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A Study of the Conditions of Schooling and the Quality of Education

SACMEQ Educational Policy Research Series

THE SACMEQ III PROJECT IN SOUTH AFRICA:
A STUDY OF THE CONDITIONS OF SCHOOLING AND THE
QUALITY OF EDUCATION

SOUTH AFRICA • COUNTRY REPORT

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Country Report

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b) School Safety

School Safety School safety is critical for all learners and teachers, but particularly so for female learners and staff. Some of the critical resources that provide safety and feelings of safety in schools include safe fencing off of school premises. In Table 1 it has been shown that in 2000 only 82 percent of South Africa's Grade 6 boys and girls were in schools that were fenced off and that this percentage had increased to 87 percent by 2007. Because fencing is such a basic safety requirement, it remains unacceptable that 13 percent of learners were in schools that were not fenced off.

c) Sanitation

Provision of adequate separate sanitation facilities such as separate toilets for boys and girls is another basic requirement. Otherwise female learners may feel unsafe in the absence of these facilities and be forced not to stay long in school. In Table 1, the average numbers of learners per toilet in 2000 and 2007 are shown separately for boys' toilets and girls' toilets. For boys and girls it is worrisome that the ratio of learners to toilets increased between 2000 and 2007. Although no norms for numbers of learners per toilet were available for South Africa, the recommendation of the World Health Organisation is a ration of 1:30, i.e. 30 learners should be sharing a toilet. Using this norm (in the absence of a national norm) it is evident that Grade 6 learners in South Africa were in schools where toilets were overcrowded as can be evidenced from the relatively high learner-toilet ratios and the fact that these increased considerably during the period in question.

3.6 CONCLUSION

The following were the key findings, which constitute useful baseline information about the learners and their home environments:

On the whole, there seemed to be general compliance with the policy on age of admission to school and the Grade 6 learners were at the expected age for this grade. However, this survey showed that grade repetitions in the schools were unacceptably high. With the exception of a few provinces, girls tended to outnumber boys.

The majority of the learners stayed with parents whose average education was mainly primary and barely secondary. But there was a sizable number of learners who indicated that, during a school week they either stayed on their own or with friends.

On average, learners had access to some books, print and electronic media where they stayed during a school week. The number of Reading textbooks owned by or put at the disposal of learners was higher than that of Mathematics textbooks. The resources varied widely among the provinces but the variations tended to be in favour of urban settings. This is an equity issue that needs an accelerated but comprehensive intervention strategy.

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Policy Suggestion	Responsible Unit (within DBE)	Time	Cost Level
4.3 The Physical Planning Unit of the Department of Basic Education should immediately seek to: (i) establish and publish norms and standards for provision of separate toilets for boys and girls; and (ii) monitor that all schools adhere to the norms and standards.	Physical Planning and Infrastructure	Medium	High
5. Learner and teacher knowledge levels on HIV and AIDS			
5.1 Greater emphasis using clearly defined content must be placed within the current and forthcoming revisions of the national Curriculum and Policy Assessment Statement (CAPS) to improve learner knowledge levels on HIV and AIDS, particularly in Limpopo province where learners had one of the lowest scores of all the participating countries on SACMEQ.	Health Promotion	Short	Low
5.2 To address the difference in knowledge levels between educators and learners, the strengthening of pedagogical approaches amongst educators is required together with an investigation of the factors that impede knowledge transmission e.g. levels of implementation of the life skills programme and conflicts between programmes and personal values.	Health Promotion and Curriculum: GET schools	Medium	Low
5.3 The study reported a positive trend with respect to stigma and discrimination of people living with HIV and AIDS across all nine provinces. However, a third of learners expressed uncertainty about interacting with people living with HIV and AIDS. Further strengthening of safety and sexuality education programmes is required to eliminate stigma and discrimination.	Health Promotion	Short	Low

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