enter lower secondary school but do not complete it; and
- Zone 6 contains children who enter and remain in lower secondary school but who are at risk of dropping out or being silently excluded (Lewin, 2007:21-2).

In South Africa, this focus on increasing access to basic education for children between the ages of 5 and 15 broadly corresponds with the age norms for Grade R to Grade 9:

- Grades 1-9 fall in the General Education and Training (GET) band of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). Grade 1 is preceded by an (intended to be, but as yet not, compulsory) Grade R, or reception year, offered in schools and also in Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres. Grades 1-7 make up primary schooling.
- Grades 10 to 12 fall in the Further Education and Training (FET) band of the NQF and comprise the senior secondary phase of schooling.

In South Africa most learners remain in school from Grades 1 to 9, but the numbers drop dramatically thereafter. Consequently, the South African CREATE research is especially concerned with Zones 3, 5 and 6, the high risk zones of drop out or silent exclusion during basic education. Moreover, the fact that most learners in South Africa are enrolled in and attend Grades 1 to 9 does not mean that problems of access to basic education have been solved. Access implies much more than physical access, which, as the experience of apartheid education makes clear, does not guarantee that learners have equal opportunities or experience an equal quality of education. Most South African learners still struggle to progress successfully through the grades and attain the expected academic outcomes.

Chapter 1 of this *Review* provides an account of the current educational policies and legislation aimed at ensuring access to schools and transforming the educational order in South Africa into one based on human rights, equality and social justice. The constitutional promise of basic education is explored alongside the statutory regulation of access to schools. Albeit highlighting the extent to which apartheid's legacy of racial inequality persists in unequal provision of educational access, the chapter goes well beyond this to discuss post-apartheid interventions intended to promote educational autonomy, increase educational access for the marginalised and the vulnerable, and improve educational quality.

Chapter 2 presents a statistical review of the zones of exclusion in the South African context. Almost all children in South Africa enter school and generally complete basic (primary and lower secondary) education, but there is large-scale drop-out in the senior secondary phase. Moreover, educational performance is poor throughout. After briefly reviewing Zone 0 (which consists of children without access to organised pre-schooling), the chapter devotes particular attention to Zones 3 and 6, and presents the data which underpins educational exclusion in the various forms of poverty, orphanhood, distance from schools, HIV/AIDS and lack of access to meaningful learning.

Chapter 3 reviews research into patterns of access and exclusion. Despite serious pressures, such as poverty, HIV/AIDS, discrimination, inadequately supportive learning environments and low motivation, most learners remain in school until the end of basic education (Grade 9). Nevertheless, learners' achievement levels are exceptionally low, and they are progressively becoming more vulnerable to losing access. The chapter identifies four sets of factors – economic, social, school and personal – which impel children into and out of schools.

Chapter 4 reflects upon the key elements within changing notions of educational access. Under the impact of globalisation, understandings of access have shifted towards rights-based approaches and focus not only on how many learners of school-going age are or are not enrolled, but also on who has access to what kind of schooling, and on what basis. It suggests that visible physical or structural access to education is necessary but insufficient, since it is often characterised by less visible processes of exclusion, and that only meaningful access can truly lead to a more just and equitable experience of

schooling. The chapter also addresses concerns over the accuracy and reliability of statistical data, the implications of pro-poor educational policies, and how socio-economic realities and poor learner and educator preparedness stand in the way of achieving more meaningful access.

Chapter 5 concludes the *Review* by briefly summing up the main findings of the previous chapters and then providing an analysis of gaps in our understanding of educational access in South Africa. It offers substantial suggestions for generating district-level statistics and conducting ‘community-school surveys’. The chapter also points to areas needing further research, and pays particular attention to the areas of drop out, gender differences in access, the impact of recent policies, and thematic studies on particular sub-groups of excluded children.

2. The National Policy Environment

2.1. Introduction

This chapter analyses policy related to educational access in the post-apartheid era. Whereas education policy during apartheid provided for separate and different schooling for various racial groups, the focus of the post-apartheid democratic government has been to ensure equitable educational access in line with the Constitution's Bill of Rights. Policy, post-1994, was therefore developed to redress past inequalities in access and to ensure inclusivity. But while government policies aimed to open up access to education, they were also intended to regulate and monitor it.

Several strands in educational access policies and processes are evident: first, the structure of the education and training landscape was completely transformed, with an emphasis on making education structurally accessible to all those who were previously denied, or had limited, access, in various forms; second, measures were introduced to regulate admission to and progression through schools; third, marginalised or vulnerable groups received particular attention in the form of inclusive education programmes and pro-poor funding policies; fourth, a new curriculum was introduced, and procedures set in place to measure educational quality; fifth, educational governance was decentralised, with significant effects on access patterns; and finally, matters of educational financing were addressed in an effort to make the new framework both more affordable and more economically accessible.

2.2 The legacy of apartheid

The institutionalised racism of apartheid continues to have profound effects on all levels of educational provision and experience in South Africa. Apartheid was structured to reproduce, maintain and perpetuate inequity based on legally-enforced racial and ethnic segregation of educational access. This was ensured and reinforced by white minority control of the legislature and state apparatus and the geo-political segregation of races through 'group areas' and 'homelands' which were central to the architecture and design of apartheid. Over generations white education received a disproportionate share of funds and resources. In 1990, for example, for every R1 spent on a black primary school child R15 was spent on a white primary school child (Nkomo, 1990).

Ironically, black South Africans had significant access to education under apartheid but it was designed to ensure the subordination of black people and the reproduction of capitalism premised on white supremacy and inequality. According to the then Minister of Native Affairs, Dr Hendrik Verwoerd:

There is no place for him ['the Bantu'] in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his own community, however, all doors are open. For that reason it is of no avail for him to receive a training which has as its aim absorption in the European community, where he cannot be absorbed (Rose & Tunmer, 1975: 266).

In practice educational provision was not only separate for black South Africans but, especially for Africans, it was desperately unequal and many doors to opportunity remained firmly locked and barred. Thus, the experience of apartheid education demonstrates that physical access to education is not enough, and that education is inseparable from other social forces that determine or influence the distribution and quality of education opportunity (Sayed & Soudien, 2003).

2.3. The structure of the post-apartheid education and training system

The main features of the post-apartheid education and training system took shape during the first few years after liberation in 1994 and ever since have been under continuous review and improvement (for more background on this section, see DoE, 2006a). The 1996 Constitution determined that the three (national, provincial and local) spheres of government, ‘distinctive, interdependent and interrelated’, should function together co-operatively; and since South Africa has no tradition of municipal responsibility for education, the Constitution provides that the national sphere has exclusive legislative responsibility for tertiary education and shares concurrent responsibility with the provincial spheres for all other education.

In practice, the national government, working with the provinces, sets the political agenda, creates the main policy and legislative frameworks for the development of education, establishes national norms and standards for the system and monitors developments. The nine provincial governments make funding decisions and exercise executive responsibility for all education from Grade R through to the end of secondary school in Grade 12, as well as formal adult education and further education and training. Public school education and the regulation of independent schools are provided for under the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Similar provision for adult education falls under the Adult Education Act, 2000. The Further Education and Training Act, 1998, which regulated post-compulsory pre-higher education learning, will be superseded in 2007 by a new Act, in terms of which the 50 public FET colleges will provide intermediate and high level skills training to post-compulsory school leavers and adults.

The national Ministry of Education co-operates with the Ministry of Social Development in implementing the inter-sectoral provision of early childhood development from ages 0 to 9. The latter Ministry has the lead responsibility, in terms of the Children’s Act, 2005, for children under school-going age. The National Education Policy Act of 1996 established the Council of Education Ministers and the Heads of Education Departments Committee, which bodies ensure the coordination of policy and executive action across the system. Quality assurance for all non-higher education, that is, for the General Education (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) bands of the National Qualifications Framework, is undertaken by the statutory body, Umalusi.

South Africa's 23 universities (which include universities of technology and six comprehensive universities) and two institutes of higher education are guaranteed academic freedom under the Constitution and institutional autonomy under the Higher Education Act, 1997, subject to their public accountability.

Skills development is the responsibility of the national Ministry of Labour which administers a statutory National Skills Authority and 24 statutory stakeholder-representative Sector Education and Training Authorities covering all aspects of the economy, private and public.

The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), which is accountable to the Minister of Education in association with the Minister of Labour, develops and implements the National Qualifications Framework (NQF). The South African NQF links formal educational, skills and professional qualifications in a comprehensive ten-level framework that covers general, further and higher education and training. SAQA oversees standards development and quality assurance throughout the system.

Although public school educators (who accounted for 95% of all South African educators in 2006) are employed by provincial education departments, their terms and conditions of employment are governed under the national Employment of Educators Act, 1998. National collective bargaining is undertaken in the Education Labour Relations Council between all departments of education and nationally recognised teachers' unions in terms of the Labour Relations Act, 1995. The professional registration and development of educators and the setting, maintenance and protection of ethical and professional standards is the responsibility of the South African Council for Educators under its own Act of 2000.

2.4. Post-apartheid policy on educational access

With the adoption of the Interim Constitution in 1993, equal education became for the first time a fundamental human right for all South Africans. The Bill of Rights of the final Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (Republic of South Africa, 1996b) provides that:

29. (1) Everyone has the right –
 - (a) to a basic education, including adult basic education; and
 - (b) to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible.
- (2) Everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable. In order to ensure the effective access to, and implementation of, this right, the state must consider all reasonable educational alternatives, including single medium institutions taking into account –
 - (a) equity;
 - (b) practicability; and

- (c) the need to redress the results of past racially discriminatory laws and practices.

Unlike other socio-economic rights, such as access to housing and health care, the right to basic education is unqualified and may be interpreted as enjoying ‘a higher normative status as an immediately enforceable right’ (Veriava, 2005: 3). The State has a positive duty to provide basic education, but in order to assess whether the State has met its obligation it is necessary to ‘define the content of the right to basic education and to measure the actual level of achievement against the standard set by the right’ (Veriava, 2005: 3). This entails taking into account international law as well as the South African social and historical context. A primary requirement is that education is both physically and economically accessible to those who were previously denied access. In addition, the quality of education should ensure that ‘learners are able to develop to their full potential and to compete on equal terms with each other for jobs and for access to institutions of higher learning’ (Veriava, 2005: 3).

Since 1994, South Africa has ratified all international and African conventions on the rights of the child (including the prohibition of child labour), the right to education and the prohibition of discrimination. A battery of statutory legislation, regulations and policy directives has created the legal, administrative and pedagogical framework to ensure that children get into schools and that, once they are there, the environment is learner friendly. National Curriculum Statements and assessment protocols are based on progressive pedagogical principles designed to encourage active learning and to recognise success. No child may be turned away from a school on grounds of poverty. Corporal punishment is banned in educational institutions. The rights of learners with HIV/AIDS are protected, as are those of pregnant learners. Policies are in place to address crime, violence, drug use and drug dealing in schools.

Access to school education was given legal form in the South African Schools Act (SASA) (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). Regulations and policy in accordance with the National Education Policy Act of 1996 govern admission to public and independent schools. Enrolment is compulsory for all learners from the beginning of the year in which they turn six to the end of the year in which they turn 15, or the end of Grade 9, whichever comes sooner. Parents are legally liable to ensure that their children are enrolled during the compulsory period. Compulsory education (also known as basic education) therefore extends from Grade 1 to 9, comprising seven years of primary school and the first two of the five years of secondary school. The Reception year (Grade R) is not compulsory but the policy of the Ministry of Education is to make it universally accessible, either in public schools or Early Childhood Development centres.

Age-grade norms for school education are clearly defined. The admission age of learners to a public school is

- 5 years turning 6 in the year of admission to Grade R or Grade 0;
- 6 years turning 7 in the year of admission to Grade 1.

After a legal challenge by the Independent Schools Association, the legislation was amended by a clause placing the onus on parents to show that younger learners are ready to be admitted to school. However, parents may choose to send their children to school one year later than the norm in each case. The law also makes provision for compulsory attendance for learners until the age of 15 years or the ninth grade, whichever occurs first.

In order to improve flow-through rates and overall efficiency in the school system, the Department of Education's assessment policy requires that learners progress with their age cohort. No learner may repeat more than once in each phase (Foundation, Intermediate and Senior) without approval from the head of the provincial Department of Education. The policy also states that 'If a learner needs more time to achieve particular outcomes, he or she need not be retained in a grade for a whole year' (DoE, 1998b: para. 32). Learners over the age of 16 who have never attended school or who have not made sufficient progress with their peer group are referred to Adult Basic Education Centres (DoE, 1998b, para. 29).

The Admission Policy for Public Ordinary Schools (DoE, 1998b) sets out the regulations and procedures for entry into school. Parents are responsible for making an initial application to a school for access, but once this has been done, it is the responsibility of the school and the head of the provincial Department of Education to ensure that the learner is admitted into the system. A parent who does not apply for admission at the appropriate age of the child is liable and can be prosecuted under the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a).

The only documentation required for entry to schools is a birth certificate and proof of immunisation (and, if the learner is transferring from another school, a transfer or report card). If a parent is unable to supply a birth certificate, the learner must be conditionally admitted until a copy is obtained from the Department of Home Affairs (within three months). Similarly, a child who has not been immunised must be admitted by the school, and parents advised on how to get the child immunised. Persons classified as 'illegal aliens' must show evidence that they have applied to the Department of Home Affairs to legalise their stay in South Africa.

Provincial Departments of Education arrange for parents to register their children for admission in the following year. This is an efficiency measure and does not preclude late admissions. Schools must inform parents in writing if their child has not been admitted, and inform them that the child is on a waiting list.

Learners may seek admission to any public school they choose. However, heads of provincial Departments of Education may, in consultation with School Governing Bodies (SGBs), establish feeder zones for public schools (which need not be geographically adjacent to the schools). First preference must be given to those who live in the school's feeder zone, and second preference to those whose parents work in the zone. Once all learners within the feeder zone have been accommodated, schools have some discretion

in selecting learners from outside their geographic area. This constraint on access exerted by the geography of feeder zones is most relevant for schools in high demand due to their good facilities, such as schools in the former white system (formerly known as ‘Model C’ schools), which make up about 10% of all schools.

In public schools, SGBs include elected representatives of parents, educators, non-educator staff (and, in secondary schools, learners). SGBs are responsible for drafting school-based admission policies which must be consistent with national and provincial law and policies. In particular, ‘a public school must admit learners and serve their educational requirements without unfairly discriminating in any way’ (Republic of South Africa, 1996a, Section 5(1)). Admission tests (including HIV screening) may not be administered and no student may be refused entrance because their parents are unable to pay, or have not paid school fees, do not subscribe to the school’s mission statement, or refuse to waive their right to claim for damages from the school. Pregnant girls may not be expelled from school.

The responsibility of determining the language policy of schools also rests with SGBs, subject to national and provincial policy. A learner has a right to choose the language of learning and teaching when they apply for admission in a school. If no school in the school district offers teaching and learning in a language chosen by a learner, they may request the provincial Department of Education to make provision for instruction in the chosen language. Where fewer than 40 learners in Grades 1 to 6, and fewer than 35 in Grades 7 to 12, request learning and teaching in a language which is not offered by a school in a school district, the provincial Department of Education will determine how the needs of these learners will be met. Parents may apply to have their children educated at home, but the Head of the relevant provincial Department of Education must be satisfied that this is in the interests of the child and will meet the province’s educational requirements.

In sum, legislation and policy regulates and standardises admission to public schools. Learners are required to begin school at admission age and to progress systematically through the grades, thereby eliminating the prevalence of over- and under-aged learners that characterised the apartheid system. Parents are required to make initial application, provide documentation and ensure their children’s attendance during the compulsory period, but the responsibility to ensure that all learners find a place in a school lies with the government. The latter has learned from the experience of apartheid education that improving educational opportunity is less a matter of increasing physical access to education, and more about *what* people have access to, on *what basis* and *why*.

2.5. Opening up access to marginalised groups

Hence, besides standardising access practices across ordinary public schools, policy has also made provision to increase and improve access by marginalised, disadvantaged or especially vulnerable groups, particularly learners infected with HIV/AIDS, those with

special education needs, girl learners, pre-school children, and the poorest learners. In this section we look at how policy affects these five groups, and also consider recent policy discussions on ‘Improving Access to Free and Quality Basic Education’ (DoE, 2003b) and some of the legislation that has flowed from this.

2.5.1 HIV and AIDS

In 1999, the Department of Education established a National Policy on HIV and AIDS for learners and educators in public schools and FET institutions. The main purpose of the policy was to prevent discrimination against learners and educators infected with HIV, maintain confidentiality and create a safe school environment. It emphasised preventive strategies and the raising of awareness through formal and non-formal education programmes, and compelled SGBs to draw up HIV and AIDS policies for their schools so as to operationalise national policy. The policy called for the dismissal of educators who refuse to work with infected learners and educators or to participate in teaching HIV and AIDS education.

The Department of Education overhauled its response to HIV and AIDS during 2005/6 to cover all health barriers to education. A new policy framework on health and wellness is being drafted, using insights from a major study on educators’ health undertaken by the HSRC on behalf of the Education Labour Relations Council (Shisana *et al.*, 2005; DoE, 2006a). Learners’ and educators’ most common health risks and appropriate interventions have been identified. The provincial Departments of Education work with the health authorities to enable health workers to visit schools to promote a healthy lifestyle among educators and learners. The Life Skills learning programme in schools focuses on HIV and AIDS and a peer education programme is implemented in all provinces. Guides for SGBs, management teams and parents have been distributed to help them understand and respond constructively to the impact of the epidemic on schools (DoE, 2006b).

2.5.2 Inclusive education

During the apartheid era, learners with special education needs – particularly those from disadvantaged communities – had problems gaining access to schools because of the scarcity of special schools. The post-apartheid government aims to implement inclusive education at all levels of the system by 2020. The White Paper on *Inclusive Education* (DoE, 2001b) recognised special needs education as that which addresses a range of barriers which leads to the exclusion of learners. Apart from disability, these barriers can include socio-economic deprivation which may require additional support services. Learners with disabilities in need of mild or moderate levels of support were to be progressively accommodated in the ordinary school system, in their local communities. The White Paper estimated that 280,000 children of compulsory school age who were not in school would thus be brought into the system. Special schools would be reserved for learners with disabilities in need of high level support, and equipped to serve as resource centres providing information, staff and materials to their local areas.

The new policy is being rolled out in 30 nodal areas for which baseline data is currently being collected and analysed. Project teams have been appointed in all nine provinces and plans are being finalised to begin the construction work on the upgrading and equipping of the 30 designated full service schools. Norms and standards for the funding of inclusive education are also being finalised. An advocacy campaign by the Department of Education is informing stakeholders and community bodies of the implications of the roll-out, and a strategy is being developed for the mobilisation of out-of-school disabled children in these areas. All documents are available in large print and Braille, and staff members are being trained.

Integrated inter-departmental programmes are being developed and some are being piloted for other vulnerable youth and children: those who are in conflict with the law, street children, children in need of care, and child-workers (DoE, 2006a, 2006b).

2.5.3 Gender equity

Gender equality in the form of equal formal access to education does not ensure gender equity or address deeply embedded and often culturally reinforced discriminatory gender practices. Enrolment figures for girls may be high while discrimination persists, as South Africa's experience attests. Gender-based differences in learning attainment are common but are not well understood and have not yet been systematically tackled. The phenomenon of adolescent boys leaving school after the compulsory phase in greater numbers than girls is a case in point.

The Directorate: Gender Equity in Education has worked to advance equity in appointments, access and performance. It has overseen the appointment of 'gender focal persons' in districts and provinces. Gender initiatives have included the launch of the Girls' Education Movement (GEM) and Boys' Education Movement (BEM), the establishment of GEM and BEM Clubs in public schools (working with local NGOs and UNICEF), workshops on gender-based violence and the preparation of a training manual, *Opening our Eyes*. A policy document on schoolgirl pregnancy is under consideration by the Council of Education Ministers. Despite these and other interventions, the education system's work on gender equity has lacked focus. Most recently, a ministerial committee was appointed to advise on the matter, and a national plan of action on gender equity will follow during 2007 (DoE, 2006a).

2.5.4 Early childhood development

The Department of Education's strategic objective is to extend quality integrated early childhood development services, including the reception year (Grade R), to the most marginalised communities. Cabinet has approved a National Integrated Plan on Early Childhood Development. An Inter-departmental Committee comprising officials from the Departments of Education, Social Development and Health have, together with the South African Broadcasting Corporation, developed a multi-media ECD strategy. Early stimulation programmes for children from birth to four years will be introduced as part of the national integrated ECD plan in 2007.

Grade R (for children aged 4 turning 5) is being implemented through programmes at public primary schools and community based sites as well as through independent provision. The target is to reach full coverage of Grade R by 2010 with 85% of provision located in public primary schools and 15% at community sites. The 2005 General Household Survey reported a significant recent increase in the enrolment of five year olds, from 40% of the age group in 2002 to almost 60% in 2005. However, much work still needs to be done: much Grade R provision depends on fee payments, many practitioners are poorly paid and have no professional training, and the quality of provision has not yet reached the desired standard. Hence, national norms and standards for Grade R funding have been prepared, and unit standards at levels 1-4 of the National Qualifications Framework have been developed for the training of ECD practitioners. Training materials and learnerships will follow.

2.5.5 Pro-poor educational access

There is much debate on whether education policies in themselves reinforce inequalities and increase the gap between rich and poor schools (Motala, 2003, 2006a), whether school fees on their own lead to exclusion from schooling (Fleisch & Woolman, 2004), and whether the indicators of poverty are adequate (Harsch, 2000; Ramadiro, 2003). These issues will be discussed in more detail later in this *Review*. In addition, some have argued that the macro-economic policy frameworks have had adverse consequences for schools by increasing privatisation and reducing government responsibility for social welfare provision (Motala & Pampallis, 2005; Motala, 2004). Others contend that poor parents and learners are disadvantaged by laws and policies such as SASA and the school funding norms because they are not unequivocally pro-poor (Carrim and Sayed, 1997; Fleisch & Woolman, 2004; Motala, 2006a).

Because fees obviously hinder access to schools by the poor, the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSSF) (DoE, 1998a) provided that parents whose combined gross annual income was less than 10 times the annual fees per learner were exempted from paying school fees. If the combined annual gross income of parents was less than 30 times (but greater than 10 times) the annual school fee, then partial exemptions could be applied (DoE, 1998a). However, the exemption process was cumbersome for SGBs to manage, and its bureaucratic procedures were daunting and time-consuming for parents, who risked the indignity of being means-tested. No blanket exemption was provided for, and if parents failed to apply to the SGB for exemption, and did not pay the full school fee, the SGB could take legal action to recover the fees (although under no circumstances could they exclude the learners from school). Given also that schools were never compensated for fees not paid by those exempted, many did not advertise the possibility of exemption.

Following a Departmental review of the costs of education (DoE, 2003a), a plan of action, *Improving Access to Free and Quality Basic Education for All* (DoE, 2003b), was developed, detailed a number of reforms intended to facilitate access to schools. These

included regulating the cost of uniforms and books, improving school budgeting systems, taking over school nutrition schemes from the Department of Health, and facilitating better transport facilities so that the poor, especially in rural areas, have easier access to schools (DoE, 2003b). Most importantly, the Education Laws Amendment Bill of 2004 and changes to the Norms and Standards for School Funding (DoE, 2004) subsequently paved the way for fee-free schools in the lowest two quintiles (40% of schools). Quintiles are now determined nationally (not provincially, as previously), and the national Department determines the amount that provinces ought to allocate per learner in each quintile. The national department also sets an ‘adequacy benchmark’ (a minimum amount considered necessary for schools to provide adequate basic education) which was R527 in 2006 for non-salary expenditure, with the poorest quintiles receiving R703 per learner and the least poor R117 per learner. Schools which receive ‘adequate’ funding will be listed as ‘no-fee’ schools. This applies only to Grade R to Grade 9.

Additional changes to the Norms and Standards aimed to improve monitoring and enforcement of the exemption policy in schools where fees continued to be paid. Orphans, learners in foster care, and children who received a government grant (such as the Child Support Grant) are automatically exempted from paying user fees. The regulations are now more rigorous (but at the same time more onerous), with specific Departmental forms to be filled in by parents and the SGB. The new formula takes into account parents with more than one learner in a public school, and also clarifies the ‘discount’ parents are entitled to if the school fees range between 3.5% and 9.5% of their annual income. (The previous policy left the amounts for these partial exemptions to the discretion of the SGB.)

Nevertheless, from the outset these reforms fall short – even in their promise to provide free schooling for 40% of the poorest learners in the country (Motala, 2003; Veriava, 2005; Spreen and Vally, 2006). The system is bureaucratically complicated and hinges on determining poverty levels of particular communities. Quintiles are determined annually, leaving schools and parents on the margins uncertain from year to year whether fees will be levied or not. Constraints on social spending make it unlikely that adequate benchmark funding will stretch to include all schools in quintiles 1 and 2, and the number of schools in these quintiles may be reduced as schools previously in the lowest quintiles in the richer provinces are pushed up the quintile ladder (Veriava, 2005). Moreover, the fee-free schools could put pressure on the middle-level (quintile 3) schools, which may be most financially vulnerable if state funding to them decreases, as they are less able to rely on adequate levels of user fees.

Undoubtedly, the government is keen to meet its obligation to provide educational access to all by 2015, in terms of the Dakar 2000 EFA Framework for Action. Given that educational access is a human right, the denial thereof could lead to litigation, an outcome which any government would want to avoid; in addition, the provision of educational access is constructed within a global political and economic framework, which places additional pressure on government to increase access (see Carrim & Keet, 2005). Notwithstanding these difficulties in making education increasingly accessible for

the marginalised, the government's policies and principles do, in spirit, encourage inclusive access, and this is perhaps most clearly to be seen in its curricular and other efforts to provide not merely structural but also meaningful educational access.

2.6. Providing meaningful access to quality education

Improving and expanding educational provision for all, especially the poor and those hitherto discriminated against or otherwise disadvantaged, and overcoming barriers to existing access, are vitally important; but they are not enough. Increased access to education does not automatically translate into better quality education, not least because broader social factors both in and outside the schools often prevent children from taking advantage of opportunities on offer. This section first examines efforts to introduce a curriculum and then discusses the need to measure and monitor educational quality.¹

2.6.1 Changing the curriculum

The school curriculum under apartheid was used as an instrument of division and inequality and a vehicle for propaganda and indoctrination. Urgent action had to be taken by the new government after 1994 to introduce a new curriculum framework which would be true to the values of the Constitution, appropriate for a progressive 21st century African nation and dedicated to raising the quality of learning in all communities.

The introduction of a new curriculum in 1997 based on Outcomes Based Education (OBE) principles immediately and inevitably led to controversy and debate. On the one hand, it was seen as a welcome negation of all that had characterised apartheid methods. On the other hand, it was criticised as too complicated and over-ambitious, in that it involved new and unnecessarily complex terminology, and depended for its implementation on poorly trained and already overworked educators. Despite the appearance of many of the problems predicted by the critics, the national Department began to address these, starting with a Ministerial Review Committee which reported in 2000, and to date the new curriculum is still being phased in on an annual basis and in a more measured and judicious fashion.

This revised approach, of which educators in the main are highly supportive (DoE, 2006a), has since spawned a National Curriculum Statement (NCS), which, written in plain language, gives more emphasis to basic skills, content knowledge and a logical progression from one grade to the next. It combines a learner-centred curriculum requiring critical thought and emphasising the democratic values embedded in the Constitution, with an appreciation of the importance of content and support for educators. Other curriculum initiatives addressed special priority areas: there are now over 400

¹ Subsections 6.1 and 6.2 below, on changing the curriculum and measuring and monitoring educational quality, draw heavily on the DoE (2006b) report entitled *The 16th Conference of Commonwealth Ministers*, South Africa Country Paper. Pretoria: Department of Education.

designated Dinaledi ('stars') schools that are being groomed as centres of excellence in mathematics and science; the Research Strategy on Racial Integration in Schools has been produced and distributed to schools; and e-learning initiatives are gathering pace in partnership with the private sector. Not least, the QIDS UP Programme is a new strategy for improving quality: providing educator and district development support to 5000 low performing primary schools, it seeks to improve children's learning, especially their literacy and numeracy skills, and will cost R12.5 billion over the first five years (DoE, 2006b).

2.6.2 Measuring and monitoring educational quality

The depth and context of South Africa's learning problem is revealed in the Department's 'systemic evaluation' reports (DoE, 2005b). These are national assessments of learning achievement, for Grades 3, 6 and, in future, 9, in mathematics, natural science and the language of teaching and learning. The Grade 3 survey was conducted in 2001 and the Grade 6 report appeared in December 2005. Like South African learners' performance in the National Systemic Evaluation, SACMEQ and TIMSS assessments, the results so far, said the Director-General of Education, Duncan Hindle, are 'clearly unpalatable to any educationist'.

The Grade 3 survey revealed how serious were the problems of literacy and numeracy teaching in the majority of foundation phase classrooms. The evidence from the Grade 6 survey of 34 000 learners in a representative sample of 1 000 mainstream public schools shows that more than half our children are not achieving the expected learning outcomes (i.e., scoring 50% or better) in natural sciences, six out of ten are not achieving in the language of learning and eight out of ten are not achieving in mathematics. Girls and boys scored about the same in all three assessment tasks, but in other respects learners' performance showed great variation. It is clear, judging by the Grade 6 learners' scores, that the chances of learning successfully are very unequally spread across the country. On some assessment tasks learners scored half as well on average in some provinces than in others. Learners in provinces that inherited large rural homelands, where families are very poor and schools still poorly resourced, fared worse by far; they scored best in town schools and less well (in descending order) in township, farm schools, rural and remote rural schools (where some learners scored almost three times worse than urban learners). 'Learner participation' was the in-school factor most clearly associated with better performance, which indicates the importance of children's communication skills and access to the language of learning and teaching. Grade 6 children performed better in all three learning areas when they learnt in the home language, whereas children who had learnt in a language other than their own tended to score less well. This confirms extensive research findings on the importance of mother tongue education, but there are other contributing factors at work: low-scoring learners who were not learning in their mother tongue also tend to live in poor circumstances in remote and rural areas. In Grade 6, it is only learners with English or Afrikaans as a home language who enjoy fully-fledged home language instruction. All maths textbooks, for instance, are in English or

Afrikaans. The matter is less one of a mismatch between language of instruction and home language, than the inability of the system to deal effectively with the transition from an African language to (nearly always) English in the Intermediate phase. This disadvantages all African language speakers. An alternative view is that the problem lies in the inability of the system to offer African languages formally as a medium of instruction beyond Grade 3.

Quality in the South African context is directly connected to equitable access and the conditions under which learning takes place. The findings of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education (DoE, 2003d) endorse this:

Submissions placed much more emphasis on issues of equity, access and human rights than on curriculum, learning and teaching. The single most powerful recommendation to emerge from the submissions was the need to improve and equalise facilities and resources. With rural schools being deficient in every indicator of material provision – e.g. physical space and amenities such as electricity and running water, libraries, textbooks, the safety of learners – it appears as if curriculum issues are almost completely overshadowed by the more immediate and pressing need for resources to enable effective teaching and learning to take place.

These findings confront us with an important corrective to any one-sided arguments that structural access to education – the resources needed to facilitate teaching, which here include equity and human rights – can simply be discounted in favour of ensuring meaningful access, such as through curriculum innovation. Instead, a multi-pronged strategy seems required; and for this, it is also important to consider issues of education governance and education finance. The next section explores the way in which the decision to decentralise governance to SGBs has impacted on access patterns. This will be followed by an investigation of whether education financing supports the government's plans for increased resourcing and access (DoE, 2006b).

2.7. Regulating access

In this section we turn to ways in which policies have effectively regulated access. Detailed attention is given to governance provisions and policies in education financing. First, the ambiguity of policy has provided opportunities for different interpretations which have affected equitable access (Fleisch & Woolman, 2004; Motala, 2006b). Second, while policy shifts have been significant in terms of the overall distribution of resources, public expenditure on education is yet to reach sufficiently pro-poor levels and continues to marginally 'favour the rich' (Gustafsson & Patel, 2006).

2.7.1 Governance

Decentralising authority to School Governing Bodies is, in part, justified as a strategy to democratise schools by encouraging stakeholder participation in decision making. SGBs comprise the school principal and representatives of educators, parents and non-teaching staff (and, in secondary schools, learners), with parent representatives holding the

majority. However, the inherited geographic apartheid that still defines the make-up of many school communities often results in governance structures that reflect particular cultural, class or racial characteristics. It has been argued that ambiguity in the language of SASA has allowed SGBs to regulate access in favour of their particular race or class interests. As Soudien and Sayed (2004) point out:

[SASA] invests in schools the power to define their community or corporate identities. Whereas schools in the old apartheid order very definitely took their identities from their relationship to the state ... the new Act gives parents the right to define and protect 'their' linguistic and value orientations. In the new order, as juristic persons capable of entering contracts in their own name and capable of branding themselves, schools have the power to establish identities independent of the state. They can invoke 'race', for example, without ever having to name it. This has emerged out of the responsibility school governing bodies have taken of 'promoting the best interests of the schools' and achieving 'quality education' (2004:108).

Soudien and Sayed (2004) also contend that the decentralised school governance system is a policy outcome of the post-apartheid political settlement between the African National Congress and the National Party. In other words, the model of school governance adopted was one of compromise, with central government relinquishing some of its powers to parents, thereby allowing ex-Model C (former white) schools to retain a measure of control over their activities, while extending the same responsibilities to former black schools.

The result is a public-private model of school funding. The amount is determined by SGBs (with parents consenting at annual general meetings). SGBs are expected to 'take all reasonable measures within [their] means to supplement the resources provided by the state' (Republic of South Africa, 1996a: Section 36). The responsibility of SGBs to close the gap between state subsidisation and the financial requirements of the school has become increasingly central to the functioning of locally elected SGBs (Motala & Tshoane, 2004; Grant Lewis & Motala, 2004). The funding model was influenced by the findings of the Hunter Committee (DoE, 1995), the body established by the first Minister of Education to advise on the organisation, governance and funding of schools after apartheid. The Hunter committee advocated a partnership funding approach to achieve four key principles: attaining equity, advancing quality, redressing imbalances, and improving efficiency. The partnership was to be between the government (which would provide for a minimal level of funding on a sliding scale related to socio-economic indicators) and parents (who would supplement state funding). The rationale was that the government could not fund all education at the high levels enjoyed by some of the previous (racial) education departments, yet it wanted to equalise internal resource allocation. It also wanted to put the onus on parents to determine the financial needs of the school and the size of the supplement they were prepared to raise if the state subsidy fell short of their needs.

Since the proposed funding mechanism was sharply progressive, schools in wealthier communities would receive from the government much smaller non-salary recurrent cost allocations than schools in poorer communities, which would increase the incentive to charge fees at the rate the parent community could bear. Moreover, allowing these former Model C (formerly white) schools to charge fees would free up additional public funds that could be used to address backlogs in schools that served the former disadvantaged communities (Motala, 2003; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Nzimande, 2001). One of the outcomes of charging school fees was to encourage children from middle class families to stay in public schools, because those schools were able to hire additional educators and acquire other features that enhanced the provision of quality education. As Fiske and Ladd explain:

Permitting the former white schools to charge fees headed off the temptation to seek equity by destroying the islands of educational excellence that existed under apartheid (2004:81).

South Africa needed all the trained workers and citizens it could muster, and it made little sense to undermine the quality of the 'good' schools, especially at a time when the constituency of those schools was being widened to include all races.

Fees, then, regulated effective demand and choice of schools. They enabled a layer of schools to be maintained which generally catered for middle-class parents who could afford relatively high fees – and created a barrier for poorer learners wanting to enter such schools, despite the provision for fee exemption and the prohibition against excluding learners on grounds of inability to pay. Fees charged in the poorest schools tended to be very low, though the extent to which even these nominal amounts have acted as a barrier has been a point of debate (see Vally, 2001; Motala, 2003; Fleisch & Woolman, 2004; Motala, S. & Pampallis, 2005).

This chapter will now describe the financing of educational access – and assess whether sufficient resources have been made available to implement the promises made in policy.

2.7.2 Macro-economic and fiscal policies influencing education financing

With the establishment of a democratic government in 1994, it was expected that the funding of schooling for previously disadvantaged groups would be substantially increased (Wildeman, 2002; Motala, 2003; Van der Berg, 2004). The new policies did indeed aim to increase the access of children to public schools, but implementation was constrained by three important factors: first, the scale of the historical backlogs inherited from apartheid; second, the effects of growing inflation on education costs; and third, the difficulties of redistributing funds from personnel to non-personnel expenditure. These factors combined to depress provincial education spending, and particularly the level of redress funding for schools serving the poor. Reviewing trends in education spending from 1999, Fiske and Ladd (2004: 35) noted that inflation adjusted spending of provinces on ordinary public schools has increased, though that increase has been small.

Education expenditure increased from R31.1 billion in 1995 to R59.6 billion in 2002 to R105 billion in the 2006/07 budget and projected to increase to R127 billion by 2010 (National Treasury, 2007). Over the same period in real terms education spending is 19.9% of consolidated national and provincial expenditures. Expenditure on national education represents 5.4% of GDP in 2006/2007. In 2009/2010 national and provincial expenditure will represent 19.8% of consolidated national and provincial government expenditures at 5.3% of GDP. The national education budget is projected to grow by 7% in 2007/2008 while sustaining a real average growth of 5.9%.

The government's macro-economic and fiscal policies after 1994 impacted on the state resources available to education (Nicolau, 2001; Vally & Tleane, 2001). The Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) had been conceptualised prior to the 1994 elections and a new government version was issued as a White Paper in November 1994 (ANC, 1994; Ministry in the Office of the President, 1994). The RDP was a policy framework rather than a plan. It envisaged balanced economic growth and fiscal prudence but, taking into account the human cost of the racist past, proposed massive human resource development as one of the key components driving the nation's economic reconstruction. Despite its grand aims, the government struggled with the machinery of RDP delivery in the early years while the total reorganisation of apartheid state structures was being undertaken and foreign external assistance was being marshalled and rationalised.

In 1996, the government committed itself to a new macro-economic policy framework, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, which was aimed at stabilising the economy and securing greater state resources for redistribution to social services (Nicolau, 2001). GEAR was based on an export-led growth strategy with reduced tariff barriers to attract foreign investment and stimulate growth. Fiscal discipline, reduction of the government deficit, and lower inflation were essential elements of the programme. GEAR targeted economic growth of 6% per annum in order to deliver higher employment and higher state revenues.

In the first five years of GEAR the government's deficit and inflation reduction targets were exceeded but inward foreign investment and economic growth rates were far below its expectations. As a result unemployment and poverty increased substantially. An IDASA briefing document acknowledges the programme's success in fiscal stabilisation but is unsparing about the developmental costs:

According to Cosatu and a range of commentators Gear clearly failed. It had promised to reduce the legacies of inequality and poverty left by apartheid but did not do so. It failed even to meet its growth, employment and private investment targets. Instead, it subverted development progress to the goal of pursuing an orthodox macroeconomic policy demanded by the international investment community.

There is no doubt that the poor development performance flowed largely from the Gear macroeconomic policy. This is for two reasons. First, because empirical studies testing the relative contribution of external factors and domestic policy in poor growth

performance in recent years say so. And, second, because economic theory on what will happen to investment, growth and employment in the wake of implementing austere fiscal and monetary policy tell us this (IDASA, 2001:7).

Poor economic growth rates meant reduced state revenues. Additional redress funding for education was not available. In any case, the Financial and Fiscal Commission, a constitutional body that advises Parliament, provincial legislatures and organs of state, argued that the overall level of public spending on education as a percentage of total state spending and GDP was higher than that of other developing countries and still higher spending on education could not be justified (FFC, 1998; see also CEPD, 2002, and Bhorat, 2004). The FFC advised that additional funding for education could be raised by requiring schools to charge fees, redistributing state resources through the government's Equitable Shares Formula (inter-provincial equity), and resource targeting of poor schools (intra-provincial equity).

An important shift in strategy emanated from the national Department of Finance in the late 1990s. This shift strongly suggested that the constrained education budget did not merely reflect a limited fiscus, but indicated government's response to the essentially inefficient system of education management and delivery by provincial education departments. The Department of Finance considered that state education funding was more than adequate in relation to performance and that redress should be addressed by improving system efficiencies (DoF, 1998). The 1998 Medium Term Expenditure Framework (MTEF) review accordingly revolved around issues of access to schooling, classroom backlogs, infrastructural deficiencies and inefficient procurement processes (DoF, 1998:11). In 1999, the MTEF review focused on flow-through rates, pass rates, over-enrolment and under-enrolment (particularly in relation to over-age and under-age learners).

While there is no disagreement that the inherited and post-apartheid education system was deeply inefficient, there is wide debate about the relative benefits of increased education resources versus a more efficient use of existing resources (Motala, 1995, 2003; DoF, 1998; Fedderke *et al*, 2000; Motala & Porteus, 2001; Van der Berg, 2002; Bhorat, 2004). Analysts have argued that the reduction of inefficiencies itself required up-front investment in the short term, thereby releasing resources for systemic redistribution in the medium term (Motala & Porteus, 2001; Porteus, 2001), and have expressed doubt whether cost containment of the more privileged sector of the public education system is possible (Karlsson *et al.*, 2001; Wildeman, 2000). The overall level of the education budget has also been considered. Several scholars have argued that GEAR, while promoting prudent and sound fiscal policy, has constrained state expenditure through excessive fiscal discipline, and compounded social backlogs, particularly in education and inhibited social redress (Nicolau, 2001; Motala, 2003; Fiske & Ladd, 2004; Reschovsky, 2005). The relative stagnation of education and health budgets were due to the rapid expansion of the system of social grants and increased expenditure on social welfare. Gustaffson (2007) has argued that one needs to look at the

system holistically and understand how the improvement of child support grants indirectly assists the education process.

What follows is a discussion of the policies and mechanisms introduced after 1994 to improve the level of resource allocation to public schooling and the distribution of this allocation, matters that impact directly on equitable access to schools.

2.7.2.1 Equitable Shares Formula (ESF) and inter-provincial equity

The post-apartheid government has attempted to direct greater levels of resources to provinces that were historically disadvantaged. The 1996 Constitution gives the national government and the nine newly-established provinces joint responsibility for the provision of major social services, including education, health and welfare services. In consultation with the provincial governments, the national government sets national norms and standards for school funding, which the provinces are required to implement. Provincial governments have limited authority to raise their own revenue and rely overwhelmingly on revenue-sharing grants from the national government. Central to the design of the new system of co-operative government is the constitutional requirement that each province must receive an 'equitable share' of national revenue so it can provide the public services for which it is responsible. This is the main lever for inter-provincial equity.

Since 1997, the national government has transferred a single annual unconditional grant to each province to be spent on education, health, welfare and other miscellaneous services. These equitable shares are based on a weighted average of demographically-driven formulae that apply to each major functional area, with the weights reflecting the proportion of spending allocated to each expenditure category. The funding goal for education, implicit in the calculation of the equitable shares, is to assure distributional equity across provinces. Equity is defined in terms of the opportunity for each province, regardless of its wealth, to spend an equitable amount on education per learner.

Equity between provinces in respect of revenue for education is calculated on the basis of a formula constructed by the National Treasury. The Equitable Shares Formula (ESF) reflects several provincial variables, including the size of the school age population, the number of learners enrolled in public ordinary schools, the distribution of capital needs in education and hospital facilities, the size of the rural population in each province and the size of the target population for social security grants weighted by a poverty index (DoE, 2001b).

The equitable-share calculations are currently based on a 41% share for education. That does not translate into 41% being spent on education in each province, however, because the education share of a province's total allocation depends on demographic characteristics, i.e., age-specific learner population for compulsory education as the main driver in the equitable share formula.

Because responsibility for funding and managing school education is a provincial matter, provincial legislatures make their own decisions about spending tradeoffs between education and other categories such as health and welfare. This means that the actual per capita expenditure on education differs from province to province.

The ESF was phased in over a period of four years, 1996 to 2000, to ensure that provinces which were projected to receive real cuts in their budgetary allocations were given sufficient time to make the necessary adjustments, either to their expenditures or to their own revenues. Already in 1995/96 the education budget showed a shift in priorities from advantaged to disadvantaged provinces. KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape and Limpopo were given sizeable increases to meet their educational obligations at the expense of more advantaged provinces like Gauteng and Western Cape. By the 2005/06 financial year another important shift had taken place in the ESF, which would no longer weight the number of school-going children differently from other children in the province. This followed a recommendation of the Financial and Fiscal Commission that the double weighting of school going children disadvantaged poor provinces which had large numbers of out-of-school children (National Treasury, 2005: 148).

The ESF influences the division of revenue to ensure adequate spending by provincial governments, but it does not determine the provincial allocations for education or any other service. Provincial government bids are negotiated with National Treasury, Cabinet makes the final decision on provincial grants (subject to Parliamentary approval), and it is then up to provincial governments to allocate the available funds to their departments in the provincial budget, subject to approval in provincial legislatures. High demand for other provincial services (including health, welfare, agriculture, roads and transport) invariably put pressure on provincial allocations to education, which are usually the largest. The national and provincial Departments of Education consult regularly with the provincial treasuries and National Treasury in order to review performance and needs in the sector, but the national Department has no power to prescribe what provinces spend on education (DoE, 2003a).

2.7.2.2 Funding norms, personnel costs and intra-provincial equity

The second key equity driver of policy and legislation is the South African Schools Act (SASA) of 1996, which states:

The state must fund public schools from public revenue on an equitable basis in order to ensure the proper exercise of the rights of learners to education and redress of past inequalities in education provision (Republic of South Africa, 1996a: Section 34.1).

One of the early effects of SASA was to redistribute the non-personnel budget through a mechanism that would retain a credible public school sector, and distribute available resources to schools on the basis of need and poverty. A programme for the allocation of non-personnel funds among learners within each province, based on poverty quintiles – the National Norms and Standards for School Funding (NNSF) – took effect on 1 January 2000 (DoE, 1998a). The NNSF dealt with public funding of schools, exemption of parents who were unable to pay school fees, and subsidies to independent schools. It

required each provincial education department to rank all its schools from poorest to least poor, and then to allocate funding for non-personnel purposes progressively. The NNSSF required that 60% of the available funds be allocated to the poorest 40% of schools. In ranking its schools, each provincial Department was required to give a 50% weighting to the poverty of the school community and a 50% weighting to the poverty of the school itself, as measured by specified criteria.

Thus, a larger resource allocation was made to the poorest public schools and those in bad physical condition, and a smaller allocation to the relatively advantaged schools (Karlsson, McPherson & Pampallis, 2001). While the NNSSF appears to have been successfully implemented on the whole, there remain critical issues about its overall effectiveness as a model for redress (Wildeman, 2001; Patel, 2002).

The NNSSF deals only with non-personnel expenditure and therefore does not redress personnel costs in favour of poor schools. As in all education systems, personnel costs make up the bulk of education budgets, but in many provinces, especially in the early years after 1994, during a period of high volatility in the management of personnel, the non-personnel budget was as low as 10% of the total (Dieltiens & Motimele, 2003). The Department of Education set a target ratio of 85:15 in order to protect essential services (like school books) from being intolerably under-funded.

The cost of educators' salaries dominates the personnel budgets of provincial education departments. After 1994 the Ministry of Education brought the employment of educators under a single Act of Parliament and established collective bargaining for their salaries and conditions of service in the Education Labour Relations Council. The lopsided, racially hierarchical provision of educators in the former apartheid education departments had to be corrected in the era of non-racialism. A bruising process of rationalisation was painstakingly negotiated and implemented with union support over several years. A new post provisioning system was also negotiated, based on standard learner-educator ratios related to curriculum requirements. The upshot was a radical alteration in the distribution of educators to schools, based on equitable principles. Schools formerly under the more privileged racial departments had to adjust to a substantially smaller staff complement. Learner-educator ratios in schools of the former black departments became more favourable. The establishment of promotion posts for educators in schools was put on the same basis throughout the system.

However, this intentionally neutral system of educator allocation inadvertently favoured schools with the most diverse curricula, which were overwhelmingly the formerly white Model C schools. Post-provisioning ratios favoured well-established mathematics, science and technology programmes, where the formerly white schools also held the advantage (Vally & Tleane, 2001; Oldfield, 2001).

The Department of Education and the ELRC have taken this situation into account by researching a new post provisioning model that gives priority to the equitable distribution of educators in schools to meet the needs of the new national curriculum framework

(Deweese *et al.*, 2005). The government has indicated its intention to ensure that poor schools will receive favourable consideration for both teaching and non-teaching personnel. However, since the implementation of the South African Schools Act in 1996 and the introduction of elected school governing bodies with legal status, SGBs in richer communities have used their fee-charging capability to employ additional educators and thereby maintain low learner-educator ratios and highly diverse curricula. In some former Model C schools the number of 'SGB educators' is almost as great as the number of educators on the provincial Department payroll. Thus inequity persists, but these days it is primarily class-based and not achieved at public expense.

Technical targeting processes are no doubt important but it has become clear that they will not be sufficient to eliminate the deep structural disparities in South African education provision. Schools have an unequal capacity to spend money, and even where additional funds are allocated to poor schools many may not be able to use them effectively (Simkins, 2002). Moreover, flaws in the poverty ranking system itself might undo the good work of provincial Departments of Education in implementing the funding norms and standards (Wildeman, 2000). If 60% of a province's population are poor, distinctions between grades of poverty in the bottom three quintiles are bound to be invidious and unjust. Analyses by Statistics South Africa and others make clear that poverty is not spatially homogenous. Rather, there are different levels of income and hardship amongst those who are considered 'poorest' and 'least poor'. The school fee exemption policy was put in place to overcome this.

In fact, public schools which were classified as less poor, or which were in the middle of the resource targeting table, experienced problems with their reduced state allocation, and concern has been expressed about their future financial viability (Wildeman, 2001:76). While the development of the resource targeting system was an important step towards attaining equity, it became apparent to policy makers from 2003 onwards that radical changes were necessary to address anomalies in the system. The wide prevalence of poverty meant that the distinctions between the bottom quintiles were arbitrary and unjust (National Treasury, 2003). Moreover, because of the substantial economic differences among provinces better off schools in one province could receive more state funding than the poorest schools in another. The resource targeting system was designed to address intra-provincial inequities but could not take account of inequalities among provinces which resulted in different funding allocations to the same quintiles in different provinces. To address these concerns, the Norms and Standards for School Funding have been completely overhauled and a national poverty ranking model has been put in place.

Since 2001, economic expansion and growth has meant that more funds have been available for redistribution. Education budget allocations have outpaced inflation significantly, and this has opened the possibility for greater redress for poor learners.

2.7.2.3 The education budget: priorities and choices

In order to understand the level of resources available for equitable access, we consider three issues below. First, we show how expenditure on ordinary school education has

tended to crowd out expenditure on other services like Inclusive Education, Early Childhood Development and Adult Basic Education; second, we illustrate the changes in per learner expenditure by province and show that while important shifts have taken place, poorer provinces continue to have lower per capita allocations; and third, we illustrate the rigidity of the ratios of personnel to non-personnel expenditure, despite policy intent. The last point is particularly significant for poor schools which are in dire need of improved and additional infrastructure and learning resources, essential for ensuring equity of access to public schooling.

Budget prioritisation and expenditure

Public Ordinary Schooling (POS) is the major recipient of programme funding for obvious and necessary reasons. In recent years POS has received improvements in non-personnel expenditure, capital and infrastructure spending, new conditional grants, and increased expenditure on educators with scarce skills. The progressive containment of personnel expenditure has enabled better funding for Early Childhood Development (ECD) and Further Education and Training (FET), though both remain small. Special Needs Education (ELSEN) and Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET) have fallen behind in funding and in spending priorities. As outlined in other parts of this *Review*, appropriate resource allocations to the areas of ECD and ABET are critical for ensuring that children are prepared as they enter school, and for parents to support their children once they are in school.

Per capita expenditure

There has been a substantial increase in per capita learner expenditure in post-apartheid education. Moreover, the gaps in expenditure between the poorest and the least poor provinces have been reduced. Between the fiscal years 1996 to 2004, per capita learner expenditure rose by 140% in the Eastern Cape, the Free State, Limpopo, Mpumalanga and North West Provinces. As Reschovsky (2005) notes, in the same period per learner expenditures grew by 40%-80% in Gauteng, Northern Cape and Western Cape, which are the relatively high spending provinces per capita mainly on account of their generally higher educator qualifications. Van der Berg (2001) notes that between 1993 and 1997, when the equalisation of personnel across the former racially divided education departments took hold, public school spending per white learner was reduced from 3.5% to 1.5% (R5 500 to R3 800) and per black learner increased from R1700 to R2 700.

Table 1 below shows the shift towards a more equitable distribution of expenditure across provinces, with the biggest increases taking place in Limpopo Province, KwaZulu-Natal and Free State. However, the disparities in spending on education between provinces continue to be stark, reflecting the disparities in unit personnel costs, among other factors. The lowest per learner expenditure figures were in the poorer provinces of Limpopo, Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, while the wealthier provinces spent relatively more per learner. KwaZulu-Natal in particular was very poorly off. The National Treasury (2004: 54) observed: ‘Despite having the biggest education budget of R10.4 billion and

notwithstanding the highest growth in total spending of 12.4% a year between 1999-2000 and 2002-2003, KwaZulu-Natal still has the lowest per learner expenditure’.

Table 1 Per capita learner expenditure by province

	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05
Eastern Cape	4173	4553	4718
Free State	4564	5277	5734
Gauteng	4265	4853	5062
KwaZulu-Natal	3619	4096	4603
Limpopo	3871	4333	4816
Mpumalanga	4111	4712	4933
Northern Cape	5231	5757	6039
North West	4403	4916	5155
Western Cape	4552	4951	5171
National average	4105	4600	4930

Source: National Treasury, 2006; DoE, 2005d.

This table includes all schools that receive an allocation for school expenditure.

While per learner expenditure is an important measure for comparing the nine provinces, it is advisable to use this category with other indicators which reflect provincial differences. Some provinces are required by circumstances to spend more on transport and hostel accommodation, while others have higher average salaries because they have larger proportions of better qualified educators.

Personnel expenditure

Personnel expenditure consumed 90.9% of education spending in the 1999-2000 financial year, but as Table 2 below shows, substantial improvements have been made in the proportion of non-personnel expenditure.

Table 2 Provincial Education Personnel and Non-personnel Expenditure (% of total)

Province	2002-03		2004/05		2005/06		2006/07	
	Personnel	Non-personnel	Personnel	Non-personnel	Personnel	Non-personnel	Personnel	Non-personnel
Eastern Cape	88.6	11.4	89.3	10.7	89.3	10.7	84.8	15.2
Free State	86.6	13.4	86.7	13.3	89.6	10.4	89.6	10.4
Gauteng	81.8	18.2	82	18	83.4	16.6	81.7	18.3
KwaZulu-Natal	88.9	11.1	85.3	14.7	85.2	14.8	85.5	14.5
Limpopo	89.7	10.3	82.6	17.4	84.8	15.2	85.5	14.5
Mpumalanga	83.1	16.9	81.2	18.8	79.2	20.8	76.8	23.2
Northern Cape	81	19	90.2	9.8	86.9	13.1	86.9	13.1
North West	89.6	10.4	86.9	13.1	84.6	15.4	86.1	13.9
Western Cape	83.8	16.2	83.8	16.2	85.1	14.9	84.7	15.3
National	86.7	13.3	85.8	14.2	85.3	14.7	84.4	15.6

Source: DoE, 2007

Personnel expenditure as a proportion of the total was lowest in wealthier provinces, with the exception of Mpumalanga, and highest in the poor provinces of the Eastern Cape, Free State, Limpopo, North West and KwaZulu, Natal. In 2003, the share of the budget allocated to personnel in these last four provinces is above the national average of 86.7% notwithstanding lower-than-average educator salaries. By 2006/2007 the Northern Cape, North West, Free State and KwaZulu, Natal continue to have higher than average personnel expenditure (84.7%). These provinces have the greatest backlogs in terms of infrastructure, facilities and equipment.

Non-personnel expenditure

Non-personnel spending includes vital items like learner support materials (LSM) such as text books and stationery, school maintenance and capital expenditure on major renovations or replacement of dilapidated schools, new school building and the provision of essential water, sanitation, electricity and telephone services. During the post-apartheid period, rising educator costs had the effect of crowding out expenditure on LSMs and other non-personnel items. Between 2000 and 2004 the tide turned decisively, as provincial government support for LSMs increased from R870 million to R2.2 billion. However, the Department of Education (DoE, 2006a) reached the conclusion that ‘despite dramatic increases in the value of the school allocation of LSM funds in certain provinces the monetary value of the school allocation is still too low’. The amendments to the NNESSF (DoE, 2004) attempt to address this shortage by setting national government target allocations for learner support materials for the various poverty quintiles in order to meet an agreed adequacy benchmark.

As with LSMs, capital expenditure is on an upward curve, though needs still well exceed budgetary allocations and (in some provinces) capacity to spend. Provincial education

departments have given priority to the elimination of 'learning under trees', and have set annual targets to provide the basic water sanitation, electricity and telephonic services. In the early post-apartheid years the education departments used successive national School Register of Needs surveys (DoE/HSRC, 1996; DoE, 2000) to appreciate the scope of the divergences and backlogs in the provision of school facilities. These were groundbreaking studies that used Geographic Information System (GIS) technology to map all public schools in the country for the first time and assess their condition. However the simple measures used to assess the state of infrastructure have proved inadequate for detailed evaluation and planning purposes. The Department of Education has therefore commissioned service providers to undertake a full-scale technical infrastructure audit and design a National Education Information Management System (NEMIS) and Basic Minimum Package (BMP) for infrastructure and basic services. When these go on line the national and provincial Treasuries and Departments of Education will have powerful tools to redress the backlogs in school facilities and services (DoE, 2006a). It remains to be seen whether budgetary allocations and provincial planning and management capacity will be equal to the task.

With regard to provincial non-personnel expenditure trends, Table 2 above indicates improvements towards the policy benchmark ratio of 85:15 for personnel to non-personnel expenditure. Some provinces have come close to or exceeded the benchmark but a few remain well below. Policy makers and policy analysts agree that non-personnel resources are crucial to access and quality learning and deserve concentrated policy attention. Moreover it is suggested that the effectiveness of non-personnel inputs should be measured against education outputs such as learner performance (Patel, 2006; Reschovsky, 2005; Motala, 2006b).

It is apparent that, after a decade of democracy, South Africa has moved from an explicitly race-based and unequal system of public education to a national system intended to provide all South Africans with equal access to educational opportunities. Despite improvements in funding equity, many learners, especially in the rural areas, continue to lack access to proper infrastructure and have to manage with limited text books, badly stocked school libraries and poorly trained educators. It is clear that many South African children do not have access to a constitutionally mandated basic education of good quality. The relationship between increased inputs and education outputs and outcomes in South Africa requires much more systematic research. Evidence thus far indicates that educating children from poor families requires more resources than educating children from better off families (Van der Berg, 2006). The depth of institutional and social deprivation and the scale of the disparities between South African schools in the era of democracy have been vividly expressed by Jansen and Amsterdam (2006: 6; see also Moll, 2000):

Consider an elite *public* high school (School A) with expansive grounds, high technology facilities, highly qualified teachers and school fees in excess of R10 000 per annum in an urban centre like Cape Town or Pretoria (several come to mind as we write) and a recognised public 'school' in which some of the classes

are conducted under a tree in Limpopo province (School B) because of overcrowded classrooms in the bare, dilapidated buildings.

Of both entities it could be said that government has equalised funding; it is probably also possible to claim that funding favours School B as part of the pro-poor funding schemes of the post-1994 government. But no analysis can even begin to anticipate reasonable, let alone comparable, educational outcomes for School B given that the resource starting points of the two schools are so demonstrably different. In other words, while resource discrimination has ended, inequality has not.

As noted earlier, while more public resources have been provided to primary and secondary education, the rate of growth of real per learner spending remains quite modest – between 1995 and 2003 the rate of growth in education averaged only 2.65% per year (Reschovsky, 2005). As in most developing countries, there continue to be wide ranging and competing demands for limited public funding.

2.8. Conclusion

This chapter has shown that in its formal policies, the South African government displays a political commitment and will to increase educational access on the basis of equality and social justice in keeping with the Education for All (EFA) aims and Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). In the early 2000s, policy review processes attempted to shift access policies explicitly towards the needs of poor communities and disadvantaged learners. However, the contested nature of all policy development, and attempts to mediate competing stakeholder interests, has inevitably resulted in compromises. Until recently, education funding to provincial education departments has been significantly constrained by the government's macro-economic and fiscal policies. The capacity and commitment of provincial governments to budget adequately for education and spend funds effectively has been highly uneven. For several years the expansion of education opportunity seemed to take second place to government efforts to curb wasteful expenditure and radically improve internal efficiency in provincial education systems. The government's measures are undoubtedly equitable in intent but they have by no means erased inequalities in education provision, access or outcomes.

Several key policy issues related to education financing and equitable access will continue to occupy the attention of researchers over the next period.

- First, it is important to establish a system of school funding where children from families with low incomes are not excluded from gaining an education that goes beyond provision for basic compulsory education.
- Second, the current system combines public funding with payment of school fees. While various policies are aimed at countering the unequal effects of school fees, none is likely to guarantee access to high quality schooling for children from poor families.

- Third, do the children of poor families receive sufficient weight in the Equitable Shares Formula for the distribution of national revenue resources to provincial governments?
- Fourth, is effective use being made of the conditional grant mechanism to improve access to schools for vulnerable learners and the retention in schools of those who are at risk of dropping out?
- Fifth, has improved efficiency in enrolment, progression and resourcing of schools improved access, and has it released resources for redistribution to improve access and retention for vulnerable children?
- Sixth, has the Department of Education's 2003 plan of action (DoE, 2003b) fulfilled its promise of improved access to schools for poor children and enhancing their learning environments?
- Seventh, how is the policy for early childhood education affecting access in the early grades and is its implementation successful? What about children on margins in special schools and improved access provision?
- Eighth, what is the progress towards improvements in equitable access particularly in terms of infrastructure provision, such as the building of more secondary schools?
- Ninth, will the roll-out of Grade R meet its targets and will its implementation decrease repetition rates in the Foundation Phase?

In order to create an enabling environment for access to quality schooling, issues of financing and resourcing continue to be of greatest concern. Current policies address the zones of exclusion in various ways, and especially by actively seeking to reduce the number of out of school children (Zone 1). The transition from primary to lower secondary schooling (Zone 4) appears to be being managed reasonably successfully. The policy challenge is both about improving efficiency and about greater inclusion, and must at the same time ensure that younger children and those with special needs and learning difficulties are not excluded because of policies too intent on efficiency. There continues to be a need in South Africa to bridge the inequalities across the public schooling system through better redistribution, and possibly expanded provision, of resources. How this will unfold will be carefully monitored in the course of the CREATE research.

3. Mapping the Zones of Educational Exclusion

3.1. Introduction

Democracy's gains in South Africa are measured in terms of how many historically disadvantaged people have received access to basic services such as health care, social security grants, housing and quality education. Of all these indicators, the measure for progress in education is most difficult to quantify. While some learners do not enter any educational institution at all, others fall by the wayside in their passage through school, and many gain little benefit despite crossing a number of hurdles. The overarching aim of this chapter is to illustrate the patterns of participation and exclusion across the schooling system in South Africa, using the conceptual model of the zones of exclusion which prevent or restrict access to education or dilute the quality of educational achievement.

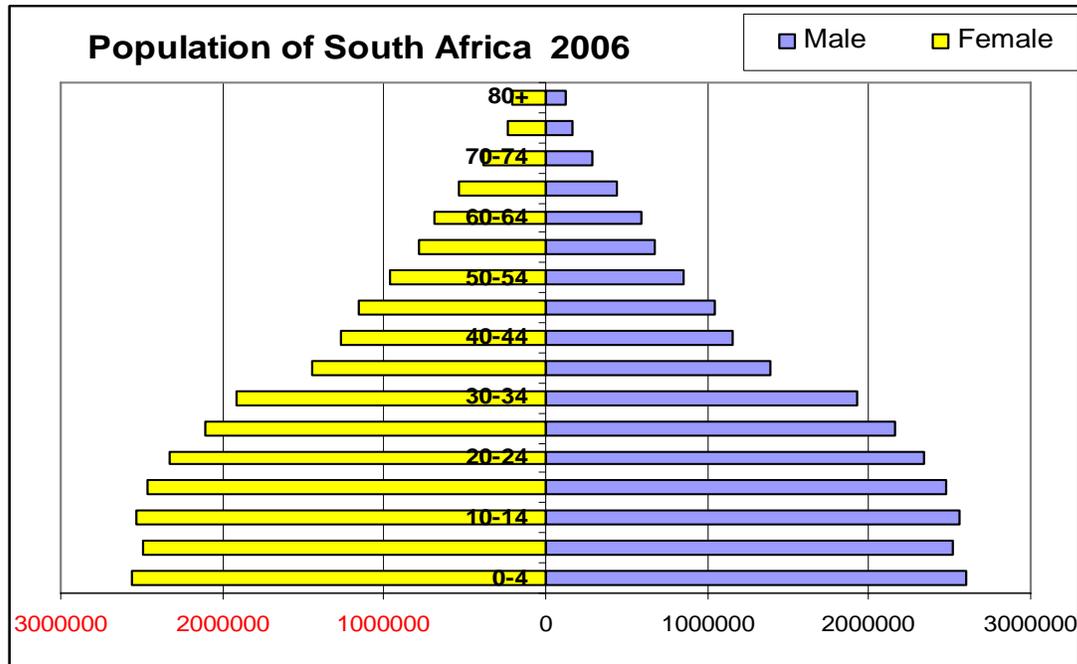
As described in the Introduction to this *Review*, the CREATE project identifies seven zones of exclusion containing groups of children who are losing, have lost or never had educational access. This chapter pays particular attention to Zones 1 to 6, thus leaving aside for the moment Zone 0, since there is as yet little substantive research on children who have no access to organised pre-schooling in South Africa (however, for some data, see section 3.3 below). To recap: Zone 1 contains children who have never been to school and are unlikely ever to attend; Zone 2 contains children who obtain access to primary education (or Grades 1-7) but who do not complete it successfully; Zone 3 includes those who enter and remain in primary education but who are at risk of dropping out (often as a consequence of low achievement, poor teaching, repetition, degraded facilities, large classes, household poverty, and poor health and nutrition and who may be silently excluded); Zone 4 contains those who complete primary but who fail to make the transition to lower secondary education (i.e., they are denied entry into Grade 8); Zone 5 contains learners who enter lower secondary school (Grades 8-9) but do not complete it; and, finally, Zone 6 contains children who enter and remain in lower secondary school (Grades 8-9) but who are at risk of dropping out or being silently excluded. Since, in South Africa, the available data is not neatly disaggregated to exactly differentiate the basic education band of Grades 1-9, in this chapter Zones 3 and 6 are treated together.

Census data from the 2001, General Household Surveys 2004, data from the Department of Education, and Labour Force Surveys, are used to measure learner participation in order to analyse the various zones of exclusion. There continues to be limitations to data availability as well as the quality and accuracy of the education data in South Africa, despite improvements in education management information systems since 1999. As far as possible, the latest and most recent data that is available is used in this report.

3.2. Population in South Africa

According to StatsSA (2006b) South Africa had a population of 47,390,900 in 2006, of which 23,327,600 were males and 24,063,300 were female. The population is made up of four basic race groups: 84.1% African; 8% Coloured; 5% White and 2% Indian. The pyramid below shows the distribution of the total population by age.

Figure 1 The population pyramid of South Africa, 2006



Source: Stats SA Mid-term Stats in Brief 2006b

The population pyramid above resembles that of many developing countries, with a large base of children who should be participating in education. As Figure 1 shows, children aged between 4 and 20 constitute a significant proportion of the population in the country. The child dependency ratio (i.e. the number of children aged 0-18 to the number of adults aged 20-60) in South Africa is 0.7. This is an important factor as each adult of working age has to support the needs of more than one child (in the OECD countries it stands at 2.5 persons for one child). It is also important to note that the age group of school age children is not growing very rapidly. It is likely to grow slower than GDP growth therefore representing an opportunity to invest more per child within similar budget ceilings of proportional allocations to education.

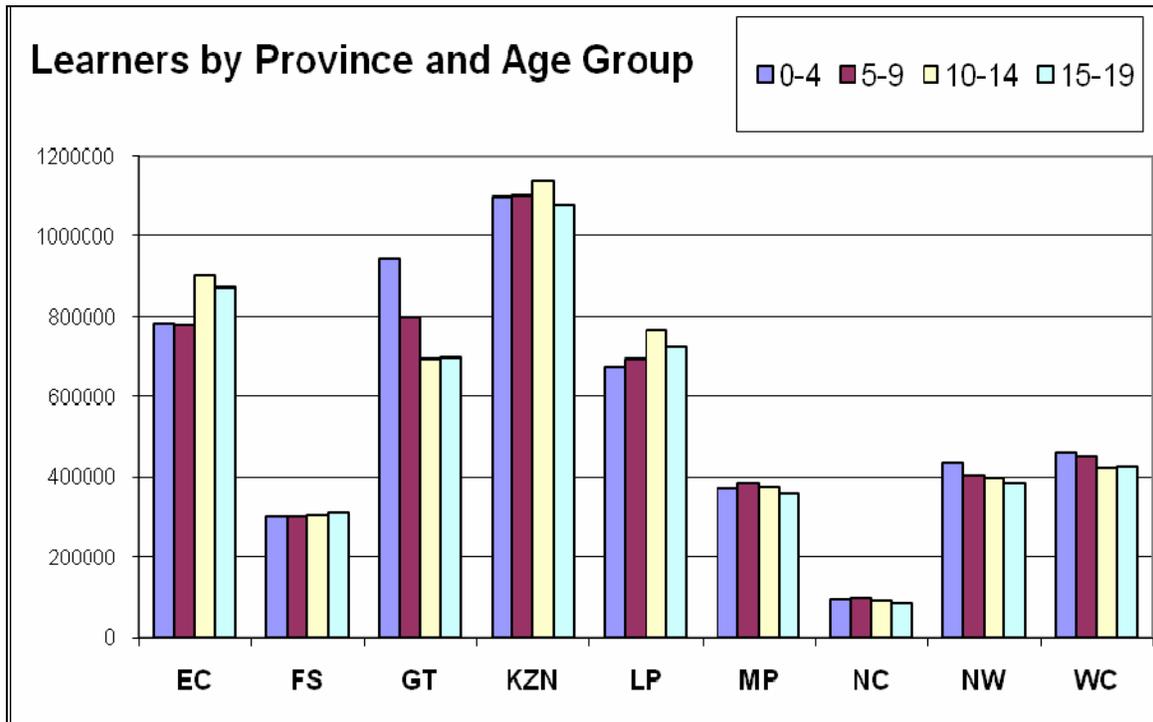
Table 3 below shows that there are just over 15 million children in South Africa between the ages of 5 and 19, of whom 49.8% are girls.

Table 3 Children in the population by age groups, 2006

Age Group	Male	Female	Total
0-4	2600900	2563600	5164500
5-9	2522600	2489500	5012100
10-14	2556800	2533000	5089800
15-19	2476900	2461100	4938000
Sub Total 5-19	7556300	7483600	15039900
% Male/Female	50.24%	49.76%	

Source: Stats SA Mid-term Stats in Brief 2006b

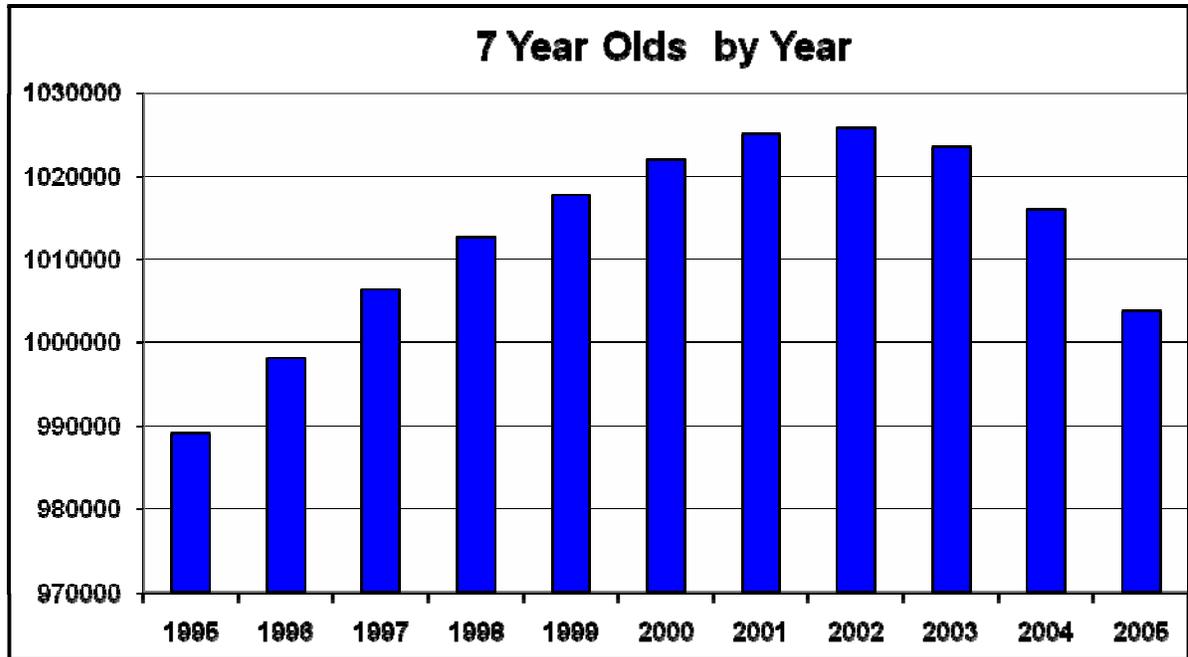
Figure 2 Learners in School and Province by age groups 2005



Source: StatsSA population census 2001a

South Africa is divided into nine provinces. These include the Eastern Cape (EC), Free State (FS), Gauteng (GT), KwaZulu, Natal (KZN), Limpopo (LP), Mpumalanga (MP), Northern Cape (NC), North West (NW) and Western Cape (WC). According to Figure 2, the province of KwaZulu-Natal has the largest number of learners amongst the provinces in South Africa. Tracking the population of seven year-olds for different years, Figure 3 shows that this peaked in 2002 and has declined since then declined, which should make it easier to improve access.

Figure 3 Population of 7 year olds



Source: StatsSA Census 2001a

3.3. Overview of access to education in South Africa

In this section, we provide an indication of access to and participation in education in South Africa. Data is disaggregated by school level (primary, secondary, combined and intermediate) and also covers the areas of pre-school education, adult education, special education and further education. Key areas of persistent backlogs in education are also analysed.

3.3.1. Access to education: a global picture

Table 4 below shows the global picture of education in South Africa in the various sections of the education system.

Table 4 Education in South Africa: A global picture, 2005

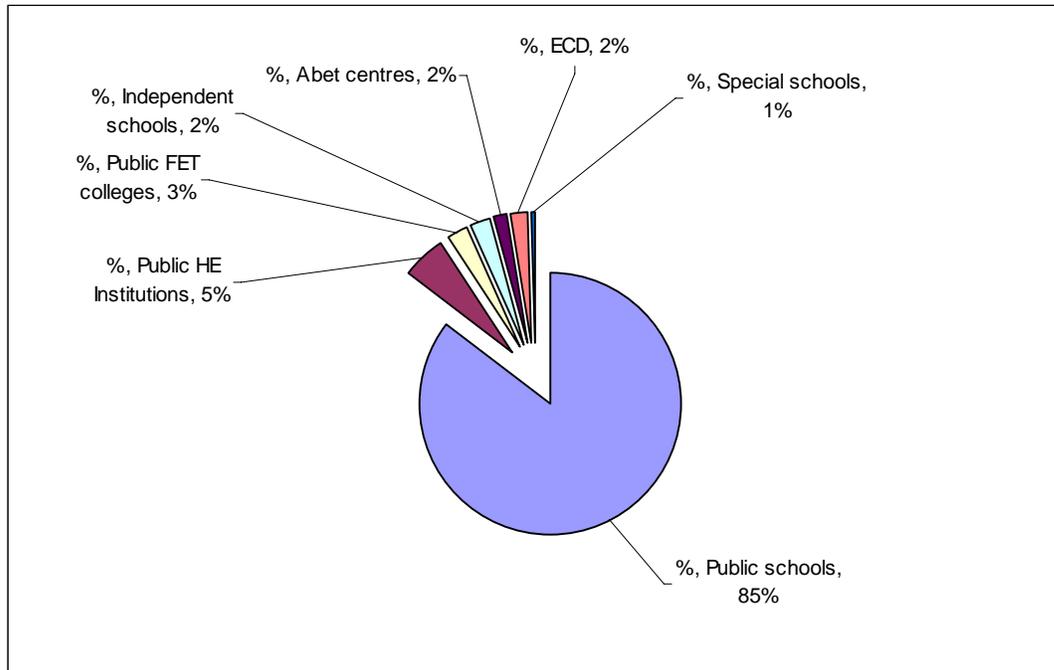
		Learners	Educators	Institutions	Learner : Ed. Ratio
Public	Primary	7588987	224439	18857	33.8
	Secondary	3769255	120377	5668	31.3
	Combined	385018	12857	674	29.9
	Intermediate	159056	4997	371	31.8
	Total	11902316	362670	25570	32.8
Independent	Primary	92337	4518	403	20.4
	Secondary	59450	3570	183	16.7
	Combined	163662	11375	436	14.4
	Total	315449	19463	1022	16.2
	Total Public and Independent		12215765	382133	25592
Other	Adult Education	269140	17181	2278	15.7
	Special Education	87865	7394	404	11.9
	Further Education	377584	6407	50	58.9
	Early Childhood Education	246911	9000	4815	27.4
	Public Higher Education	737472	15315	23	48.2
	Total other	1718972	55197	7570	31.1
Grand Total		13936737	437330	34162	31.9

Source: DoE, 2006d

The greatest number of learners are in the public schooling system and the large portion of these are in the primary school sector. The independent or private school sector is small in South Africa, occupying 2.7% of the schooling sector. A major difference noted above between the public and private school sector are the learner:educator ratios. The coverage of adult education, ECD, special and further education is small in relation to the public formal schooling sector.

The percentage breakdown of learners in the system is shown in Figure 4 below.

Figure 4: Percentages of learners participating in the various types of education offered in SA



Source: DoE, 2006d

The table shows that the majority of children in South Africa are in public ordinary schools, with independent schools accounting for around 2% of learners.

3.3.2. Trends in access to basic and further education and training

Basic education (Grades 1-9) in South Africa is compulsory. Basic education covers 7 years of primary education and the first 2 years of secondary education. In addition, Grade R, once fully operational by 2010, will also be part of basic education. In order to get a complete overview of education access in South Africa, three indicators of access are looked at in this section: gross enrolment ratio, net enrolment ratio and age specific enrolment ratio. Other factors which impact on or shape patterns of access, such as geography and race, are also discussed. Table 5 below shows trends in enrolment over time.

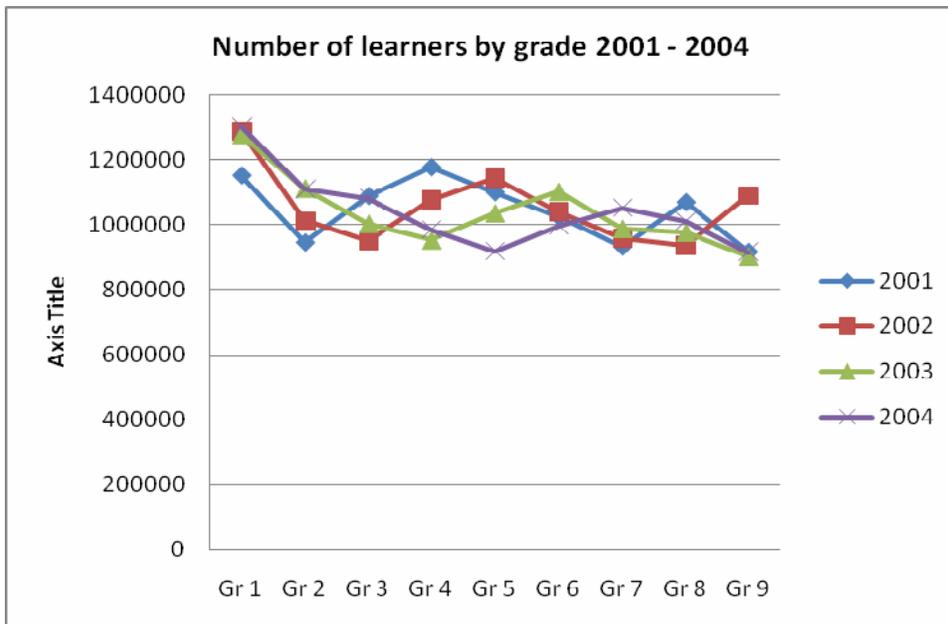
Table 5 : Comparative analysis of learners by grade 2001, 2002 and 2004

Grades	2001	2002	2003	2004
Gr 1	1150637	1286591	1277400	1303016
Gr 2	944961	1012892	1111858	1109201
Gr 3	1087675	949721	1003331	1081956
Gr 4	1175860	1076107	952465	985139
Gr 5	1098863	1142806	1035707	916911
Gr 6	1023269	1038679	1101740	997365
Gr 7	932151	958932	987876	1050554
Primary	7413416	7465728	74703747	7444142
Gr 8	1068479	936392	976750	1010710
Gr 9	916280	1089404	902129	914729
Total	9398175	9491524	9349256	9369581

Source: DoE, 2005d

The table shows that Grades 1, 2 and 7 recorded positive growth of more than 11% each over the four year period while all other grades experienced negative growth. The negative growth in other grades may be a result of the system increasingly enrolling appropriately aged children in the grades. However, more research is required to explain the patterns evident in the table.

Figure 5: Total Learners by Grade



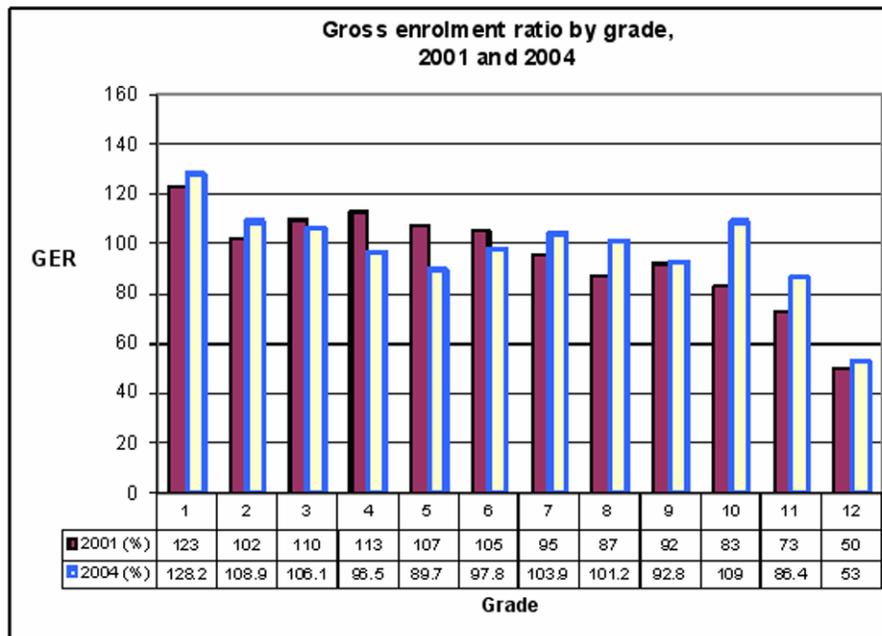
Source: DoE, 2005d

Figure 5 shows the number of learners by grade over four years, with the pattern changing primarily as repetition rates have varied. In the latest year enrolments have declined in Grade 5 and peaked in Grade 7 before declining again in Grade 9.

3.3.2.1 The Gross Enrolment Ratio

Gross enrolment ratio (GER) measures the proportion of the population, regardless of age, enrolled in a specific school phase. Since it is interested in the total number of children enrolled in the system, without regard for official prohibitions of age, the GER includes both older and younger children than the norm. Thus, figures of more than 100% can be recorded. Figure 6 below compares enrolment in each grade in 2001 and 2004 with the appropriate school aged population for each grade (using seven years of age as the appropriate age for entry into Grade 1).²

Figure 6: Gross Enrolment Ratio, 2001 and 2004



Source: Shindler 2005; DoE, 2005c.

Figure 6 shows that while there has been a decrease in the GER in some primary school grades (Grades 3, 4, 5 and 6) between 2001 and 2004, there was an increase in other primary grades (namely, Grades 1, 2 and 7) over the same period. In the entire secondary school sector (Grades 8 to 12), on the other hand, each grade recorded an increase in

² In 2000 the Admissions Policy for Ordinary Schools stipulated that learners could only be admitted into Grade 1 in the year that they turned 7. This regulation was subsequently amended, and from January 2004 children who are 4 turning 5 by 30 June of the year of admission are eligible for enrolment in a reception year of school (Grade R) and those who are 5 turning 6 before 30 June can be admitted to Grade 1.

GER between 2001 and 2004, an indication that more learners are gaining access to secondary education (assuming repetition is not increasing).

Caution is required in drawing conclusions about grade specific GERs. Various statistical analyses posit different conclusions in order to explain the trends above. The decline in certain primary grades could be the result of improvements in the enrolment of appropriately aged children in primary schools as a consequence of the age grade norms in 2000. The high GER in Grade 1 in both 2001 and 2004 suggests that a large number of over-aged and under-aged children are enrolled in Grade 1 for the first time and also that large numbers are repeating Grade 1. The increases in secondary school could be a result of a large number of over-aged learners belonging to larger cohorts who are now in secondary school. The number of over-aged learners could be attributed to repetition in primary school.

The GER figures show that many children are enrolled in the system in South Africa. The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) figures also show high levels of participation in education.

3.3.2.2. The Net Enrolment Rate

Table 6 : Net Enrolment Rate

	ASER	Population	NER
Grade 1	1188219	1204303	99
Grade 2	966876	1003796	96
Grade 3	915831	1005714	91
Grade 4	789444	1010057	78
Grade 5	702204	1018708	69
Grade 6	757135	1025743	74
Grade 7	781652	1026315	76
Grade 8	716871	1020424	70
Grade 9	632577	1008070	63

Source: DoE ASS 2005e & StatsSA, 2006a Sats in brief

The Net Enrolment Rate is shown by grade above. The largest enrolment is in Grade 1 at 99% of the learners in the population at age specific enrolment. There is some uncertainty about the enrolment and population figures for Grade 1.

The Net Enrolment Rate (NER) is a measure of appropriately aged children in the education system. The age grade norms laid down the appropriate ages for primary schooling as 7 to 13 years and for secondary schooling as 14 to 18. Following the revision of the policy in 2004, the age of entry into primary school was reduced to 6 years. For the purpose of this *Review*, the age groups 7 to 13 and 14 to 18 are used for primary and secondary schooling respectively. Table 7 below shows the NER by phase and province for 2001.

Table 7: Net Enrolment ratios (percentage) by level and province, 2001

Province	Primary (Gr 1-7)	Compulsory (Gr 1-9)	Secondary (Gr 8-12)	Total (Gr 1-12)
Eastern Cape	101.7	96.1	50.3	91.1
Free State	89.0	87.0	61.9	86.6
Gauteng	89.7	87.4	66.0	84.6
KwaZulu-Natal	91.3	88.7	60.2	86.4
Limpopo	90.9	88.1	65.1	87.5
Mpumalanga	87.4	85.7	63.1	84.6
North West	86.8	85.1	61.5	84.7
Northern Cape	94.6	91.8	59.7	87.8
Western Cape	88.4	86.5	64.2	81.7
National	91.9	89.0	60.8	86.5

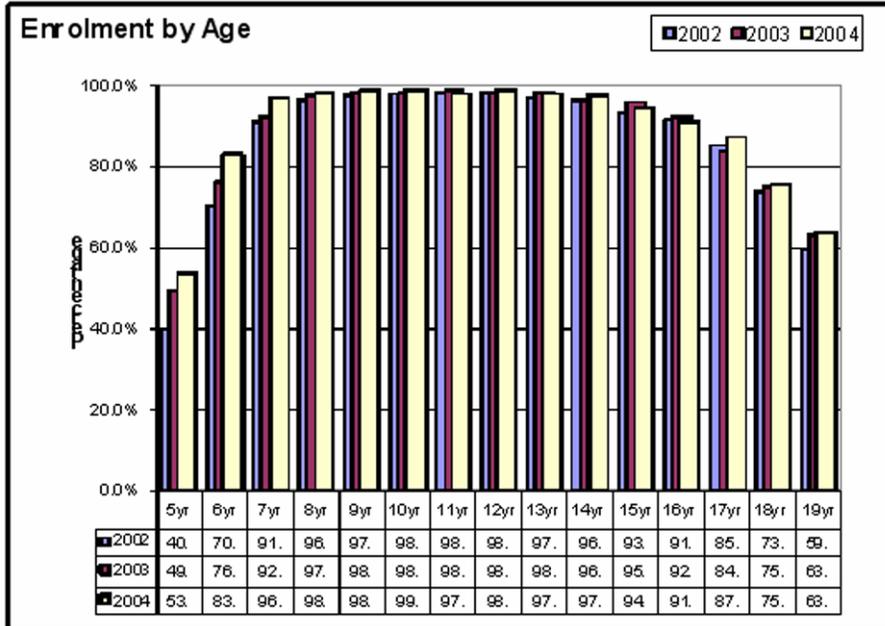
Sources: Enrolment data from Department of Education; Population data from Statistics SA, 2003. Note: the NER of >100, for Primary schooling for the Eastern Cape, is a product of a combination of population figures for 7 year olds and enrolment figures for 6 and 7 year olds.

The analysis of NERs shows that full access to primary and basic education has not been achieved, although access is extensive (Shindler and Fleisch, 2007). While these figures are under debate, the table clearly shows that the NER for primary schooling is high across provinces, especially in the primary school phase.

3.3.2.3. Enrolment by age

An examination of enrolment by age is significant since it shows how many children of a specific age group are enrolled in the school system. While the GER does not consider age, and the NER indicates only appropriately aged children in the school system, the enrolment by age data indicates children of school going age who are enrolled, and therefore provides an important measure of access to education. Figure 7 below presents the data for children aged 5 to 19 for the years 2002 to 2004.

Figure 7 : Comparison of enrolment in educational institutions by age for 2002, 2003, 2004



Source: General Household Survey (GHS), 2005, as aggregated by Statistics SA.

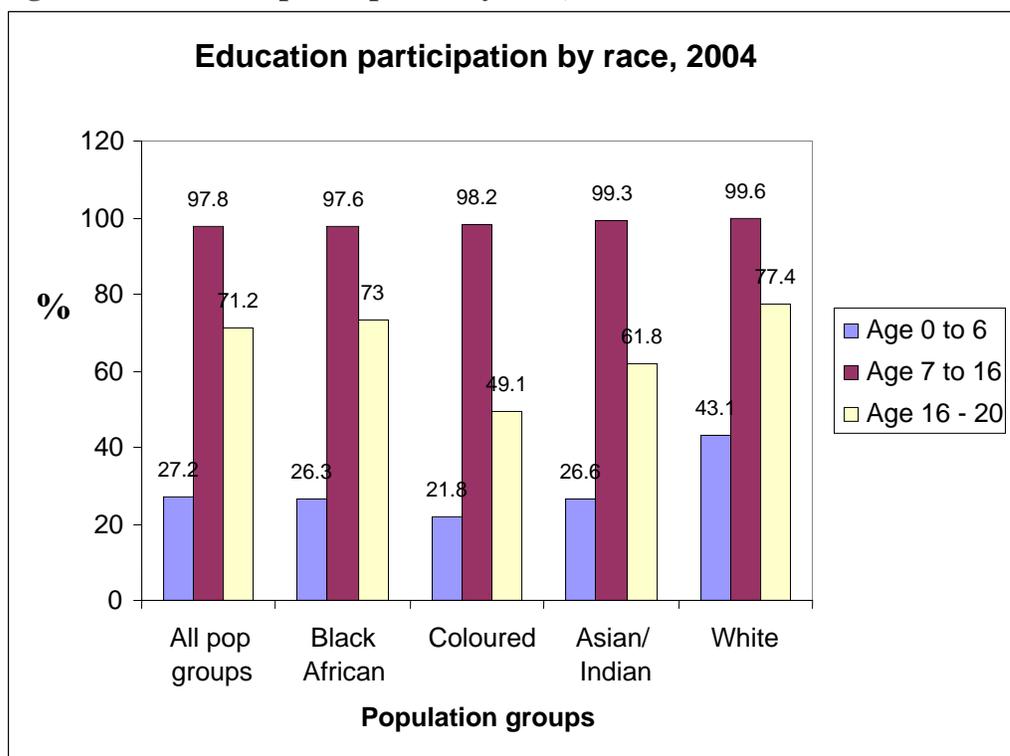
Figure 8 provides enrolment of children aged 5 to 19 in an educational institution (i.e., not only schools) for 2002, 2003 and 2004. The graph shows improvements in enrolments of children aged 5 from 40% in 2002 to 54% in 2004. Similarly, there are improvements in enrolment of children aged 6 years, from 70% in 2002 to 83% in 2004. This is a result of the phasing-in of Grade R provision, which, according to plans, will be fully operational by 2010. It is significant that there are high enrolment rates across the age groups: over 90% for children aged 7 to 16 and well over 75% for children aged 17 to 18 in 2004.

Moreover, for children aged 7 to 15, the age group which is explicitly required to be in school in terms of compulsory school legislation, no single age cohort recorded less than 95% enrolment in 2004. The data indicate that most children in South Africa in this age group are enrolled in an educational institution. It is mainly from the age of 16 onwards, after compulsory education ends, that the proportion of children attending an educational institution begins to decline. While there are many children enrolled in the system, there are debates regarding how many children complete Grade 9 (Perry and Arends, 2003). In particular, Perry and Arends suggest that significant numbers of children take more than 9 years to complete, due to repetition.

3.3.2.4. Equitable access to education

Given South Africa's history of discrimination, it is to be expected that education participation levels will be affected by race, gender, geography and disability. A significant achievement during the post-apartheid era has been the increased participation of previously disadvantaged race groups. However, as shown in Figure 8 below, by 2004, while levels of participation amongst different race group converge for children aged 7 to 15 (who are legally compelled to go to school), they diverge for those younger than 7 and to some extent for those older than 15.

Figure 8: Education participation by race, 2004



Source: Stats SA, 2005 ; GHS 2004.

The data shows that access to education for children aged 0 to 6 years was much higher for white children (at 43%) than for Indian (27%), African (26%) and coloured (22%) children. It is significant, however, that in relation to post-compulsory schooling (16 to 20 year olds) enrolments of Africans was 73%, compared to that of Indians at 62% and coloureds at only 49%. Whites continued to enjoy a higher rate of participation than all other race groups.

3.2.5 Gender Parity

Gender Parity Index (GPI) is defined as GER for females divided by GER for males. This is used to indicate the level of access for females to education compared with males. A

GPI of more than 1 indicates that in proportion to the appropriate school age population, there are more females than males in the school system. Table 8 below shows that there are more boys than girls in Grades R to 9, but this is reversed for Grades 10 to 12. When all the grades are considered together, only the years 2002 and 2003 show more boys than girls in the system. This might be explained by a higher dropout rate for boys, related to a reduction in their demand for continued schooling.

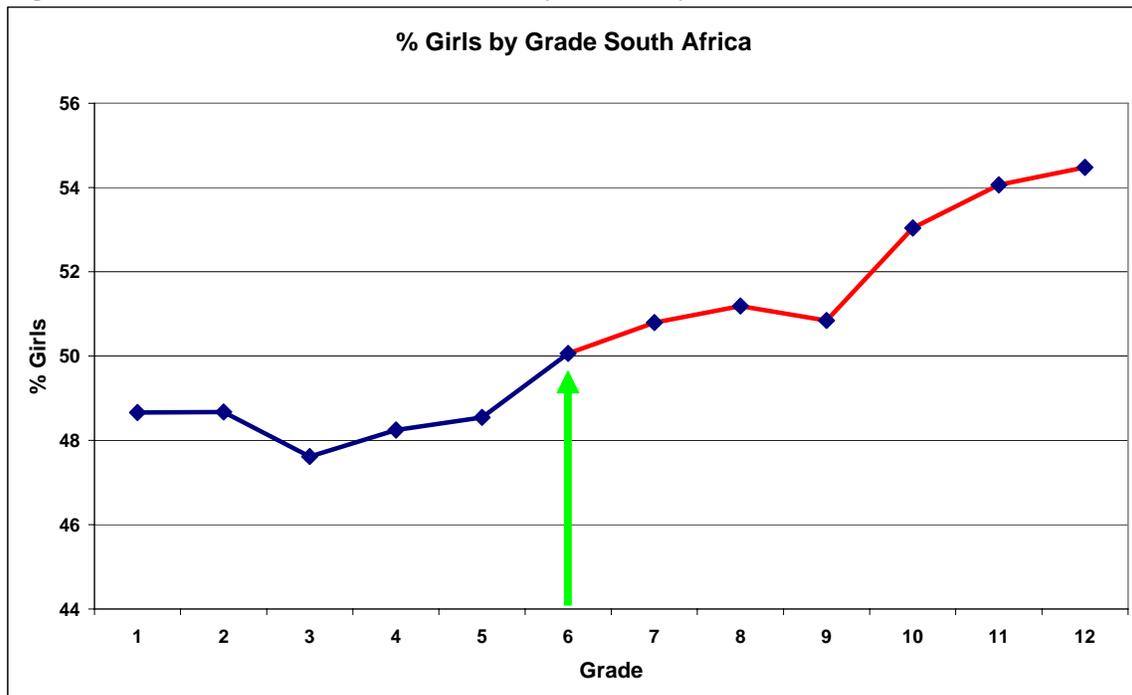
Table 8: Gender Parity Index

Year	Grades (R-9)	Grades (10-12)	Grades (R-12)
2000	0.97	1.11	1.01
2001	0.95	1.10	1.00
2002	0.97	1.13	0.99
2003	0.97	1.10	0.99
2004	0.97	1.14	1.01
2005	0.97	1.13	1.00
2006	0.97	1.14	1.01

Source: DoE, 2005d.

The figure below shows that the tipping point is at Grade 6 for girl learners.

Figure 9: Girls exceed the number of boys in the system from Grade 6



Source: DoE, 2006a (ASS Average from 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005)

3.3.3. Early Childhood Development

Access to education refers not only to enrolment in schools but also the provision of Early Childhood Development (ECD). There are limitations of data with regard to ECD provision which constrains analysis of key indicators of access. There are also many players in the field of ECD provision in South Africa. A recent Department of Education report (DoE, 2006d) suggests that ECD sites constituted approximately 1.8% of learners in the education system in South Africa. The document indicates that just over 400 000 of these children were in Grade R (in both public and independent institutions) and a further 34000 were in pre-Grade R programmes.

Table 9 below shows the distribution of children in public and independent ECD institutions by gender.

Table 9: Pre Grade R and Grade R enrolment

	Independent		Public	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Pre-Grade R	4335	4462	12387	12457
Grade R	7541	7792	195049	194815

Source: DoE, 2006d.

The table shows that the majority of these children are in public institutions, and in Grade R, which is mostly attached to schools. The national Department has committed itself to phasing in Grade R as part of the 10 years of compulsory schooling by 2010. A national ECD audit in 2000 (DoE, 2001d: 35) found that the participation rate in ECD was 13% of all children aged 0 to 6 years. It remains to be established what the Grade R participation rate is for 5-6 year olds. It is necessary to include Grade R in the 'no fee' category for the respective quintiles in order to ensure access.

3.3.4 Backlogs in education

While most of South Africa's children now have access to primary education, and access to secondary education is expanding, the system faces several major challenges, most notably the need to improve the quality and efficiency of education. The School Register of Needs carried out in 2000 (DoE, 2000) highlighted a wide range of persisting inequalities, problems and shortages (Table 10 below), especially in the provision of facilities, infrastructure and basic services. Backlogs are greatest in schools that formerly provided education only for black learners, and most severe in the rural areas of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape.

Table 10: Backlogs for basic needs

	Total in use	Backlog	Backlog as % of Total
Backlog of classrooms	315830	13269	4.0
Staffrooms	5208	11384	68.6
Office	6864	6432	48.4
Physical Science Lab	1867	662	26.1
Biology Lab	1479	719	32.7
Computers for admin	6616	19094	74.2
Computers for Teaching	3351	22359	86.9
Telecommunication	17498	8212	31.9
Water	19331	6379	24.8
Electricity	14891	10819	42.1
Sanitation	23212	2498	9.7

DoE: School Register of Needs, 2000

The serious shortages related to basic services (water, sanitation and electricity) may have more impact on access than some of the other backlogs. The figures in Table 10 should nevertheless be treated with caution, in part due to low response rates. For instance, fewer than half of schools responded to the 'biology lab' question. The figures were calculated on the basis of the number of schools that offer Biology as a subject, a subset of the total number of secondary schools; and the low percentage of 32.7% is due to the fact that few black schools offer Biology, a consequence of apartheid policy preferences for Biblical Studies, History and Geography.

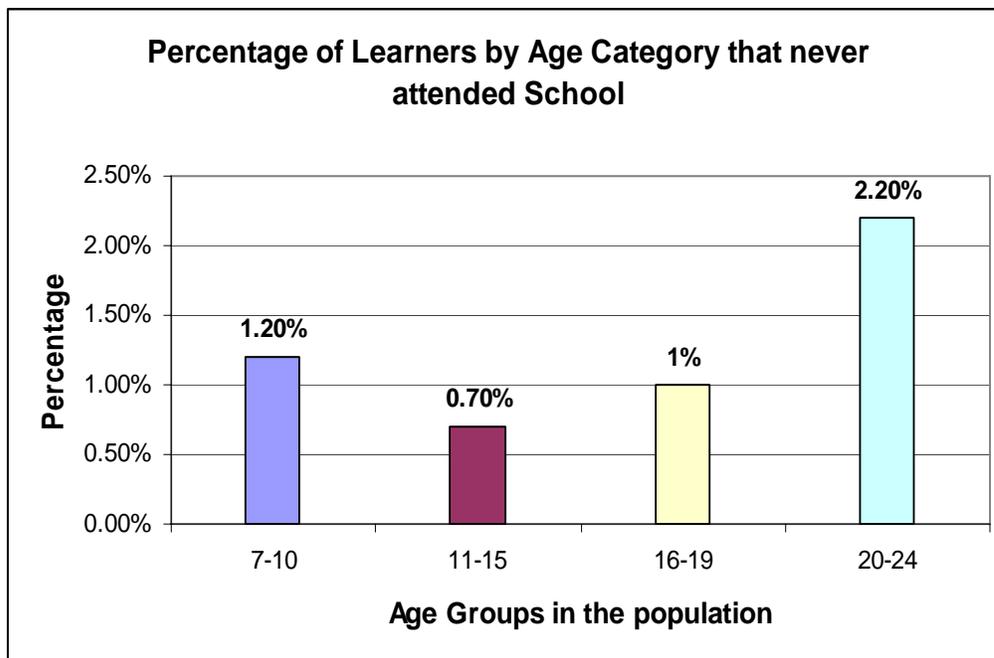
3.4. Zones of Exclusion

The foregoing discussion indicates that South Africa enjoys high levels of participation in education, particularly in the primary school phase and increasingly so in the secondary school phase. However, many hurdles prevent the achievement of basic quantitative access for some children, and meaningful access for many of those enrolled in the system. Meaningful access is used in this *Review* to denote secure enrolment, progression through the system at appropriate ages, meaningful learning and achievement and transition into post-compulsory schooling. These issues of exclusion are discussed below using the conceptual framework of zones of exclusion.

3.4.1. Zone 1

This zone comprises children who have never been to school, a very small quantity in South Africa. According to Statistics South Africa's General Household Survey undertaken in 2004 (StatsSA, 2005), fewer than 1% of children aged between 7 and 19 years were not enrolled at school at the time of the survey, and had never attended school. As represented in Figure 10 below, more persons between 20 and 24 years of age have never attended school than amongst the younger age groups. While 0.7% of children in the population aged 11 to 15 had never attended an educational institution, this applied to 1.2% of younger children aged 7 to 10. It is highly likely, though, that some of the children in this latter cohort may eventually attend school, thus reducing the proportion of this cohort who will never attend an educational institution. Research by Shindler (2005) found that of the just over 1 million learners who enrolled in Grade 1 in 2001 for the first time, 16% were overage and aged between 8 and 13.

Figure 10 : Percentage of learners that never attended school



Source: StatsSA, 2005.

A study undertaken by the Southern African Migration Project recently indicated that children of immigrants, especially undocumented immigrants, experience several challenges regarding access to schools in South Africa. These populations are largely undocumented and include both internal migrants and those from outside the country.

3.4.2. Zone 2

This zone of exclusion includes those children who enter primary school (Grade 1 to Grade 7) but do not complete it. There is much debate in South Africa over the exact nature and extent of primary school dropout. Dropout refers to learners in the compulsory age group (7-15 years) who leave the education system without completing a given grade and those who complete a grade and do not return the following year.

Different calculations arrive at different conclusions about the numbers of children who drop out of the compulsory phase of schooling. The Department of Education estimates that 250 000-300 000 children to be out of school in the compulsory phase band (DoE, 2003a: 13), while Shindler and Fleisch (2007: 26) estimate this to be 665 000 children nationally in the age group 7-15 years. The latter also point out that while near universal access has been achieved for a number of smaller children, there continues to be significant provincial variation particularly in the rural provinces where, after an initial peak in the earlier years of schooling, declines are seen in the higher grades of compulsory schooling.

Noting this complexity, Crouch (2005: 2) suggests that the problem arises in looking at the very high enrolment in Grade 1 (say 1 600 000) which contains a lot of repetition due to under-age intake and assuming that if there are only, for example, 1 000 000 in Grade 2 the next year, that 600 000 have dropped out. The difference, as Crouch notes, is mostly due to a large number of repeaters in Grade 1 (despite the age-grade norms) and not to dropouts between Grade 1 and Grade 2. Much of this repetition is not reported as repetition as it is not based on academic failure. Crouch argues that enrolment in Grade 1 is artificially increased for several reasons. First, parents in many areas have no access to Early Childhood Development (ECD) and principals face moral pressure to accommodate these children as early admissions to Grade 1, with the expectation that the child will sit in Grade 1 for two years. Second, the system contains incentives to boost enrolment, and it is easier to enrol a child early in Grade 1, and make him or her repeat than to make up a non-existent child in later grades. These children are typically not reported as repeaters; they are in fact enrolled twice.

One of the studies that attempted to understand the phenomenon of drop-out is that conducted by Perry and Arends (2003). Using a model constructed from age-grade profile of learners in 1997, they suggest that approximately 3% of primary school learners in South Africa dropped-out in 1997. Table 11 below presents their estimates of the drop-out rates based on 1997 data.

Table 11: Dropout rate in primary school, 1997

Grade	Drop-out
Grade 1	-
Grade 2	3.9
Grade 3	3.1
Grade 4	4.7
Grade 5	4.4
Grade 6	5.2
Grade 7	-

Source: Perry and Arends, 2003: 311

The table shows that while at primary level the rate of drop out is around 5%. If 5% of learners at primary level are dropouts this would translate into about 350 000 children.

The UNESCO report (2007) suggests slightly lower figures for Grades 1 to 6, based on 2003 data, as shown in Table 12 below. The UNESCO calculations are based on a definition of drop defined as “the percentage of pupils who drop out from a given grade in a given school year. It is the difference between 100% and the sum of promotion and repetition rate”. In this definition, the problem is that if the repetition data is incorrect, then the drop-out rate will also be wrong. Many analysts (for example, Crouch, 2005) have warned that there is gross under-reporting of repetition in South Africa. The data should thus be read with caution.

Table 12: Drop out rates in primary schools, 2003

	Grade 1	Grade 2	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6
Male	12.29	1.19	0.89	3.79	3.89	3.79
Female	9.17	0.89	0.89	2.19	2.19	2.97
Total	10.79	1.09	0.89	2.97	3.09	3.37

Source: UNESCO, 2007.

Nevertheless, the table shows that more boys than girls drop out between Grade 1 and Grade 5. There is no data for Grade 7. What this implies for Zone 2 is that there is dropout in the primary school phase, and this is between 3% (DoE figures) and 7% (Shindler and Fleisch, 2007). The figures above may suggest an over-estimation; however, in the absence of other available data they have been used to inform our analysis. The CREATE research, through provincial and district analyses, will be able to test these aggregates and provide a more accurate picture. It is equally important to ensure that calculations of dropout and completion include repetition, for current figures

suggest these are either being overestimated or underestimated. It is also difficult to quantify the dropout and drop-in to school phenomenon noted by Motala (1995).

3.4.3. Zones 3 and 6³

Zone 3 consists of children who enrol in primary school but are ‘at risk’ of dropping out before completing it (i.e., finishing Grade 7) and those who fail to complete successfully. This zone therefore includes all children aged from 6/7 to 13 who are in the schooling system but are at risk of dropping out. Zone 6 refers to those learners who are at lower secondary school level (Grades 8 and 9) who are at risk of dropping out. In addition to the risk of dropping out, these zones also speak to what has been referred to as ‘silent exclusion’ (Lewin, 2007) or lack of epistemic access. Epistemic access refers to access to suitable teaching, meaningful learning and adequate levels of achievement.

Endogenous and exogenous factors limit learners’ abilities to contend with schooling. Exogenous factors include poverty, rates of orphanhood, the environment in which schooling takes place and the impact of HIV/AIDS. Endogenous factors relate to erratic attendance, overage enrolment (especially given the age-grade norms which would prohibit certain age groups from certain grades), repetition and low achievement. Zones 3 and 6 also include learners who are under-achieving or present in class but not actually learning anything. This may be because they have learning difficulties, health problems or inadequate nutrition, or receive poor quality instruction.

In South Africa, there has been very little research done to quantify the number of children at risk of dropping out of school at either the primary or the secondary level. In this section we attempt to identify, and where possible quantify, factors which contribute to learners’ vulnerability, though the paucity of data means that these are often merely estimates.

3.4.3.1 Endogenous factors

a) Attendance

Attendance rates of both learners and educators are of concern. Detailed and reliable data is lacking but that which exists indicates that many learning days are lost through irregular attendance of learners due to a variety of causes including poverty, sickness, disinterest, lack of safety, and opportunity costs. Regular attendance is defined as attendance with valid reasons for absence.

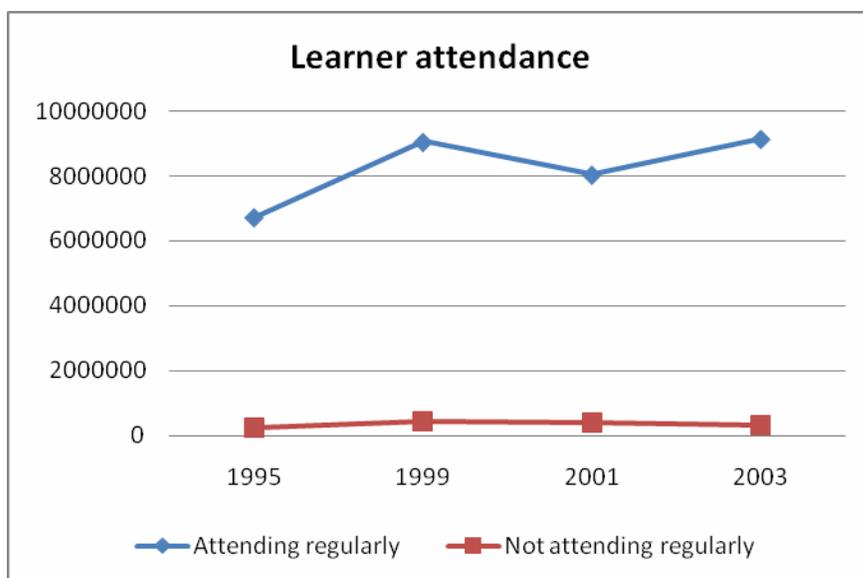
³ It should be noted that while this report is primarily concerned with basic education, in some instances available data is not neatly disaggregated to reflect the basic education band. Thus, data that cover the entire secondary school system is used in some instances (children aged 14 to 18, instead of 14 to 15 which would be appropriate age for Grades 8 and 9).

Table 13: Attendance of learners

	1995	1999	2001	2003
Attending regularly	6728000	9051000	8041000	9143000
Not attending regularly	250000	435000	411000	319000

Source: GHS survey 2001 and 2003, LFS 1995 and 1999 – DoE 2004 Education Service Delivery Indicator Report (DoE, 2004: 37)

Figure 11: Actual attendance by (7-15) year old for the period (1995-2003)



Source: GHS survey 2001 and 2003, LFS 1995 and 1999. Note: the graphs above are taken from the General Household Survey conducted by Statistics South Africa, 2005. The survey defines poor attendance as PV where a child is absent in excess of ten days per year and has produced a letter indicating illness. Poor attendance defined as PI refers to absence without a letter from a doctor. Regular attendance is defined as attendance for 95% and above of the 200 school days, excluding specific religious absence.

Figure 11 above shows the results of surveys conducted over the years 1995, 1999, 2001 and 2003. This is an absolute measure of the number of learners that do not attend school. The absentee rate ranges from 3.4% to 4.9%, which translates to 4 to 5 children out of every hundred absent every year.

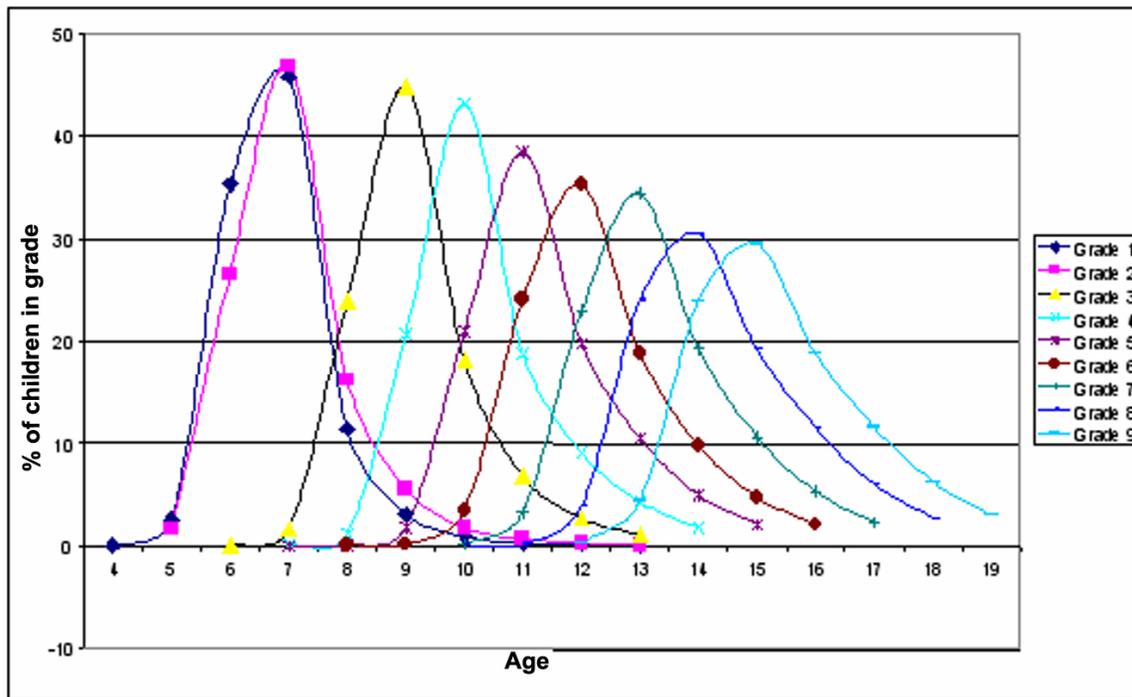
The results of the HIV mobile task team in KwaZulu-Natal noted high levels of absenteeism amongst children involved in caring for siblings in HIV-affected households (Heard et al., 2004). Educator attendance varies widely between schools but is known to

result in significant loss of learner time (Chisholm *et al*, 2005). Apart from arriving at school late and leaving early, reasons for educator absence include strikes and stay-aways, examinations and sporting events and municipal activities (ANC, 2007), and loss of learning time will undoubtedly adversely affect achievement, outcomes and progression. More research is needed into the amount of time on task actually spent by learners in different schools.

b) Over- and under-age enrolment

One of the key issues that can contribute to vulnerability within the schooling system is over-age enrolment. Available data indicate that many children are enrolled in grades that are inappropriate for their age. Figure 12 below shows the percentage enrolment by age and grade for Grades 1 to 9 in 2004.

Figure 12: Enrolment by age and grade for the Compulsory Phase in 2004



Source: ASS 2004 DoE data base

Figure 12 shows that while enrolment of children under the age of 6 in Grade 1 is low (0.1 and 2.6% of children aged 4 and 5 respectively), there is also a concentration of approximately three years for any one grade. For example, the majority of learners in Grade 1 are aged between 6 and 8, and in Grade 2, the majority are aged 7 to 9. Fewer underage children were enrolled in the lower grades of secondary school. Younger children who are enrolled in higher grades may not be especially vulnerable to dropping out, though they may experience greater pressures associated with education at a higher

level, perhaps accompanied by increased anxiety. More research is required here regarding the effects of underage enrolment in secondary grades.

However, the fact that about 9% of 12 year olds were enrolled in Grade 4, and 5% of 14 year olds were in Grade 5, is a concern. For children who are over-age for their grade, vulnerability increases, not only because of personal adjustment issues but also because of the age-grade policy norms. More research is required to establish how many learners are likely to be excluded on the basis of age before they are able to complete their education.

The age distribution curves for Grade 1 and Grade 2 almost fall upon each other, showing no age differentiation in these grades. This may be due to younger, weaker and slower maturing learners repeating Grade 1. The brighter, older and faster maturing learners move to Grade 2. In Grade 3 the standard deviation increases, shown by the bell-shape becoming broader: by Grade 9 a six year age differentiation has grown to seven years. This means that in Grade 9, learners have an age gap from 12 to 19 years, with serious learning and teaching implications. 12 year old learners are beginning to grasp abstract descriptions whereas 19 year old learners should understand these concepts with ease. The speed of learning and understanding between age-groups differs, thus learners in such a mixed group range from those that don't cope to those that are bored with the pace of teaching. This further contributes to dropout and retention. These patterns of age-grade participation should be changing and need further verification because of their significance for learning and teaching.

c) Repetition

The two main reasons for over-aged children being enrolled in the wrong grade or phase for their age are repetition and overage entry. Repetition, which in simple terms can be defined as doing the same grade more than once due to failure to master the curriculum of that grade, increases vulnerability. Data on the extent of repetition amongst learners in the compulsory schooling phase is scarce. UNESCO (2007: 327) estimates that the repetition rate in primary school was 7.4% in 2003. Perry and Arends' (2003) analysis, which is based on 1997 data, shows the following situation:

Table 14: Repetition by grade, 1997

Grade	Repetition
Grade 1	24
Grade 2	9.8
Grade 3	9.6
Grade 4	10.2
Grade 5	9.3
Grade 6	7.2
Grade 7	6.2
Grade 8	16.7
Grade 9	16.1

Source: Perry and Arends, 2003: 311.

The table indicates that repetition rates were very high in Grade 1 in 1997, and declined in Grades 2 and 3 before increasing slightly in Grade 4. The rates decline somewhat between Grades 5 and 7 and increase significantly in Grade 8. The high repetition rates in Grade 1 have been associated with the enrolment of under-aged children in Grade 1 due to the lack of access to Early Childhood Development programmes in South Africa, and systemic enticements for principals to boost enrolments (see the discussion of Crouch (2005) in relation to Zone 2, above).

One of the policies that were introduced to address the high repetition rates that prevailed before the current government took office was the Assessment Policy of 1998. It expected that learners should progress with their age cohort and, where they require more time to achieve particular outcomes, they should not stay in the same (three grade) phase for longer than four years, without specific Departmental approval (DoE, 1998b: 14, para.32). Given this provision that prohibits learners from repeating a phase more than once, it is not clear to what the extent the figures, especially after 1998, reflect the policy environment. Age in grade data continues to suggest that a wide range of ages is present in each grade, and that the distribution becomes wider as grade increases. More research is required to examine the impact of the policy on actual repetition data that is being reported, and its implications for the quality of education. In addition, the extent to which repetition on its own makes children vulnerable to dropping out needs to be researched.

d) Learning achievement in the GET band

The poorer the quality of education that a learner receives in school, the greater the likely level of vulnerability amongst learners and the less value learners and their parents will derive from continued enrolment. Learning achievement may also tell us about the extent to which learners, once enrolled, benefit from the learning and teaching processes in the classroom. If learners are at school, but are not achieving at least as well as they ought to, then it cannot be said that children have meaningful access to education. Several measures of learning achievement are available in South Africa for various grades, which provide some indications of the extent of achievement. Chief amongst these are the Grade 3 and Grade 6 systemic evaluation reports (DoE, 2003c; DoE, 2005b), the results of which were poor (Table 15).

Table 15: Average percentage scores attained in the Grade 3 systemic evaluations

Grade 3	Percentage
Literacy	54%
Listening comprehension	68%
Reading comprehension	39%
Numeracy	30%
Life skills	54%

Source: DoE, 2003c.

The results for the Grade 3 evaluation indicates that while learners achieved an average score of 68% for listening comprehension, and 54% for life skills, these scores dropped to

39% for reading comprehension. For Numeracy, learners achieved 30% and the score for Life Skills averaged 54% (DoE, 2003c). It should be noted that these are national averages, and do not show the range of scores achieved by province, gender and geography.

The achievement rates of learners in the Grade 6 evaluation were even poorer than those in Grade 3, with learners obtaining an average of 38% for language (language of learning and teaching), 27% for mathematics and 41% for natural sciences (DoE, 2005b). These averages conceal the distribution. In some schools the scores would be much lower indicating that even less learning was taking place.

An assessment of Grade 6 learners was undertaken in 2004 the results of which were published in 2005. The tests were developed and standardized for Grade 6 learners and tested across provinces by the HSRC, with attainment score bands set as follows: 0-20 very poor, 21-40 poor, 41-60 average/good, 61-80 very good, and 81-100 excellent. The national median was set at 50. The tests were conducted by Jet Education Services, an independent body. According to the report (DoE, 2005b: 1), the Grade 6 systemic evaluation study was intended, amongst other purposes, to determine the level of achievement of learners within the system. Table 16 below presents the average scores for language (LOLT), Mathematics and Natural Sciences by province.

Table 16: National averages for all three learning areas

Province	Language	Maths	Natural Sciences
EC	30.16	23.4	36.01
FS	38.64	30.8	44.14
GP	51.58	33.76	50
KZN	36.92	26.38	39.65
LP	25.54	19.38	32.57
MP	35.64	25.28	41.01
NW	34.7	24.26	38.43
NC	53.02	32.97	46.89
WC	58.79	40.22	51.93
National	38.03	27.08	40.77

Source: DoE, 2005b.

The national average scores were poor across the learning areas, with learners achieving highest in Natural Sciences, followed by LOLT and then Mathematics. There were great variations by province as shown in the table, with Limpopo having the lowest averages across the three learning areas and the Western Cape performing best across all three learning areas. There were variations by geography, with learners in rural schools performing worse than their counterparts in the urban areas. There were also variations by gender.

With regard to international learning achievement assessments, three studies stand out as the most significant: the MLA Project, TIMSS and SAQMEC. The results from these assessments indicate that South African children perform exceptionally poorly as compared to other countries that participated.

The Monitoring Learning Achievement (MLA) project was conducted in several African countries in 1999 and measured the competencies of Grade 4 learners in numeracy, literacy and life skills. South Africa’s performance in all three areas indicated serious shortcomings. Of the 12 participating countries, South Africa scored the lowest average in numeracy, the fifth lowest in literacy and the third lowest in life skills.

Table 17: MLA percentage average scores for numeracy, literacy and life skills, 1999

	Numeracy average	Literacy average	Life skills average
Botswana	51.0	48.0	56.0
Madagascar	43.7	54.7	72.1
Malawi	43.0	35.0	77.0
Mali	43.6	51.8	56.9
Mauritius	58.5	61.0	58.0
Morocco	56.4	67.6	62.3
Niger	37.3	41.1	44.7
Senegal	39.7	48.9	45.7
South Africa	30.2	48.1	47.1
Tunisia	60.4	77.9	74.7
Uganda	49.3	58.7	66.8
Zambia	36.0	43.0	51.0

Source: Strauss et al., 1999

The TIMSS studies measured Grade 8 learning achievement in mathematics and science in several countries in 1995, 1999 and 2003. In both the 1999 and 2003 TIMSS studies, South Africa’s performance was disappointing. Learners attained lower average test scores in both mathematics and science than all other participating countries (including other African countries such as Morocco, Tunisia and Botswana). Out of an imputed maximum score of 800, the average South African mathematics score was 275 in TIMSS 1999 and 264 in TIMSS 2003. The average science score was even lower: 243 in TIMSS 1999 and 244 in TIMSS 2003. Table 18 shows the 1999 and 2003 average scores for Mathematics and Science.

Table 18: Average Score in the TIMSS 1999 and TIMSS 2003 Grade 8 Mathematics and Science Achievement Tests

	Mathematics	Science
TIMSS 1999		
SA average score	275	243
International average score	487	488
TIMSS 2003		
SA average score	264	244
International average score	467	474

Source: HSRC, 2005

The data presented above indicates that while a large number of children have access to primary education in South Africa, a significant proportion of these learners do not achieve at the level at which they acquire the basic skills necessary to progress to the next phase of schooling. There is a clear need for a more focussed performance in schools, amongst both learners and educators. With regard to the first two years of secondary schooling (Grades 8 and 9), there has been as yet no similar systemic evaluation undertaken in South Africa. The evidence suggests that meaningful access remains elusive for the majority, and it follows that, as Crouch (2005) points out, the main inequality in South Africa is in relation to achievement in education outcomes.

3.4.3.2 Exogenous factors

Exogenous factors that contribute to the vulnerability of learners to drop out include variables such as poverty, the impact of HIV and Aids, and lack of transportation to schools (especially for children in rural areas).

a) The impact of poverty

Table 19 below provides a snapshot of poverty indicators across the provinces. The Eastern Cape is the poorest province, with Limpopo and North West provinces ranking as second and third poorest, respectively.

Table 19: Summary of Poverty- and Vulnerability-Related Statistics, 2003

	WC	EC	NC	FS	KZ	NW	GA	MP	LP	Total
Households lacking access to piped water	0.9	40.1	3.4	3.2	23	9.1	0.9	9.4	22.2	13.9
Households lacking access to electricity	6	42.8	17.6	15.3	30.7	15	11.2	18.9	25.7	21.3
Households lacking access to sanitation	8.5	69.3	27.3	40.8	53.8	56.5	13.1	54.7	83.2	43.3
Share of population in poorest 40%	16.9	54.9	38.6	35.4	45.3	45.8	24.9	41.5	55.4	40
Orphanhood rate (single & double)	13.2	23.9	16.2	23	23.5	21.4	16.3	19.7	19	20.3
Rate of access to social grants	24.7	46.1	37.9	32.7	33.7	34.9	20.2	36.1	47.6	32.8
Disability rate	3.5	2.5	4.1	2.9	1.9	2.9	2.1	2.7	2.7	2.5
Share of households with child hunger	4.9	8.8	6.8	7.4	7.6	10.9	5.4	8.8	4.8	7
Average HH Ratio of non-workers to workers	1.7	2.2	2	1.8	1.9	2	1.5	2.1	2.6	1.9
Share of population in rural areas	12.1	66.7	32.5	32	55.4	64.4	4.3	60.2	88.1	45.2
Unemployment Rate	26.2	49.4	39.2	41	45	47.1	37	41.5	55.8	41.7
Share of 25-64 without Grade 9	36.9	56.5	54.6	49.4	45.5	53.3	29.3	50.7	52.5	43.8
Share of 25-64 without Grade 12	64	78.4	74.9	7.06	69.8	74.5	56.2	72.4	74.3	67.9
Average Institution Fees (Rands)	938	244	388	426	444	304	1196	268	144	494

Average Poverty Ranking 2003	8	1	6	7	5	3	9	4	2	
2001	8	1	7	6	4	3	8	5	2	
1999	8	1	5	7	4	3	9	5	2	
1995	8	1	6	7	3	3	9	5	2	
Human Development Index (UNDP) 2003	9	3	7	6	4	2	8	5	1	
2001	9	3	7	6	4	2	8	5	1	
1999	8	3	6	7	4	2	9	5	1	
1995	8	2	5	7	4	3	9	8	1	

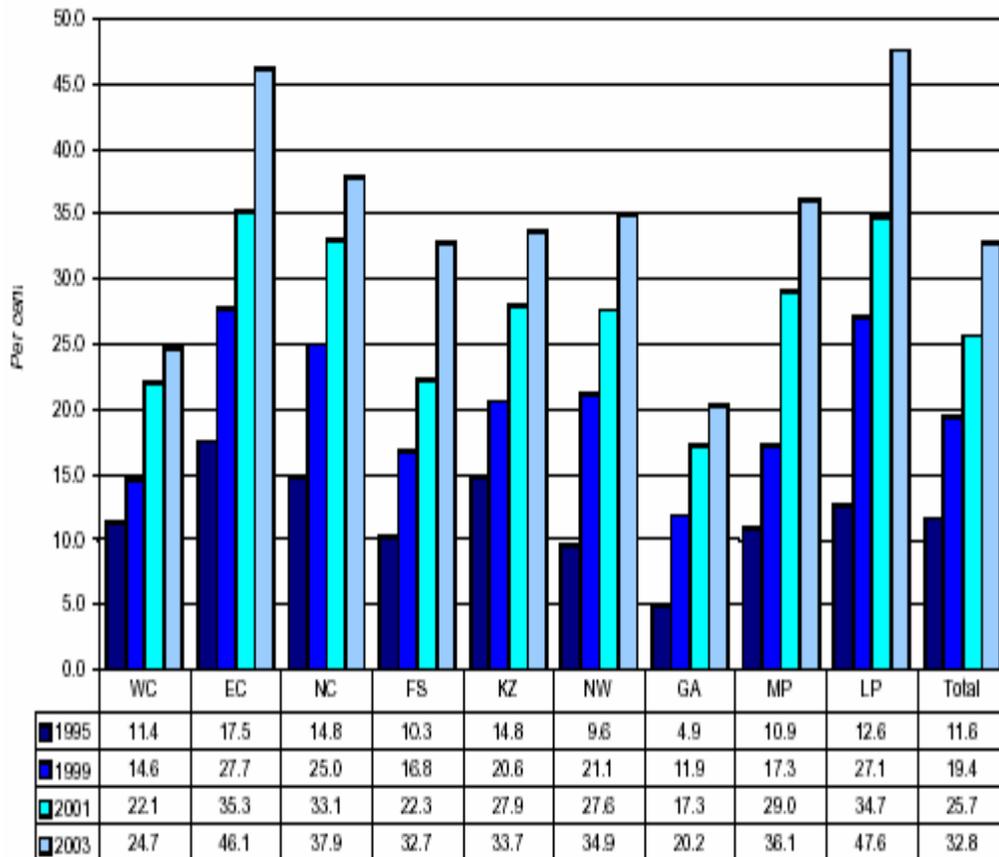
Source: LFS 2003; GHS 2003, Statistics South Africa, 2005; UNDP (2003).

Note: Provincial rankings for each indicator are provided below the relevant indicator, with 1 indicating the worst-off province and 9 the best-off province. Average poverty rankings are the provincial rankings of the average of the rankings for the fourteen indicators.

The table above indicates that poverty is widespread in South Africa. Provinces such as Limpopo, Eastern Cape, North West and Kwazulu Natal ranked low in terms of both the poverty index and the human development index. It is not clear how many children who are of compulsory schooling age are found in households with high levels of poverty.

Given the Child Dependency Ratio in South Africa (see above in this chapter), it would not be unreasonable to suggest that those children who are not supported by an adult who is working and/or receiving social security grants are more likely to be vulnerable to dropping out. As a way of cushioning the effects of poverty, government has steadily increased access to social security grants, with 32.8% of households receiving a grant in 2003. Figure 13 below shows household access to social grants by province between 1995 and 2003.

Figure 13: Household Access to Social Grants, by Province, 1995-2003

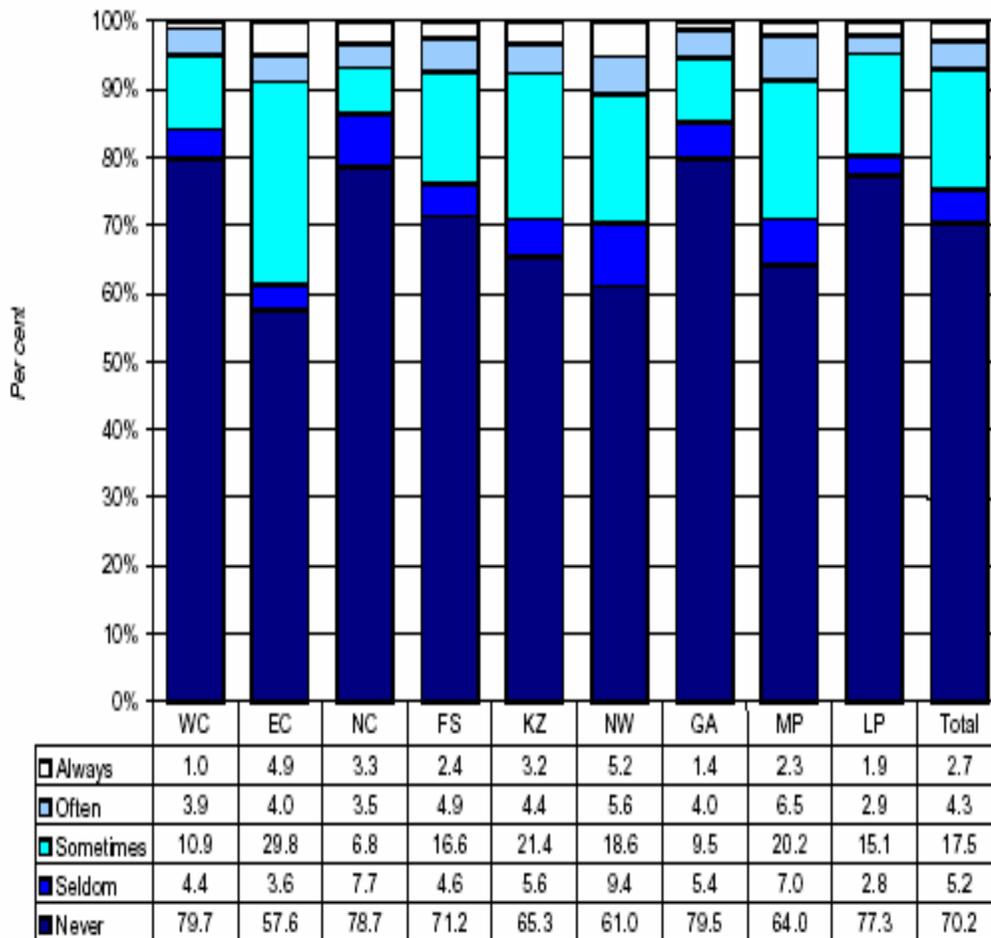


Source: OHS 1995, OHS 1999, LFS 2001, LFS 2003 (Statistics South Africa, 2005)

The graph shows that there have been increases in the number of households receiving grants since 1995. However, other studies suggest that approximately 22% of children aged 0 to 19 who are eligible to receive the Child Support Grant (which is one of the social security grants) are not receiving the grant (see Monson *et al.*, 2006). If one assumes that the 22% can be applied equally to each single age in the 0 to 19 cohort and apply it to the more than 10 million children in the 5 to 14 age cohort, it can be estimated that about 2.2 million of children in this age group may be vulnerable to dropping out, or are attending school irregularly. Irregular school attendance is likely to negatively affect a child’s performance and therefore lead to failure, repetition and drop-out.

One of the consequences of poverty is that children often go hungry. Hunger is very likely to have an impact on academic performance, as children who are hungry are unlikely to be able to learn properly and could be expected to perform poorly. Also, if children do not receive adequate amounts of essential nutrients this could have a long-term effect on their cognitive development, which could also affect performance. It is likely that children who experience hunger regularly are vulnerable to dropping out. Figure 14 below shows incidences of households where children experience hunger.

Figure 14: Incidence of Child Hunger (children aged 17 and younger) amongst Households, by Province 2003



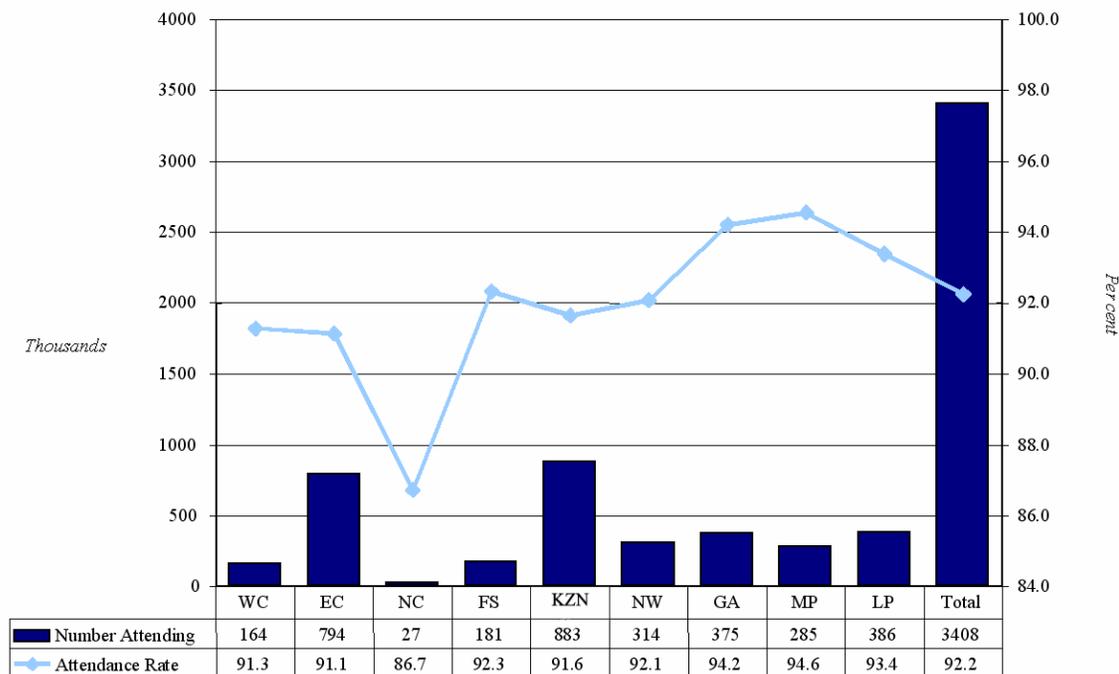
Source: GHS 2003 (Statistics South Africa, 2005)

Figure 14 shows that, nationally, children in 7% of households were always or often hungry, while in a further 17% of households, children sometimes went hungry. These national averages hide the severity of the problem in some provinces. In the Eastern Cape, children in about 38% of households always, often or sometimes went hungry. In

the North West this applied to almost 30% of households (with children in 11% of households in this province always or often hungry).

An analysis undertaken by the Department of Education found that of those children aged 7 to 18 who regularly experience hunger (i.e. those who say they always, often or sometimes go hungry), 92.2% (or around 3.4 million children) participate in school (DoE, 2005c). This means that almost 8% of children who experience hunger regularly do not attend school. This amounts to about 282 000 children. It was also found that children aged 7 to 18 who regularly experience hunger were slightly more likely not to participate in school than other children, with a participation rate of 92.2% compared to 93.5% overall. Figure 15 below shows school attendance among children who regularly experience hunger.

Figure 15: School Attendance of 7 to 17 Year Olds Who Regularly Experience Hunger, by Province, 2003



Source: GHS 2003 (Statistics South Africa, 2005). Notes: 1. Learners are deemed to regularly experience hunger if they are members of households who indicated that children always, often or sometimes go hungry. 2. This question was asked only of children younger than 17 years of age, hence the age-group investigated in this figure is seven to 17 years and not 18 years as is generally the case in this study.

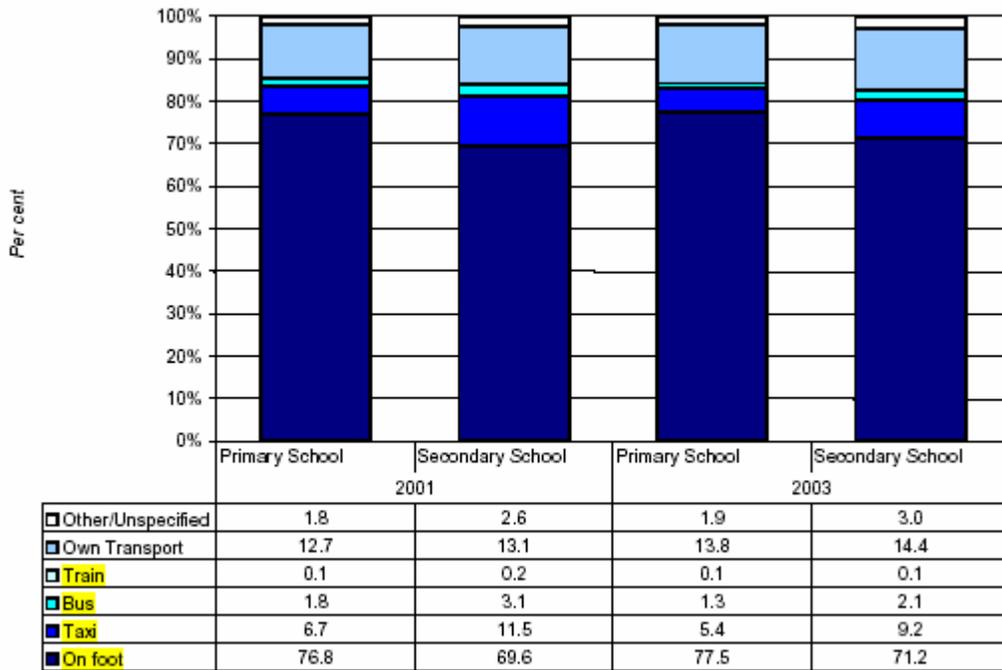
One possible reason why the non-school attendance rate among children who are regularly hungry is not higher than it is, could be because of the existence of the national school feeding scheme. The feeding scheme aims to ensure that the poorest learners have

at least one meal per day and thus improve their attendance and performance (DoE, 2005c). Its impact on school attendance requires further research.

b) School transport

Figure 16 below shows the various modes of transport used by children to get to school every day. After walking, 'own transport' was the next most common mode of transport to school, with about 14% of households transporting their primary and secondary school children to school in this way. Taxis were also an important mode of transport to schools, followed by buses. Among those who use motorised transport, slightly over 5% of primary school-learners used taxis in 2003.

Figure 16 : Households' Mode of Transport to Primary and Secondary Schools, 2001 & 2003



Source: LFS 2001, LFS 2003 (Statistics South Africa)

There are costs involved in using various modes of transport, and, as a study by the Centre for Applied Legal Studies indicated, the cost of transport to school was a major burden on children from poorer households. Unfortunately, there is no data which shows the direct impact of transport costs on participation rates in basic education.

If getting to school is over a long distance or is hazardous, and if transport is expensive or unavailable, then children who are living in such conditions can be considered extremely vulnerable. While the majority of children (77.5% of primary school learners and 71.2% of secondary school learners) walk to school everyday, some 320 000 learners have to walk more than 5km to get to school (DoE, 2005c). This excessively long distance 'has a

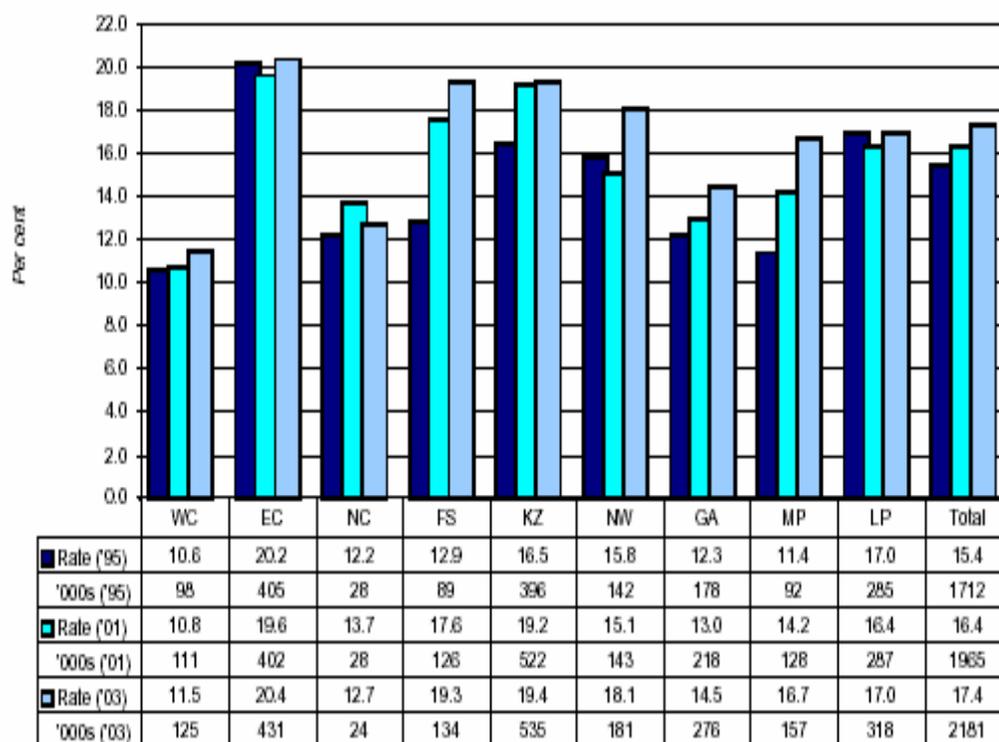
decidedly negative impact on children’s education’ (DoE, 2005c: 42), as it puts them at risk of attack by criminals and at the mercy of adverse weather conditions. They are also often tired when they get to school. Long distances from schools could also help explain why a fair proportion of younger children start school later than 7 years of age, since it is possible that their parents are reluctant to allow them to walk so far.

Apart from poverty, the impact of HIV/AIDS also increases learners’ vulnerability.

c) The impact of HIV and Aids

The impact of HIV/AIDS can be seen in Figure 17 below which shows an increasing number of single and double parent orphans. In 2003, 17.4% of children (just over 2 million children) had lost one parent, while 3% had lost both parents (371,000 children). Certainly, these children, especially those living in child-headed households and those who do not receive any form of social security grant, will be particularly vulnerable to dropping out of school, or attending school erratically.

Figure 17: Single Orphans by Province, 1995-2003



Source: OHS 1995, LFS 2001, LFS 2003 (Statistics South Africa)

While it is difficult to establish the exact number of children who are at risk of dropping out before they complete basic education because they are afflicted by poverty, do not get any form of social security grants, are orphans, have to walk long distances to school everyday, or are affected by HIV/AIDS, the accumulation of these obstacles makes

learners even more vulnerable to dropping out and losing access to meaningful learning. From the data above it can be estimated that the number of at-risk children could range from about 280,000 to about 2 million. More research is required to establish the exact number of children aged 7 to 15 who are affected by these conditions.

3.4.4. Zone 4

Zone 4 refers to learners who fail to make the transition to secondary school (i.e., to Grade 8 in South Africa). These learners complete Grade 7 but do not proceed to enrol in the first year of secondary schooling. Transition rate refers to the number of children admitted to the first grade of a higher level of education in a particular year, expressed as a percentage of learners enrolled in the previous grade in the previous year excluding repeaters, less those learners who are repeating. It provides an indication of the extent of access or transition from one level of education to another. Between 1991 and 2004, participation rates in secondary schooling increased by 49%. This may be explained by the fact that, in the mid-1990s, the first two grades of secondary schooling were declared part of the compulsory schooling system (DoE, 2005d).

UNESCO data (2007: 292) suggest that the transition rate from primary to secondary schools for South Africa was 95% in 2003 (96% for girls and 94% for boys). There are no indications of the breakdown of the transition rates by gender or province. These relatively high transition rates suggest that Zone 4 is not a major problem in South Africa.

3.4.5. Zone 5

Zone 5 refers to children who enter secondary schooling but who drop out before completing the cycle. As the data for the previous zone indicate, most learners make the transition from primary to secondary schooling. In this section, we examine the proportion of learners who complete Grade 9, the last year of basic education. The completion rate in this section refers to the number of learners who have completed a given level of education in a given year expressed as a percentage of the population of the relevant age group for that particular grade. As mentioned before, given the state of the education data, especially the repetition data, it cannot be assumed that all the learners who are not completing in a particular year, are actually dropping out. As a result of repetition some children will take longer to complete Grade 9. The table below shows dropout in Grades 8 and 9 in 1997.

Table 20: Dropout rate in grades 8 and 9, 1997

Grade	% drop out
Grade 8	7.5
Grade 9	7.3
Grade 11	20

Source: Perry and Arends (2003)

The table shows a drop out rate of just over 7% in Grades 8 and 9 in 1997. These are aggregated figures which do not show variations by province or gender. The dropout rate in the secondary grades increases steadily through the grades. There is a marked increase in the dropout rate in Grade 10, the beginning of the further education phase which is no longer part of compulsory schooling. The highest dropout rate is in Grade 11 and currently stands at 20%.

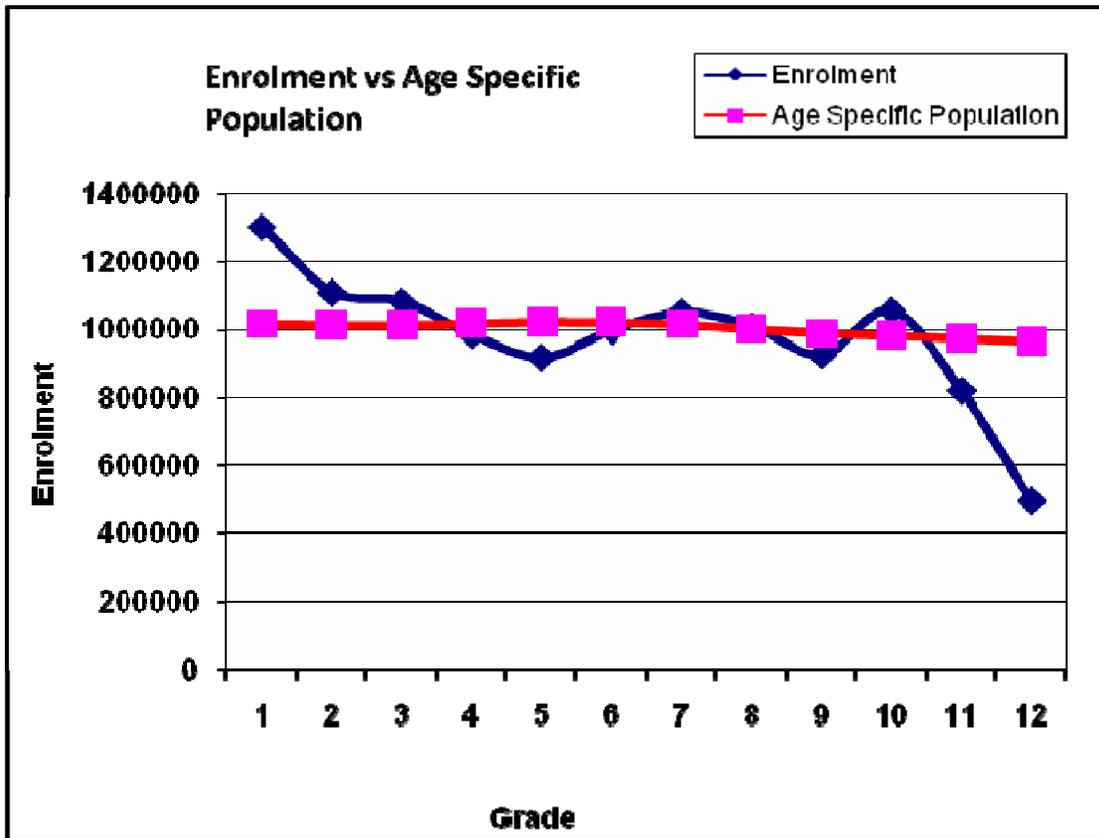
More recent calculations using Department of Education and Statistics South Africa databases suggests that 92% of the relevant age for Grade 9 (15 years) successfully complete basic education. There has been an improvement in the completion rate from 78,5% in 1997 to 92,5% in 2003. After basic education the completion rate drops substantially. In 2003, the completion rate of Grade 11 was only 47%.

3.5. Conclusion

The key issue in CREATE is how to address meaningful educational access for girls and boys from age 5 to 15. As this chapter shows, the specific policy challenge in South Africa is less one of enrolment and more one of retention, achievement and completion on schedule for age, especially completion of lower secondary schooling. Achievement data shows the very low levels of basic skill acquisition by Grade 3 and 6. The South African case also shows that the actual age of entry is often more and sometimes less than the official age. Many children are in grades below those appropriate for their age. The age of primary school completion is perhaps several years above the nominal age for the last grade and many primary school children are of secondary school-going age. Late entry appears to reduce the chance of completion and exacerbates slow progression through grades.

Age grade patterns often vary between girls and boys. The South African case also shows that girls persist longer through the higher grades, unlike a number of other developing countries. Substantial early childhood education and pre-schooling are important policy goals yet to be achieved. While pre-school provision is the subject of formal policy commitment in South Africa, the problem of over-enrolment of under-age children in Grade 1 persists. Grade R roll-out appears to be a long way off. It may also have to be made fee-free if it is to reach out to all children.

Figure 18: Enrolment and Age Specific Population



Source: Crouch, 2005

The graph above shows enrolment and age specific population: from Grade 1 to Grade 3 there are more learners enrolled than those in the population that should be enrolled. The causes for this are the following: under- and over-age enrolment in Grade 1, a high retention rate in Grades 2 and 3 and the follow-through of the abnormal enrolment in Grade 1. There is a reduction in enrolment in Grade 5, which is due to repetition, the transition from junior primary schools to intermediate schools, and the dropout of rural children around 12 years of age seeking employment in the agricultural sector.

The increased enrolment in Grade 7 is due to the high retention rate of learners in the last grade of the primary school. The low enrolment in Grade 9 is due to the number of learners that dropout at the end of the compulsory GET phase of education. The increase in the number of learners in Grade 10 is in part caused by a limited number of spaces available for senior secondary education. Thus, Grades 9 and 10 show the impact of dropout due to the end of legal compulsion to attend, increased need to seek income and/or limited space for forward progression.

South Africa is close to achieving universal basic education, particularly when one considers GER figures of over 100% and an NER of close to 83% for the compulsory

phase of schooling. Almost all learners enter school and the majority reach the end of Grade 9. However, there are many vulnerable learners who are prone to dropping out during the compulsory phase of schooling, either as a result of poverty and an inability to afford schooling costs, because of trauma related to HIV/AIDS, which also robs families of breadwinners and imposes care-giving demands, or because of low achievement and poor teaching. The poor quality of schooling contributes to repetition, with both learners and parents losing faith in the education system. This is particularly evident in the post-compulsory phase of schooling, given the large drop out of learners after Grade 9. The biggest access problems in South Africa therefore reside in Zones 3 and 6.

Although information from the Education Management Information System allows us to view provincial and national averages, the data needs to be handled with caution. When learner numbers are collected from schools there is a possibility that they are inflated because teachers and non-personnel resources are partly distributed according to learner numbers. The more learners a school claims, the more funds they can claim from the state. It would be useful, therefore, to check national averages against quantitative studies of access patterns on a smaller scale. Data on transition, completion and repetition will have to be calculated from provincial, district and school-level databases to provide a more comprehensive picture of access. Household surveys will provide valuable socio-economic and other data.

Some of the specific access and policy research concerns emerging from the chapter are as follows:

- Internal efficiency policy measures: monitoring the implementation of the age grade norms (Zones 2 and 5).
- Equitable access: reviewing the implementation of the no fee policy and its impact on resource allocation at the school level.
- The rollout of Grade R and its relationship to improving efficiency in the earlier grades.
- The national picture of dropout: depicting this at district and school level by undertaking tracer studies of drop outs and drop-ins.
- Establishing a profile of the silently excluded and at risk populations through questioning in-school and out-of-school variables such as how these groups fail to meet learning criteria, and how poverty and household conditions contribute to exclusion, respectively.
- Gender and the different levels of participation of boys and girls, particularly at Grade 6 where girls outpace boys.

4. Review of Research on Access to Schooling

4.1. Introduction

The picture that has emerged from the previous chapter's statistical survey is one in which most learners enter and complete primary and lower secondary school (Grade R plus Grades 1 to 9), but numbers begin to drop quite dramatically thereafter in senior secondary school (Grades 10 to 12). While learners are attending school, their achievement levels are low, which suggests that learners are progressing through the grades without necessarily attaining the learning outcomes prescribed by the curriculum. The routine of school may have been established, but learners are increasingly being left behind academically, becoming more and more vulnerable to repetition, drop-out and exclusion.

This chapter identifies a range of factors which permeate contemporary South African society, from the economy to the school and from the family to the individual, and which put stress on these vulnerable learners, affect their learning and can eventually lead to their departure from school. These factors are organised here around four themes:

- economic factors, related to the direct and indirect costs of education;
- social factors, in the context of communities and households, including family structure, gender and HIV/AIDS;
- school factors, such as discrimination, poor facilities and educator unpreparedness; and
- personal factors, such as the health of, support for and motivation of learners themselves.

These categories overlap, of course. It is usually a combination of several factors that causes learners to be absent from, or perform poorly in, schools and eventually to drop out.

4.2. Economic factors

One of the consistent findings of research in South African education is that access is seriously influenced by poverty, in terms of both direct costs of schooling, and indirect (or opportunity) costs such as children being of more productive use to the family if they stay away from school.

Most public attention has focused on the impact of school fees as a barrier which prevents poorer children from attending school. Money can buy access to better quality schools, but even the low levels of fees charged by the poorest schools have proved to be a hurdle for poor families. The Education Rights Project (ERP) and the Education Inclusion and Exclusion in India and South Africa report (INEXSA) (Sayed & Soudien, 2003) indicated that school fees and the non-payment of fees have a bearing on educational access for the poor. Some schools have resorted to illegal and punitive steps to force payment of fees,

such as withholding learners' results, depriving learners of access to school facilities, and humiliating learners and parents publicly (Ramadiro, 2003; Sayed & Soudien, 2003). A number of cases revealed by the Nelson Mandela Foundation's research in rural schools tell of learners who dropped out or missed portions of the school year as a result of criticism or humiliation inflicted on learners by educators and principals because their families were unable to pay the fees (NMF, 2005).

In its *Review of the financing, resourcing and costs of education in public schools*, the national Department of Education acknowledged that non-payment of fees sometimes resulted in schools acting contrary to human rights obligations:

Poor learners whose parents could not pay school fees have been turned away from school, placed in separate rooms, away from other learners, forced to sit on the floor, named and shamed in school assembly, and so on (DoE, 2003a: 54).

Exemption policies are not always made known to parents. Even those learners whose families have been officially exempted from payment have on occasion experienced intimidation and humiliation through comments made by the principal or educators (DoE, 2003a: 90).

Fleisch and Woolman (2004) argue that it is not so much school fees that exclude learners from schools, but additional school costs, which include costs for transport, school uniforms, books and stationery, all of which increase the price of educational access. Further evidence that fees alone do not prevent access to schools in the lower quintiles was provided by the Systemic Evaluation conducted by the national Department in 2001. It was found that, according to principals, only 58% of parents were 'paying school fees'. The Department reported in its *Review* (DoE, 2003a: 83) that a survey of over 40,000 parents of randomly selected learners showed that overall 85% of parents considered school fees to be reasonable. Motala (2006b) notes the huge disparities between affluent and poor fee paying public schools which lead to equally stark quality and equity differentials. In the Department's view, exclusion because of non-payment of school fees affected only a minority of families: 'What the statistics do indicate, however, is that the problem is mainly one of a majority of parents in each school marginalizing a minority' (DoE, 2003a: 83).

Transport difficulties may be the single most significant factor which impedes access to schools, especially for those learners who live beyond a safe walking distance from school. A study conducted by the Education Rights Project in the Sol Plaatje settlement in Gauteng showed that 327 children from the settlement travel distances of 4 to 6 km to school, and a further 382 children travel between 12 and 14 km, thereby incurring costs of up to R14 per day on travel. Interviews with children in the study indicated that if there was no money for taxi fares, they did not go to school (Wilson, 2003). Another report, based on the National Household Travel Survey revealed that, nationally, approximately 12 million learners (76%) walk to reach the nearest relevant education site, 9% use taxis and 8% use cars (DoT, 2005). Rural provinces, such as KwaZulu-Natal, Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, and North West, had a high proportion of learners who walked for more than 30 minutes to reach education sites. These rural learners usually cover long distances

by foot, exposing them to treacherous roads, the danger of car accidents, and (for girl learners) the threat of molestation or rape. The Nelson Mandela Foundation study pointed out that ‘young learners perceive the distance from school as one of the reasons some children drop out of school’ (NMF, 2005:47).

It has been argued that indicators used to determine poverty are not always adequate (Vally, 2001; Ramadiro, 2003). Qualifying for welfare and social grants, or exemption from school fees, does not properly capture the extent of poverty suffered. This is especially so for households which have more than one child of school-going age. A family with four children of school-going age, even if exempt from school fees, must bear four times the non-fee costs of schooling, in particular the costs of uniforms, transport and stationery. Such education costs increase family poverty but are often overlooked.

Writing from an African perspective, Harsch (2000) suggested that the effects of natural disasters, such as floods and drought, are usually not examined when determining the poverty levels of families. Similarly, it is important to include variables such as the costs of diseases like HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis, to get a more realistic account of the actual poverty levels and disposable income available to African families. Clearly, then, which indicators are used when measuring poverty levels of families is a matter of debate and requires more research.

A study conducted by Porteus et al. (2000) over two years (1998 and 1999), of 69 out-of-school and 60 out-of-age learners in two informal settlements and one hostel complex located in the Kathorus township cluster east of Johannesburg, found that protracted poverty was the most important reason for learners being out of school. The depth of poverty – in terms of its material deprivation, social isolation and psychological consequences – distinguished the children who were not in school from their peers in the same poor community. In these schools, fees were low (R50 per annum), but they became a practical barrier which was the ‘last straw’ when combined with other costs. The out-of-school learners in the study also lacked social support networks (Porteus *et al.*, 2000: 43). The report pointed out that ‘their social connections within their communities often reached no further than immediate neighbours’ (they were found in a door to door search), and approximately half (47%) had had no contact with inter-sectoral services of any kind over a period of a year (Porteus *et al.*, 2000: 44). A final defining characteristic of the deep poverty experienced by out-of-school learners was their sense of powerlessness to negotiate the bureaucracy and procedures for school entry.

The finding that direct and indirect costs contribute to lack of access, or late entry, into school is supported by a number of studies which gauge the impact of cash transfers to poor families as having a positive effect on enrolment.

Case et al. (2005) assessed the impact of the Child Support Grant⁴ in the Umkhanyakude district in KwaZulu-Natal, and found that the grant appeared to ‘overcome the impact of poverty on school enrolment’ (2005: 469). Using data collected from approximately 11 000 African households, the study found that children who received the grant (in 2002) were significantly more likely to be enrolled in school in the years following receipt of the grant than equally poor children of the same age (Case *et al.*, 2005: 468). Among six year olds, receipt of the grant was associated with an 8.1% increase in school enrolment, and among seven year olds a 1.8% increase. Their older siblings, on the other hand, who were of school-going age before the Child Support Grant was implemented, were significantly less likely than other children of the same age to be enrolled in school. Because grant recipient households were poorer on average (measured in terms of household assets, parents’ educational attainment and employment), the findings of the survey suggested that the Child Support Grant enabled households to cover the expenses of schooling or to improve the nutrition and health of learners, both of which contributed to their school readiness.

The data did not indicate any gender differential in school attendance as a result of the Child Support Grant. A gender difference in nutritional status was, however, found by Duflo (2003) in her study of old-age pensions and intra-household allocations. Interestingly, Duflo found that granddaughters benefited most from the pensions received by their grandmothers:

pensions received by women increased the weight for height of girls by 1.19 standard deviations but did not significantly increase that of boys. Pensions received by men are not associated with an improvement in the nutritional status of either girls or boys (Duflo, 2003:3).

Unexpected shocks to poor households intuitively could suggest a possible disruption to schooling for children in the household. However, Hunter and May (2003) found that this was not the case. They found that a substantial proportion (41%) of all households reported experiencing some type of shock during the 24-month period prior to September/October 1999. But only 3% of those households said that they had removed one or more of their children from school (Hunter and May, 2003: 17). This suggests that once learners are in school, households choose to keep up attendance even when faced with unexpected pressures. It can be inferred from this study, therefore, that the effect of poverty impacts mainly at the point of enrolment.

The evidence reviewed so far suggests that the costs of schooling are undoubtedly burdensome to poverty-stricken families. In a minority of cases, this results in drop-out, but its biggest impact appears to be in delaying school entry. Further research could investigate whether such delays are repeated at subsequent points of entry, such as Grade 4 (among learners from schools that cater only for the foundation phase) and Grade 9 (the

⁴ The Child Support Grant is a non-conditional means-tested cash transfer given to parents or primary caregivers whose monthly income is less than R1100. Initially the grant was targeted at children under the age of 7 but was extended to those younger than 14 years. The grant has steadily increased from R110 per eligible child in 2002 to R190 in 2006.

transition point to senior secondary school). As the following studies will show, once in school most children complete the primary phase, though for many the journey is protracted.

Hallman and Grant (2004), reporting on their longitudinal study, observed that most young people had attained at least primary education by age 20, but poor children are more likely to have had ‘school delays’.⁵ Of the approximately 3000 adolescents interviewed (in the Durban Metropolitan Area and the rural Mtunzini Magisterial District), more than half of the 14-15 year old youths in the lowest socio-economic quintiles had experienced a delay in schooling. By contrast, in the highest asset-rich quintile, only 27% of boys and 15% of girls had experienced delays.

Table 21: Proportion of youth who have experienced school delays, by asset quintile of the family

Asset quintile	Male					Female				
	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-22	23-24	14-15	16-17	18-19	20-22	23-24
Low	54	61	65	70	78	52	48	62	66	65
Low-mid	64	62	65	62	81	54	58	57	65	55
Mid	41	67	63	66	75	28	50	54	59	69
High-mid	41	40	46	50	64	30	36	43	55	65
High	27	27	33	35	27	15	19	15	32	36
Total	45	51	53	56	68	35	42	47	57	60

Source: Hallman and Grant (2004: 4)

Hallman and Grant also found that pregnancy is the most common reason for slow progress among females; other factors included own illness, inability to pay fees, and child-care responsibilities. For males, inability to pay school fees is the most common reason for school delay, followed by own illness, and having to work. While African girls advance more quickly through primary schooling than African boys, by age 20 attainment levels even out between the genders.

Using 1995 October Household Survey (OHS) data, Anderson et al. (2001) found that African children who were lagging behind in their school grade had less money spent on school fees, school transport, and other school expenses. Learners who were behind six or more years for their grade had approximately half as much money spent on their schooling as children who were age-appropriate. This result persisted in multivariate analyses, controlling for such factors as the student’s age, gender, family structure, location, and household socio-economic characteristics. The assumption is that fees are correlated with quality, and learners in better schools are less likely to repeat grades.

⁵ A delay is defined as a year of non-advancement because of either not having enrolled at all during a particular year (but eventually returning to school), or withdrawal during the year, or repeating a grade because of poor performance the previous year.

Reinforcing this, Anderson *et al.* found that ‘African disadvantage in schooling is not primarily the result of learners dropping out of school early, but rather driven by a lower rate of grade attainment that begins in early grades’ (2001: 3). They found that Africans completed about 0.80 grades per year for the ages 10 to 16, whereas whites completed 0.94. The impact of high repetition rates was evident in a detailed study of Gugulethu High School, a township school in Cape Town where roughly two-thirds of the learners had repeated at least one grade, and more than one-third had repeated two grades. The effect of repetition is under-researched but, as Anderson *et al.* put it, it is ‘potentially a self-reinforcing process’ (Anderson *et al.*, 2001: 3) with repeaters less likely to fare well in future grades. Indeed, in the Gugulethu High School study, each additional year of age resulted in a decrease of between 0.5% and 2% in the final year examination. With ages ranging between 17 and 30 years, scores for the older learners lagged 10% behind their 18 year old colleagues.

Much data reflects access patterns from the mid-1990s and earlier. It was also found that many apparent drop-outs may in fact be enrolled elsewhere in the school system, and that repetition is a greater problem than drop-out, according to a seminal 1995 tracer study of drop-out and repetition rates among a thousand children in Gauteng (Motala, 1995). Since then, new policies on age-grade norms and assessment have been taking effect, and the toll of repetition may be less extensive. Changing repetition patterns is therefore another area for further research.

4.3. Social factors

The studies reviewed so far indicate that the direct and indirect costs of schooling contribute to delayed access and irregular attendance. Further explanation is needed for the fact that large numbers of poor learners continue to attend school, even in the face of such deterrents as child labour, fostering, HIV/AIDS, poor nutrition and pregnancy.

One consequence of poverty is an increased reliance on child labour.⁶ Children may be required to work for money or on domestic tasks that free adults for employment (or to look for employment). An obvious concern with child labour is its potential disruption to schooling, but there is little evidence in the South African context that this is the case.

The Survey of the Activities of Young People (SAYP), conducted in 1999 by Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2001b), suggested that child labour was widespread in the country, but it did not seem to prevent children from attending school. This may be because opportunities for children to directly contribute income were very rare given the high unemployment rate and legislation prohibiting child labour. According to SAYP data, 93% of children performing economic activities for at least three hours per week

⁶ Child labour is defined in the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (No. 75 of 1997, section 43) as work by children younger than 15 or who have not completed compulsory schooling, and work that places at risk the child’s well-being, education, physical or mental health, or spiritual, moral or social development.

were attending school (StatsSA, 2001b: Table 7.7). Only when children worked more than 36 hours per week (about 5 hours per day) was it likely that school attendance dropped significantly (StatsSA, 2001b: 61).

Children's work is often done after school hours but this may nonetheless impact on performance in school. The survey showed that children engaged in child labour experienced difficulties with finding time to study and to catch up with class work. Those doing a combination of unpaid household chores and school work were more likely to face problems than children doing other kinds of work (StatsSA, 2001b: 63). In Bray's (2003a, 2003b) view, however, the difficulties experienced were more likely a result of poor schooling (in terms of both teaching and physical resources) than work participation per se (Bray, 2003a: 18). Children aged 10-14 who did economic work were less literate than their peers who did not work (StatsSA, 2001b: 65). However, this difference disappeared once children reached 14 years of age, and in fact reversed amongst 17 year olds. In Bray's words, 'the most plausible potential sources of harm to children who spend long hours doing household chores are levels of tiredness that affect school attendance and performance' (Bray, 2003a: 18).

Working children in the Statistics South Africa survey gave different reasons for not attending school. The primary reasons were inability to afford school fees, illness, pregnancy and child-rearing, and lack of interest because of poor school quality (StatsSA, 2001b: 64). Significantly, less than 1% of children engaged in economic activity who missed school cited their involvement in work as their reason for being out of school (2001b: Table 7.10).

A study conducted by the Nelson Mandela Foundation (NMF) in 2005 into rural schools in three provinces provided a picture of the barriers that prevent access. While few respondents in the survey of 599 households mentioned the cost of schooling as a reason for absenteeism or drop-out, educator respondents pointed to poverty as an important barrier to access, since a high percentage of children were kept at home to help with domestic and farm work, like cultivation and dipping cattle.

Table 22: Reasons for absenteeism and drop-out as reported by educators and caregivers in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape

	Educators (%) Reasons for absenteeism and drop-out		Caregivers (%) Main reasons why learners miss school
	F	M	
Care of siblings	22	7	2
Helping parents with domestic work	41	21	6
Helping parents with cultivation and livestock	21	46	4
Helping parents with other wage-earning activities	14	18	1
Wage labour	4	9	
Lack of parental interest in education	51	48	0
Lack of interest of child in what is taught			2
Lack of learner interest in education	30	42	
Schooling is too expensive	7	8	
Looking after sick family members	16	12	2
Pregnancy	29		
Ill-health			57
Lack of pressure to attend by parents			2
Visiting relatives			3
Other			21

Source: NMF, 2005:57

The NMF report noted: ‘Punishment for late-coming is not uncommon, so many children simply stay away from school on those days when their chores make them very late’ (NMF, 2005: 44). According to the report:

Not only do parents need their children’s labour, they also believe that household chores are part of learning about and preparing for life, complementing formal education. This is not a simple question of cost alone, but is embedded in social mores and values (NMF, 2005: 46).

The report also noted that absenteeism was high in the first week after schools reopen, as learners trickled back from holidaying in urban areas.

Access to schooling may be increased for children who migrate to increase their chances of school entry, but it could also be disrupted. Internal migration in South Africa has remained relatively constant at around 12% of the population in each five-year period investigated by Statistics South Africa (1975-80, 1992-96 and 1996-2001), but the flow is not all one way (Lehohla, 2006). Statistics South Africa (StatsSA, 2005: 23) has documented the significant migration of people from largely rural areas and provinces to more urbanised areas. Young adults in particular move to more industrialised provinces in search of employment opportunities.

A recent multi-level analysis of migration in the N4 corridor linking Limpopo and Mpumalanga Provinces and Gauteng has illuminated the complex dynamic of South African rural-urban migration, the importance of migration to small rural towns, and the phenomenon of circular rural-urban-rural migration.

The findings ... can be summarised as follows: the metropolitan populations are growing from migration, but not all the growth is permanent. Strong links exist between a large proportion of city and rural dwellers. These may be unusually enduring due to the history of segregationist settlement policies of the past and the entrenched patterns of labour migration. The experience of temporary migration acts as a precedent and migrant networks have developed through 'cumulative causation'. These links are strengthened daily and continue to grow.

Small towns emerged as key development nodes in the migration analysis at subprovincial level. Small towns are attracting populations which do not return to the rural villages. This is a different pattern to links between the rural village and urban areas from which robust flows of people move in both directions, namely, 'rural-to-urban' and 'urban-to-rural'. Women are on the move, taking families out of the rural villages and into the small nearby towns.

The household level analysis highlights the startling prevalence of temporary migration as an individual and household strategy linking the rural areas of with larger settlements. The case study shows remarkably high levels of temporary migration among rural men and increasing trends among rural African women (Collinson *et al.*, 2006: 32).

The scale of such migration in other parts of the country may yet be unclear but the pattern is likely to be similar. Clearly social services including education are significantly affected in the communities of origin as well as the receiving communities. Collinson *et al.* (2006: 36) report that 'school is the most prevalent cause' of the flow of rural migrant children under the age of 14 to Gauteng.

Migration within urban areas, especially among poor residents of informal settlements, has similar effects (Wilson, 2003; Porteus *et al.*, 2000). The study by Porteus *et al.* found that out-of-school learners in Kathorus township were highly mobile, with 60% having moved homes at least once in the preceding five years. Six 'pathways linking high residential mobility to the lack of school attendance' were identified: refusal of mid-year entry to school; lack of documentation; general instability; new medium of instruction; no entry for illegal immigrants; and short-term visit becoming long-term stay (Porteus *et al.*, 2000: 76).

HIV/AIDS is a significant cause of mobility among rural and urban families, with attendant disruptive effects on children's lives and well-being that cannot help but affect the continuity of their schooling:

Migration occurs for several reasons and people move both within and between rural and urban areas. Some identified forms of migration include ‘going-home-to-die’, rural widows moving to town to seek work or the help of relatives, and potential caregivers and dependants moving between kin households to achieve the most optimum care arrangements for all concerned. Children are frequently relocated (Richter, 2004: 10).

Adolescents, Richter suggests, ‘are particularly affected by migration, as girls are sent to help out in other households, or as children are encouraged to try and fend for themselves by working – including street work’ (Richter, 2004: 10).

Apart from mobility, another possible predictor of children’s enrolment (or not) in school is whether they live with both, one, or neither of their biological parents. It is assumed that the likelihood of children enrolling in school drops if they are in single-parent or fostered households. Since the level of fostering is relatively high in South Africa, it is important to determine the veracity of this assumption. According to the South African Demographic and Health Survey (conducted by the national Department of Health in 1998), 24% of households had foster children (children under the age of 15 who had no biological parents in the household). In urban areas the proportion of households with foster children was 17%, while it was double in non-urban areas, at 34% (DoH, 1998: 10).

Anderson (2003) used a sample of 16,338 children from the 1995 October Household Survey (OHS) to test whether the presence of biological parents in a household predicted school enrolment and outcomes. They found that black and coloured children who lived with neither parent were the most disadvantaged in terms of probability of enrolment, the highest grade completed, the rate of attainment, and expenditure on school fees. Living with just one parent did not seem to make a difference relative to living with both parents. Anderson suggested this was ‘a protective effect of the presence of a parent’ (Anderson, 2003: 9).

Similar conclusions on fostering were reported by Anderson in a later analysis (2005) using a sample of 11 211 black South African children from the same 1995 October Household Survey and the 1995 Income and Expenditure Survey (conducted by Statistics South Africa). Anderson found that relatedness had no effect on children currently attending school, but that children were behind in terms of their age (Anderson, 2005: 22). While the data suggested that children living with distant relatives may have been at a disadvantage, an alternative explanation is that these children had greater disruptions in their schooling history than children living with their biological parents (Anderson, 2005: 24). Anderson’s findings on child fostering support the access patterns presented earlier, that is, that access to school is delayed, followed by slower progress through the system.

But Anderson’s findings are slightly at odds with those of Zimmerman (2003), who found ‘no Cinderella effect for children fostered to a close relative’. That is, South

African households treat foster children whom they are related to as they do their own children in terms of human capital investment (2003: 279). In Zimmerman's view, this is true across ages, gender, and rural households. His hypothesis was 'that foster children typically move from low-resource families without access to educational opportunities to families with more resources and better access to education' (2003: 561). Zimmerman used data on 3320 black households collected in 1993 by the South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU). It showed that 'the institution of fostering allows parents to boost their child's chances of enrolment again by a 2-3 percentage-point increase' (Zimmerman, 2003: 583). Furthermore, while both 'boys and girls are equally likely to be fostered, and both boys and girls benefit considerably from fosterage', there do appear to be some gender-differential effects, because:

boys benefit half-again as much as girls do. These results are due in large part to the differences in what enrolment rates would have been if girls and boys had stayed in their biological families. Boys appear to be more vulnerable to adverse household circumstances, and thus stand more to gain from changing them through fostering (Zimmerman, 2003: 589).

That young people remain in primary school despite high repetition rates also suggests that there is a high demand for schooling and strong familial and social pressure to secure it despite the significant sacrifices poor families must make. Young people interviewed in the 'Transitions to Adulthood' study conducted by Rutenberg *et al.* (2001) noted that 97% of interviewees considered that the persons they felt closest to within their family would want them to complete school, and 94% said this person would want them to continue studying after high school.

Similarly, the Nelson Mandela Foundation study (2005) into rural schools found that parents were committed to schooling their children, though their reasoning around the purposes of education differed for boys and girls. For girls, education was more strongly linked to marriage and childcare – although a substantial minority of caregiver respondents in the survey (22%, 25% and 40% in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape, respectively) felt it would be more difficult for educated women to marry (NMF, 2005: 39).

While there is a demand for education, parents and guardians are not always able to provide the necessary background and knowledge of schooling to support their children – and this may provide at least one clue to why learners fail and repeat. The NMF study found that levels of education of adults were low. The literacy levels of female respondents were 69% in Limpopo, 59% in KwaZulu-Natal and 70% in the Eastern Cape. Illiterate and semi-literate parents are unable to provide much assistance to learners with their schoolwork, other than moral support and encouragement. Of the learners interviewed for the NMF research, 65% reported that no one in their households was sufficiently educated to help with homework, and a further 44% said they turned to an older sibling for assistance (2005: 29).

A strong correlation between the educational levels of (co-resident) mothers and that of their children is evident in data gleaned from the 1995 October Household Survey. Anderson *et al.* found that there was approximately two full grades differential between African children (at ages 13 and 17) where the mother had 12 years of schooling and those where the mother had less than 4 years (2001: 6). The effects of a father's schooling level are roughly equal to those of a mother's and there was no differential impact on the learning outcomes of girls and boys (2001: 6). The researchers suggested that educated parents were more likely to provide support for learning and to send their children to better schools. Nevertheless, referring to the Gugulethu High School Study, they note that 'the relationship between parents' schooling and children's schooling among the 603 learners surveyed in this one low-quality school is weak, in spite of considerable variation in parents' schooling' (Anderson *et al.*, 2001: 6).

Turning now to the access-effects of HIV/AIDS on children and families, Richter (2004: 13) notes that these effects are incremental, and far worse for poor communities with inadequate infrastructure and access to basic services: in fact, 'poverty amplifies the effects of HIV/AIDS on children and renders their effects on children unrelenting'. The safety nets provided by extended families and community networks, as well as the potential support given by the school to affected children (if they can be enabled to stay in school) may prove crucial in the context of HIV/AIDS. The pandemic is having an enormous impact on demographic and social patterns in South Africa and is possibly the most important single factor impacting on access to school, since it affects both supply (because educators are affected) and demand for education.

HIV prevalence amongst children aged 2 to 18 years is approximately 5.4% and is nearly constant among age groups although somewhat higher in the 2-9 age group according to a Nelson Mandela Foundation/Human Sciences Research Council study undertaken in 2002 (Brookes *et al.*, 2005: xv, 17). Three percent of the sampled children between 12-18 years said they were head of their households. Nine percent of children live in households that do not contain a parent, grandparent or spouse (StatsSA, 2001b: 6).

HIV/AIDS is likely to lead to school drop-outs, if young people themselves are ill, or take on additional responsibilities of caring for ill parents or siblings. In addition, AIDS-related deaths of productive household members are likely to deprive households of cash incomes, and therefore leave less money to pay for education-related expenses. Lack of motivation and trauma as a result of illness and death are also likely to increase absenteeism among affected children.

The length of time children are absent from school as a result of care-taking responsibilities, and their ability to reintegrate into schools at a later stage, is as yet unclear. A longitudinal study in the Free State found a statistically significant difference between non-attendance in school for older children in households affected by HIV as opposed to their peers in non-affected households (Booyesen & Arntz, 2002). These researchers found that proportionately fewer children between 7 and 13 years of age were out of school compared to adolescents (14 to 18 years), which suggested that older

siblings were more likely to take on caring roles or domestic tasks in HIV affected households. Bray (2003a, 2003b) noted a lack of substantial research investigating the links between HIV/AIDS and children's work responsibilities, though her own research in one community in the Western Cape found that caring responsibilities tended to fall on neighbours or kin rather than on children.

On the other hand Richter (2004: 11) reports that school attendance of children in HIV/AIDS affected families falls off because of their increased family responsibilities including work, loss of family income or stigmatisation.

Girls are more likely to be withdrawn from school as a result of HIV/AIDS. A survey of households affected by the pandemic in four provinces found that within a total sample of 330 children who were maternal orphans, twice as many girls than boys dropped out of school (Johnson *et al.*, 2002: 2). But their survey also showed that boys under the age of 18 were just as likely to be primary caregivers as girls of the same age (2002: 4).

It does appear, however, that withdrawal from school is a last resort. Schools offer a sense of continuity or routine for families experiencing the devastating effects of HIV/AIDS. A survey conducted in Limpopo Province reported that HIV-affected households spent 8.5% of total household expenditure on education (about R259 per month), compared to unaffected households which spent a proportionately higher amount, 15.6% (a mean of R640) (Oni *et al.*, 2002: 553). Yet, the difference in expenditures on housing between affected and unaffected households is greater, suggesting that spending on other basic needs is trimmed before children are pulled out of school (Bray, 2003a:21).

HIV-infected mothers are inclined to keep their children in school, as reported by De Lannoy (2005). This finding was based on a small qualitative study carried out in Khayelitsha, a poor settlement in the Cape Town Metropolitan area, of ten HIV-positive mothers. The research found that the women saw education as being 'very important' because schools provided a social space where their children enjoyed a feeling of belonging and equality. For these mothers, education also had instrumental value, as a way to employment and independence for their children – and as a coping strategy in the face of the disease. These mothers' experience is reflected in Richter's (2004: 25) conclusion that school education is extraordinarily important in supporting the security and psycho-social health of HIV/AIDS affected children in conditions of extreme poverty.

The authors of the Nelson Mandela Foundation/HSRC study of the HIV risk to children comment that more research is needed on child migration between families and other localities, adaptations to other constraints on proper childcare, and the burden of orphanhood (Brookes *et al.*, 2005: 41). Clearly, such work will be relevant to the study of school access among vulnerable children.

Yet another contributing factor to weak learner performance, repetition and dropout is poor nutritional status. Kallmann (2005) found that malnutrition, hunger, parasitic infections, and a lack of nutrients in diet (particularly iron and iodine) diminish children's cognitive development, either through physiological changes or by reducing their ability to participate in learning experiences, or both. Kallmann pointed out that children with diminished cognitive abilities and sensory impairments were more likely to repeat grades, drop out of school, or enrol at a later age than healthy children. The problem is serious if one considers the Health Systems Trust's (Barron, 1997) estimation that at least 20% of primary school children were stunted and suffered from chronic malnutrition.

Gustafsson's (2005) analysis of the 2000 Southern & Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) data revealed that 65% of learners in historically disadvantaged schools received lunch on all days, and 8% of children went without lunch every day. Gustafsson estimated that 'if all learners were to eat three meals a day, we might expect a performance improvement of around 2%' (2005: 22).

Social factors such as nutrition and health affect learners' access to school, and their ability to remain at least until the end of basic education, even if their progression through the grades is slow. In spite of these difficulties, dropout tends to be a final resort and affects particularly marginalised children.

Finally, although teenage pregnancy is less of a concern for girls in primary school (the under-15 age group) than in secondary school, early childbearing is a significant factor in schooling disruption. Department of Health data showed that, in 1998, 35% of 19-year old girls had given birth at least once (DoH, 1998).

Kaufman et al.'s (2000) study on teenage pregnancy was based on focus group discussions in May 1998 in Soweto and rural Agincourt, Limpopo. Participants in the groups were teenage mothers, mothers in their 20s who had had their first child before age 20, parents of adolescent mothers, and young men in their 20s. They found that older mothers had achieved roughly equivalent educational status to the young men, indicating that even if schooling was disrupted during pregnancy or post-partum, these teenage mothers were eventually able to re-enter schooling. This was despite girls carrying primary responsibility for childcare, and families not always being willing or able to accommodate the schedule of a young mother attending school. For boys, the need to make payments for child maintenance or for *lobola* often implied leaving school to find work.

Hallman and Grant (2004) used data from the Transitions to Adulthood dataset (compiled by Rutenberg *et al.*, 2001), collected in KwaZulu-Natal. They used:

multivariate analysis to explore how the school environment and previous academic performance – such as previous school delays, connectedness to school and community, and age of school entry – and socio-economic factors influence the likelihood that a young woman becomes pregnant, that she is enrolled in school at the time of pregnancy, and if enrolled, the likelihood of drop-out versus

continuing her education (Hallman and Grant, 2004: 2).

Hallman and Grant (2004) noted that 16% of 14 to 19 year old girls had been pregnant, and 73% of these were in school at the time of their pregnancy. Of those enrolled in school at the time of pregnancy, 74% dropped out and 23% did not. Higher rates of pregnancy occurred among poorer young women.

4.4. School factors

The preceding sections examined factors which for the most part are outside the school gate. This section moves on to those in-school dynamics which encourage or discourage access. The main focus here is on the broad institutional ethos of schools, including those practices, attitudes and facilities which function either to welcome or discourage learners – especially those who are disadvantaged or have been out of school for any length of time. On a pedagogical level, debates centre around two cardinal issues: first, factors affecting low learner achievement levels, which in turn are associated with low educator preparedness levels; and second, the widespread incidence of discrimination and intolerance in various forms.

The quality of learning in schools has been of concern for some time. South Africa was one of 38 countries which participated in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests in literacy and numeracy, conducted by the International Study Center at Boston College. Results showed that South African learners were among the lowest on the scale in terms of their actual achievement levels. The most recent Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation Report (DoE, 2005b) gave similar findings, and highlighted just how serious the problem of quality is in South African education. Learners obtained a national mean score of 38% in Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), 27% in Mathematics, and 41% in Natural Sciences. Most worrying was that open-ended questions were particularly poorly answered, suggesting that learners might have scored slightly better in the Natural Sciences tests because 72% of the questions were multiple choice. The worst performing learners came from township, rural and farm schools. Learners whose home language was the same as the Language of Learning and Teaching scored significantly higher than those who learnt in a language other than their mother-tongue. However, LOLT may be a measure of other socio-economic factors. One of the recommendations from the report was that

particular attention should be paid to ensuring that schools have proper strategies for dealing with punctuality and absenteeism of learners and educators for the maximisation of available learning and teaching time (DoE, 2005b: 118).

Taylor and Vinjevoold's (1999) study on Foundation Phase classes found that not only were learners in these classes unable to read and write adequately, but their educators lacked the 'pedagogical content knowledge' to equip learners with the skills they needed. There is much debate around the lack of achievement levels among South African learners, ranging from those who dispute whether this data was a fair reflection of what happens in schools (Fleisch & Perry, 2005), to the complicated nature of the curriculum

design in the new outcomes based forms of education (DoE, 2001a), to the conflation of knowledge forms in a skills based curriculum (Young, 2006; Taylor, 2002). Whatever the explanation, the point is that on a pedagogical level, learners who had structural access to schooling still lacked *epistemic access*: they did not have access to the content knowledge or the skills they needed to reach the required levels of achievement and competency.

A consistent observation of the South African education system is that there is differential access to schools. Learning outcomes can often be predicted, depending on the previous racial department and the geographic location of the school. Such differentials were also evident in statistics collected for the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC). This data showed that 60% of rural educators were required to teach classes with more than 46 learners. An analysis of the responses of the 20 488 educators showed that 58% of African educators were responsible for classes of about 46 learners, while over 60% of white educators taught classes smaller than 35 (Phurutse, 2005: 5-6).

Overcrowded classes, absentee educators, and continuing use of corporal punishment featured in many of the descriptions young people provided of their schools in the study in KwaZulu-Natal conducted by Rutenberg *et al.* (2001). Some of the findings were: 70% reported that their classrooms were noisy, 45% that they are crowded and 39% that they are dirty; 25% stated that their educators were often absent; 48% said they did not have all required textbooks; 11% reported sexual harassment from fellow learners; and 5% experienced harassment from educators, with girls and learners from urban areas more likely to note sexual harassment (Rutenberg *et al.*, 2001:26).

Yet despite these often chaotic conditions, Rutenberg *et al.*'s study showed that young people reported a sense of social connection in their schools. Three-quarters of the 2 415 respondents said they had many friends at school, and 93% thought that the educators cared about the learners. A large majority (86%) felt safe at school, though 27% also reported violence among learners. One-third of all respondents said they would be happier if they attended a different school, with rural and African learners more likely to express this sentiment (2001:27).

Farm schools are amongst those in greatest need. In a survey of 4, 657 farm schools (Human Rights Watch, 2004), 1 273 of the schools did not have toilets on site and virtually no schools had libraries or specialised classrooms. Few offered classes beyond Grade 7. The schools tended to be small, with fewer than 50 learners. As of 2000, approximately 20% of farm schools were one-educator schools (Human Rights Watch, 2004). If the educator is absent for any reason the school is effectively closed. In addition to inadequate qualifications, farm school educators seldom benefited from educator development programmes, largely because farm schools tend to be isolated and far from towns. The Human Rights Watch report also found that labour disputes emanating from the introduction, in April 2003, of the minimum wage for farm workers had impacted on education. The report found cases of farm school closures linked to evictions of farm workers, the sale of the farms, a change in the nature of the business operations, or disputes with the provincial Department of Education arising from non-payment of rent

or lack of the legal agreement (required by SASA) between the Department and the farmer.

Large class sizes, new assessment practices, and lack of resources were among the reasons given by educators for increased workloads. However, time-on-task was another significant problem. A study of 3,909 educators (Chisholm *et al.*, 2005) revealed that they spent slightly less than the required 43 hours per week on their various activities (41 hours per week). On average, only 16 hours per week (3.2 hours per day) was spent on teaching. Educators were expected to teach between 22.5 and 27.5 hours per week, but the study found that administrative tasks took precedence over class contact time. Rural educators and those with classes of over 50 learners spent less time on teaching activities than their counterparts in urban areas, with smaller classes. Chisholm *et al.* reported that ‘educators spend progressively less time on teaching and other school related activities as the week progresses, with very little teaching recorded on Fridays in many schools’ (2005: 11).

Educators’ late-coming is another problem. Gustafsson (2005: 22) identified that 85% of school principals in the 2000 SACMEQ sample regarded late-coming amongst educators as a problem. In Gustafsson’s view, if this problem were eliminated, achievement scores of learners would increase by around 15% in the system as a whole.

Large class sizes remain a problem for many educators. The adverse effect of high learner-educator ratios on enrolment and achievement was captured by Case and Deaton (1999) who combined the 1993 South African Living Standards Survey (SALSS) with data from the *Education Atlas of South Africa* (Krige *et al.*, 1995), which measured average quality of schooling in a district. They found that even when household background variables were controlled for, high educator-learner ratios reduced maths scores. Furthermore, good quality schooling had a significant positive effect on the number of years of completed education. Using data from the 1996 census, Case and Yogo (1999) found that reducing the learner-educator ratio by 10 learners would have increased completed schooling by 0.6 years, all else being equal.

Epistemic access for school-going learners, as defined earlier, is largely determined by parents’ and educators’ level of content knowledge and skills required for high levels of achievement and competency. The lack of epistemic access signals a dire need for educator development and support. The *Report of the Review Committee of Curriculum 2005* (DoE, 2001c) noted that the training provided to educators in order to implement the new curriculum in South African education had been utterly inadequate and of poor quality.

Limited epistemic access and its influence on learner achievement is compounded by the effects of discrimination and violence. Discrimination operates on a social relational level and in interactions between people in schools, communities and homes. Discriminatory interactions are developed by ‘non-input’ factors or non-material factors which cannot be easily quantified and whose costs cannot be readily calculated.

Race, gender, HIV/AIDS, and disability affect educational access and performance. Given apartheid's legacy, the problem of racial integration in schools has received a great deal of attention – although proportionately multi-racial schools are a minority. The migration of learners took place from former black schools into formerly coloured, Indian and white schools. Research undertaken by Paterson and Kruss (1998) concluded that 'educational migration patterns are driven either by a lack of local access to educational opportunities, or by the motivation to gain access to educational opportunities that are perceived to be better' (1998: 150).

Some formerly white schools have resisted the admission of black learners on the pretext of protecting white culture, a contention rejected by the government and the courts. In Potgietersrus, a rural town in Northern (now Limpopo) Province, the local dual medium (Afrikaans/English) primary school turned black learners away on the grounds that the school's Afrikaans culture and ethos would be impaired by their admission. The High Court in the case of *Matikane and others v. Laerskool Potgietersrus* ruled that the black learners had been unfairly discriminated against and ordered that they be admitted (see De Groof & Bray, 1996; Veriava & Coomans, 2005: 67-68).

While schools are no longer allowed to discriminate on the basis of race, a number of exclusionary devices have limited access to comparatively better quality ex-Model C schools. The first limiting factor was geographic area since the schools are located in previously white residential areas, meaning that most black learners had to travel into the cities from townships, adding to the cost of their schooling. The second exclusionary mechanism was financial, as fees at these schools are relatively high. Third, schools excluded potential learners by presenting themselves as places of privilege where white cultural norms, traditions and language defined the ethos of the school, and learners who came in from outside those traditions were expected to fit into the dominant culture.

Problems of racism in schools were prevalent in formerly white schools in the early years after 1994. The South African Human Rights Commission's 1999 report on racism in public secondary schools showed that racism affected educational access and performance levels of children (Vally & Dalambo, 1999).

The Education Inclusion and Exclusion in India and South Africa project (INEXSA) has analysed a less overt form of racism. This project investigated processes of integration in 14 schools in the provinces of KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Western Cape (Soudien, 2004), and found that a tendency towards assimilationism was the overriding approach taken by these schools. Assimilationism took three forms: aggressive assimilationism, which is 'brusque [and] characterised by high degrees of intolerance and often violence'; assimilationism by stealth, in schools which have political credentials, such as some former Indian and coloured schools, but which leave racial issues unaddressed; and benign assimilationism, where schools (usually formerly white and English-speaking) presents themselves as multicultural but maintain dominant relationships (Sayed and Soudien, 2003: 104-105). In sum, these schools discriminated

against learners who were different from the dominant culture – by race or class – by discouraging their admission, or including them on the assumption that they would be made to fit in with predetermined norms.

Using findings from the INEXSA project, Sayed and Soudien (2003) showed that the new exclusionary practices invoked discourses around ‘standards’, ‘language’ and school fees. Admission to former white, Indian and coloured schools was controlled at the entry gate as schools attempted to preserve their established ways of doing things and explained their access policies as upholding standards of excellence, or argued that learners’ inability to speak the language of learning and teaching disqualified them from admission.

Refugees experienced similar alienation, as Sookrajh et al. (2005) found in a school that had admitted refugee children since 1997. Subtle ‘exclusionary practices’ kept learners from being fully integrated into the school community: for example, learners were labelled as ‘refugees’ by the school authority, a term the refugee learners felt carried a negative connotation, including a sense of disloyalty to their country of origin. Peers teased them with derogatory terms such as *kwerekwere*. The authors argued that ‘the discourse of vulnerability can contribute to the way in which these learners get included or excluded in school’ (2005: 8). The learners were viewed as vulnerable, and were essentialised. This ‘predisposed assistance programmes towards offering palliative care rather than confronting underlying systemic injustices – the danger of this being regarded as a dependency syndrome, addicted to assistance’ (Sookrajh *et al.*, 2005: 12).

The gender of learners has a direct impact on educational access and performance. Adverse male attitudes and behaviour towards schoolgirls is a matter of serious concern. The Human Rights Watch’s report (2001), entitled ‘Scared at School – Sexual Violence Against Girls in South African Schools’, reported that girls frequently encounter violence in school, including rape, sexual abuse, sexual harassment and assault by male classmates and educators (though the finding of Rutenberg *et al.*, 2001, discussed above, is less pessimistic). Many of the girls who experienced assault told how their school performance suffered, and others dropped out of school altogether. The culture of silence around sexual violence in schools has made gathering reliable statistics on the extent of the problem extremely difficult. The Human Rights Watch report asserted that sexual harassment and violence had become normalised in schools, cases were often concealed, and victims who reported abuse talked of further victimisation and stigmatisation. Last year, the Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, stated outright that schools were not ‘safe’ for girls (DoE, 2006c).

Girls have been forced to leave some schools because they were pregnant (despite this contradicting government policy). Many others have been withdrawn from schools to mind and rear children at home, including siblings or relatives orphaned by AIDS (Chisholm & September, 2005).

Several initiatives aim at making South African schools safer places, including the abolition of corporal punishment, which is a criminal offence under the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, 1996a). The level of bullying and violence in schools and its impact on dropout and absenteeism is under-researched. The seriousness of bullying and violence was confirmed by the Educator School Survey (Shisana *et al.*, 2005), which found that the three major forms of violence experienced by educators in schools over a 12 month period were: learners or educators carrying weapons to school (22%), assault (18%) and fights involving weapons (14%).

The range of school-related problems outlined above point to experiences of discrimination, exclusion, bullying, sexual harassment, and serious violence by learners (and educators) once they have access to schooling. All these exacerbate the risks of dropping out. Such experiences occurring within schools indicate a denial of constitutional protections, which prohibit such forms of discrimination and violations of human rights. But there is an additional set of factors which affect learners' educational access, and that concerns individual learners' own perceptions, and capacity to take advantage, of education. The last section of this chapter is devoted to a consideration of these factors.

4.5. Individual factors

Poor socio-economic conditions affect children's health as well as their cognitive and psychological development. The numbers of Learners with Special Educational Needs (LSEN) generally tends to be underestimated. In terms of developmental vulnerability, Donald (1994) estimated that, in the early 1990s, between 30% and 40% of primary-school-age children needed some degree of special education. The escalation of HIV/AIDS since then has undoubtedly aggravated the situation. If these projections are correct, education for LSEN cannot be dismissed as a peripheral issue, nor can it be reduced to individual pathology. The extent of LSEN highlights the degree to which social structures contribute to and then fail to respond to 'disability'. Government policy on LSEN emphasizes mainstreaming of learners into ordinary schools, but no additional financing has been allocated to support this. All features of poor quality schooling – overcrowded classes, non-home language medium of instruction, lack of materials and under-qualified educators – impede educational advancement, and require serious attention (Donald, 1994: 149).

So too does learner motivation, on which, though an important influence on understanding drop-out and truancy, there is at yet little research. Phurutse (2005) argues that:

the educational context does play a major role in the educational performance of learners, but the agency of learners and other people in the specific context play an equally critical role in getting good matric results. Agency refers to the resolve people have to improve their lot with or without the assistance of the government (Phurutse, 2005:16).

An individual's assessment of the relevance of education is a key motivating influence in continued attendance at school. Data from the 1995 October Household Survey shows high rates of return to schooling, with increases in earnings of around 20-23% above Grade 7 (Anderson *et al.*, 2001: 10). Africans completing Grade 12 have 2.1 times the earnings of those in Grade 8, and 1.4 times the earnings of those in Grade 10. Anderson *et al.* point out, however, that high repetition rates and high unemployment rates discount these high returns somewhat.

In South Africa, education matters only after a certain level of attainment. In other words, learners need to get through at least 12 years of schooling before they see education making a difference to earning potential (Keswell & Poswell, 2002). Furthermore, because the labour market differentially rewards blacks and whites, the rate of return for education is higher for whites than it is for Africans. Over the decade since the end of apartheid, while the rate of return of education for Africans has remained unchanged, there has been a significant increase for whites. If the decision to stay in school depended on the rate of 'human capital investment', then given the almost negligible rewards for basic education, it makes sense to leave school earlier. As Keswell and Poswell concluded, 'This is bad news for textbook economics, as it implies that individuals can persist in poverty indefinitely even in the presence of public policy designed to achieve the opposite' (2002: 2).

Beutel and Anderson (2003) assessed educational expectations of learners in the Western Cape, using subjective measures, together with objective measures of literacy and numeracy. Their study used the Cape Area Panel Study (CAPS) which contained data on 5078 households and 21 674 residents (42.8% black, 41.6% coloured, 15.0% white and 0.6% Indian/other/unknown). In Beutel and Anderson's view, age at school entry played an important role in producing educational expectations of black learners. Correlations between parental and adolescent educational expectations – which are important if parents are unwilling to pay for or support learners beyond particular points – showed that blacks and whites generally showed strong agreement between educational expectations of adults and adolescents. The coloured group, however, showed greater discrepancies between parent and child expectations. For coloured adolescents who expected to obtain some postsecondary schooling, only 36.2% of parents had the same expectations as their children; more parents (39.3%) had lower expectations of their children (2003: 17).

The importance, nature and relevance of schooling are not in question. However, it does need to be asked whether schooling is necessarily a 'good thing', and/or whether it is experienced as such. The assumed normative value of schooling is not without contestation. It is not clear as yet to what extent people are choosing to go to sites other than schools, how prevalent these sites are, or what patterns may be discerned from them. Such questions need further research.

4.6. Conclusion

While this chapter is not a comprehensive portrait of all factors affecting access to schools, the research on which it is based, supported by statistical analyses, sketches a bleak picture of access patterns in South Africa. Most learners enrol in and complete primary education, but late entry and relatively high repetition rates have a slowing effect on progress through the system. Marginalisation and poverty are significant factors in the generally slow transition rate through the grades. There is a great demand for schooling, despite numerous barriers to success and poor quality of outcomes which are in part a consequence of unwelcoming schools and uncaring educators. Learners too are not blameless, lacking discipline and motivation. Yet many parents, themselves of meagre means and even more miserable schooling, are so keen on education for their children that they are prepared to foster them to relatives in order to improve their chances of accessing school. Withdrawing learners from basic education appears to be a measure of last resort – even in the context of HIV/AIDS. Given the generally positive culture of school-going in South Africa, the poor quality of schools is a haunting worry.

5. (Re)Conceptualising Access

5.1. Introduction

In attempting to reconceptualise access it is important to return to some of the debates that have contextualised the achievement of access internationally. Other parts of the CREATE project have explored different theoretical perspectives that link improved access to desirable development outcomes. The international discourse on access has been shaped by the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) process. By the early 1990s, various international bilateral agencies, such as the World Bank, UNICEF and UNESCO, were in agreement that development could be accelerated through investment in human capital. This spearheaded a new thrust to universalise primary education (World Bank, 1993). However, by the late 1990s, a broader conception of human development began to replace the more narrowly focused human capital development perspectives linked to rates of returns and economic growth. In addition, globalisation has impacted upon both rights-based approaches to education and development, and educational practice and process (Lewin, 2007).

In the international literature, universal enrolment is frequently reduced to the problem of reaching the last 20% of children who remain unenrolled. The experience of most developing countries, however, is that those not enrolled in primary schooling are a small minority of those who are out of school. In most poor countries, out-of-school children are overwhelmingly drawn from those who did enrol but who, for various reasons, subsequently dropped out before completion. The CREATE model of zones of exclusion provides a much more nuanced analysis, distinguishing forms of exclusion which are part of the school process and which disproportionately affect those who are most vulnerable, as well as capturing the complex interplay between the different forms of access and exclusion.

In the Introduction to this *Review*, it was suggested that the experience of apartheid education requires a view of educational access which is wider than mere structural access to schooling. Under apartheid, most black South Africans did have access to schooling, but this access was based on separation and inequality. In the light of the CREATE model, which is particularly relevant to the South African case, it can be seen that educational access is not only about how many learners of school-going age are in school, nor even about how many successfully complete their schooling. Educational access is also about who has access to what *kind* of schooling, and on what *basis*.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the ways in which educational access is conceptualised in South Africa. This exploration covers the legislative and policy context of education provision and the assumptions underpinning research and theories related to educational access. Approaches to educational access are framed by different paradigms, which operate on economic, socio-political and pedagogical levels.

Education policy in post-apartheid South Africa, as shown in Chapter 1 of this *Review*, is based on legislation and procedures aimed at increasing educational access for all South Africans, as a human right and on the basis of equality. These laws and procedures determine budget and resource allocations intended to improve and expand educational provision in poorer schools and areas. In the context of the history of education in South Africa, this constitutes a highly significant reallocation of resources for the purposes of transforming and redressing the legacy of apartheid and creating a much more democratic dispensation. However, as Chapters 2 and 3 point out, many South Africans still do not benefit from increased access, and tend to drop out of primary schooling because of factors such as poverty, fees, low achievement, HIV/AIDS, poor health and nutrition, pregnancy, discrimination and other negative experiences as well as their own, their parents' and their educators' motivations, commitments, expectations and resources.

Conceptualisations of educational access which emphasise structural access to schooling and the factors which prevent such access being exercised tend to focus on quantitative counts of the number of learners enrolled in, and who drop out of, primary schooling. Central here are issues related to various measures and indicators used to calculate rates of access, and ways of defining and refining these. By calculating investments in various parts of the educational system, structural approaches generate quantitative data which are useful for government and funding agencies interested in directing budget and resource allocations and developing educational policies to deal with financing, administration, management, equity, absenteeism and levels of achievement.

However, such approaches are limited when it comes to considering factors such as negative schooling experiences, HIV/AIDS and reasons for poor levels of achievement. These kinds of factors prevail despite increased structural access to schools. Children encounter forms of abuse, discrimination and dissatisfaction on a daily basis in schools. HIV/AIDS is often experienced as a barrier even by those attending school, and low learner achievement levels, particularly in numeracy and literacy, may reflect inadequate pedagogical practices, poor nutrition or poverty. Broader and not exclusively structural approaches to educational access take such factors into account, and treat social relations and pedagogical processes as central. The data thus generated is especially meaningful for educators, learners and parents, since they point to the everyday experiences of children when in school.

The two major conceptions of educational access prevalent in South African educational research and policy provision can thus be characterised as follows:

- *Structural access*: In many EFA programmes, South Africa included, educational access is presented as a supply-side issue that can be resolved if enough school places can be provided. Provision of sufficient school places gives priority to research into enrolment, retention and drop out rates, household income levels, budget allocation, educator training and deployment, resource availability and distribution, and personnel and capital expenditure. Factors such as gender, age, HIV/AIDS, nutrition, child labour and pregnancy are considered to be of

statistical relevance or significance largely as variable ascribed characteristics influencing rates and levels of structural access and retention. On its own, structural access to education is necessary but insufficient to achieve quality schooling for all (see Colclough and Lewin, 1993).

- *Meaningful access*: Initial structural access has little meaning unless it is shaped by regular attendance, progression through grades at appropriate ages, meaningful and useful learning, achievement and completion. In the South African context, such an expanded notion of access also prioritises research into sexual harassment, racism, xenophobia, HIV/AIDS, violence, quality of achievement, epistemic access, learner participation, and educator preparedness and competency. At issue, too, is the impact of a broad range of social factors on educational access and on the social relations within schools, and their overall effects on the lives of individual learners during schooling. The focus is not only on the rates and economic implications of such experiences, but also on the processes and dynamics which construct them. Meaningful access to education will be enhanced by improvements in structural access, but even alone can make an important contribution to a just and equitable experience of schooling.

These two main approaches to educational access in South Africa operate on three distinguishable levels: economic, socio-political, and pedagogical. Although these levels articulate with each other and overlap on an ongoing basis, their points of emphasis are different and lead to different kinds of interventions. By examining the three levels in turn, we can get a clearer picture of how educational access is conceptualised and of the current debates within and between each approach.

5.2. Economic level

Understanding the political economy of access is essential if we are to progress towards achieving our millennium development goals. On the economic level in South Africa, there are debates about the accuracy and reliability of statistical data and their relationship to investment choices, as well as whether policies on educational access are sufficiently pro-poor and equitable.

As discussed in the earlier chapters of this *Review*, statistical data has been drawn from different data sets which cover different years. The post-apartheid state inherited an educational system that collected minimal data on any education indicators; unfortunately, the tradition has been hard to break and ‘the use of educational indicators in South Africa is still sadly undeveloped’ (Taylor et al., 2003: 19). The following four main sources of educational data in South Africa are, nevertheless, the most reliable available: (1) the national Education Management Information System (EMIS), coupled with the October Household Survey (OHS) and the national census data; (2) international comparative studies; (3) studies by higher education institutions; and (4) donor-driven research (Taylor *et al.*, 2003). The national Department of Education has also noted the

need to strengthen and improve the ‘Annual Survey of Schools and the School Register of Needs’, as well as monitoring, evaluation and statistics on learner performance (DoE, 2003b: 23, 27-28).

Given the scant data sources, the reliability and accuracy of data generated by various sources remains inadequate for research purposes. It is difficult to make exact assessments of educational access – for example, exactly how many learners of school-going age there are, where they are, or what their needs might be. In addition, correlations between variables are limited, either because the data may not be available, or because it exists for different years, or because it is not reliable. For example, one may want to know how many 6 year old children are in South Africa and ought to be in school. The national Department of Education may have the data for 2003, or the national Census may have the data for 2001, or the data may be drawn from particular provinces without being generalisable to discern national patterns. Correlations between ‘age’ and educational access are thus difficult to draw.

Limited data availability also has economic consequences, because budget and resource allocations are calculated on the basis of the data that *is* available. Large-scale statistical data sets are of particular importance for government when formulating policies and when directing resources. They are also important for donor agencies as a basis on which to make investment choices. In reconceptualising access, this Review has been able to bring together data from different systemic levels, in order to contribute to debates about GER, NER and ASER, and to track progress, completion, and education outcomes through the expanded notion of meaningful access to education. All the same, since this lack of sufficient and reliable data compromises processes of planning and managing the educational system, the need to strengthen and improve systems for data generation cannot be overstressed. It is suggested that the CREATE research can help promote greater specificity in the use of indicators, properly contextualised, and contribute to the production of sound, reliable and informative data sets.

Another issue on the economic level is the consistent research finding that educational access is seriously influenced by poverty. There are four major questions relating to ‘pro-poor’ debates over educational policy: first, whether educational policy provisions in themselves reinforce inequalities and increase the gap between the rich and the poor (Motala & Pampallis, 2001); second, whether it is school fees, or additional school costs, which lead to exclusion from schooling (Fleisch & Woolman, 2004); third, whether the indicators of poverty being utilised are adequate (Ramadiro, 2003; Harsch, 2000); and fourth, what are the rates of returns from expanded access to primary schooling. Keeping children in school also depends on decisions that children and households make about benefits, and these benefits can be rendered more attractive and more useful through provision of meaningful access.

The preceding chapters have raised a number of concerns about the pro-poor degree of educational access in South Africa. It is questionable how pro-poor educational policies can be when, to the extent to which they privatise and commodify education, they

disadvantage those who cannot pay for education in the free market. A related concern is that the current macro-economic framework increases privatisation and thus reduces government responsibility for social welfare provision. Moreover, school fees, no matter how nominal, influence the nature of access, and especially equitable access, to quality education. Finally, leaving aside their adequacy, indicators such as means tests, which are used to determine poverty and exempt poor families from payment of school fees, often have unintended humiliating consequences.

In tacit acknowledgement of concerns such as these, the national Department of Education's plan of action (DoE, 2003b) recognises that policies need to be more actively pro-poor. Hence it allows for fee exemptions and grant support provisions, makes budget allocations to provide more to poor schools, and creates possibilities for cross-subsidisation. It also commits itself to taking over the management of school nutrition schemes, and facilitating better transport schemes so that the poor, especially in the rural areas, have better access to schools. Many of these plans are in the process of being implemented, and their impact and effectiveness in increasing access for the poor must still be assessed; of particular interest will be the relationship between household income, on the one hand, and access to and progression through primary school and transition to lower secondary school, on the other, as well as whether and how the direct and indirect costs of schooling contribute to exclusion, and what rates of return ought to be expected from increased access to primary schooling.

5.3. Socio-political level

On the socio-political level, key levers of EFA and MDG strategies translate into three specific concerns relevant to the South African context: (1) the extent to which provision of educational access upholds the right to basic education as a human right; (2) the extent to which educational access leads to experiences of discrimination; and (3) which modes of educational governance provide greater educational access and efficiency.

Much of the discussion on the right to education has been undertaken in the earlier chapters of this review. The Department of Education has shown that it is keen to meet its obligations for providing educational access as a human right. It has dealt explicitly with the imperatives of both the South African Constitution and the Dakar 2000 Framework to provide educational access to all by 2015.

One of the most notable articulations of South Africa's position was presented by the late Katherina Tomasevski when she argued that 'the right to basic education has been converted from a right to a development goal' (cited in Motala, E., 2007: 5). She emphasised the importance of placing human rights at the centre of education policies and translating these rights into 'human rights obligations'. She further argued that 'rights based education entails safeguards for the right to education, and the advancing of all human rights in education'.

Conceptualisation of access needs to take note of the uneasy reciprocity between the right to basic education and human rights. This approach also introduces the notion of agency – that the right to basic education is to promote and protect access to quality education, and such sustained and broadened access must be supported by human rights approaches that build on the agency of those who are claiming these rights.

As discussed earlier, discrimination operates on a social relational level and interactions between people and communities and homes. Issues of race, gender, HIV/AIDS, and disability affect educational access and performance. In the post-1996 period, a number of court cases illustrated attempts by white schools to prevent black learners from gaining access to their schools. Similarly, a South African Human Rights Commission report on public secondary schooling shows that racism affects educational access and performance (Vally and Dalambo, 1999). The processes of desegregating schools in South Africa affects mainly white, Indian and coloured schools – which are in the minority – but they are of critical significance to all South Africans.

Regarding the influence of gender on educational access and performance, the UN *Global Monitoring Reporting on Education for All: the Leap to Quality* (2004), South African studies have also indicated that girls are forced to leave school because of pregnancy or childrearing obligations. Increased work responsibilities in the home to care for AIDS sufferers reduces time spent on school work (see Chisholm and September, 2005; Shilubana and Kok, 2005; Cohen, 2005). Children who are themselves infected by HIV/AIDS may be too ill to concentrate on their school work, to perform well academically, and to enjoy their access to schooling (USAID, 2005; NZAID, 2005). Though relatively under-researched in comparison with other issues, disability also influences educational access and performance. The two major reasons for this are that many schools lack the infrastructure and resources to accommodate learners with disabilities, and educators are not trained or equipped to deal with learners with disability in the classroom.

The above discussion points to socio-political factors faced by learners who do have access to schooling, but have to deal with other severe problems. These learners experience discrimination within schools, which is often subtle, and there is little constitutional protection from such forms of discrimination. Worse still, these realities militate against meaningful access.

The South African case also illustrates how decentralisation has been promoted as a mechanism to enhance equity and access. Interestingly, this is also supported in the EFA goals and MDGs. Decentralised school financing in the South African context as well as fuller representation of parents in school bodies has not necessarily had the effect of improving participation and equity. Policy intention and outcome have differed. Another concern is how the EFA principle of universal free primary schooling is implemented and interpreted in South African policy and legislation. The implementation of free and compulsory education continues to be a source of political and academic debate – the main contention is whether this has in fact been achieved. What is evident is that macro-

level political, social, cultural and institutional conditions exist alongside economic realities. Together they frame the interaction of education supply and demand at the system, community and household levels and, crucially, the level of learner-educator interaction.

5.4. Pedagogical level

On a pedagogical level, the debates centre around two primary issues: first, achievement levels and the factors which affect these; and second, the level of educator preparedness to be effective in working with the curriculum. Although South Africa claims to have achieved much since the establishment of democracy in 1994, including being better than most African countries in providing universal access to education, the achievement levels of learners in South African schools leaves a lot to be desired. The Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) tests in 1995 and 1998 in literacy and numeracy found that South African learners scored well below the international average of 38 countries in terms of their actual achievement levels.

As mentioned in Chapter 3, Taylor and Vinjevold's (1999) study on Foundation Phase classes found that learners were unable to read and write adequately, and that their educators also lacked the 'pedagogical content knowledge' to equip their learners with the skills they need. There are varying views on the causes of this lack of achievement, but whatever the arguments, it is clear that on a pedagogical level, learners who do have structural access to schooling do not necessarily have epistemic access, that is, they do not have access to the content knowledge they need, the skills that they should acquire, and do not reach the level of achievement and competency they should have.

Walker (2004) argued that learners do not acquire the capabilities needed to live fulfilled lives. Contributing factors to this situation are complex and differ markedly from school to school, and generalisations about reasons for the lack of such 'capabilities' are problematic. However, this research wishes to emphasise Amartya Sen's (1999) concept of human rights as capabilities, defined as 'the substantive freedom of people to lead their lives they have reason to value and to enhance the choices that they have'. Education will add more value to people's lives when their freedom to choose is enhanced by meaningful access.

The lack of epistemic access, however, signals the dire need for educator development and support. The *Report of the Review Committee of Curriculum 2005* (DoE, 2001c) noted that the education and training provided for South African educators to enable them implement the new curriculum is utterly inadequate and of poor quality. More recently, in relation to educator development and support, the Minister of Education has emphasised the need for well designed and relevant educator development programmes in reading and writing in all schools.

Crouch (2005) notes that the two biggest problems that South Africa faces are extreme inequalities in actual learning achievement and the relatively low levels of such achievement across all groups. Relating this to access, he suggests that the issue in South Africa is precisely the gap between the very large access and enrolment and the low level of achievement. The CREATE conceptual model of zones of exclusion accommodates this notion of inequality of access. What the CREATE research is particularly interested in is meaningful access which shows that learners have achieved the mastery of basic skills in the learning outcomes.

In all of the above, increased educational access is seen as being good and desirable. Education is in high demand, as shown by the fact that large numbers of poor learners continue to attend school. Yet this conceals problems: many learners drop out of school because they do not believe that schooling is of much relevance to their lives, and they hold low expectations of what schooling can do for them. To counter this, education must find ways of demonstrating its undeniable benefits earlier and more visibly. Provision of meaningful access is the key to this.

5.5. Conclusion

A reconceptualised notion of access requires an expansion of current definitions. Access must be more than just a place in a school for every child; it must be meaningful schooling for every child. Such an expanded definition needs to consider not only how access, progression and transition are currently taking place, but also how increased, equitable and meaningful access can be sustained through viable financial frameworks for resource allocation within the specific socio-economic context that is South Africa.

In a South African context of near universal enrolment, a sharpened and expanded notion of access – meaningful access – can help expose potentially vast disparities in access to public resources, which otherwise can result in the silent exclusion of learners and a denial of epistemic access. Full access in South Africa will not be secured unless enrolment is linked to high attendance rates, unless progression occurs with little or no repetition and unless indicators of learning outcomes confirm that basic skills are being mastered.

Drawing on the model presented by Lewin (2007) in the CREATE discussion paper, *Pathways to Access*, the following starting points are important in reconceptualising access in South Africa:

- Different enrolment, attendance and participation patterns are important starting points for universalising access and envisioning different pathways towards EFA;
- Access can only be understood and addressed if it is informed by a sound base of reliable data;
- The conceptual model of zones of exclusion applies to the South African context with some variations. What the preceding chapters have presented thus far are the

- different characteristics of learners and how they fall into different zones of exclusion;
- The majority of those who are not enrolled today have nevertheless attended school at some time in the past. The fact that they may have dropped out now did not, and should not in the future, prevent them from dropping back in and attending more regularly;
 - Access in education in post-apartheid South Africa has been regulated by efforts to create a more efficient education system. This has had an impact on greater inclusion and access but has also influenced particular patterns of exclusion, such as pushing out over-aged learners;
 - A particular problem in the South African context is that amongst those who are attending and enrolled are those who learn very little and are silently excluded. This relates to both in-school factors such as poorly prepared educators, discrimination and lack of learner motivation and out-of-school factors such as poverty, hunger, illness and migration;
 - EFA and universalising access to primary schooling must be related to investments in secondary schooling with respect to the supply of adequate educators and sufficient infrastructure. Transition from primary to secondary schools does not present itself as an access problem in South Africa except in relation to the two factors cited above;
 - The South African case also presents an interesting caveat of gendered exclusion with girls and boys participating and dropping off at different phases in their schooling. These relate to structural factors within education systems, family choices and cultural practices, all of which relate to differential entry and exit ages. Some important variations are observed in South Africa;
 - Access and equity have to be addressed together. Access, progression and transition to higher levels are strongly related to household income, suggesting that direct and indirect costs remain significant causes of exclusion;
 - Maintaining expanded access requires viable financial frameworks for resource allocation which recognise demographic, economic and political realities.

6. Conclusion

Without meaningful access for all to education, poverty will spread, inequalities will intensify, economies will stagnate and social conflict will increase.

Educational access is the central pillar in development strategies related to both the Millennium Development Goals and those associated with the Education for All campaign, which emphasise the achievement of universal primary education and gender equity in enrolments across all low income countries as essential components of efforts to arrive at a more equitable, just, prosperous, sustainable and harmonious world order.

This *Review* has used the CREATE model of zones of exclusion in order to provide an account of the patterns of access to schools in South Africa. Focusing on the period between 1994 and 2006, the *Review* outlines policies aimed at promoting access, provides statistics relating to varying levels of access, and gives a descriptive account of the research relating to educational access. It also analyses ways in which educational access is being conceptualised and reconceptualised. The purpose of this conclusion is to identify gaps that exist in the accounts of educational access reviewed in this report, and highlight possible areas for further research.

In sum, this *Review* has noted that:

- Most learners enrol in and complete basic education;
- Less than 2% of the 7-17 year age group in 2004 had never been to school;
- Enrolment rates begin to decline only after basic or compulsory education has been completed;
- As many as 12% of learners do not complete Grade 7 (Zone 2) (2003 figures);
- Marginalisation, poverty and HIV/AIDS are likely to be the most significant factors slowing progression;
- Withdrawal of learners from basic education is seldom contemplated and even more rarely acted upon;
- Children who are silently excluded from basic education even though they enter and remain in the system (Zones 3 and 6) are of particular concern and are large in number;
- As many as 8% of learners drop-out in Zone 5 (2003 figures).

Learners most vulnerable to dropping out (i.e., those in Zones 3 and 6) are often those who:

- Are over-age;
- Come from homes that should be receiving child support grants but are not;
- Are infected or affected by HIV/AIDS;
- Have special educational needs;

- Are malnourished.

It follows that, because a negligible percentage of children of school-going age have never been to school, Zone 1 is statistically of little importance in South Africa. In addition, since statistics do not reveal a significant drop in numbers in the transition between primary and high schools (from Grade 7 to Grade 8), Zone 4 is also of limited relevance. On the other hand, late entry and relatively high repetition rates have a slowing effect on progress through the system, and the consequences of low achievement, poverty and poor health in Zone 3, compounded by new factors such as pregnancy and the taking on of adult responsibilities at home, increase learners' vulnerability to drop out in Zones 5 and 6 (Grades 8 and 9). Demand remains high, and withdrawal rare, even in the face of what would appear to be overwhelming social and economic pressures, including a paucity of facilities, indifferent teaching and poor quality of outcomes. Household factors may affect high absenteeism and patterns of drop-out-and-drop-back-in, but equally relevant is the inability of schools to provide and learners to gain epistemic access – or learning that is meaningful and useful.

A primary task for CREATE is to establish the scope and scale of the problem of access to basic education. While Chapter 2 provides national data for each zone, the reliability and validity of available statistics is debateable, and their interpretation is made difficult by learners repeating grades, transferring between schools, and enrolling late. Schools also have much to gain from inflating numbers of learners, since educators are allocated according to admissions. Aside from the available statistics, national policy itself could be rendered clearer with regard to access issues. For example, it can be asked whether the access to basic education guaranteed by national policy is free and compulsory or just compulsory. It is clear that access to basic education cannot be denied and that it is compulsory, but the influence of school fees and costs on educational access, and the granting of exemptions for school fee payments, implies that basic education is not necessarily free. Access to education is allowed to incur costs and exemptions are used in exceptional cases where such costs cannot be met; but provision of nutrition and transport and the regulation of practices regarding school uniforms suggest it ought not to cost, if such costs lead to the denial of access to basic education.

Gaining greater clarity on the scale of the problem of access in relation to each of the seven zones will be helped through further analysis of secondary data, such as the surveys conducted by the Birth-to-Twenty study. In addition, detailed analysis of statistics on a smaller, district-wide scale would enable better scrutiny of the accuracy of the primary data. A snapshot of districts which show particular patterns would be especially valuable in either validating or disputing national statistics. Furthermore, a detailed breakdown would help to provide a disaggregated picture of which sub-populations experience high drop-out rates and repetition, where they are located geographically, and at which points in their school career learners are most likely to drop out. Tracked over five years, such district-wide statistics would provide a dynamic picture of shifts in enrolment and cohort movements through the grades, which could be cross-correlated with census or Household Survey data to generate possible hypotheses and explain access patterns. If,

for example, the number of vulnerable learners grows (due to HIV/AIDS, poverty levels, or patterns of urbanization), then it would be important to investigate to what extent their progress through primary school is interrupted or terminated. Such baseline secondary analyses are particularly important in the South African context, where it is widely acknowledged that there is insufficient utilisation of quantitative data for diagnostic analysis of systemic progress.

Besides the need for greater assurance from the statistics, any intervention programme to improve access to schools would benefit from a fuller understanding of the reasons why learners drop out or fall behind. While this report identified a number of explanatory variables which hinder access to schools, the specific relationship between them and their order of priority is less clear. In addition, a number of studies have relied on quantitative data to explain why learners are dropping out of school, and, while these point to the scale of different factors, they need to be tested with rigour in a qualitative manner. What is the particular mix of factors that eventually result in a learner dropping-out? What are the historical precedents in the process to dropping-out? What factors push learners out of schools, and what factors in the home, the community and amongst learners themselves act to pull them out? Some hints might be gleaned from adumbrating factors which attract more learners to certain schools rather than to others (school reputations; proximity; fees; parental expectations), particularly in urban areas where learners have greater choice.

One way of arriving at answers to these questions would be through a ‘community-school survey’, which would research the interaction between households and schools. The aim of such a survey would be to track learners who are out of school, and those who are vulnerable to dropping out because they are over-age (because of either late enrolment or repetition) or because they are performing poorly, or are frequently absent. Interviews with households could capture the particular home circumstances that contribute to drop-out and the perceptions which parents and caregivers have of the value of education. Households would also be able to quantify the costs involved in sending children to school rather than having them engaged in some other more immediately productive activity. Besides capturing the detailed correlations between access to schools and generally identified variables such as age, race, gender, HIV/AIDS, regional location, proximity to schools and poverty levels, such a community-school survey would also capture the impact of less obvious factors such as migration, fostering, attitudes to schooling, sexual orientation and coming-of-age or ‘initiation’ rituals.

The converse to these demand-side factors is the role that schools play in opening and closing their gates to learners. This report has underscored the fact that, in South Africa, the main access problems lie with Zone 3 learners – those who are regularly absent or who, because of ill health, poor nutrition, poorly resourced classes or inadequate teaching, fail to learn. Further, the problems in Zone 3 largely explain drop-outs in Zone 5, and this influence extends to the post-compulsory phase of schooling when the system begins haemorrhaging numbers. Drop-out in the post-basic phase is usually the result of learners not receiving an adequate educational grounding, or no longer coping with academic demands, or of schools avoiding low scores in the matriculation results (by

pushing underachievers out), and/or where the increasing opportunity costs of attending school can no longer be endured. Understanding what happens in classrooms – and the impact of learner and educator absenteeism – is therefore an important area in researching access. A community-school survey would, amongst other activities, need to keep track of attendance registers and performance records and, where possible, undertake classroom observations of educator-learner interactions.

A community-school survey could also help make sense of the gender differences in access. At secondary school levels there appear to be higher drop-out rates for boys in comparison to girls. There is very little information as to why and to what extent this is case. What are the factors that influence boys to leave school? What are the patterns for the country as a whole? Conversely, there is a need to research the greater retention rates among girls at senior secondary levels, seemingly despite the disrupting effects of pregnancies and the care-demands associated with HIV/AIDS, and the factors that influence this. For both girls and boys, finding out where drop out's end up and what they do may help explain why they dropped out in the first place, and shed light on who drops back in.

Another area for possible research is the impact of a number of recent policies on access. These include policies introduced during the late 1990s, such as progression and age-grade norms and the introduction of Grade R. Have repetition rates and patterns changed markedly since then? Does the inclusion of Grade R – on which little access-related research has been done to date – in the basic education phase improve progression through school, and what has been the impact of Grade R in terms of costs and rates of access? How are schools dealing with over-age learners? And is it possible that the picture regarding educational access could be significantly altered if adults who do not have access to education are factored better into calculations regarding rates of access and actual literacy and numeracy rates? More recent policy, such as the Department of Education's plan of action, *Improving Access to Free and Quality Basic Education for All* (DoE, 2003b), which among other things aims to contain uniform and transport costs, also needs to be monitored. Systemically, and of immediate importance, the impact of fee-free schooling needs to be studied more closely. Over the past few years, a number of (usually small, often multi-grade) schools have been closed, particularly on farms but also in urban townships: what is the impact of these closures on educational access in remote rural areas and the urban peripheries?

Thematic studies on particular sub-groups of excluded children would also add to our understanding of access issues. Greater disaggregation of the numbers would offer more insight into particular categories of children and help with tracking changing patterns of access for these learners. The focus could fall on:

- Children who do not have access to ECD, either in the pre-school phase or in Grade R;
- Children with special needs who are not yet identified and enrolled;

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- Children in AIDS-affected households who are not able to enrol or have to leave school prematurely;
 - Orphaned children;
 - Children in detention;
 - Working children;
 - Children who live far from school and who have to walk long distances to get there;
 - Children of migrating parents, or who are sent to stay with relatives;
 - Children in families that cannot afford school costs;
 - Children who drop-out but then return to school;
 - Pregnant children;
 - Children who are victims of bullying, violence, gangsterism, sexual threat or abuse;
 - Children who are substance abusers;
 - Street children; and
 - Children of refugee parents and of undocumented immigrants.

It would also be useful to compare and contrast findings from such research into excluded children with studies of children from underprivileged backgrounds who manage to attend regularly, progress consistently and achieve despite the odds.

Research into these and other areas would undoubtedly deepen our understanding of who is excluded from schooling and why. Getting answers to these questions would be a most significant step in designing effective intervention strategies to improve meaningful access to schooling.

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Report summary:

Meaningful access to education requires more than full enrolment; it requires high attendance rates, progression through grades with little or no repetition, and learning outcomes that confirm that basic skills are being mastered. This Review describes and explains patterns of access to schools in South Africa for children between the ages of 5 and 15 years. It outlines policy and legislation on access to education and provides a statistical analysis of learners enrolled in school, out-of-school children and learners vulnerable to exclusion. The quantitative data is supported by a review of research which explains the patterns of access and exclusion. The Review also analyses the way in which educational access is conceptualised, and identifies areas for future research.

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