

Press Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

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SA needs an alternative to the State-run schooling that is stunting our children's future

'Parents, not politicians, must run South Africa's schools' is the title of the first edition of *FreeFACTS* from the Institute of Race Relations (IRR), a report that exposes the extent to which the State-run school system is stunting the development of South Africa's children, especially black pupils.

The report argues that the bulk of our state schools 'are not in the main inferior because of a shortage of money. Many emerging markets spend less on education than South Africa, but produce much better results'.

In South Africa's case, however, 'corruption, destructive trade unions, ideological dogma, and incompetent bureaucrats and politicians are responsible for the fact that only a small majority of children will be well educated'.

Citing IRR research showing that 'when communities control schools, results improve', the report makes the case for a constructive alternative, suggesting that 'a short cut to much better education is to get bureaucrats out and let parents take over'.

As things stand, the outlook is grim.

Author of the report, IRR Campaign Manager Marius Roodt writes: 'The data in this report shows, among other things, that only 33% of matric candidates 'passed' maths with a grade of 40% or higher, that just 29.2% of schools have a library, that only 18.3% of government schools have a science laboratory, and that only 13% of the 2006 grade-1 class managed a university entry qualification when they wrote matric in 2017.

'This may be the future of your child if you don't find an alternative outside of the government school system – but few people can afford private schools.'

The report notes, however, that alternative approaches capable of achieving the 'short cut' to better education outcomes are feasible.

One is to sell some schools to community groups, churches, non-profit organisations, and private education providers for a nominal fee of, say, R1, and let them run such schools within agreed guidelines.

This would go hand in hand with channelling the national education budget into smart-card vouchers to be given to all parents.

Writes Roodt: 'We estimate that these vouchers will be sufficient to finance high-quality education for every child in the country. Parents can redeem these vouchers at any school of their choosing and top up the voucher with their own funds in the event that the school charges higher fees. By giving parents the choice and buying power to decide on the education of their children they then have the power to control the curriculum, language policy, and ethos of the school they send their children to.'

'It is not for the government and politicians to decide how to raise your child. That is for you to decide.'

This inaugural edition of FreeFACTS [\[\[click here\]\]](#) coincides with the launch of the IRR's Education Charter [\[\[click here\]\]](#), an initiative to give South Africans the opportunity to endorse greater parental involvement in schools as a first step to rescuing the education system from the grave crisis it is in.

The Charter is addressed to the politicians who are directly involved in managing the country's schooling system; the Minister of Basic Education, the nine provincial education MECs and the Official Opposition's Shadow Minister of Basic Education.

It will urge them all to heed growing public anxiety about the state of education in South Africa, and to implement policies that give parents the greater control and influence over schools which, universally, have led to better results in the classroom.

Ends.