A Review of Shortcomings That Impact Primary and Secondary Education in South Africa

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Abstract
The structure of South African primary and secondary education by department of Basic education encompasses primary and secondary education. Primary education lasts for 8 years and is split up into 4 phases Foundation, Intermediate, Senior phase and Further Education and Training Phase. After completion of the primary education, students are awarded the General Education and Training Certificate. After completing the secondary education, students are awarded Senior Certificate. South Africa post-apartheid has changed primary and secondary education pass rates of poor quality that is setting primary and secondary leaners into failure compared to government regime and other countries. That leads to most matriculants with standard and lower grade symbols were not accepted in many universities. The challenge began when current education structure of Basic education allowing learners to at least have, at least 40% pass in Home Language, at least 30% pass in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT). This paper presents an argument and report that the current basic education system and the grading standard produce poor quality of learners who mostly do not qualify to study at a university level and overpopulated in public schools' classes. This paper applied secondary research methodology and the findings are based on existing literature, empirical and theoretical studies. The paper concludes that a pass rate in primary and secondary education needs change for the best quality, remove Life Orientation subjects in secondary schools and compare South African basic education pass rate with other countries to propose an alternative basic education system for South Arica.

Keywords: Basic Education, Employment, Equality, Acceptable, Compare

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Introduction

South African primary and secondary education quality has been declining after the down of democracy. Education in South Africa is governed by two national departments, namely the Department of Basic Education (DBE), which is responsible for primary and secondary schools, and the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), which is responsible for tertiary education and vocational training. Prior to 2009, both departments were represented in a single Department of Education (Budget speech, 2022). Therefore, this paper focuses on Department of Basic Education as it offers Primary and secondary education in South Africa. The DBE department deals with public schools, private schools (also referred to by the department as independent schools), early childhood development (ECD) centers, and special needs schools. The public schools and private schools are collectively known as ordinary schools, which are roughly 97% of schools in South Africa. Unlike in most countries, many public schools charge tuition (referred to as fees). No-fee schools were introduced on a limited basis in 2007 (Education Policy, 2017). In South Africa hereafter to call it (SA), education system performs extremely poorly along unlimited dimensions. These are school which used to perform better and managed better during apartheid government system, which is a system that used to discriminate black and colored races and reduced to Bantu education. The apartheid government Minister of Native Affairs and Prime Minister Hendrik Verwoerd designed Bantu education to teach African culture and educate Africans in accordance with their opportunities in life Bantu Education Act (No. 47) of 1953 (Ocampo, 2004). That contributed to the test scores at every level exhibit sharp dualism between the smaller part of the school system, mainly schools that historically served whites and Indians, which perform similarly to schools in developed countries mainly competing with the first world countries, and the bigger parts of the system, historically serving majority black and colored children, which performs extremely weakly, also in comparison to the third world countries. There is a fundamental concern in thus the learning that transpires in schools is highly unequal with respect to the socio-economic status of children and their race group.

Although these performance differentials are evident throughout the school system, an important feature is that these inequalities in performance manifest early, so that by the foundation phase which from Grade R, Grade1 to Grade 3. The intermediate phase consists of Grade 4 to Grade 6. The Senior phase is from Grade 7 to Grade 9 and the Further Training Phase is from Grade 10 to Grade 12 (Macha & Kadakia, 2017). That is a whole Primary and Secondary education in South African education preparing for Tertiary education. The shortcomings have impacted all races post-apartheid where black, whites, Indians and colored are all allowed to attend same schools or schools of their own interest being public or private education in SA. That Bantu education have affected youth of between since apartheid regime years until 1974 (Clark & Worger, 2016). These were dark days where black and colored races cannot eloquently communicate in English mostly and acquire skills and be admitted in the universities to study and compete with the rest of races to the rest of the world. These challenges are continuing persist in the democracy of South Africa after 1994 (Ocampo, 2004). It is relatively clear which children have fallen so far behind that they would probably not be able to reach and pass matric with good enough marks to go on to university studies after the South Africa government introduced the thirty percent (30%) minimum pass rate in designated subjects in South African education system. This problem has raised a lot of noises amongst South Africans and neighboring states competitors that gives a picture of South African youth deemed as weakling learners. The noises were further raised by political leaders likes of Mmusi Maimane leader of opposition party Building One South Africa (BOSA). Mmusi Maimane have publicly criticized the minister of basic

education Mrs. Angie Motshekga who is the member of cabinet and agreed to this questionable resolution that led to decline quality of education in South Africa (Mashego, 2022). Consequently, the large returns on obtaining a university degree, this early failure of the education system has massive implications for labour market outcomes, and thus for social mobility also a regressive generation that cannot compete with other learners to the rest of the world. These low-quality education sets many children a poverty trap. It is evident that productivity improvements that can drive economic progress have to be built on this foundation (Van der Berg, 2007).

Research Methodology

This paper applied qualitative research methodology. The paper used secondary data collection method. Books, Government documents, journals, magazines and newspapers were used to accomplish the paper.

South African Education Policy Post-apartheid

The new down of democracy of South Africa post-apartheid government was facing school system that was highly fragmented, segregated by race, and with greatly discriminatory funding for teachers, learning materials and schools' spaces for learners beginning of every academic year especially Grade 1 and Grade 8 the entries of both primary and secondary education (Department of Education 2009: 12). Most challenges were arising from urban areas in the big cities that consists of rainbow nation races and challenges of migrant's children searching for school spaces in primary and education in big cities like Cape town, Pretoria, Johannesburg, and Durban. All races are now allowed to any school in the city private or public depending on affordability. Black, white, Chinese, Indian and black are all acceptable in all schools which embraces diversity. The challenges of school spaces in the beginning of the was the tantamount problem that impacted black and colored leaners discriminated systematically on certain schools with higher quintile and used be named model Cs (South African Institute of Race Relation, 2011).

The schools such as The Glen high school, Willow Ridge high school, Girls High, and Boys High schools etc., also those schools specializing with Afrikaans as the medium of instructions have been discriminating black and colored learners from being admitted into their education. These have resulted into the then MEC of education Mr. Panyaza Lesufi to review the policy of primary and secondary entry level to put the applications of admissions on the internet for every leaner going for Grade1 and Garde 8 entries levels (Curriculum Reform in South Africa, 2017). This calculated move has created a great deal of peace and harmony in the cities schools when spaces were concerned. Learners are now accepted and admitted into primary and secondary education according to who applied and within the spectrum of deadlines. This has limited the challenges and complains of schools' space even if other minor challenges persist that migrants' leaners are dominating the urban schools where only less than 5% is supposed to be the maximum admitted foreign leaners in South African Primary and Secondary schools.

This tendency of admitting more than 5% foreign leaners has caused a lot of havoc in the societies and citizens had formed movement such as Dudula Operation Movement and Put South African first to visit township and urban schools to show their concerns regarding the matter at hand. Unfortunately, both these South African Patriotic movements were named Xenophobic for taking strides in forcing the South African schools to implement the policy of

registering only maximum of 5% foreign leaners (Pongweni, 2023). These are parents who are concerned about many children staying back at home while foreign leaners exceeding the number stated on the policy in South African schools. Certainly, this South African Primary and Secondary education system had little legitimacy, given its role under apartheid in perpetuating racial inequalities and now 30% pass rate, scarcity of space which is a problem of minimal infrastructure, the burning of corporal punishment that led leaners misbehaving in schools to a point where teachers are tormented, some killed by leaners in township schools (Alistair, 2017). All these shortcomings are impacting Primary and Secondary education in South Africa worse negatively compared to the rest third world countries schools. Even though the Bantu Education Act of 1953 was repealed in 1979, it was replaced by the Education and Training Act, which essentially created an 'independent' education system for each of the four apartheid racial groupings (Ocampo, 2004). These tendencies of leaners fighting each other and their insular being out of proportion is fueled by the religious subject being removed from South African public schools across the country post 1994.

Politics at Play Within Education System Reform

Disregard important symbolic role of educational discrimination, Bantu education and segregations under apartheid regime, the democratic transition brought about strong pressures and more challenges in South African primary and secondary educational structure that impacted the quality education (Department of Education 2009). The influence comes from political leaders of the ruling party named African National Congress (ANC) to put people under their consistence control and made 60% of the South African population to rely on social grants. South Africa has four different kinds of social grants which are Pension grants, Orphans grants, disabled grants, and covid-19 social grants to anyone unemployed above the age of 18 to 59 years. When people are not educated in numbers, is difficult to be employable. Also, when people lack education, they keep on relying on grants that encourage them to vote for the same ANC led government. This is a strategy to keep majority of youth unemployable and lacking knowledge to keep ANC in power. These policies are made deliberately to collapse the whole educational structure because primary and secondary education is the most important school foundation (Gustafsson, 2016). The whole scenario is politics at play to keep majority of leaners unqualified for tertiary education.

The major political challenges regarding the functioning of the school system revolves around the role of teacher unions. One of the oldest known majority unions for teachers, South African Teachers Union (SADTU), is very strong and according to a recent Ministerial report 'the Volmink report" this union effectively controls six of the nine provincial education departments. Clashes between government and the unions have had major impacts, even though SADTU is a member of Congress of South African Teachers Union (Cosatu), an alliance partner of the led government ANC. The clashes happened in 2008 with strikes about teacher pay, which led to the closing of many schools for an extended period. After 2015 SADTU and other unions' objections led to a refusal to implement the Annual National Assessment in schools nationally, one of the few potential accountability systems that government has tried to put in place. These are other political shortcomings contributed to negatively impact the improvement of public primary and secondary educational (Department of Education, 2013).

The Significance of South African Early Childhood Development

South African basic education has extended primary education with the Early Child development classes. The National Development Plan (NDP) drawn up by the National Planning Commission (NPC) describes early childhood development as a priority and significant among the measures to improve the quality of education and long-term prospects of future generations" (NPC 2013:71). Furthermore, the NDP proposed that an additional year of pre-school should be added to schools before the current reception year or admission to Grade R. There is now strong agreement across disciplines that early development of children is both cost effective and inequality reducing (Heckman, 2013). It is evident that in South Africa there is belief that inequality in education already manifests early in the school system. These calls for the reduction of inequalities as one of the main reasons why the NDP and the education authorities put such emphasis on the reception year (for children aged 5), but also on even earlier learning in ECD centers (ages 1 to 4). The issues with quality and inequality in the school system are not improved by the current weak, fragmented and poorly resourced ECD sector. This contributes for children to be prepared for a strong foundation phase excellence.

The South African Education Digital and Technological Usage

The information and communication technology (ICT) use in South African education ICTs can be defined as a shorthand for the computers, software, networks, satellite links, and related systems that allow people to access, analyze, create, exchange, and use data, information, and knowledge in ways that were almost imaginable (Barakabitze, et al. 2019). The South African country has worked to include information and communication technology (ICT) within the education system. Limitedly, since South Africa is a developing nation, factors that hampers educational technology adoption and implementation exist. That including lack of resources such as tablets and computers, lack of internet infrastructure, and a large gap between the wealthy and the missing middle or the disadvantaged when it comes to access to personal devices which can be used for education (Lembani, et al., 2019).

The Introduction of ICT Utilization in South African Education

The South African education early years of ICT adoption occurred from 1996 to 2000. Since those periods, some South African education institutions began using computers and many institutions-built computer labs (Ng'ambi et al, 2016). These computers were used mainly by staff, but some institutions also implemented computer-based education or computer-aided instruction for learners as well. Such learning reflected behavioral philosophy and focused on drilling and practicing. The second phase of ICT adoption, was between 2001 and 2005, saw a focus on creating more access for learners in South African schools, including basic connectivity, wired schools and educator development. The utilization of Computers for learners expanded, while staff were introduced to email and the internet. In those time, ICTs were most often used to find information and for word processing tasks. Following 2005-2006, ICT use within the South African student population began to include mobile phones (Jantjies, 2023). The South African students began using their mobile phones for educational purposes, institutions lagged behind and did not generally implement learning opportunities via mobile-based teaching. The emerging of social media used exploded with the advent of Facebook, launched in 2005, and other sites. Most Primary and Secondary teachers also mentioned referring students to Mindset, a government-developed program which enables learners to access on-line videos related to mathematics. Eventually, as the decade

progressed, education continued to embrace varying educational technologies, and with the arrival of the COVID-19 global pandemic in 2020, educational ICTs were pushed even more to the forefront of education across the world, including in South African Schools (Ng'ambi et al, 2016).

Factors Hampering Implementing ICT by South African Educational Structures

South African education system was keen to and pushed to fully go for digital education during covid-19 pandemic national lockdown. Teachers were compelled to teach online, and leaners had to swiftly adapt for fully online education. The enormous shortcomings that negatively impacted ICT utilization in South Africa, even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, was the lack of a solid infrastructure and internet access throughout the entire country (Lembani, et al. 2019). South Africa is facing national electricity cuts named loadshedding. When in 2017, only about 22% of the population had access to the internet. Public internet access, at places such as internet cafes, existed for learners in urban areas, but rural areas sometimes lacked the infrastructure needed for consistent internet access. The learners from rural areas primary and secondary schools lack of internet causing them to fall behind in their studies, indicating that internet access did indeed is a major barrier for education in South Africa prior to the COVID-19 pandemic even during national lockdown of Covid-19 period. Consequently, in rural areas, less personal resources, such as personal computers and tablets, were available, often due to low socioeconomic status and being unable to afford such luxuries (Chisango, et al, 2020).

Within the schools, additional factors that negatively affected ICT usage continues to persist. Some of such shortcomings was a lack of teachers who were competent and comfortable with ICTs. The technical support assists in bridging that gap of ICT competency in teachers, but other barriers persist (Chigona & Chigona, 2010). Teachers sometimes resisted ICT adoption, believing ICTs were not a priority or even a hindrance to learning. These lack of resources and overcrowding of leaners in classes were also major shortcoming negatively impacting within schools to ICT use prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. Chigona and Chigona, (2010), stated that on average the class sizes are 40 plus learners, the lab has capacity to support 25 learners only. There are only 25 computers in the lab. It is evident that if you got 2000 kids in a school and you have 25 or 30 computers, it is not enough. These thus illustrate the difficulty with implementing ICTs for education when resources are limited, and schools are overcrowded. The final barrier faced by schools that is worth mentioning is the lack of a solid equipment's, electricity, and network access (Chisango, et al, 2020). The major factor that discourages learning even in schools where learning equipment's, internet and infrastructure are available, is the cuts of electricity loadshedding challenges.

Shortage of Teachers in South African Primary and Secondary Education

The South African schools faces a challenge of a shortage of teachers. Eventually, the rapid educational growth during democracy period and since the transition resulted in a growing need for teachers. The steady enrolment expansion for several decades has meant that the demand for teachers also grew steadily yet supply of new teachers has not matched the demand. The major possible factor was the closing or amalgamation of the 120 largely rural teacher colleges into the 23 universities in 2003, which resulted in a dramatic drop in the number of teachers trained (Taylor et al. 2013: 8). Gradually, the number of new teachers seems to have risen since the introduction of the Funza Lushaka state bursary scheme for studying teaching in 2009.

According to Van Broekhuizen (2015) the rate calculations at which the higher education system is currently producing qualified teachers is still not sufficient to meet current and future needs of the schooling system. The scarcity of teacher is widespread: in almost all education districts throughout the country there are schools that are problematically under-staffed (Gustafsson 2016: 50). The matter at hand is much more serious at secondary than at primary level, as secondary-level teaching posts are more difficult to fill because of specific requirements, such as subject requirements. Van Broekhuizen (2015: 1) argued that the country faces a particular shortage of teachers in key subject areas like mathematics and physical sciences. Gustafsson (2016: 51) found that in some districts upwards of 45% of secondary learners attend understaffed schools. This has serious implications for meeting the country's skilled manpower needs. Most of teacher workforce is ageing. Taking into consideration that the under-supply of teachers already poses a major constraint to improving educational outcomes, this is likely to become worse as the teacher workforce shrinks over time due to retirement.

Recommendations

After reviewing the shortcomings that impacted the Primary and Secondary education in South Africa, the following recommendations can contribute to improve basic education system in South Africa:

- The DBE needs to consider employing enough teachers in Primary and Secondary schools to reduce the pressure on the current teachers.
- There is a need to increase extra buildings of school classes in schools to accommodate less leaners in class to reduce overpopulated classes.
- All Rural and Urban schools need to be supplied with enough computers, teaching equipments, free internet access for leaners and teachers.
- The South African Primary and Secondary education needs to implement the policy of keeping immigrants' leaners at five percent (5%) to avoid external forces interference on matters of school spaces.
- The teachers Unions needs to align their actions with the policies of Department of Basic Education to walk on equal feet. To keep in mind learners' education is significant as well as teachers' salaries and other needs.
- Political leaders need to make educational laws that are fair and bring about ethical morals that builds pooper disciplined for both teachers and leaners in primary and secondary schools to respect each other to reach a common goal being teaching and learning.
- Parents at home needs to come to play and help teachers in control of leaners best behavior. And the DBE needs to come with fair measures in disciplining the teachers considering they are working with minors from different backgrounds.
- The Department of Basic Education need to increase a minimum pass rate of 50% for South African learners to be on an equal foot competition with the rest of the world learners.

Conclusions

The South African Department of Basic Education has worked tremendously for the transformation of primary and Secondary education system after 1994 post Democracy. The review of these transition and changes of educational system is facing shortcomings that impacted education negatively due to 30% pass rate reduction to the minimum of 30% that will affect learners negatively to compete with other learners in the rest of the world. The

shortage of teachers is an important element to be looked at and the DBE will be deemed as failure if schools lack teachers to carry out the teaching tasks for so many leaners while there are shortages of class and leaners are overpopulated in classes. This will affect the pass rate as teachers will not have access to give each learner attention they need. The DBE turning a blind eye of shortage of school infrastructure in public schools in rural and townships is a meager disadvantage for the leaners to pass. The Government of South Africa facing unending cuts of electricity (loadshedding) is another contributing factor setting leaners for failure being in rural and urban schools.

Acknowledgements

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