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More than getting through the school gates

Barriers to participation in schooling

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social surveys
A F R I C A

CALS
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Legal Studies

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Findings from the Access to Education Study
Volume 3

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The photographs in this volume were taken by Khathu Mathavha, field manager, at Phagameng and Doreen in Limpopo, two of the sites of the qualitative research undertaken for this study.

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Preface

More than Getting through the School Gates is the third in a series of three publications which present key findings from the Access to Education study undertaken by Social Surveys and the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS) from late 2006 to 2009.

The purpose of the study, previously known as Barriers to Education, was to collect data on the access of children and youths to South African schools, and identify factors preventing them from attending school and completing their school education. The findings are based on a nationally representative household survey as well as qualitative research in urban and rural areas.

More than Getting Through the School Gates conveys the findings of our survey of youths aged 16 to 18, and our qualitative research among youths, caregivers and educators. It provides a textured picture of the daily experiences of youths and the barriers to their meaningful participation in schooling (with a particular focus on the impact of poverty).

Volume 1, *Treading Water*, provides an overview of enrolment and completion patterns in South African schools. It then takes a closer look at the extent, causes, and impact of schooling delays, with a particular focus on the repetition of school grades.

Volume 2, *Left Unfinished*, focuses on the temporary and permanent absence from school of children and youths aged seven to 18, profiles out-of-school youths, and explores why they are not in school.

Each publication can be read on its own; however, the series is intended to provide a comprehensive picture of access to schooling in South Africa.

A detailed technical report on the national household survey is available from Social Surveys, and can be downloaded from www.socialsurveys.co.za.

Acknowledgements

Abbreviations

ASER	Age-specific Enrolment Ratio
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FET	Further Education and Training
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GHS	General Household Survey (Statistics South Africa)
NSC	National Senior Certificate
NER	Net Enrolment Ratio
SACMEQ	Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality
SES	Socio-economic Status

About this study

South Africa's post-apartheid constitution enshrines the right to basic and further education. In line with this, the Schools Act of 1996 introduced compulsory schooling for all children aged seven to 15. It stated that public schools should admit learners and serve their educational requirements without any form of 'unfair discrimination'; and that no learners should be refused admission to a public school on the grounds that their parents had not paid or were unable to pay school fees.

From 2003 onwards, CALS assisted parents in the settlement of Thembelihle where some children were being barred from accessing schools due to their inability to pay school fees or registration fees. As a result, CALS and Social Surveys launched a major research project, entitled Barriers to Education, aimed at establishing the extent of this problem in South African schools, and identifying any other factors barring the access of children or youths to education which could similarly be regarded as 'unfair discrimination'.

In 2007, shortly after the project began, the government introduced no-fee schools in poorer areas (see Box 1). As a result of this important change, and the findings of the qualitative and pilot research conducted by Social Surveys, the scope of the study was broadened to include any factors affecting learners' access to schooling.

Meaningful access to education requires more than just 'getting through the school gates'. Access was therefore defined as the ability to participate meaningfully in school education, and data was collected on a range factors which allow or prevent this. The conceptual framework for this approach is summarised in Table 1.

Box 1: No-fee schools and fee exemptions

Government schools in South Africa are grouped into one of five quintiles. Based on the assumption that a school primarily serves the children in the community surrounding it, the classification is done on the basis of the socio-economic status of the surrounding community.

Quintile 1 schools are the poorest, and Quintile 5 schools the wealthiest (former Model C schools fall into this quintile). Quintile 1 schools receive progressively more funding per learner for non-personnel, non-capital expenditure than those in the higher quintiles.

In 2007, all Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 schools were made 'no-fee' schools, which meant that learners no longer had to pay school fees. Learners attending schools in the upper three quintiles who cannot afford the fees could apply for a partial or full exemption.[1]

In 2010, the no-fee school policy was extended to Quintile 3 schools. This means that parents of learners attending some 60 per cent of state schools in South Africa are exempted from paying fees.

The quintile system has been criticised, and is being reviewed by the Department of Basic Education.[2]

Table 1: Dimensions of access to education researched in this study

BASIC ACCESS	**Attendance:** enrolment in and attendance at school
	Enrolment and progression at the **appropriate age**
	Consistent attendance (conversely: absenteeism)
	Contractual access: school adherence to regulations which enable access for children
'ENABLING' ACCESS	Access **to physical and human resources** in schools
	Freedom from exposure to a range of harmful behaviours (bullying, sexual abuse etc) in schools

The annual General Household Survey (GHS) undertaken by Statistics South Africa showed high levels of enrolment for children and youths of compulsory schoolgoing age (seven to 15), but other surveys also pointed to low levels of school completion,[3] high levels of grade repetition, and high levels of prolonged absence from school.[4] Building a profile of children and youths who experience these delays or barriers to school completion became a key focus of our research.

Box 2: The South African schooling system

The South African education system is divided into three bands:

General Education and Training (GET), or **Basic Education**, comprises Grades R to 9. This band is further divided into three phases, namely the Foundation Phase (Grades 1 to 3), Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6), and Senior Phase (Grades 7 to 9).

Further Education and Training (FET) comprises Grades 10 to 12 (and equivalent levels in FET colleges).

Higher education comprises courses at tertiary institutions, including universities and colleges.

Children have to attend school until they have completed their Basic Education or until they turn 16 (whichever comes first).

Children have to start school at age seven or age six if they will turn seven before June. As of 2004, children aged five turning six before 30 June can be admitted to Grade 1, although seven remains the age at which compulsory education begins.[5]

The **age-grade norms** specify how old childen should be in each grade (i.e. if their progression through the system has not been delayed). This is calculated by adding 6 to the grade number (age seven in Grade 1, age eight in Grade 2, and so on).

The scope of the study

In terms of the South African Schools Act, children have to attend school from the first day of the school year in which they turn seven until the last day of the school year in which they turn 15, or the end of Grade 9, whichever comes first.[6] Should a child move through the school system without repeating or missing school for substantial periods of time, he or she will be 17 or 18 when they matriculate. It was partly for this reason that the Access to Education household survey focused on the seven to 18-year age group. Collecting additional data on older youths out of school would have been desirable, but budget and time constraints had to be taken into account.

The survey captured data on all learners in school (irrespective of age), as well as children and youths out of school aged five to 18 years. Data was collected for those attending (or having left) public or private schools, including ordinary schools, Further Education and Training (FET) colleges, and schools catering for learners with special needs. Additional qualitative research was conducted on youths from age 16 to their early twenties.

Research process and method

Key stakeholders in education were consulted throughout the project. A reference group was established comprising representatives of the Department of Basic Education, educationalists, child rights specialists, and experts on research methods (see Appendix 1).

Research began in late 2006 with a comprehensive literature review. Qualitative research was conducted in 2007 comprising focus group discussions with caregivers, youths, and educators in a range of formal and informal settlements in Gauteng and Limpopo.

The household survey[7] was conducted from late October to the first week in December 2007, and the booster survey in early 2008. Comprising 4 498 households throughout the country, the sample was both nationally and provincially representative. Data was weighted up to the national population.

In early 2010, given the findings of the household survey, Social Surveys conducted additional qualitative research on over-aged learners and their impact on their edu-

Box 3: The sample frame

Statistics South Africa classifies all enumerator areas in the country into settlement types (such as formal settlements, informal settlements, and so on). This is done on the basis of their geographic location and the kinds of dwellings most common in the area in question. Enumerator areas are then aggregated into sub-places. We used the sub-place classification of the 2001 census as the basis for our sampling frame.

Our sample was drawn from formal sub-places, informal sub-places, farm sub-places, small-holding sub-places,[8] and traditional sub-places (described as 'tribal areas' in the census). Other settlement types – including industrial areas and recreational areas, such as holiday resorts – were not considered relevant for a household survey.

Farm sub-places are essentially commercial farms. Households in in this category were randomly selected, and included those of farmers, farm labourers, and other people living on farms.

Traditional areas are communal areas governed by traditional authorities. They are predominantly rural, and largely correspond to the former homelands.

Informal sub-places are settlements largely comprising informal dwellings, ie, shacks.

Formal sub-places are structured settlements which are provided with municipal services, and on which primarily formal dwellings are located. This category is very broad as it ranges from formal townships to middle-income suburbs towns and cities.

cators and younger peers. In-depth interviews and focus discussions were held with learners, educators, and younger peers in the township of Bekkersdal on the West Rand in Gauteng, and the rural villages of Mamaila Molototsi and Bellevue in Limpopo.

The main person we interviewed in every household was the primary caregiver, defined as the person most closely involved in the education of the children in the household. Youths aged 16 to 18 were interviewed on the basis of a separate questionnaire (which we refer to as the youth survey). This data was not weighted to the national population.

The study and questionnaires were approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of the Witwatersrand.[9] Respondents (both caregivers and youths) consented in writing before being interviewed.
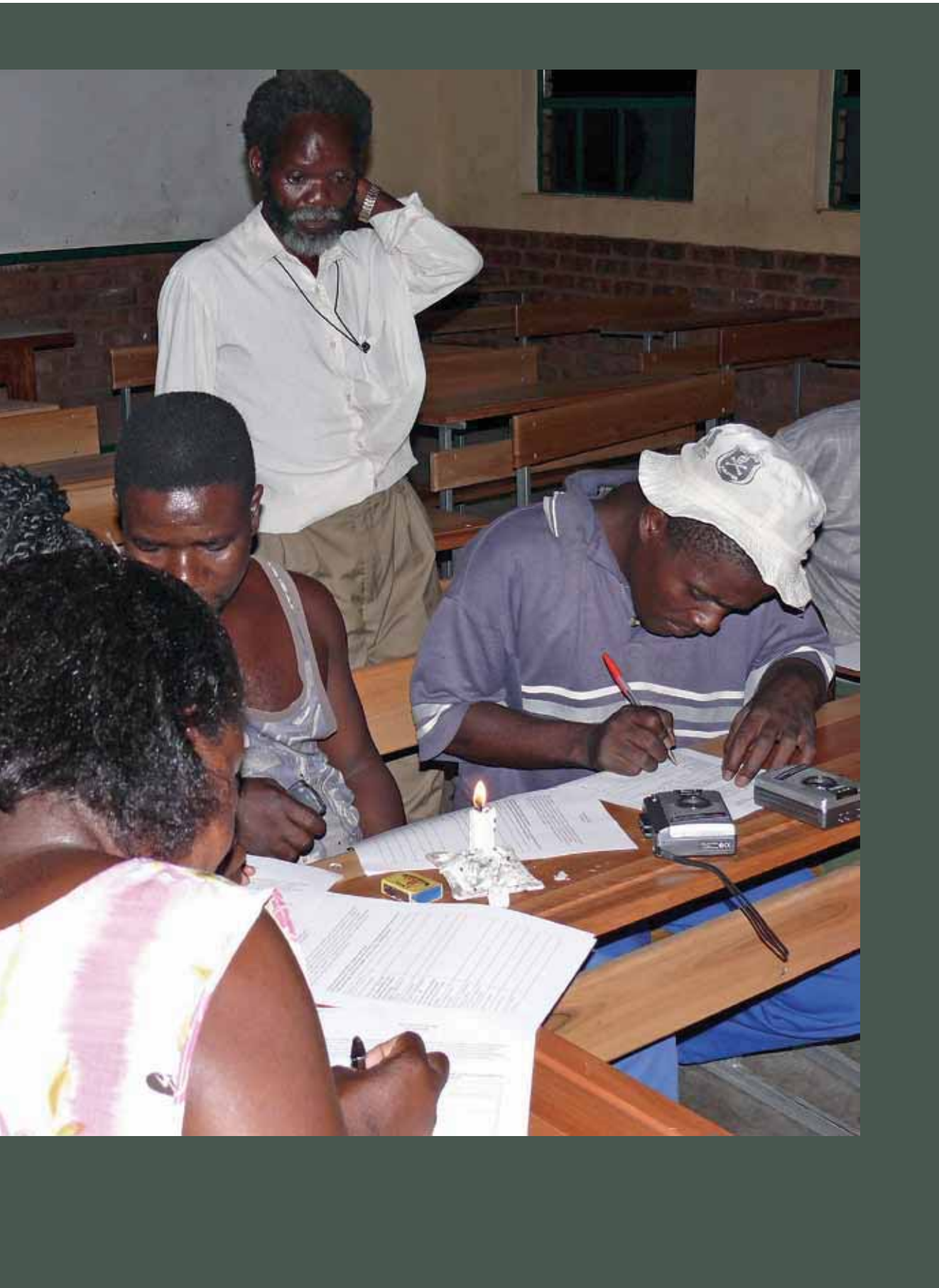
Providing context

In this volume we draw primarily on the findings of our qualitative research on access to education in Limpopo and Gauteng respectively, and our national survey of youths aged 16 to 18. The qualitative research helped us to design our household survey by provisionally identifying the challenges facing children and youths in accessing and completing school. It focused, therefore, on barriers to schooling as well as barriers to full participation in education (such as hunger, which might affect concentration on school work, or lack money for transport to extracurricular events at school).

The quality of education (including teachers' qualifications and skills), material resources in schools, and non-school factors such as home environment and parents' education have been shown to have an impact on learning outcomes.[10] However, there is debate about the extent to which learners' access to physical and human resources at school and at home impact on learning outcomes, and which are most important.[11] We do not attempt to establish direct linkages between learners' school and home environments on the one hand and learning outcomes, enrolment, and completion on the other, except where this is indicated by our survey data or other research. Rather, our aim is to paint a picture of the daily settings in which children and youths' access schooling, with a particular focus on difficulties experienced by learners from poor households.

The research sites

Brief descriptions follow of the areas in Gauteng and Limpopo in which we conducted our qualitative research.

Thembelihle, Gauteng

Thembelihle is an informal settlement situated near the formal suburb of Lenasia, south of Johannesburg. In 2006, residents in Thembelihle were surviving on R887 a month on average.[12] Fifty nine per cent of adults were unemployed, and only 20 per cent had full-time jobs.[13] Many households depended on social grants as their primary source of income.

There are no primary or secondary schools in Thembelihle, and most children and youth attend schools in Lenasia or Soweto. Focus group sessions were held with educators from schools in Lenasia, and caregivers and youths in Thembelihle.

Diepkloof Extension, Gauteng

Diepkloof Extension is a formal residential area in Soweto, south of Johannesburg, largely comprising low- to middle-income households. The adjacent area of Diepkloof comprises a mix of formal houses (primarily old township houses) and hostels. Households in Diepkloof are generally poor, and unemployment rates are very high.

Most children and youths in Diepkloof Extension attend schools in Diepkloof Extension and Lenasia, or former Model C schools in the suburbs of Johannesburg. Schools in Diepkloof Extension are also feeder schools for many poor households in Diepkloof and surrounding areas in Soweto.

Focus group sessions were held with youths and caregivers in Diepkloof Extension, as well as educators from schools in Diepkloof.

Phagameng and Modimolle, Limpopo

Phagameng is the township next to the town of Modimolle (previously Nylstroom) in the Waterberg region of Limpopo. Much of Modimolle's economy is linked to agriculture.

Phagameng comprises a formal township and informal settlement. The unemployment rate is very high, and many of those who do have jobs work as farm or domestic workers. The informal settlement has been swelled by people evicted from farms.

Phagameng has four primary schools and one secondary school. Most learners attending these schools live in the township, but a small number are children of farm workers who travel to and from the surrounding farming areas every day.

Modimolle has five schools (including a school for learners with special needs), primarily attended by white English- and Afrikaans-speaking children.

Discussion group sessions were held with youths and caregivers in Phagameng, and an in-depth interview was conducted with an educator from a local school. A focus group discussion was also held with educators from former Model C schools in Modimolle.

Doreen, Limpopo

Doreen is a small village surrounded by commercial farms close to the former homeland of Venda as well as the national border with Zimbabwe.

Most adults are unemployed or underemployed, and those who do work earn very low wages for casual work on surrounding commercial farms. Social grants are an important contributor to household income.

There are two farm schools in the area, and many learners have to travel long distances to get to school. These schools only provide education up to Grades 7 and 9 respectively, and the nearest secondary school offering tuition up to Grade 12 is in Musina, some 20 kilometres away.

The educators at the local farm school did not live in the village, except for one educator, who stayed in Doreen during the week and returned home elsewhere at weekends. Most lived in Musina, and were bused to the school every day, leaving again as soon as classes finished. Focus group discussions were held with these educators, as well as caregivers and youths living in Doreen.

Affording education

In Volume 2 we described how household poverty provides the context in which many children and youths aged seven to 18 are made vulnerable to dropping out of school. In this section we focus on the costs of schooling, the burdens these place on poor households, and the barriers they create to the full participation in schooling by learners from poor households.

School fees

According to our household survey, 50 per cent of households which paid school fees paid less than R300 a year, and 38 per cent of all learners did not pay fees at all. Following the extension of no-fee status to schools in quintile 3 in 2009, the proportion of learners who pay no school fees is even higher.

Table 2: Household expenditure on school fees, 2007 (government as well as private schools)

Household spending on fees	Percentage of households	Cumulative percentage
R0	26.7%	26.7%
R1 to R50	9.0%	35.7%
R51 to R100	10.5%	46.2%
R101 to R200	12.7%	58.9%
R201 to R300	7.4%	66.2%
R301 to R500	8.1%	74.3%
R501 to R1000	6.7%	81.0%
R1001 to R2000	6.5%	87.5%
R2001 to R5000	5.4%	92.9%
R5001 to R10 000	4.5%	97.4%
More than R10 000	2.6%	100%
n=4394. Source: Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.		

According to our household survey, a quarter of children and youths attending Quintile 1 schools (those in the poorest communities) and 46 per cent of those attending Quintile 2 schools (the next poorest) were paying fees. All Quintile 1 and Quintile 2 schools were made no-fee schools in 2007. The high level of non-compliance by schools implied by our survey data may be partly because of a 'transition period' from fee-paying (thus partly income generating) to no-fee schools from 2007 onwards.

Research by the Alliance for Children's Entitlement to Social Security (ACESS) on the impact of the no-fee policy on government schools shows that 'late or unreliable transfers [from government] in some provinces played havoc with school cash flows.'[14] In the absence of timely transfer of state funds to schools strong incentives are created for no-fee schools to charge fees, or to ask caregivers for other financial contributions, (such as payments for school lunches and firewood, which we encountered in a rural school in Limpopo). Anecdotal evidence suggests that transfers of state funds to schools improved in 2008, and may have resulted in higher levels of compliance by schools with the no-fee and exemption policies.

The payments to Quintile 1 and 2 schools recorded in our survey may also be partly related to the fact that some caregivers did not differentiate between school fees and requests for donations (although the latter also constitute costs to households, and are also ruled out by government policy).

As noted in Volume 2, only 1 per cent of children aged seven to 18 recorded in our caregivers' survey had been permanently refused entry to a school or expelled due to the non-payment of fees. It therefore seems as if the fees exemption and no-fee policies have decreased barriers to access and reduced drop-out in the context of household poverty. However, punishment for the non-payment of fees in some schools (which is common according to our caregivers' survey) and demands for funds by some no-fee schools can severely strain learners and caregivers, even when this does not result in a child dropping out of school.

Household income and access to education

Interestingly, the correlation between household income and repetition weakens significantly for household incomes of more than R20 000 a month – in other words, household income has a far lesser impact on whether learners are likely to repeat a grade.

Source: Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Box 4: Limits to choice

Low income limits households' choice of schools. According to Anderson et al, there is 'strong reason to believe that school fees are correlated with school quality in South Africa'[15]... 'As wealthier township families send their children to better schools, township schools are filled with the children of poorer families'[16]. Fiske et al argue that 'class differences appear to be replacing racial differences as a criterion for [school]entry'.[17]

While in theory, learners from low-income households can access the generally better quality education offered by former Model C schools, a number of barriers remain. For one thing, even if households are exempted from paying fees, there are many other costs associated with accessing these school that low-income households could not afford (see next section for other costs). Moreover, zoning policies in some provinces prevent many learners in poorer communities from attending better resourced schools elsewhere.[18]

The perceptions of caregivers of barriers to attending former Model C schools also play a role. In our qualitative research, some learners and parents in Thembelihle, Diepkloof Extension, and Phagameng claimed that former Model C schools (and some previously Indian schools in Lenasia in the case of Thembelihle) discriminated against township residents. Educators in Phagameng also assumed that children from the township would not be accepted by the former Model C high school in Modimolle because of discrimination against black learners, and that, if they were, they would be segregated from white learners (which would contravene government policy, and therefore seems unlikely). A learner from a school in Phagameng commented:

> The schools in town discriminate against black learners, they don't mix the black learners with white learners in a class but they go to the same school, pay the same amount of fees, but the black learners have their own classes and the white learners have their own classes.

None of these caregivers and learners in Phagameng had applied for admission to this former Model C school.

Other costs of access

School fees constitute only a portion of the total costs of education, and other costs may be an even greater burden on poor households. Thus caregivers in 50 per cent of households reported paying more than R600 for uniforms in 2007. A learner in Thembelihle explained how her family's choice of the school she should attend was determined by the cost of a uniform:

> I attend night school at Apex because at home there are many of us and I am the oldest, so my mother decided that I should go to night school because we don't have to wear uniforms like in day school. That will enable her to buy school uniforms for my other siblings who are attending day school. My mother is the only one who is working.

Parents in Phagameng and Thembelihle said uniforms were the biggest financial burden of their children's education, and saw new specifications for school uniforms every few years in Phagameng as unaffordable and unnecessary. Caregivers resented the additional cost caused by the requirement that Phagameng matriculants have to have a different school uniform from the rest of the school.

Participants in focus groups in Phagameng, Doreen and Thembelihle spoke of children being turned away from school temporarily for not having the correct school uniform. An educator noted:

> Children will just stay at home if they don't have school shoes, because they know that they won't be allowed in school, and this causes them to get behind in their studies.

Transport costs also seem high. While, according to the household survey, 76 per cent of learners walked to school, 50 per cent of households which paid for transport paid more than R 250 a month. In Volume 2, we showed that the cost of transport (predominantly affecting learners in rural areas) lead to some learners dropping out of school, either temporary or permanently.

While fees, uniform and transport costs constitute the most significant costs for most households, households also incur a range of other education expenses (such as learning materials, school building funds, and other donations to the school). According to our household survey, 50 per cent of households paid more than R250 a year on these items.

> Seven per cent of learners who were temporarily absent from school in 2007 were absent because their households were unable to pay school fees or other access costs. – Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Social exclusion and relative poverty in schools[19]

Some learners from poor and low-income households attending school with learners from better resourced households may be acutely conscious of their poverty. Conforming with their peers is vital for many teenagers, and factors which make them feel different may cause stress and anxiety.

Box 6: Costs of sending children to school identified in our qualitative research

- Registration fees
- School fees
- Uniforms (and separate uniforms for matric in some schools)
- Textbooks or contribution to the cost of textbooks
- Money for lost textbooks
- Covering textbooks in plastic
- Stationary
- Lunch money or food from home for lunch
- Transport costs
- Casual day / 'civvies'
- School trips
- School infrastructure
- Firewood
- Cleaning the school
- School lunches

Source: Qualitative research, Access to Education, 2007.

Most youths in Thembelihle attend school in the higher-income area of Lenasia. Participants in our focus groups spoke of their sense of inadequacy because they could not afford the things their classmates could, or because they felt they lacked status in the eyes of their peers for coming from poorly resourced homes. A young woman from Thembelihle explained:

> You feel like you don't exist when your classmates start to talk about how their mothers cooked, using the microwave. You feel small because if we had electricity we wouldn't be using paraffin stoves or lamps or candles.

Another learner added:

> In one instance I invited my cousin to come over to my house for a party and she refused and said she does not want to visit rural areas. So I feel like because we don't have electricity we are not any better from people who live in the rural areas.

These experiences are likely to particularly affect learners attending schools outside their socio-economic environment, where the likelihood of being labelled as an outsider is greater: learners from low-income communities attending former Model C or DET schools for example.

Even small differences in household income or socio-economic status can leave learners open to being teased. Some learners living in the informal settlement in Phagameng were singled out by learners living in the formal township for being 'dirty' and 'poor'.

In Section Five we explore the fact that a number of caregivers from low-income communities felt disempowered and excluded from engaging with the school attended by their charges. This was, in some cases, related to very real experiences of social exclusion by schools and wealthier parents.

Access to basic infrastructure and resources

While the relationship between a household's socio-ecoconomic status and learning outcomes is complex, the literature suggests that factors such as a lack of lighting, time spent on domestic chores as a result of poor access to infrastructure, and so on may impact on learners' ability to focus on their school work.[20] In addition, these issues may cause anxiety among learners from poor households, further detracting from their ability to finish their homework on time, and study for exams and tests.

Poor and overcrowded housing

Our qualitative research showed that poor and overcrowded housing and associated conditions such as lack of space, lack of privacy, and high noise levels affected learners' ability to concentrate on their homework, and affected their sleep. For example, a learner at a school in Diepkloof Extension spoke of living lives next to a shebeen [local bar], which was very noisy. He struggled to do his homework and even to sleep at night, often arriving at school late as a result of oversleeping.

Another learner in Thembelihle complained of not being able to study because the neighbours regularly played loud music:

> Sometimes when you come back from school your neighbours are playing their radio very loud and they play till late at night, when you ask them to keep it down a little bit they will tell you it's their house and they will do whatever they want. They don't understand that their neighbour has a school-going child and she has to study.

Many children and youths living in these conditions do not have alternative places to study or do homework. For example, focus group participants reported that the library in Phagameng was often overcrowded with learners trying to find a quiet space to do their homework.

Inadequate access to electricity, clean water and sanitation

Learner's ability to complete their homework may also be affected by a lack of (or irregular access) to electricity. A Thembelihle learner explained:

You can't study at night because sometimes your mother does not have money to buy enough paraffin for you to study till late and sometimes when you are using the candle it burns out before you complete studying.

Poor access to electricity and water can increase learners' domestic workload (such as collecting firewood and water), affecting the time they can spend on doing homework, or leaving them feeling too tired to tackle homework after the housework is done. Referring to learners from the informal settlement of Thembelihle, an educator in Lenasia commented:

The children who live in the informal part of town don't always get to do their homework because of the cultural set-up. They have household chores that they have to do.

Interestingly, data from our household survey does not indicate that children or youths in informal settlements have greater domestic workloads. It does, however, indicate that learners in rural areas spent slightly more time on domestic chores, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Time spent on domestic chores per day by sub-place (all learners)

Sub-place	No chores	1 minute to 1 hour	1-2 hours	2-3 hours	More than 3 hours	Mean (all ages)	Mean for children aged 13 and older
Formal	0.0%	59.0%	37.3%	2.9%	0.7%	68 mins	71 mins
Informal	0.0%	65.8%	29.3%	4.2%	0.7%	67 mins	75 mins
Farms	0.0%	61.0%	34.6%	2.8%	1.6%	72 mins	73 mins
Traditional Authority	0.1%	55.8%	34.1%	6.9%	3.1%	82 mins	90 mins

n=7412. Source: Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Overcrowding (high living density), poor housing and inadequate access to clean water and sanitation may also affect learners' health.[21] Focus group participants in Doreen, Phagameng and Thembelihle spoke of learners being regularly absent from school because of illnesses such as diarrhoea and cholera, caused by poor water supply and sanitation.

Seventy six per cent of learners live in households with access to electricity, but only 29 per cent have piped water in their homes, and 26 per cent have piped water in their yards. – Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Lack of transport

Some learners in Thembelihle, Doreen and Phagameng were walking long distances to school. This makes them more likely to arrive late (which could lead to them being excluded from class), and attend school irregularly (see Volume 2). Having to walk long distances to school is a problem particularly for learners in farming and other rural areas. Learners in these communities were walking long distances to school as a result of the lack of provision of public transport (or unreliable public transport) to schools and to households inability to afford (or consistently afford) to pay for transport .

Waking to school can also be dangerous. A parent in Thembelihle said young children have to cross busy roads on their own in order to get to school, while parents in Doreen said children have to cross a river which sometimes comes down in flood. When it does, they either have to take another route, which takes an hour, or they do not attend.

The costs and lack of safety of public transport also plays a role. Some learners and their parents in Phagameng and Diepkloof Extension said this prevented them from taking part in extramural activities and after-school events. Even relatively wealthier families in Diepkloof Extension in Soweto spoke of a lack of safe transport preventing them from participating fully in their children's schooling. A parent in Diepkloof Extension said she could not attend school governing board meetings at her child's school in a Johannesburg suburb because of the lack of safe public transport at night.

Box 7: How do children get to school, and how long does this take?

Table 4: Mode of transport to school by sub-place (all learners)

Sub-place	On foot	School bus	Private car/ lift club/ motor bike	Public bus/ train	Taxi	Bicycle	TOTAL
Farms	43.7%	32.8%	16.5%	5.0%	1.6%	.8%	100%
Traditional	84.5%	4.4%	1.8%	3.5%	5.0%	.8%	100%
Formal	67.8%	4.3%	15.7%	3.7%	8.2%	.7%	100%
Informal	89.6%	2.7%	2.8%	2.4%	2.1%	.5%	100%

n=9147. Source: Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Table 5: Time taken to walk to school by sub-place (learners younger than 10)[23]

Time taken	Farms	Formal	Informal	Traditional
Up to 10 minutes	23.8%	54.3%	27.5%	30.2%
11 to 30 minutes	20.7%	40.1%	63.0%	47.4%
31 to 1 hour	45.3%	4.8%	8.5%	19.5%
Just over an hour to 2 hours	10.2%	.8%	1.0%	2.7%
Just over 2 hours to 3 hours	.0%	.0%	.0%	.3%
TOTAL	100%	100%	100%	100%

n=2390. Source: Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Experiences of hunger

According to our household survey, half of children and youths aged seven to 18 went hungry at some point in 2007, and 16 per cent often or always went hungry. (Instances of hunger might have been under-reported as families do not always want to acknowledge that their children have gone hungry. At the same time, hunger may be a fluctuating phenomenon, even when households are generally poor over time.)

According to our focus group participants, some learners in Doreen, Diepkloof, Phagameng and Thembelihle went to school hungry (either as a result of lack of household income or lack of adult supervision) affecting their concentration in class, and in some cases causing children to faint at school. When asked if there were children in the community who were going to school hungry, an educator in Phagameng confirmed that:

> I've talked about issues of unemployment and issues about our school, I can even take you right now to where [the hungry children] are staying. Most of their parents are not at home, they come back on Fridays and leave to go back to work on Sundays and if it's not end of the month parents don't even know if there's food for their children.

Anecdotal evidence suggests that the School Nutrition Programme has improved the attendance of learners from very poor households.[24] Encouragingly, our household survey showed that 84 per cent of primary school learners had access to feeding schemes at school.

Table 6: Access to School Nutrition Programme or other feeding scheme by sub-place, 2007 (all learners)

Sub Place	Primary school	Secondary school
Farms	83.1%	43.2%
Traditional	92.8%	11.9%
Informal	86.4%	31.0%
Formal	76.0%	25.9%
Source: Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.		

While the high levels of access to the School Nutrition Programme or other school feeding schemes is encouraging (with further roll-out to more secondary schools by the Department of Basic Education under way), not all learners who have access to a feeding scheme are making use of it.

While some of the schools in the communities in which we conducted qualitative research had feeding schemes, learners were under social pressure to bring 'lunch boxes' to school, or have money for buying lunch ('carry-out money'). A learner living in Diepkloof Extension who attends a former Model C school commented that some learners did not feel free to admit that their families could not afford to provide them with lunch every day. A young woman attending the Phagameng high school explained how she was embarrassed to be seen with *pap* (maize porridge) in her lunch box when other children had 'nice things' like cheese and bread. These pressures were leading some learners in Thembelihle and those attending Diepkloof Extension to skip school.

Access to social and psychological support

A popular definition of social support is that of Cobb, who has described it has 'information that would lead a person to believe that he or she is cared for and loved; that he or she is esteemed and valued; and that he or she belongs to a network of communication and mutual obligation.'[25]

Social and emotional support can help to mitigate emotional and behavioural problems in children and youths, and reduce their chances of engaging in risky social behaviour (violence and involvement in crime, substance abuse, and so on). Without appropriate parental, institutional or community support, children who are under severe pressure or experiencing violence, abuse, or family strife may be more likely to be temporarily or permanently absent from school, or find it more difficult to concentrate on school work.

Access to formal counselling support

Learners at the former Model C school in Modimolle had access to social workers and psychologists. Few schools in poor communities studied appeared to have dedicated school social workers or psychologists – one school in Lenasia appeared to be the exception. An educator from another Lenasia school said:

> Unfortunately we don't have a full time guidance counsellor at school. And I think some of the schools are lacking that. At one stage the department allowed for a full time guidance counsellor […] and I think things used to run more smoothly, but now because we don't have guidance counsellors, things are very different and then there are more problems.

According to participants in our youth focus groups in Phagameng, many learners do not use what little support there is – such as counsellors at LoveLife Centres because of the stigma attached to visiting a centre associated with HIV and AIDS.

A quarter of participants in our youth survey had access to a counsellor or social worker based at school. Of those who did not attend a school which employed a counsellor or social worker, 18 per cent had access to a visiting social worker. In total, 43 per cent of respondents said they had access to a social worker or counsellor, and 29 per cent of these had used this support.

Half of respondents in Quintile 5 schools had access to a social worker or counsellor based at school, dropping to 16 per cent in Quintile 1 schools.[26]

We suspect, however that levels of access to professional counsellors and social workers may be lower than those reported by respondents, as some learners may be reporting on access to Life Orientation educators or other educators given roles in learner support.

Box 8: The toll on educators

Teaching in an environment where many learners are heavily stressed for various environmental reasons and do not have access to support professionals takes its toll on educators. Referring to the need to support learners with HIV, an educator at a school in Diepkloof Extension commented:

> If a learner who is HIV-positive comes to school, then before you teach the learner you need to counsel them. You turn from being a teacher into a counselor. You need to indicate the possibility of life after the counseling, how are you then going to be able to actively engage the learner in the classroom when he is crying, while he did not receive his ARVs, when he's been to the clinic and told they're running short? You need to be a priest, a mother, a counselor, a pastor, and you end being Jesus.

Source: Qualitative research, Access to Education, 2007.

Parents' engagement with their children's schooling

Numerous studies have confirmed that parental involvement positively affects learners' attitudes towards their schooling.[27] In South Africa, levels of caregiver engagement vary significantly, with previous research showing particularly low levels of engagement by caregivers in poor households.[28]

Except for some parents in Diepkloof Extension, parents identified in our study had generally not finished school, or had very little or no formal education. As a result, according to educators, many parents could not help their children with their homework. Learners in Doreen reported that they asked Zimbabwean migrants working on surrounding farms ('who have some knowledge'[29]) to help them with their homework, because their parents were unable to do so. A parent in the Thembelihle focus group said she was unable to read her child's report card because of her low level of literacy.

Caregivers with low levels of formal education may feel they are unable to support their children's education, or have little to contribute. This may impact on the degree to which learners feel their caregivers are supporting their education. Long working hours and having to travel long distances to and from work may further detract from their ability to support their children's education.

Caregivers in Thembelihle and Phagameng appeared both marginalised and alienated from their children's school environments, a state worsened by their relationship with their children themselves. Responses from parents in the Phagameng and Thembelihle focus groups pointed to lack of communication and engagement between parents and their children. Parents felt their children no longer respect them, and because of this they had little control over their children's actions or behaviour. A Thembelihle parent stated:

> I want to be honest on this issue. Our kids do not respect us. They do not want to listen to us. They know very well that you can't do anything if they do not go to school. They like staying in groups in the area. You can't tell them anything. They have got the rights, and the law protects them.

Box 9: Corporal punishment

Although corporal punishment is prohibited in both public and private schools,[30] it is still fairly common practice.[31] Research suggests that educators may lack knowledge of alternative forms of disciplining learners.[32] In addition, some caregivers still advocate corporal punishment as an appropriate means of disciplining their children.

A number of educators and parents in our focus groups expressed frustration with the fact that corporal punishment had been 'taken away' from teachers as a disciplinary tool, and had been provided with nothing in its place. Few seemed to have a sense of the negative effects of corporal punishment, or to understand or engage with other forms of disciplining children at school.

Thirty-eight per cent of all learners recorded in our household survey had undergone some form of corporal punishment, with 32 per cent having been hit, kicked, thrown around, or otherwise physically hurt by a teacher.

The CJCP Youth Victimisation Study reports even higher levels of corporal punishment: 51 per cent of their respondents reported being spanked or caned at school, with black youths and learners in rural areas most vulnerable to corporal punishment.[33]

Following qualitative research in informal settlements in Potchefstroom, Maarman noted that many caregivers in poor households who were employed worked very long hours, arriving home late and tired after long journeys back from work.[34] This also affected communication between caregivers and learners in poor households, with learners reporting that they seldom discussed their school activities with their parents.[35]

Box 10: The relationship between the levels of education of household heads and children's education

Our results indicate that, the higher the education level of the household head, the less likely children and learners are of being out of school, missing a year or more of schooling, or repeating a grade.[36]

According to our household survey, only 11 per cent of learners whose household heads had a tertiary education had repeated a grade, against 42 per cent of learners whose household heads had not formal education.

Indeed, the level of education of the household head is a powerful indicator of many important factors (higher levels of household income, access to better schools, and access to better material benefits relevant to education such as computers, books, and other learning aids).

The level of education of adults may also be an important factor in itself. Caregivers or households heads with better education are better able to help children with their homework, and provide them with an environment similar to those referred to in their curriculae.

Source: Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Caregiver's engagement with their children's schooling

For reasons outlined previously – including a lack of money for transport – some caregivers who participated in our qualialtive research found it difficult to engage with school governance issues, or attend functions at school.

In addition, some caregivers from low-income communities did not feel confident or empowered enough to discuss their children's progress with educators, attend school meetings, or challenge schools which contravened official regulations in respect of access to schooling. (At the same time, many caregivers in the communities studied-were not aware of their and their children's rights in this regard).

These problems were particularly acute in respect of caregivers in Thembelihle, whose children attended a school in a better resourced area staffed with educators who spoke English, a language they were not necessarily comfortable with.

While 6 per cent of caregivers of children attending Quintile 5 schools (the wealthiest quintile) felt uncomfortable about talking to their educators, this proportion rose to 36 per cent for Quintile 1 schools. – Household Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Regarding involvement in school governing body meetings, a Thembelihle parent commented:

> Yes, we would like to be more involved [in the SGB]. Actually, we would like to be empowered and understand how the SGB works. At the moment we do not even know its roles and responsibilities. At the SGB meetings we do not ask questions because we do not know what to ask.

Some caregivers felt they were discriminated against by schools for being poor and 'from a squatter camp':

> They involve only Indian parents. We are discriminated against since we do not have money.

Another parent commented:

> We are regarded as nothing [in the SGB meetings].

School staff may make little effort to make low-income or uneducated caregivers feel included. School governing body meetings at a school in Phagameng were conducted in English despite the fact that most parents spoke Sipedi. An educator from the school commented:

> During parents meetings or any meetings concerning their children's education, issues are addressed in English and parents would agree to everything because they don't understand.

In turn, educators expressed frustration with many parents' lack of involvement in their children's education, with an educator in Diepkloof Extension commenting:

> Parents are saying, 'my child is going to school to learn', to them that is enough. They are only involved when they get a report that the child has failed.

Infrastructure and resources in schools

Schools that do not charge fees or are unable to generate enough income from fees or other fundraising means depend on state funding, which is often insufficient and is often received late in the school year.[37] This impacts on resources and services such as teachers, support personnel, teaching and learning materials, basic services and infrastructure, and extracurricular activities.[38]

The availability and quality of physical (such as desks and textbooks) and human (such as educators and support staff) resources affects learners' experience of their schooling, and may impact on learning outcomes.[39] This section documents our findings on access to these resources.

Infrastructure and physical resources

According to our youth survey, school infrastructure was still poorly and unequally distributed (see Box 11). Thirteen years after the transition to democracy, schools in lower quintiles were still worse off in terms of infrastructure and basic resources.

According to educators in our focus groups, classes in Diepkloof Extension, Lenasia and Phagameng were all overcrowded, with too few desks and textbooks.

A Phagameng learner expressed her frustration about the fact that she had to share a textbook with a learner who did not stay near her home, affecting her ability to do her homework. Another learner commented:

> [A lack of resources at school] affects us badly because sometimes we can't write because we have to share a table and others are standing up because there is not enough space. [...] We have to go to school early [to] get a seat before others do.

Fifty per cent of participants in our youth survey had to share a desk with another learner, and a further 4 per cent did not have access to a desk at all in most classes.[40]

The Report of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education (2005) highlighted challenges in rural schools, including under-resourced school facilities and problems of teaching in multi-grade and large classes[41], largely confirmed by our study. In one of the farm schools in Doreen, for example, learners in a number of different grades were

Box 11: Basic infrastructure in schools

Twenty two percent of participants in our youth survey indicated that they did not have tap (piped) water inside their school building or in the yard, and a quarter did not have access at school to what the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry considers adequate sanitation (pit latrines without ventilation and bucket latrines are considered inadequate because they are more likely to spread disease).[42] Moreover, 40 per cent did not have flush toilets at school. Ninety-five per cent of respondents said their schools were electrified, but 13 per cent of those reported that the electricity did not work most of the time. Figure 2 displays our findings on access to infrastructure by school quintile.

Figure 1: Access to tap water inside school building or yard by school quintile for learners aged 16 to 18
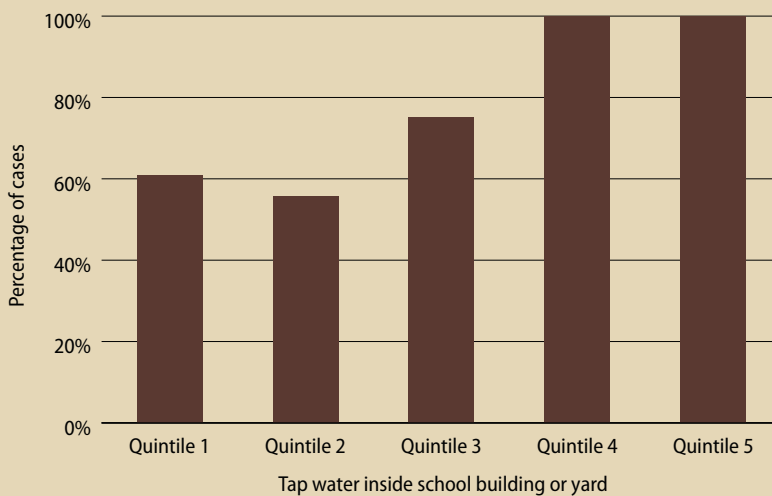
n=563. Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Figure 2: Access to sanitation considered adequate by DWAF by school quintile for learners aged 16 to 18[43]
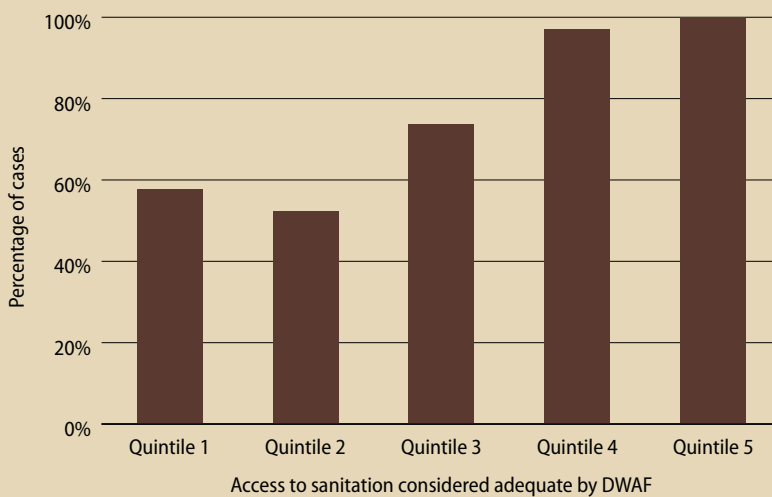
n=569. Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

being taught in the same class. This was not because there were too few educators, but because there were too few classrooms; learners used to be taught in separate groups when some classes were still taught outdoors. Multi-grade classes distracted learners in Doreen, and older learners ended up helping younger ones instead of concentrating on their own work.

Class size

The more children there are in a class, the less attention the educator can give to each child.[44] As many as 18 per cent of participants in our youth survey reported class sizes of 60 or more (i.e., with one educator).[45]

Figure 3: Average number of learners per class for learners aged 16 to 18

n=739. Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007.
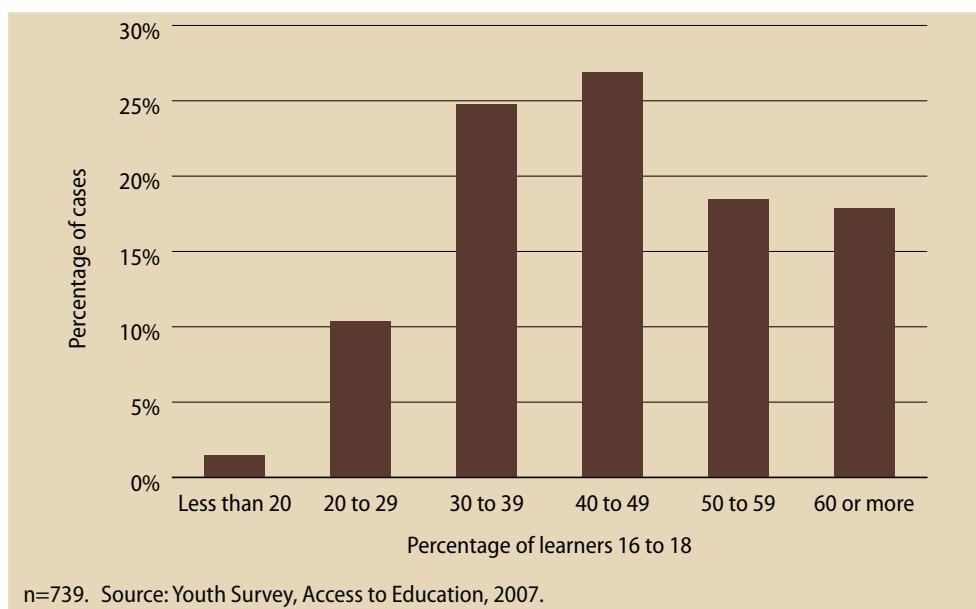
At a school in Phagameng where children were being turned away as the school was too full, an educator was found to be teaching a class of 94 Grade 1 learners.

Box 12: Teacher absenteeism

Teacher absenteeism is difficult to evaluate. To provide a rough proxy for teacher absence (teachers either absent for a full day, leaving early, or spending time in the staff room or marking, for example, when they were scheduled to teach), participants in our youth survey were asked to state whether they were taught when they were supposed to be taught.[46] A third said this was not always the case.

According to a CASE / JET report on teacher absenteeism, education officials in North West said teacher absence was a bigger problem than learner absence.[47]

Eighty two percent of participants in our youth survey attending Quintile 5 schools said teachers always taught classes when they were supposed to, contrasted with 49 per cent in Quintile 1 schools.

Box 13: Lack of breadth of education

Most poorer schools are unable to offer the range of subjects and extracurricular activities offered by former Model C schools. A Phagameng educator participating in our formative research said this led to non-academic learners feeling discouraged, as they could not find subjects or activities at which they excelled or enjoyed.

An educator in Diepkloof Extension commented:

> Primary learners come to secondary school with a whole lot of expectations; those who were taking part in golf and cricket and are passionate about sport are disappointed when they discover that we do not have such sporting codes. They are discouraged from going to school because they are not benefitting from us.

A Doreen learner said there were no sports activities at school, and boredom caused young people in his community to turn to drugs and alcohol.

Learners' sense of safety at school

This section focuses on learners' sense of safety in and on the way to school, and experiences of bullying and sexual assault in schools.

According to our household survey, 3 per cent of learners aged seven to 18 had dropped out of school because of being assaulted by learners or educators or being verbally or physically abused, and 0,5 per cent of learners had been temporarily absent from school for the same reasons. The corresponding figures from the youth survey were 1,7 per cent and 0,6 per cent respectively.[48]

Even when access to education is not affected by these experiences, they can be highly traumatic, impacting on learners' ability to concentrate on school work, their freedom of movement at school, and their general experience of schooling.

Learners' sense of safety

Ten percent of participants in our youth survey always felt unsafe on their way to school, and 15 percent sometimes felt unsafe on their way to school.[49]

Box 14: Reasons for feeling unsafe at school

According to our youth survey, the most common reasons why youths aged 16 to 18 felt unsafe at school were:

• Bullying/violent learners (36%)
• Drop-outs and criminals with access to the school (24%)
• Learners using drugs/drinking and becoming aggressive (22%)
• Learners with weapons at school (21%)

Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Some youths who took part in our focus group discussions in Thembelihle, Phagameng and Diepkloof Extension reported that they were scared of being raped, abducted, or robbed on their way to school. A female learner in Thembelihle explained:

> The route that I use to go to school has lots of bushes, and even when you scream people won't be able to hear you.

Another female learner in Phagameng commented*:*

> There was a case where a girl was raped and her private parts were removed and she died. The community was shocked, and it was not safe for the girls to walk alone anymore.

Interestingly, while female learners discussed these fears in our focus groups, our Youth Survey showed that equal proportions of boys and girls always felt unsafe on their way to school.

Box 15: Weapons at school

Violence at schools and youth' engagement in crime is worsened by the number of weapons in school and in the community. Research suggests that those learners who bring weapons to school, bring them to school for two main reasons: to protect themselves on the way to school and from school and /or in school; or to gain attention from their peers.[50] Weapons brought to school usually include knives and other sharp objects, as well as guns. Educators may search learners' possessions, but are only allowed to do so when they have "reasonable suspicion that an individual is in possession of a dangerous substance or weapon."[51]

Twenty one percent of learners (aged 16 to 18) who always or sometimes felt unsafe at school reported that this was because of learners bringing weapons to school.

Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

Five per cent of male participants and 6 per cent of female participants in our youth survey said they always or sometimes felt unsafe at school.[52] A higher proportion of boys (14 per cent) than girls (9 per cent) sometimes felt unsafe, which may be related to the fact that more boy learners reported being physically bullied by other learners.[53] Most learners who said they felt unsafe at school said this was as a result of other learners.

Experiences of bullying and assault in schools

Bullying can include physical abuse (beating, punching), verbal abuse (name-calling, racist remarks), relational (social exclusion), emotional (blackmailing, humiliating), and sexual assault.[54]

According to our youth survey, a fifth of learners aged 16 to 18 reported having experienced verbal bullying in 2007, and 8 per cent reported being physically bullied or subjected to violence in school, with far more boys than girls reporting these experiences.[55] However, real levels of bullying may be higher, as some youths are reluctant to report traumatic experiences.[56]

The 2005 National Youth Victimisation Study reported that one in five learners (21 per cent) had been threatened or hurt by someone at school, and a third (33 per cent) had been verbally abused.[57]

A greater proportion of out-of-school youths aged 16 to 18 had been bullied, assaulted, or sexually assaulted by other learners than youths who were still at school.

Some 39 per cent of out-of-school youths reported being verbally bullied at the last school they attended, versus 19 per cent of in-school youths.

Also, 23 per cent of out-of-school youths reported being physically bullied. versus 8 per cent of in-school youths.[58]

Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007.

As noted in Section 3, some learners in Thembelihle reported being singled out for being poor. A learner in Phagameng related the following:

> They would call you names and tell you that you don't have a future. They would say bad things to the learners who live in the informal settlements. They would say things like they don't bath they use Vaseline just to make them look nice and they are so poor that they don't even have food.

Some over-aged learners may also be teased for being older than their peers (see Volume 1 for data on over-aged learners in South African schools).

Learners attending schools Phagameng and Diepkloof Extension noted that a high proportion of bullies were members of gangs. A Diepkloof Extension learner commented:

> At [our school] there is bullying. We cannot report them because they will beat you after school. There is nothing they can do about it.

Learners from schools in low-income areas as well as former Model C schools participating in our focus groups reported being bullied, though other research suggests that bullying is more common and severe in violent and alcohol-prone communities.[59]

Learners also reported being sexually assaulted. Two percent of participants in our youth survey reported having been sexually assaulted by another learner in their school.[60] In

Phagameng, learners participating in our focus groups spoke of girls being sexually harassed and even raped by boys from their school.

Evidence from our focus groups suggest that when girls are raped they are often raped by boy friends or former boy friends, or by someone they know very well. A learner in Phagameng said:

> It's like when the girl declares the relationship over, the guy won't accept that, and then he will rape her, and this happens mostly in the taverns.

Boys may also be raped and sexually assaulted. A learner attending a school in Diepkloof Extension said:

> At our school [bullying] is rife. You can't go to the toilets. You will find a boy raping a boy. Everybody knows there is bullying at our school. During first year they took everything I had with me. No one goes to the toilets except the [gang] bosses and their bodyguards. Teachers are afraid to go to the boys' toilets. They know what will happen.

These sorts of experiences undoubtedly affect victims' sense of safety at school and their concentration in class. The general trauma of having been raped may lead to victims missing school and even dropping out of school, especially when they have fallen pregnant.[61]

Other studies have recorded high levels of sexual harassment, including rape, of girls in South African schools.[62]

Some school girls are also sexually assaulted by educators. Ten per cent of participants in our youth survey said they knew of another learner at their school who had been sexually assaulted by an educator, while 2 per cent said they themselves had been sexually assaulted by an educator.[63] Given their traumatic nature, instances of sexual assault by educators are also likely to be under-reported.

> Thirty three per cent of participants in our youth survey said that they knew of learners in their school who had dated or were dating a teacher, and 2 per cent said they had dated, or were dating, a teacher.[64]

Box 16: Sexual relationships and dating between educators and learners

A 2000 amendment to Employment of Educators Act, 1998 states that an educator must be dismissed if he or she is found guilty of sexually assaulting a learner, student or other employee; or having a sexual relationship with a learner, irrespective of the willingness of the learner or his or her age.[65]

Girls who participated in our focus groups said they knew of learners who had dated educators. While many of these relationships seemed voluntary, the unequal balance of power between educator and learner left some of these feeling vulnerable and open to abuse. A learner in the Phagameng focus group reported being approached by one of her teachers who wanted to date her, which she found very distressing.

The following has been extracted form the discussions:

> Participant: The teachers ask the learners to go out with them and they do. If you date a teacher its difficult to concentrate in class or study because you don't look at him as your teacher you look at him as your boyfriend. If maybe you did not see him the previous day [outside school] because you were busy with your house chores the next day he will treat you badly in class in front of the other learners.

> Moderator: Is this happening in your school?

> Participant: Yes, very much so.

A learner in Thembelihle said educators in her school were supportive and 'took action' when learners reported male educators making unwanted advances or sexually harassing learners. However, learners in Phagameng said female educators were unsympathetic generally towards girls who reported being sexually harassed by male educators (the reasons for this were unclear).

Engagement in risky behaviour

Risky sexual behaviour

Engagement in risky sexual behaviour[66] increases the vulnerability of young people to sexually transmitted diseases and teenage pregnancy. In our surveys, teenage pregnancy emerged as the main reason why girls dropped out of school.

Various studies have found that adolescent risky sexual behaviour is associated with insufficient social and emotional support, poor parental monitoring,[67] substance abuse (caused in turn by a complex set of social issues), and other factors.[68]

Some young people in our focus groups felt they had nothing to look forward to. Some learners in our focus groups in Phagameng and Thembelihle were demoralised, and a Phagameng learner described how fatalism about their futures and HIV in particular affected the sexual behaviour some of the girls in her class:

> Some teenage girls have sex without a condom, and when you ask them why they will tell you that we are all going to die in any case, so they need not protect themselves.

According to members of our youth focus groups in Doreen, Thembelihle and Diepkloof Extension, some girls offered sexual favours in return for gifts or money, and some turned to prostitution, which contributed to their chances of falling pregnant. A Phagameng learner said girls dating older men were encouraged by them to drop out of school, though the reason for this was not clear.

Fifteen per cent of girls aged 15 to 19 had been pregnant, and only a third of teenage mothers had returned to school. – A E Pettifor et al, *HIV & sexual behaviour among young South Africans: a national survey of 15 to 24 year olds,* 2004.[69]

Box 17: Perceptions of the biggest problems facing young people

Participants in our youth survey were asked what the biggest problems were which faced youths in their school. Selling and taking drugs emerged as the biggest factor, followed by teenage pregnancy and alcohol abuse. Disturbingly, alcohol abuse by both youths and adults was named as the biggest problem facing youths in the wider community, followed by drugs and teenage pregnancy.

Fewer than one per cent of learners mentioned HIV/AIDS in either context, despite the fact that the HIV infection rate for girls under the age of 20 is estimated at 15,8 per cent.[70]

Table 7: Perceptions of the biggest problems facing youths at school

Biggest problems facing youths at your school	% of respondents
Selling and taking drugs at/outside school	33.9%
Teenage pregnancy/learner mothers	25.6%
Learner alcohol abuse	24.8%
Smoking cigarettes at school	18.2%
Gangsterism/violence at school/severe bullying	10.1%
Learners who have no respect for teachers/parents/provoke teachers	9.8%
Bunking classes/students not serious about studies	5.7%
Responses mentioned by 1%–5% of learners[71]	21.4%
Responses mentioned by less than 1% learners[72]	16.1%
n=644. Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007.	

Table 8: Perceptions of the biggest problems facing youths in the wider community

Biggest problems facing youths in the wider community	% of respondents
Alcohol abuse by youths and adults	45.4%
Drugs (youths and adults)	35.3%
Teenage pregnancy/young mothers	32.1%
Crime/youths involved in crime	16.3%
Smoking	9.2%
Gangsterism/violence/no safety/use of weapons	8.4%
Poverty/financial difficulties/unemployment	6.3%
Responses mentioned by 1%–5% of learners[73]	27.6%
Responses mentioned by less than 1% learners[74]	12.8%
n=663. Source: Source: Youth survey, Access to Education, 2007.	

Substance use and abuse

Research shows that substance abuse by learners is common in South Africa.[75] Three per cent of participants in our youth survey acknowledged that they took drugs, and 8 per cent that they drank. These percentages were probably higher,[76] particularly in the light of responses to the question, 'what are the biggest problems facing youths in your school?' (see Box 17). Just over a third of respondents expressed concern about the selling and taking of drugs by learners either at school or outside school, and a quarter of respondents about alcohol abuse.

Substance abuse is widely associated with an increase in harmful and risky behaviour (including violence and unsafe sexual practice),[77] and may affect learners' mental and physical health. Drinking and taking drugs may negatively affect attendance as well as concentration in class. For example, our learner focus group in Thembelihle reported that a few young men at their school had been arrested for using or selling drugs, as a result of which they were absent from school. Learners attending schools in Phagameng and Diepkloof Extension complained of other learners arriving at school drunk or high on drugs, and disrupting classes.

While the use and or sale of drugs by learners in schools in low-income urban townships appeared more visible than in other schools, other studies have indicated that drugs are used by learners in schools across a range of socio-economic communities.[78] Confirming this, a learner from Diepkloof Extension attending a former Model C school in Johannesburg commented:

> The issue of drugs and alcohol is happening in every school. It is happening in my school, but it is under control. They hide themselves.

A greater proportion of youths aged 16 to 18 reported taking drugs or drinking in their last year at school than youths of the same age who were still at school.

Sixteen per cent of out-of-school youths reported having taken drugs in the year before they left school, versus 3 per cent of youths in school at the time of the survey.[79]

Thirty five per cen of out-of-school youths reported having used alcohol in the year before they left, versus 9 per cent of youths in school at the time of the survey.[80]

Source: Youth Survey, Access to Education, 2007

Involvement in crime

Educators and caregivers in Diepkloof Extension and Phagameng spoke of learners leaving school temporarily or permanently as a result of their involvement in crime. At that time, some boys at Phagameng High and a school in Lenasia were missing days of school in order to attend their court hearing for a criminal matter. A Phagameng learner explained:

> Most of the boys at school are criminals, so they have criminal court cases. On weekends they do a lot of criminal activities, and then they are arrested. On Monday, when they are supposed to go to school, they appear in court instead.

However, this account was probably exaggerated. While research points to the disproportionate involvement of young people in crime,[81] data on the proportion of those attending school and perpetrating crime is scant. Qualitative research in the Free State has suggested that learners are mainly involved in 'victim-less' crimes such as vandalism of school property and theft.[82]

Box 18: Attachment to school

Various studies have shown up a relationship between risky behaviour and learners' attachment to their school. Attachment to school has been particularly strongly linked to teenage pregnancy, one of the main reasons for girls leaving school.

Research has shown that, when teenagers feel a sense of attachment or connection to school and are successful at school, they are less likely to fall pregnant. Thus one study notes that attachment to school, academic achievement, and higher educational aspirations provide teenagers with incentives to avoid pregnancy.[83] On the other hand, when girls' relationships with their schooling are tenuous, either through a dislike of school, poor academic achievement, or poor expectations of furthering their education, they are more likely to fall pregnant.[84]

Attachment to school is related to a range of factors, including learners' sense of safety; structured social integration, such as sport and extracurricular activities; peer relations; teacher support; school / classroom leadership and management (including the active involvement of learners) and a sense of belonging.[85]

Concluding remarks

South Africa has made very significant progress towards universal access to schooling. However, our study shows that much remains to be done to provide all children and youths with environments conducive to learning.

For example, while average educator:learner ratios are below the norm stipulated by the Department of Basic Education, our study shows that a disturbing number of children are taught in classes bigger than 50. Schools remain unequal in many respects, and many lack adequate infrastructure and resources.

Moreover, children and youths remain exposed to a variety of potentially traumatic or harmful experiences, ranging from bullying to sexual abuse.

This volume has also highlighted the multidimensional impact of household poverty on learners' ability to participate meaningfully in their education, and their daily experiences of schooling. This is too often forgotten in the public debate on the crisis in our education system.

Endnotes

1. The fees exemption policy is outlined in the 2006 Regulations of the South African Schools Act (Republic of South Africa, South African Schools Act, No 84 of 1996. Pretoria). The no-fee school policy is outlined in Department of Education, Amended National Norms & Standards for School Funding, Government Gazette No 29179, Pretoria, 31 August 2006.

2. P Govender, Radical plan to provide poor schools with more funds, www.timeslive.co.za, 12 June 2010.

3. See results of the annual General Household Survey and the Quarterly Labour Force Survey at www.statssa.gov.za.

4. See the Cape Area Panel Survey at www.caps.uct.ac.za, for example.

5. Republic of South Africa, South African Schools Act.

6. Republic of South Africa, Education Laws Amendment Act, No 50 of 2002, Government Gazette No 24113, Cape Town, 28 November 2002.

7. For details on the pilot survey, sampling, weighting, and data quality control, see the Technical Report of the Household Survey at www.socialsurveys.co.za. Hard copies are available on request.

8. When sub-places were drawn proportionate to the relative distribution of sub-place types in each province, one small holding sub-place was drawn (in Gauteng, on the edge of Tshwane) and was subsumed for analysis under the formal sub-place.

9. Ethics Protocol Number H070901.

10. L Deng & E N Tjønneland (eds), *South Africa: Wealth, poverty and reconstruction*, Bergen/Cape Town: CMI/Centre for Southern African Studies, 1996, p 28; K G Anderson et al, Causes and consequences of schooling outcomes in South Africa: Evidence from survey data, *Social Dynamics*, 27(1), 2010, p 39; R Wildemann, *Resources and Outcomes in Public Schools: The case of South Africa*, Cape Town: IDASA, 2010; S van der Berg, How effective are poor schools? Poverty and educational outcomes in South Africa, Stellenbosch Economic Working Papers: 06/06, Stellenbosch: University of Stellenbosch & BER, 2006.

11. See, for example, Wildemann, Resources and Outcomes in Public Schools.

12. Centre for Applied Legal Studies, Access to Education for Learners in Thembelihle, University of the Witwatersrand, May 2006, p 7.

13. Ibid.

14. K Hall and S Giese, Addressing quality through school fees and school funding, in S Pendlebury et al (eds), *South African Child Gauge, 2008/2009*, Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, p 38.

15. Anderson et al, Causes and consequences of schooling outcomes in South Africa, p 41.

16. Ibid.

17. E B Fiske & H F Laad, *Elusive Equity: Education reform in post-apartheid South Africa*, Cape Town: HSRC Press, 2004, 99.

18. Government schools in a number of provinces have 'feeder zones', an area the school 'is obliged to favour when admitting students'. Preference is given to children whose

parents reside in the school's feeder zone, followed by children whose parents work in the feeder zone. All other children are admitted on a first-come, first-served basis. Source: http://www.southafrica.info/services/education/edufacts.htm

19. For an extended argument on relative poverty and access, see V Dieltiens and S Meny-Gibert, School drop-out: poverty and patterns of exclusion, in Pendlebury et al, *South African Child Gauge*, 2008/2009.

20. S van der Berg, Poverty and Education, International Academy of Education and International Institute of Educational Planning, Education Policy Series, No 10, UNSECO, 2008.

21. UK Office of the Prime Minister, The Impact of overcrowding on health and education: A review of evidence and literature, 2004, at http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/138631.pdf.

22. K Hall, Income and Social Grants - children living in poverty, Statistics on children in South Africa, Fact Sheet Number 14, Cape Town: Children's Institute, http://www.childrencount.ci.org.za/uploads/factsheet_14.pdf. The value of the per capita poverty line was R 569 a month in 2008.

23. Shown for children whose only form of transport is per foot, excluding for example those who walk to the taxi rank and then catch a taxi.

24. Dieltiens and Meny-Gibert, School drop-out.

25. S Cobb, Social support as a moderator of life, *Psychosomatic Medicine*, 38(5), 1976, 300-314.

26. Access based at school, n=542. We were not able to match all school names to quintile numbers – see Technical Report on the Household Survey for details.

27. A T Henderson and N Berla (eds), A new generation of evidence: The family is critical to student achievement, A report from the National Committee for Citizens in Education, Washington, DC: Centre for Law and Education, 1994; S Redding et al, The Effects of Comprehensive Parent Engagement on Student Learning Outcomes. Cambridge, MA: Harvard Family Research Project, 2004, http://www.hfrp.org/content/download/1250/48753/file/redding.pdf; and P Singh et al, Black parental involvement in education, *South African Journal of Education*, 24(4), 2004, pp 301-307.

28. W S Khumalo, Parental involvement in classroom life in rural schools, Master's thesis, Johannesburg: University of Johannesburg, 2006, http://ujdigispace.uj.ac.za:8080/dspace/bitstream/10210/548/1/Khumalo.pdf

29. Focus group discussion with youths in Doreen, Access to Education study, 2007.

30. Republic of South Africa, Abolition of Corporal Punishment Act, 1997, Pretoria.

31. L Leoschut & P Burton, How Rich the Rewards? Results of the 2005 National Youth Victimisation Study, Centre for Justice and Crime Prevention, Monograph Series No 1, Cape Town, May 2006), p 72; I J Prinsloo, How safe are South African schools? South African Journal of Education, 25(1) 2005, pp 5–10; and the Access to Education Household Survey, 2007.

32. Department of Education, Alternatives to corporal punishment, Pretoria: Department of Education, 2000; K Porteus et al, Alternatives to corporal punishment – growing discipline and respect in our classrooms, Johannesburg: Heinemann, 2001.

33. Leoschut & Burton, How Rich the Rewards?

34. R Maarman, Manifestations of 'capabilities poverty' with learners attending informal settlement schools, *South African Journal of Education*, 29, 2009, p 328.

35. Ibid.

36. Statistically significant association. For more on repetition, see Volume 1, and for more on missing school for a year or more, see Volume 2.

37. J Pampallis, School Fees, Issues in Education Policy Number 3, Johannesburg: CEPD, 2008, p 4.

38. S Motala, Quality and indicators of quality in South African education: a critical appraisal, International Journal of Educational Development, 21(1), 2001; and L Chisholm, The quality of primary education in South Africa, Background paper prepared for UNESCO Education for All Global Monitoring Report, 2004, http://www.hsrc. ac.za/research/output/outputDocuments/2872_Chisholm_Thequalityofprimary.pdf

39. For an exploration of the impact of class sizes and teacher qualifications, see Wildeman, Resources and Outcomes in Public Schools. In Ghana, building more classrooms and supplying more textbooks had a major impact on learning outcomes. See H White and E Masset, Books, Buildings and Learning Outcomes: an impact evaluation of World Bank assistance to basic education in Ghana, Development and Comp Systems Number 0504013, EconWPA, 2005, http://ideas.repec.org/p/wpa/wuwpdc/0504013.html

40. n=751.

41. Department of Education, Report of the Ministerial Committee on Rural Education: A New Vision for Rural Schooling, Pretoria, 2005.

42. A De Lannoy, updated by L Lake, Children's access to education, in A Pendlebury et al (eds), *South African Child Gauge, 2008/2009,* Children's Institute, University of Cape Town, 2009. EMIS data shows: 40% with access to flush toilet, 21% with access to VIP/Enviroloo, 34% with access to pit latrine, 5% with access to a bucket or no sanitation at all.

43. Flush toilet or pit latrine with ventilation: Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

44. De Lannoy, Children's access to education.

45. Note that EMIS data estimates an educator: learner ratio of 1: 32. The average of the results presented below is higher than the EMIS educator: learner ratio because our data shows the number of learners accessing a particular educator: learner ratio rather than a count of the ratio per class. It is possible that the Access to Education data overestimates the number of children in overcrowded classes, as learners may not know the exact number of children in their class, and may be more likely to overestimate in slightly physically overcrowded surroundings. The data nevertheless points to far too many children per class for optimal learning outcomes.

46. This question does have limitations as youths' interpretation of 'supposed to be taught' could not be interrogated in field, but it does provide a rough proxy for teacher absenteeism and is useful for comparative purposes.

47. CASE and JET, Learner Absenteeism in the South African Schooling System, Study commissioned by the Department of Education, Johannesburg, 2007.

48. Drop out: results for youths / children aged seven to 18 from household survey: 3% affected (assault at school by learner or educator, experiences of verbal or physical bullying). Drop-out: results from youth survey for youths aged 16 to 18: 1,7% of youths affected. Absenteeism in 2007: results for learners aged seven to 18 from household survey: 0,5% of learners affected. Absenteeism in 2007: results for learners aged 16 to 18 from youth survey: 0,6 per cent of learners affected.

49. n=748.

50. C Braun, School Violence, Catholic Parliamentary Liaison Office Research Paper, 2007, p 12, http://www.cplo.org.za/site/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=204&Itemid=54

51. I J Prinsloo, How safe are South African schools?, *South African Journal of Education*, 25(1), 2005, p 8.

52. n=734.

53. n=734.

54. J Neser et al, Peer victimization in schools: the victims, *Crime Research in South Africa*, 5(1), 2003, p 28.

55. All genders verbal bullying: n=748, all genders physical bullying: n=743, verbal bullying by gender: n=736, physical bullying by gender: n=732.

56. Neser et al, and Morodi, R. 2003. Peer victimization in schools; and Department of Health, The first South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey, 2002, http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2003/youth/complete.pdf

57. P Burton, Easy Prey: Results of the national youth victimisation study, *SA Crime Quarterly*, No 16, June 2006.

58. n=751 in-school youths, and 61 out-of-school youths. The question put to respondents was: 'Have you ever experienced or been the victim of physical bullying or violence at school (not sexual abuse)?'

59. Neser et al, Peer victimization in schools: the victims; Department of Health, The first South African Youth Risk Behaviour Survey; C De Wet, Free State educators' experiences and recognition of bullying at schools, *South African Journal of Education*, 26(1), 2006.

60. n=734.

61. Pregnancy is the main reason why girls aged 16 to 18 drop out of school. According to the Kaiser/ SABC study, 3 per cent of teenage women who have been pregnant reported that they had been forced to have sex against their will. Kaiser Family Foundation & South African Broadcasting Corporation, Young South Africans, Broadcast Media, and HIV Awareness: Results of a National Survey, California: Henry J Kaiser Family Foundation, 2007.

62. E George & A Finberg. Scared at school: sexual violence against girls in South African schools, Human Rights Watch, 2001. Also see I J Prinsloo, How safe are South African schools? *South African Journal of Education*, 25(1), 2005, pp 5–10; and S Prinsloo, Sexual harassment and violence in South African schools, *South African Journal of Education*, 26(2), 2006.

63. n=742, n=734.

64. n=737, n=730.

65. Republic of South Africa, Education Laws Amendment Act, No 53 of 2000.

66. Risky sexual behaviour can be defined in a number of ways and take several forms, ranging from a large number of sexual partners to engaging in unprotected sex, and sex under the influence of substances. See P A Hall et al, Risky Adolescent Sexual Behavior: A Psychological Perspective for Primary Care Clinicians, *Topics in Advanced Practice Nursing eJournal*, 4(1), 2004.

67. C W Metzler et al, The social context for risky sexual behavior among adolescents, *Journal of Behavioral Medicine*, 17(4), 1994; and A Evans et al, An exploration of the relationship between youth assets and engagement in risky sexual behaviors, Journal of Adolescent Health, 35(5), 2004.

68. A Amoateng et al, Substance use and sexual behaviour among African adolescents in the North West province of South Africa, *African Journal of Drug and Alcohol Studies*, 6(1), 2007.

69. Cited in Panday et al, Teenage pregnancy in South Africa with a specific focus on school-going learners, Pretoria: HSRC, 2009.

70. Findings from the 14th National HIV and Syphilis Sero-Prevalence Survey of women attending public antenatal clinics for 2003, conducted by the Department of Health. http://www.southafrica.info/ess_info/sa_glance/health/aids/hivinfections-report.htm

71. Peer pressure to smoke/drink/sex; Crime in community; Inability to pay education costs; Learners date teachers/sexual abuse by teachers; Poor school infrastructure/lack of school resources/no sport facilities; Dropping out of school; Gambling/playing dice; Focus in boyfriends/men/promiscuity.

72. Learners who are struggling academically/ failing, uncommitted/absent teachers, lack of teachers , favouritism by teachers, Matric stress, learners struggling with English / maths, no career guidance, fantastic principal left, no extra classes, no report end of year, learners expelled unfairly, school now has cameras, abusive corporal punishment, suspension for wrong uniform, stealing / theft at school, 'keeping up with the Jones's', racist learners, sexual abuse and rape at school, lack of basic services in the community, unreliable / no transport , corruption, HIV and AIDS, child headed households, prostitution, family problems, piercing / tattoos, youth suicide, high death toll of youth, youth exposure to inappropriate media.

73. Drop out/absence; Bad peer pressure; Youth don't respect parents/teachers/insulting/ don't listen; Youth who are careless about their education; Rape and sexual abuse (3%); No recreation facilities/activities; Lack of libraries/education institutions in area; Youth watching too much TV/cell phones/partying; Transactional sex/having sex with older men.

74. No transport for learners, lack of basic services, road accidents, racism, teachers striking, don't support each other, people getting sick, youth domestic responsibilities, youth don't attend church, no parental support for education, lack of discipline, not understanding English, bunking class, bullying at school, can't access closest school, initiation disrupting studies, gambling, promiscuity, unsafe sex, child headed households, HIV/ Aids stigmatisation, materialism, domestic abuse, politics, witchcraft, pollution.

75. A Flisher et al, Substance use by adolescents in Cape Town: prevalence and correlates, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 32, 2003; Parry et al, Trends in adolescent alcohol and other drug use: findings from three sentinel sites in South Africa (1997–2001), *Journal of Adolescence*, 27(4), 2004; and L Routledge, Substance abuse and psychological well-being of South African adolescents in an urban context, Master's thesis, University of Pretoria, 2007, http://upetd.up.ac.za/thesis/available/etd-07172007-145323/ unrestricted/00dissertation.pdf.

76. We are not suggesting that any use of alcohol by teenagers is necessarily harmful, or constitutes substance abuse.

77. Amoateng et al, Substance use and sexual behaviour.

78. Research also shows highly segmented patterns of substance use by race in South Africa, with different forms of drugs being used depending on disposable income, the manner in which substances are marketed across income groups and geographical areas for example. See Parry et al, Trends in adolescent alcohol and other drug use.

79. n=789.

80. n=787.

81. See Youth Policy Initiative Round Table 6: Crime and violence at http://www.hsrc. ac.za/Document-2689.phtml

82. See, for example, C de Wet, Free State educators' perceptions of the scope of learner crime, *South African Journal of Education*, 23(3), 2003.

83. D Kirby, Antecedents of adolescent initiation of sex, contraceptive use, and pregnancy, *American Journal of Health Behavior*, 26, 2002, cited in S Panday et al, Teenage pregnancy in South Africa with a specific focus on school-going learners, Human Sciences Research Council, Pretoria, 2009, p 21.

84. Panday et al, Teenage pregnancy in South Africa.

85. H P Libbey, Measuring student relationships to school: attachment, bonding, connectedness, and engagement, *Journal of School Health*, 74(7), 2004.

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