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THE SAME EDUCATION FOR ALL?

THE SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOL SYSTEM 17 YEARS AFTER THE END OF APARTHEID

Jennifer Schuster

“Education for all!” This is the banner under which South Africa is aiming to meet two of the United Nation’s central Millennium Development Goals by 2015. All children should receive a school education, regardless of gender or ethnic group.¹ At the root of this is the belief that modern development with an emphasis on human dignity cannot be achieved without education. “Economic success is inextricably linked to human capital – the knowledge, qualifications and characteristics which allow people to increase their personal and social well-being, along with that of their country.”²

In the case of South Africa, “Education for all” is also an opportunity to heal the wounds inflicted by apartheid. Education should break down the old social structures and create a more cohesive and less polarised society. But it is debatable whether, 17 years after the end of apartheid, the South African government has managed to integrate all pupils into a high-quality school system. The South African school system is lagging far behind what was expected of the transformation process. In regional surveys, South African schoolchildren generally come out worse than children from other African countries. Less than half of all school entrants make it through to year 12. Of the 1.3 million children who began school in 1999, only 550,000, or 42.3 per cent, actually sat their leaving exams.³ Only 23.5

1 | Goal 2: Universal primary education, goal 3: Gender equality.

2 | Angel Gurría, “OECD Insights: Humankapital,” <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/9/10/41592995.pdf> (accessed April 11, 2011).

3 | Cf. David MacFarlane and Kamogelo Seekoei, “Matric pass welcomed and questioned,” *Mail & Guardian*, January 7, 2011, <http://mg.co.za/article/2011-01-07-matric-pass-welcomed-and-questioned> (accessed May 18, 2011).

per cent of school leavers achieved the marks required for university entrance in 2011. So far the gap between black and white, rich and poor has not been bridged.⁴

Although the present government is pouring large amounts of money into rectifying this imbalance, the legacy of apartheid in the education system remains strong.

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM DURING THE APARTHEID ERA

No other social institution reflected the apartheid era's policy of racial separation more clearly than the education system and it was a major challenge for the first democratically-elected government in 1994 to integrate all the country's citizens into one single system. The ideological framework for "Bantu education" was set out in a manifesto in 1939, based on the racist premise that education of the blacks was a job for their superiors, the whites.⁵

From the beginning of apartheid in 1940 until it ended in the mid-90s, South Africa had an education system which trained Africans to work in the low-wage sector, in order to protect the white minority from competition for jobs.⁶ The Bantu Education Act of 1953 limited the educational possibilities for blacks, coloureds and Asians. According to the Minister for Native Affairs, there were no jobs for blacks outside the low-wage sector.

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Moreover, many missionary schools found their financial support was withdrawn if they were not prepared to teach the Bantu education curriculum. The majority of these schools had to close down. In the decades before and during apartheid these schools had made it possible for black children to get an education, among them children such as Nelson Mandela. The National Party (NP) preferred that "their" children should get a Christian, nationalist school education. In their education policies they promulgated the view that a person's responsibilities and opportunities

4 | Cf. "Key subjects spark pride and concern," *Business Day*, January 7, 2011.

5 | Cf. Frances Baard and Barbie Schreiner, "My Spirit is not banned," <http://overcomingapartheid.msu.edu/sidebar.php?id=3&page=1> (accessed March 30, 2011).

6 | Cf. Rita M. Byrnes, *South Africa: A Country Study* (Washington: GPO for the library of congress, 1996), 3.

were defined by their ethnic identity. As a result, financial resources were to a large extent directed only to white pupils. At the end of the 1960s 16 times more was spent on school education for a white child than for a black child.⁷ Education for non-white children was funded by a general poll tax on blacks. But as the majority of black South Africans either earned nothing or very little, tax revenue and hence spending on education was very low. School education for white children, on the other hand, received state funding.⁸

The school infrastructure for non-white children and teacher qualifications were at a much lower level than for white schools. 96 per cent of teachers at white schools had a teaching certificate, compared to only 15 per cent of teachers in black schools. There were enormous disparities in the financial infrastructure between black and white schools and the teacher-pupil ratio had a negative effect on the quality of teaching for black pupils. Figures from the 1980s show this discrepancy between white and black schools: the teacher-pupil ratio was 1:18 in white schools, 1:24 in Asian schools, 1:27 in coloured schools and 1:39 in black schools.⁹

The black community cried out for a single state education system. For many blacks, the abolition of the school system was a way of weakening apartheid, and in the 1970s there was an increase in demonstrations against the system of racial segregation. Protests came to a head on June 16, 1976 in Soweto township near Johannesburg after Prime

The Soweto uprising was seen by the black population as being the start of a new movement and a new consciousness. The aim of this uprising was to make South Africa "ungovernable".

Minister Hendrik Verwoerd announced that in future teaching in certain subjects would be done in Afrikaans – a language which was associated with the apartheid system and which most blacks could not speak. An aggressive police operation ended in violence

and the death of several pupils. The Soweto uprising was seen by the black population as being the start of a new movement and a new consciousness. The aim of this

7 | Cf. "No one gets prizes," *The Economist*, January 14, 2011, <http://economist.com/node/15270976> (accessed March 30, 2011).

8 | Cf. Baard and Schreiner, "My Spirit is not banned," n. 5.

9 | Cf. *ibid.*

uprising was to make South Africa “ungovernable”. The precarious situation of black educational institutions was improved slightly by the National Policy for General Affairs Act of 1984, but racial segregation continued. There were further protests in the years that followed which finally led to secret negotiations between the NP government and the political leaders of the black opposition, which resulted in increased spending on black education.

The reorganisation of the education system was one of the greatest challenges facing the government after the abolition of apartheid in the 1990s. The new South African government took over a deeply unequal society. During the process of political transition, F.W. de Klerk created the Education Co-ordination Service, which was tasked with regulating school education during this time and abolishing the dual system in order to finally establish a single school system for all. The right to education is enshrined in paragraph 29 (1) of the constitution, making the right to education part of the new state’s basic legal framework. The state is obliged to guarantee a basic education for all its citizens. It is also written into the constitution that national and provincial governments share joint responsibility for education.

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23.5 per cent of the national budget for 1993/1994 was invested in education in order to offer all its citizens the same educational opportunities. The dismantling of parallel school systems led to problems due to lack of infrastructure and a shortage of qualified teachers. Subsidies by the national and provincial governments were directed only at teachers, which meant that schools had to introduce fees from which only the very poorest pupils were exempt.¹⁰

SOUTH AFRICA’S SCHOOL SYSTEM TODAY – PROGRESS AND PROBLEMS

If we compare the segregated school system during apartheid with the structures that exist today, it is clear that things have changed for the better. South Africa has one of the highest rates of school enrolment in the

whole of Africa (nearly 100 per cent), with a similarly high rate of girls attending elementary school.¹¹ So it is no longer surprising that German development aid for the South African education system focuses on secondary and tertiary education and vocational training.¹²

If we look at the country's present school system in more detail, it is clear that South Africa is on the right track towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals in the areas of elementary education and gender equality.

However, the drop-out rate of pupils who leave the school system early and without school-leaving qualifications is dramatic. Pupil enrolment and attendance shows a dramatic decline after primary school.¹³ Along

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with enrolment and attendance statistics, the results of the national school-leaving examination, the "matric", reflect the terrible state of South Africa's education system. It is true that school leavers in 2010 achieved an average pass rate of 67.8 per cent, an improvement of 7.1 per cent over the previous year. But the matric pass rate tells us little about the quality of the education system, as the pass rate does not show how many pupils only achieved the lowest pass mark of 30 per cent. Moreover, only 23.5 per cent of school-leavers achieved the marks required for university entrance – it remains to be seen whether they are really qualified for tertiary education.

If we compare the marks from 2008 it is clear that white pupils did much better than black pupils. Only 57 per cent of the 460,000 black pupils passed the national school-leaving exams in 2008, compared to 99 per cent of the

11 | Cf. Jonathan Jansen and Nick Taylor, "Educational Change in South Africa 1994-2003: Case Studies in Large-Scale Education Reform", *Country Studies Education Reform and Management Publication Series*, 2, http://www.jet.org.za/publications/research/Jansen%20and%20Taylor_World%20Bank%20report.pdf (accessed April 2, 2011).

12 | Cf. Embassy of the Federal Republic of Germany Pretoria, "Bildung," http://www.pretoria.diplo.de/Vertretung/pretoria/de/00__Arbeitsordner/DE__SA__Bildung (accessed June 27, 2011).

13 | Cf. UNICEF, "Statistic South Africa," http://www.unicef.org/infobycountry/southafrica_statistics.html#77 (accessed April 17, 2011).

41,000 white pupils. The results of black pupils fall well below the national average, particularly in poor and rural provinces.¹⁴ The 2008 year group showed that the South African education ministry have not been able to develop a competitive education system, nor have they closed the gap between the previously disadvantaged and favoured groups.

In general, South Africa also comes up short in international comparative assessments such as the Mathematics and Sciences Study (TIMSS) in 1999 and 2003. South Africa did not participate in the subsequent international study in 2007 but it seems likely that it will take part in the 2011 assessment.

Table 1

Performance of South African pupils

	Maths Score	Science Score
TIMSS 2003		
South Africa average score	264	244
International average	467	474
TIMSS 1999		
South Africa average score	275	243
International average	487	488

Source: HSRC¹⁵

Other comparative surveys show similarly negative results, not only in comparison with the developed nations but also compared to other African countries.¹⁶ Domestic comparisons carried out in years three and six also confirm the low educational levels of South African schoolchildren. In 2003 the average result in the year three maths test was just 30 per cent, and in reading and writing it was

14 | Cf. Karen Van Rooyen, "Matric 2009: The Sobering Aftermath," *The Times*, January 10, 2010, <http://www.timeslive.co.za/sundaytimes/article254358.ece/Matric-2009--The-Sobering-Aftermath> (accessed April 18, 2011).

15 | Cf. TIMSS SCORE 2003 and 1999, http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Programme-Page-62.phtml (accessed May 3, 2011).

16 | Cf. OECD, "Reviews of National Policies for Education – South Africa," (2008), 54, <http://digm.meb.gov.tr/uaorgutler/OECD/5.Reviews%20of%20National%20Policies%20for%20Education%20South%20Africa.pdf> (accessed April 25, 2011).

39 per cent. Pupils in almost exclusively black schools did significantly worse than pupils in almost exclusively white schools. However, children at predominantly white schools still only barely reached the OECD average.¹⁷ A considerable proportion of pupils have not even mastered the basic skills which are required to move on to the next stage of schooling.¹⁸

South Africa has poured huge amounts of funding into the education sector in order to bring poorer schools up to the level of richer schools.

Access to education and quality of education are not commensurate with the amount of money that the government has invested in the education system. Since 1994 South Africa has poured huge amounts of funding into the education sector in order to sweep away educational inequalities and to bring poorer schools up to the same level as richer schools. In 2006, as part of the government's Pro-Poor policy, 49 per cent of educational funding was spent on 40 per cent of the country's poorest population.¹⁹ In 2011 189.5 billion rand will be budgeted for education, of which 145.5 billion rand will be invested in basic education. The budget report comments on this: "There is not always a correlation between spending and outputs."²⁰

TEACHERS – POORLY TRAINED, BUT HAPPY TO STRIKE

A whole series of factors have contributed to the parlous state of the education system. The role of the teachers themselves has been heavily criticised, as a series of strikes in 2010 led to schools being closed for weeks at a time and put teachers under the spotlight. These strikes took place just a few weeks before the matric. The influential teachers union SADTU, which represents around 220,000 of the country's 386,000 teachers, was fighting for higher salaries for teachers and so felt that the school closures were justified. Although over 80 per cent of education expenditure goes on salaries teachers still feel that they don't earn enough.²¹

17 | Cf. "SA's Math and Literacy levels compared with other countries," *The Star*, February 22, 2010, 5.

18 | Cf. OECD, n. 16, 55.

19 | Servass van den Berg, "Low Quality Education as a poverty trap", University Stellenbosch Research paper March 2011, 3.

20 | Cf. OECD, n. 16, 145.

21 | Cf. OECD, n. 16, 104.

Many teachers are not fully qualified, a fact that can be traced back to the Bantu education system. Most of the teachers who are still working today started out under apartheid. As a result only 18 per cent of teachers are fully qualified.²² With the help of training programmes the government is trying to help teachers to gain their qualifications retrospectively, but despite these measures the majority of teachers are still not sufficiently well-trained to satisfy the needs of a modern school system. This is a major contributing factor to the pupils' low level of education.²³

Most of the teachers started out under apartheid. As a result only 18 per cent of them are fully qualified – a major contributing factor to the pupils' low level of education.

This lack of teachers' qualifications is a political problem because the ANC did away with the existing colleges that were responsible for teacher training. Teacher training became the responsibility of the universities. The switch was not without difficulties or disputes and this has had a negative effect on the quality of teacher training.

Teachers who fail to turn up for work or to teach the required 6.5 hours per day continue to attract media attention. A study by the Human Sciences Research Council shows that on any given day between ten and twelve per cent of teachers are absent.²⁴ This is the equivalent of 40,000 teachers who fail to turn up to teach each day, whether because they are sick or attending further training or for no reason at all. More and more pupils are starting to demonstrate about their right to education and this has already led to violent clashes. The government seems powerless to control the behaviour of the teachers. Most of the teachers who work in state schools are members of SADTU and can use strikes to flex their muscles.

22 | Cf. "No one gets prizes," *The Economist*, January 14, 2011, <http://economist.com/node/15270976> (accessed March 30, 2011).

23 | Cf. OECD, n. 16, 85.

24 | Cf. Yolande Du Preez, "Study fingers high teacher absenteeism," *The Star*, December 14, 2010, 5.

STEPS TOWARDS REFORMING THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

According to Jansen and Taylor there are very few countries who have introduced more legislation or reforms in the area of education than South Africa since 1994.²⁵ Most of the legislation was passed during the ANC's first term of office from 1994 to 1999. The goal of the new framework is to offer high-quality education to all children, regardless of skin colour.

The first reforms in terms of a new curriculum were designed to develop a goal-oriented study plan in which the focus is firmly on the pupils and where they are trained to think for themselves. In 1996 outcome based education (OBE) was introduced as part of the C2005 education reforms. The C2005 plan was initially welcomed by politicians as well as teachers and SADTU as a positive step. However, C2005 failed during the implementation phase because teachers had not been properly introduced to the new curriculum. It became clear early on that there were not enough staff, which resulted in lesson plans not being completely understood by teachers and therefore not correctly taught. The language used in C2005 was thought to be too complicated so that teachers failed to properly understand the new teaching plan.²⁶

By 2008 the wisdom of C2005 and OBE in particular was starting to be questioned as pupils who had been studying for 12 years were getting poor results in the national final exams. The senior classes of 2008 were unusual in that they were the first pupils to complete their schooling in the post-apartheid era. These were the pupils who were going to show whether or not South Africa's new education policies were in fact able to deliver high-quality education to all pupils. With an average mark of 62.5 per cent, the results were much lower than expected and acted as a wake-up call for South African politicians. It was clear that it was not possible to deliver a high-quality education system using this curriculum. Instead of doing away with OBE and C2005 the Education Minister Angie Motshekga simply decided to review their implementation. The

25 | Cf. Jansen and Taylor, "Educational Change in South Africa 1994-2003," n. 11, 8.

26 | Cf., *ibid.*

country is still waiting for a radical reform of the education system even though it is clear that this resource-intensive curriculum cannot be considered a suitable model in the South African context.

According to a report by the Human Rights Commission, children from poor families are still not being given a decent education. Education spending per pupil is lower in poor provinces than in those with lower unemployment and higher incomes. Also families on low incomes can only afford to pay low school fees, something which further reduces the budgets in schools in poorer areas. Even school fees of as little as 100 rand (approx. 10 Euros) per month are too much for some parents.²⁷

Despite all the government's efforts there is still a causal link in South Africa between good exam results and the quality of the school's resources. As a result the richer Western Cape (78.6 per cent) and Gauteng (76.8 per cent) provinces achieved significantly better average exam results in 2010 than poorer provinces such as Eastern Cape (58.3 per cent), Limpopo (57.9 per cent) and Mpumalanga (56.8 per cent). Private schools did even better (98 per cent). In contrast there were one or two schools in the Eastern Cape where not one single pupil passed the matric.

Former Model C schools still seem to enjoy some of the advantages they had from the days of segregated schooling. These are mostly former white-only state schools. Even now they still have a better infrastructure and are better equipped because spending per pupil is still far higher than for children in the former DET and HOR schools (for black and coloured children during apartheid). The government is trying to remove the inequality between former Model C schools and DET and HOR schools by providing the latter two types with financial grants, but in 2002 10,859 of 27,148 schools had no electricity and 2,496 schools had no basic sanitation facilities.²⁸

Former Model C schools still have a better infrastructure because spending per pupil is still far higher than for children in the former schools for black and coloured children.

27 | Cf. OECD, n. 16, 99.

28 | Cf. South African Human Rights Commission, "3rd Socio-Economic Rights Report 2000/2002", (2002).

Today it is also possible for black and coloured children to attend former Model C schools. Pupils at these schools achieve significantly better results in the school-leaving exams than those in other state schools, irrespective of their skin colour.²⁹ The results from 2009 serve to underline this fact. While the average national mark was round 60 per cent, the former Model C schools achieved 94 per cent on average. This shows that, irrespective of skin colour, pupils can achieve good results if the school is sufficiently well-equipped and there are enough qualified and committed teachers available. It should be pointed out that the majority of the coloured and black children who attend these schools tend to come from better socio-economic backgrounds, which makes it difficult to make a true comparison with pupils from poorer backgrounds.

The former Model C schools can charge higher fees due to the socio-economic profile of their pupils. A fact that only serves to propagate the existing divisions within the school system.

88 per cent of white pupils currently attend a former Model C school. They benefit not only from the fact that the schools are well-equipped, but also from being able to go to these schools in the first place. Because of the socio-economic profile of the pupils the schools are able to charge higher fees, a fact that only serves to propagate the existing divisions within the school system.³⁰

The school fees at former Model C schools are generally much higher than for other state schools and as a result parents of pupils from poorer backgrounds cannot afford to send their children to these schools. It is in fact possible for pupils from poor backgrounds to be exempted from paying these fees but it is a lengthy process and many parents don't even realise that the possibility exists. The majority of black and coloured South African pupils therefore do not enjoy the privilege of attending these former Model C schools. As a result, it is much more likely that pupils from poorer families will receive a worse education than those who do.

29 | Cf. South African Institute of Race Relation, Press Release, "The school, not race, makes the difference," <http://sairr.org.za/media/media-releases/The%20school-%20not%20race-%20makes%20the%20difference%20-%2017%20January%202011.pdf> (accessed April 6, 2011).

30 | Cf. Marius Roodt, "Fix education crisis at the root," *The Star*, January 24, 2011, 12.

The fact that so many languages are spoken in the country is also a major challenge for the education system. Three main problems have been identified. The first problem is that in poor and rural areas as well as township schools there are usually not enough teachers available who can speak the local language or who can teach in the local dialect. Secondly, a considerable number of parents think that English would be the best language for their children to be taught in, in order to prepare them for the job world where English is usually necessary. The final problem is that many pupils don't actually speak English at home, but more likely Zulu or Xhosa for example. However, most subjects in school are taught in English, which is a major problem for many pupils and teachers alike.³¹ The *Emerging Voices* report by the Nelson Mandela foundation suggested that 42 per cent of pupils have problems in understanding their teachers³² and so cannot follow the lessons.

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PROBLEMS PERCEIVED, SOLUTIONS SOUGHT

According to a study by the University of Stellenbosch, the factors mentioned above, along with many others, such as a lack of school books, the high level of HIV infection among teachers³³ and children who turn up to school hungry, have resulted in the South African education system simply reproducing the division between poverty and privilege instead of breaking down the barriers.³⁴

Even Education Minister Angie Motshekga admits that it will probably take up to 20 years before the legacy of apartheid can be overcome in the education sector. The administration of many schools is still poor and the quality of teaching

31 | Cf. OECD, n. 16, 180.

32 | Cf. Nelson Mandela Foundation, *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities*, (2005), 28, http://www.nelsonmandela.org/images/uploads/Emerging_Voices.pdf (accessed May 2, 2011).

33 | 12.7 per cent of South African teachers are HIV positive, with the highest number in the 25-34 age group teaching in rural areas.

34 | Cf. van den Berg, "Low Quality Education as a poverty trap," n. 19.

is still a long way below required standards.³⁵ The results from the huge investments that have been made can at best be described as poor. The education system is in such a bad state that government spending alone is unlikely to be sufficient to overcome the inequalities of opportunity. The Minister and the Vice President Kgakema Mothlanthe therefore appealed to businesses to invest in the education system under a Public Private Partnership system³⁶ and today South African businesses are investing millions of rand in education projects. However, these investments have so far failed to have a major impact on improving the school system.³⁷

In contrast, private schools that only charge low fees and have therefore opened up the private school sector to pupils from poorer backgrounds are having a much greater impact than Public Private Partnerships. As many parents see little hope for their children in the state schools they are starting to turn to these new private schools in order to offer their children a brighter future. In comparison tests carried out by the local Center for Development and Enterprise, pupils at these private schools are getting better results than similar groups in state schools. These private schools are in a competitive education market and so are constantly trying to improve their performance and what they have to offer.

Pupils at private schools are getting better results than similar groups in state schools. Private schools are competitors in an education market and therefore constantly improving their performance.

What is not clear is whether or not the new private schools are actually in competition with state schools. The big question is whether the state schools will really be forced to raise their education standards because they are losing pupils to the private schools. The state schools are really only in competition for pupils who can afford a private education. Pupils from poorer backgrounds can't afford to go to private schools anyway – even the new low-cost schools – because school fees in South Africa are

35 | Cf. "No-frills private schools cater for forgotten poor," *The Star*, January 3, 2011, 4.

36 | Cf. Nontobeko Mtshali, "Minister says it will take 20 years to address education woes," *The Star*, November 30, 2010, 7.

37 | Cf. Ann Bernstein, *Business and schooling reform – CDE Workshop*, (Johannesburg: The Center for Development and Enterprise, 2009), 10.

significantly higher than in other emerging nations. So the new private schools are only likely to be attended by pupils from the working class and not the poorest of the poor.³⁸

PERSONAL AND ECONOMIC CONSEQUENCES OF POOR EDUCATION

In turn, the quality of school education has a significant impact on the opportunities that are available for pupils. Young people who pass their school-leaving exams are twice as likely to get a job as those who leave school early. And a university degree makes them three times more likely to find a job compared to those who only have a high school leaving certificate.³⁹

Economic growth depends on well-educated people. The 23.5 per cent of all school-leavers who go on to tertiary education are not enough to meet the need for qualified specialists. According to the education ministry, schools are not producing enough school-leavers with the kind of good exam results which will be needed by the South African job market.⁴⁰

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Even today the country is feeling the effects of the lack of qualified people. For example, in the next few years one third of technicians and engineers who work for the state-owned power company Eskom will be retiring. At the moment the government is investing an additional 780 million rand in education programmes to try to deal with the imminent dearth of skilled labour in the energy sector. But similar investments are not being made in other sectors, meaning South Africa will have to continue getting their skilled staff from abroad.⁴¹ Along with the lack of skilled labour, there are also large numbers of young

38 | Cf. Ann Bernstein, *Hidden Assets South Africa's low-fee private schools – CDE in Depth* (Johannesburg: The Center for Development and Enterprise, 2010), et al.

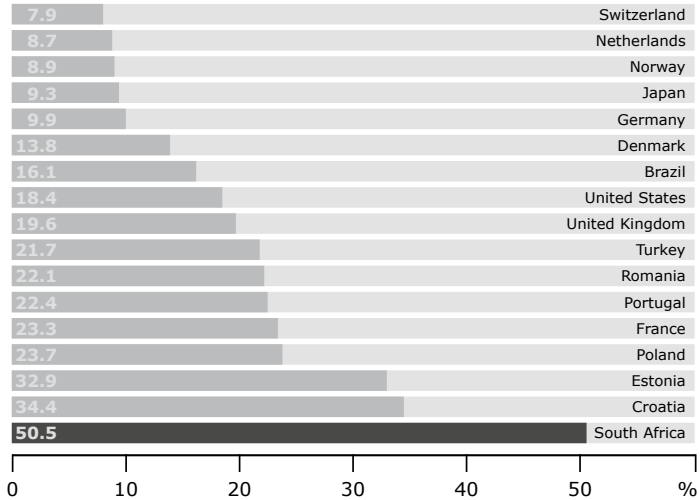
39 | Cf. Murray Leibbrandt, *Investing in Human Capital – CDE Round Table* (Johannesburg: The Center for Development and Enterprise, 2010), 8, 21, 27.

40 | Cf. "Key subjects spark pride and concern," *Business Day*, January 7, 2011.

41 | Cf. "R 780m invested to avert skills crisis," *The Star*, March 15, 2011, 8.

people who are unemployed. South Africa has one of the highest youth unemployment rates in the world. 83.3 per cent of unskilled labourers are black South Africans.

Fig. 1
Youth unemployment rate, 2010



Source: ILO⁴²

In South Africa sustainable economic growth is certainly a necessary prerequisite for further transformation, but to date economic growth in South Africa has not led to a reduction in unemployment or the removal of inequality.⁴³ Only an increase in qualified school-leavers can help overcome the country’s lack of skilled workers, even out income disparities and pave the way to sustainable economic growth.

CONCLUSION: “LOST GENERATIONS”

This poses the question of whether, 17 years after the end of apartheid, the government has managed to integrate all schoolchildren into a high-quality school system and create equal educational opportunities for all its citizens.

42 | International Labour Organization (ILO), Dept. of Statistics, ▶ “Unemployment rate by age: youth,” June 2011, http://laborsta.ilo.org/sti/DATA_FILES/TABLE_PDF/By_Topic_FULL_EN.pdf (accessed June 22, 2011).

43 | Cf. OECD, n. 16, 239.

Overall the picture of the South African education system is a sobering one. Up to now, laws and regulations have not been enough to transform the education system so that it supports the development of the country and its people. Just meeting the Millennium Development Goals is not enough to give everyone equal educational opportunities and to become and remain competitive on the world stage. The restructuring of the education system was and remains one of the biggest challenges facing the government since the end of apartheid, and so far it has not accomplished its goal.

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Unfortunately many international donor organisations and countries, including Germany, are allowing the positive statistics on school enrolment rates to blind them to the parlous state of the education system. It would make sense to also focus on primary education along with vocational training in South Africa, in order to support the country in its difficult task.

The country has to improve the quality of its school education while also drastically reducing the numbers of pupils who leave school without qualifications. Of course an improved school system is not the only way of guaranteeing development and a way out of poverty, but it is a first step for people to make the most of their own and their country's potential. Education is not just an opportunity for personal development but is something which benefits the whole community.

South African non-governmental organisations such as the Center for Development and Enterprise and international organisations such as the OECD have suggested extensive educational reforms in the area of teacher training, restructuring of spending on education and an overhaul of curricula in order to make the South African education system ready to face the future – but these reform proposals have so far been largely ignored by the education ministry. Radical

reforms and unpopular decisions are the only way out of the country's educational plight. This requires strong political leadership which is in a position to set urgent priorities and to organise the education system and its challenges. 17 years after the end of apartheid the education system is still churning out "lost generations" with zero opportunities who contribute nothing to the social and economic development of South Africa.