IRR
South African Institute of Race Relations
The power of ideas

*Free*FACTS

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Parents, not politicians, must run South Africa's schools

This edition of *FreeFACTS* exposes the extent to which the State-run school system stunts the development of South Africa's children, especially black pupils.

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.

Bad government 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. 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.

Our research* further shows that when communities control schools, results improve and that a short cut to much better education is to get bureaucrats out and let parents take over. This can be best done by firstly, selling some schools to community groups, churches, non-profit organisations, and private education providers for R1. Secondly, the national education budget must then be divided into smart-card vouchers that are received by all parents. 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. Support our work and we can make greater parental control of education a reality.

*Ask about our *@Liberty* report on schools and what makes them work.

— Marius Roodt

JOIN US

The IRR is an advocacy group that fights for your right to make decisions about your life, family and business, free from unnecessary government, political, and bureaucratic interference. FreeFACTS publishes evidence that communities are better off when individuals are free to make decisions about how they want to live, be educated, work, access healthcare, think, speak, own property, and protect their communities. If you agree with the issues we stand for, welcome to the team. There are millions of people just like you who are tired of South African politicians, activists, and commentators attempting to rein in your freedom to decide. Take control and make sure your voice is heard by becoming a friend of the IRR.

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Education

Table 1 shows enrolment in public and independent schools by province. Two points are striking – the first is that independent schools account for just under 5% of school enrolment. The second is that the rate of increase in independent school enrolment far exceeds that of public schools. We view this as a key social trend.

Table 1: Pupils in public and independent schools by province, 2000 and 2017

Province	*Year*	*Public*	*Independent*	*Proportion of schools independent*
Eastern Cape	2000	2 130 390	8 471	0,4%
	2017	1 898 723	62 824	3,2%
	2000–17	**–10,9%**	**641,6%**	–
Free State	2000	744 868	19 887	2,6%
	2017	671 712	16 637	2,4%
	2000–17	**–9,8%**	**–16,3%**	–
Gauteng	2000	1 436 964	117 531	7,6%
	2017	2 048 558	278 026	11,9%
	2000–17	**42,6%**	**136,6%**	–
KwaZulu-Natal	2000	2 619 621	43 739	1,6%
	2017	2 808 137	69 407	2,4%
	2000–17	**7,2%**	**58,7%**	–
Limpopo	2000	1 830 018	15 247	0,8%
	2017	1 706 725	58 830	3,3%
	2000–17	**–6,7%**	**285,8%**	–
Mpumalanga	2000	898 599	13 180	1,4%
	2017	1 046 234	28 118	2,6%
	2000–17	**16,4%**	**113,3%**	–
North West	2000	902 256	7 650	0,8%
	2017	810 260	19 207	2,3%
	2000–17	**–10,2%**	**151,1%**	–
Northern Cape	2000	196 205	2 445	1,2%
	2017	288 515	4 080	1,4%
	2000–17	**47,0%**	**66,9%**	–
Western Cape	2000	888 251	28 133	3,1%
	2017	1 063 349	53 223	4,8%
	2000–17	**19,7%**	**89,2%**	–
South Africa	2000	11 647 172	256 283	2,2%
	2017	12 342 213	590 352	4,6%
	2000–17	**6,0%**	**130,4%**	–

Source: Department of Basic Education

Table 2 provides the critically important insight that, as children advance through the school system, levels of grade repetition increase particularly in the latter years of high school. This indicates inadequate preparation in earlier years.

Table 2: Repeaters[a] by grade, 2009-15

Grade	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015
1	6,9%	5,8%	6,9%	9,0%	10,7%	9,2%	7,0%
2	7,4%	8,4%	8,3%	9,7%	9,1%	9,0%	8,7%
3	7,1%	8,9%	7,7%	9,5%	9,7%	9,6%	8,9%
4	6,8%	6,2%	8,2%	10,7%	9,2%	7,6%	9,5%
5	6,5%	7,0%	6,0%	8,2%	9,4%	7,8%	6,9%
6	6,5%	6,6%	7,3%	7,2%	7,6%	8,4%	7,4%
7	5,0%	5,3%	6,1%	6,5%	7,9%	6,8%	7,9%
8	8,2%	6,6%	7,6%	10,3%	8,6%	9,8%	12,3%
9	10,7%	11,3%	13,4%	15,0%	16,2%	17,3%	14,8%
10	17,1%	19,0%	21,0%	22,1%	24,5%	21,0%	20,4%
11	16,3%	18,2%	18,1%	19,9%	21,1%	17,7%	15,6%
12	8,3%	10,6%	10,9%	8,9%	8,9%	6,4%	7,6%

Source: Department of Basic Education

a The total number of pupils who are enrolled in the same grade as in the previous year, expressed as a proportion of the total enrolment in that specified grade.

Table 3 shows that the number of candidates writing matric has increased since 2008 – the number achieving a bachelor's pass having increased by 43,2%. This does not necessarily reflect an increase in the quality of the school-leaving class, and has undoubtedly contributed to the burden on universities. Note also that in 2017, despite the increase over time, just 28,7% of the school-leaving class achieved this level of pass.

Table 3: National Senior Certificate examination results (new curriculum), 2008-17

		Pass		*Fail*	*Higher Certificate admission*		*Diploma admission*		*Bachelor's admission*	
Year	*Candidates*	*Number*	*Proportion*	*Number*	*Number*	*Proportion*	*Number*	*Proportion*	*Number*	*Proportion*
2008	533 561	334 744	62,7%	199 817	102 032	19,1%	124 258	23,3%	107 274	20,1%
2009	552 073	334 718	60,6%	217 355	93 356	17,0%	131 035	23,8%	109 697	19,9%
2010	537 543	364 513	67,8%	171 471	91 241	17,1%	146 224	27,2%	126 371	23,5%
2011	496 090	348 114	70,2%	147 976	85 296	17,2%	141 584	28,5%	120 767	24,3%
2012	511 152	377 829	73,9%	133 323	88 604	17,3%	152 881	29,9%	136 047	26,6%
2013	562 112	439 779	78,2%	122 333	94 556	16,8%	173 292	30,8%	171 755	30,6%
2014	532 860	403 874	75,8%	128 986	86 022	16,1%	166 689	31,3%	150 752	28,3%
2015	644 536	455 825	70,7%	188 711	105 770	16,4%	183 720	28,5%	166 263	25,8%
2016	610 178	442 672	72,5%	167 506	100 486	16,5%	179 619	29,4%	162 374	26,6%
2017	534 484	401 307	75,1%	133 177	86 265	16,1%	161 333	30,2%	153 610	28,7%
2008–17	**0,2%**	**19,9%**	**19,8%**	**–33,4%**	**–15,5%**	**–15,7%**	**29,8%**	**29,6%**	**43,2%**	**42,8%**

Source: Department of Basic Education

a In order to be granted an NSC, a pupil needs to achieve 40% in three subjects, one of which must be their home language, and achieve 30% in three additional subjects. Pass figures include higher certificate, diploma and bachelor's passes.

b This allows a person to study for a higher certificate. The minimum admission requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching.

c This allows a person to study for a diploma. The minimum requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching and 40% or more in four other subjects.

d Or university entrance pass, which allows a person to study for a bachelor's degree. The minimum requirement is an NSC with a minimum of 30% in the language of learning and teaching and 50% or more in four or more subjects.

Table 4 concerns us a great deal. It shows that the number of children who wrote both maths and physical science in matric has declined over the better part of a decade. The proportion of candidates passing maths with a grade of 70% of higher has also declined (while it increased for science). Passing maths in matric remains a key marker of a person's likelihood of living a middle class life.

Table 4: Results for selected subjects (proportions)[a], 2008-16

Subject	*Year*	*Wrote*	*0–29%*	*30–49%*	*50–69%*	*70–100%*
Mathematics	2008	300 008	54,6%	24,6%	12,5%	8,3%
	2009	290 630	53,9%	27,8%	12,0%	6,2%
	2010	263 034	51,4%	29,5%	12,3%	6,8%
	2011	224 635	52,7%	28,8%	12,6%	5,9%
	2012	225 874	46,0%	31,3%	15,6%	7,0%
	2013	241 509	40,9%	32,9%	17,9%	8,2%
	2014	225 458	46,5%	31,1%	15,0%	7,3%
	2015	263 903	50,9%	28,8%	13,7%	6,6%
	2016	265 810	48,8%	29,9%	14,4%	6,9%
Physical science	2008	217 300	45,1%	39,9%	11,6%	3,4%
	2009	221 103	63,1%	26,8%	8,2%	1,9%
	2010	205 364	50,5%	31,0%	12,3%	6,2%
	2011	180 585	44,7%	34,8%	13,9%	6,7%
	2012	179 201	38,6%	37,0%	16,7%	7,6%
	2013	184 383	32,6%	41,9%	18,1%	7,4%
	2014	167 997	38,5%	39,0%	15,3%	7,1%
	2015	193 189	41,4%	36,6%	15,1%	6,8%
	2016	192 618	38,0%	37,3%	16,6%	8,1%

Source: Department of Basic Education
a IRR calculations.

Table 5: Ratio of maths literacy to mathematics candidates and passes, 2008–16

Year	*Candidates*	*Achieved 40% or above*	*Achieved 60% or above*
2008	0,9 to 1	1,6 to 1	1,5 to 1
2009	1,0 to 1	1,7 to 1	1,5 to 1
2010	1,1 to 1	2,2 to 1	2,0 to 1
2011	1,2 to 1	2,6 to 1	2,4 to 1
2012	1,3 to 1	2,2 to 1	1,7 to 1
2013	1,3 to 1	2,1 to 1	1,4 to 1
2014	1,4 to 1	2,3 to 1	1,8 to 1
2015	1,5 to 1	2,0 to 1	1,5 to 1
2016	1,5 to 1	2,0 to 1	1,3 to 1

Source: IRR calculations based on data from the Department of Basic Education

In **Table 5** we see that the ratio of maths literacy to maths pupils has changed over time in favour of the former. This indicates a reduction in standards of maths education.

Tables 6 and **7** rank schools by living standards quintiles. Less than 1% of children who write maths in the poorest quintile of schools will pass with a distinction. In quintile five schools, that figure is below 10%. After careful consideration, we have to state that this and other data we have tracked over time reflects a complete failure to improve both the access to and the quality of mathematics education in the country. This is despite the policy efforts of government and the funding efforts of corporate social investors.

Table 6: Mathematics results by school quintile[a] (actual numbers), 2016

Rank	*0–19,9%*	*20–39,9%*	*40–59,9%*	*60–79,9%*	*80–100%*	*Total[a]*
Quintile 1	24 699	22 920	9 934	2 926	525	61 018
Quintile 2	21 135	23 092	10 270	3 267	753	58 527
Quintile 3	21 167	22 647	10 423	3 776	909	58 933
Quintile 4	8 121	11 226	7 117	3 229	924	30 621
Quintile 5	3 591	11 843	14 471	10 345	4 328	44 590
Quintile 99[b]	2 286	3 958	3 346	1 898	631	12 121
Total	**80 999**	**95 686**	**55 561**	**25 441**	**8 070**	**265 810**

Source: Department of Basic Education

a The quintile ranking system is a poverty index used by the DBE for funding purposes (primarily school subsidies). The poorest schools fall under quintile 1 and the most well-off are in quintile 5. For example, there were 24 699 pupils in quintile 1 schools who scored between 0 and 19,9% in mathematics and 3 591 from quintile 5 schools who obtained similar results. There were 525 quintile 1 pupils who achieved between 80 and 100% and 4 328 (eight times as many) quintile 5 pupils scored similarly.

b Schools not captured or whose ranking is unknown. Includes independent and special schools, which are not ranked.

Table 7: Mathematics results by school quintile[a] (proportions), 2016

Rank	*0–19,9%*	*20–39,9%*	*40–59,9%*	*60–79,9%*	*80–100%*	*Total[a]*
Quintile 1	40,5%	37,6%	16,3%	4,8%	0,9%	100,0%
Quintile 2	36,1%	39,5%	17,5%	5,6%	1,3%	100,0%
Quintile 3	35,9%	38,4%	17,7%	6,4%	1,5%	100,0%
Quintile 4	26,5%	36,7%	23,2%	10,5%	3,0%	100,0%
Quintile 5	8,1%	26,6%	32,5%	23,2%	9,7%	100,0%
Quintile 99[b]	18,9%	32,7%	27,6%	15,7%	5,2%	100,0%
Total	**30,5%**	**36,0%**	**20,9%**	**9,6%**	**3,0%**	**100,0%**

Source: Department of Basic Education

a The table shows, for example, that 40,5% of pupils in quintile 1 scored between 0 and 19,9% in mathematics and 8,1% from quintile 5 schools obtained similar results. On the other hand, only 0,9% of quintile 1 pupils achieved between 80 and 100% and 9,7% of quintile 5 pupils scored similarly.

Table 8 shows the progress made by a child who enrolled in grade one in 2006 through the school system and into the tertiary education system. Considering the needs of the economy, we would be comfortable in judging that less than half of children are properly prepared for a life of independence and employment, and that of all the impediments to socio-economic advancement, the education system is now one the most serious.

Table 8: The grade 1 class of 2006

Class progress	*Number*	*Proportion*
Grade 1 in 2006	1 185 198	100,0%
Grade 10 in 2015	1 112 604	93,9%
Grade 11 in 2016	901 697	76,1%
Grade 12 in 2017	661 116	55,8%
NSC full-time candidates in 2017	534 484	45,1%
NSC passes in 2017	401 307	33,9%
Bachelor's passes in 2017	153 610	13,0%

Source: Department of Basic Education

Education

Despite adequate financing, as **Table 9** shows, there is a dire shortage of infrastructure across all schools (such as laboratories or libraries) that are necessary for a child in those schools to receive an excellent education. We regard the data as reflecting a mis-prioritisation of resources.

Table 9: Public schools and facilities by province, 2016

Province	*With water*	*With electricity*	*With laboratory*	*With computer facility*	*With library*
Eastern Cape	99,0%	96,7%	5,7%	10,8%	8,5%
Free State	97,8%	97,4%	26,7%	35,5%	35,0%
Gauteng	100,0%	100,0%	33,3%	80,3%	63,3%
KwaZulu-Natal	98,4%	94,1%	11,4%	33,3%	24,2%
Limpopo	100,0%	100,0%	6,0%	15,0%	6,5%
Mpumalanga	100,0%	99,2%	12,3%	10,2%	19,1%
North West	100,0%	99,8%	19,1%	43,2%	23,2%
Northern Cape	100,0%	100,0%	16,9%	54,9%	27,9%
Western Cape	100,0%	100,0%	33,2%	59,3%	55,0%
South Africa	**99,3%**	**97,6%**	**18,3%**	**41,4%**	**29,2%**

Source: Department of Basic Education
a Figures do not add up horizontally owing to the fact that schools may have a combination of different water sources.

Table 10 shows an overall increase in levels of higher education participation since 2002. The white and Indian figures are far ahead of the South African average, although the white figure has declined markedly.

Table 10: Higher education participation rates[a] by race, 2002 and 2015

	20–24 year olds in the country		*Students enrolled in higher education*		*Participation rate*	
Race	*2002*	*2015*	*2002*	*2015*	*2002*	*2015*
Black	3 594 000	4 461 515	399 915	696 320	11,1%	15,6%
Coloured	358 000	426 013	38 329	62 186	10,7%	14,6%
Indian/Asian	96 000	108 304	47 706	53 378	49,7%	49,3%
White	283 000	306 415	179 380	161 739	63,4%	52,8%
Total[b]	**4 333 000**	**5 302 246**	**667 182**	**985 212**	**15,4%**	**18,6%**

Source: Statistics South Africa
a The proportion of people aged between 20 and 24 who are enrolled in public universities.
b Includes unspecified population groups.