



# OVERCOMING THE ODDS

Why school vouchers would  
benefit poor South Africans

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# AGENDA

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  - Quality of instruction
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- 4** **Interventions**
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Section 1

# **The inequality crisis: how bad is it really?**

 IRR

The logo for IRR (International Resource Review) features a stylized white icon of a person with arms raised, composed of geometric shapes and dots, positioned to the left of the letters "IRR".

# The inequality crisis: how bad is it really?

75

out of 76

2015: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) ranked the education systems of 76 countries on how high school pupils fared in maths and science tests.

South Africa came 75th, one place ahead of Ghana in last place.

62

out of 64

2019: 'Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study', South Africa's Grade 5s were placed 62nd out of 64 countries for maths and science.

In both instances, South Africa was placed above only Pakistan and the Philippines.

# The inequality crisis: how bad is it really?

81%

Proportion of Grade 4s whom cannot retrieve basic information from a given text to answer simple questions in any language, according to the latest Progress in International Reading Literacy Study.

31.8%

2022: Out of the 1 062 510 pupils enrolled in Grade 10 in 2020, 337 364 (31.8%) dropped out before writing matric exams (the National Senior Certificate).

# The inequality crisis: how bad is it really?

40%

Proportion of South African pupils who begin Grade 1 and go on to pass matric in Grade 12 fluctuates around 40%, compared to Turkey (53%), Brazil (67%) and Chile (72%).

Top  
3%

2018: Proportion of high schools that produced more mathematics distinctions than the remaining 97% combined.

# The inequality crisis: how bad is it really?



71% v 16%

Of Grade 4 pupils attending the richest 10% of schools 71% can read at a basic level compared to 16% attending the remaining 90% of schools (PIRLS, 2016).

# The inequality crisis: how bad is it really?

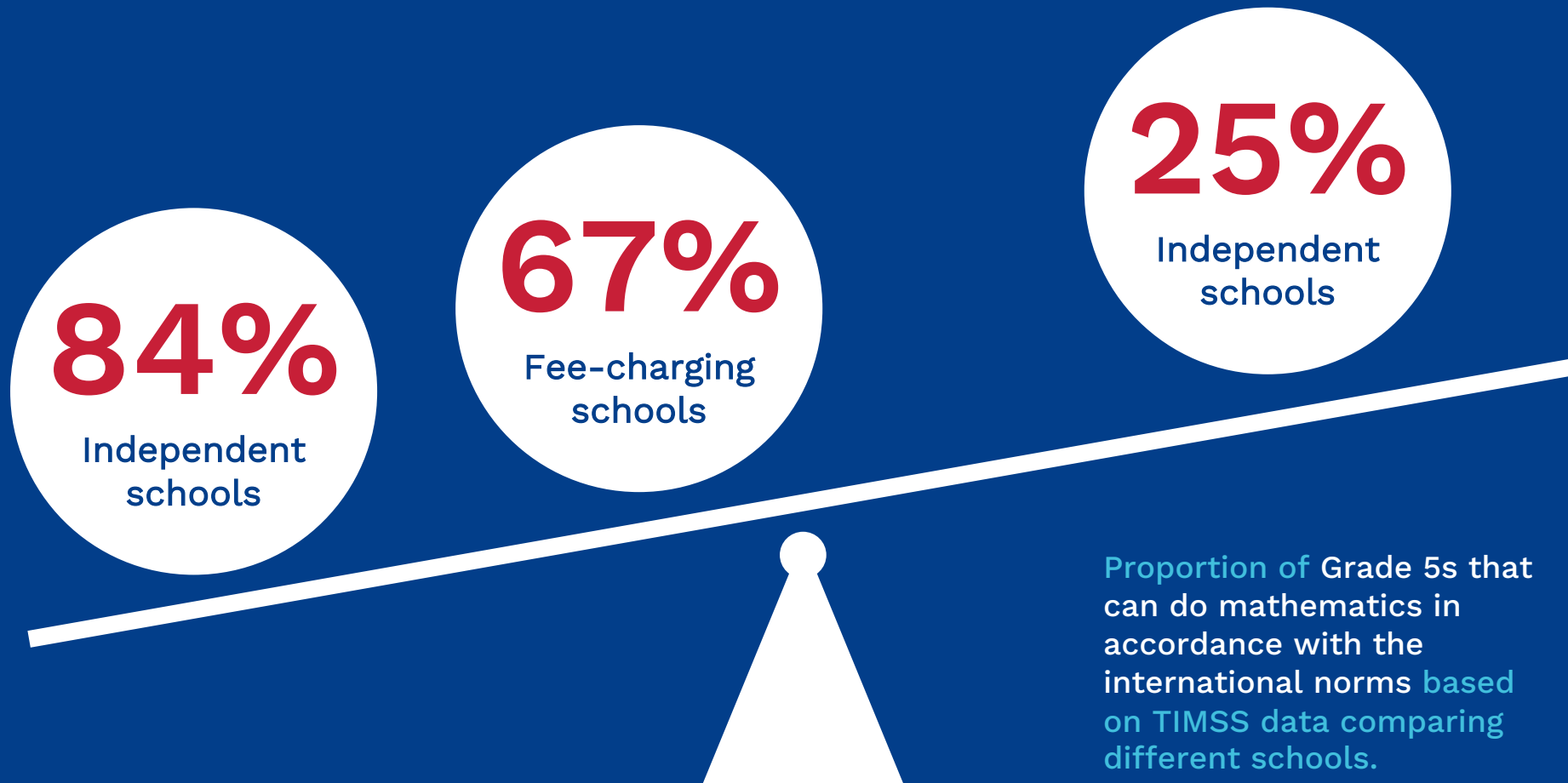


**48% v 85%**

Mathematics pass rate compared  
between black and white Grade 3 pupils.



# The inequality crisis: how bad is it really?





Section 2

# Early-grade literacy and numeracy



“... not keeping pace at school is a fundamental determinant of who drops out.”

- *Nicola Branson, Senior Research Fellow at the UCT School of Economics.*

“... falling behind at school is strongly correlated with socio-economic status and school quality in South Africa.”



Section 3

# Barriers to early- grade reading and numeracy

 IRR

The logo for the Institute for Reading and Numeracy (IRR), consisting of a stylized white icon of a person's head with neural connections, followed by the letters "IRR" in a bold, sans-serif font.

## **Section 3: Barriers to early-grade reading and numeracy – School Readiness**

- Nutritional intake
- Pre-primary school attendance
- Parental involvement
- Family make-up

## Section 3: Barriers to early-grade reading and numeracy – Quality of instruction

**45%**

Grade 6 language teachers struggle to make straightforward inferences on comprehension tasks and

**26%**

cannot retrieve explicitly stated information.

## Section 3: Barriers to early-grade reading and numeracy – Quality of instruction

**79%**

Grade 6 maths teachers that did not achieve at least 60% on a Grade 6 test.

**89%**

Teachers in Quintile 1 schools that did not have the mathematical content knowledge on par with the level they were teaching.



## **Section 3: Barriers to early-grade reading and numeracy – Quality of instruction**

### **Why aren't our primary school teachers qualified?**

- Teacher educators pay only lip-service to policy set by government.
- University education departments attract the weakest students.
- Not much attention paid to reading pedagogy.

“... the average Grade 6 mathematics teacher in South Africa reported being absent from school for 19 days (annually).”

*- 2007 SACMEQ data*

## Section 3: Barriers to early-grade reading and numeracy – School Management (Teacher Absenteeism)

Average days absent per teacher annually



Poorest 20% of schools



Wealthiest 20% of schools



SADC countries

## **Section 3: Barriers to early-grade reading and numeracy - Accountability**

**Surely, it's all about the money? Not exactly...**

- Relationship between school performance and financial resources is not deterministic.
- Well-performing poor schools.
- Accountability is the difference.

## **Section 3: Barriers to early-grade reading and numeracy**

### **Why is there a lack of accountability in public schools?**

- Lack of bureaucratic competence
- South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU)

The CDE estimates that a quarter of a million children in South Africa are being educated in independent schools charging fees below R12 000 a year.

“... studies undertaken of the factors behind this trend and the performance of these schools provide a very clear lesson – in system reform, accountability matters.”

**- CDE**



Section 4

# Interventions

 IRR

The logo for IRR (Infrastructure Resilience Review) is located in the bottom left corner. It consists of a white icon of a stylized circuit board or network of nodes and lines, followed by the letters "IRR" in a bold, white, sans-serif font.



“School vouchers are probably a key element in achieving that [improvement] because you’ve got to bring the forces of **supply and demand** to bear on the education system to lift performance. Under the current system, there are no **consequences for bad performance**. In contrast, with school vouchers, there would be: underperforming schools would see themselves starved of funding, unless they get their act together.”

# How does a school voucher system work?

## Section 4: Interventions

### Targeted interventions: Three priorities

- National Reading Plan
- Audit and hold university education departments to account
- Remove the corrupting influence of teacher unions

# THANK YOU



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