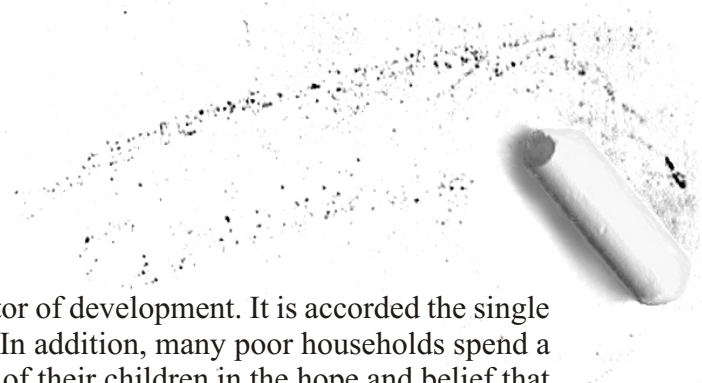


SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION



Education is both a key indicator and important facilitator of development. It is accorded the single largest proportion of the national budget of all sectors. In addition, many poor households spend a significant proportion of their income on the education of their children in the hope and belief that this will ensure them a better life.

The government-commissioned 'Poverty and Inequality Report' notes that South Africa had one of the lowest scores, worldwide, regarding human resource development as measured by the size of the skilled workforce, and the financial resources spent on industry training (May, 1998:91). These findings have implications for personal well-being as well as for the country's ability to grow, compete economically and create jobs. The report attributes South Africa's low scores to poor basic education and the exclusion of the majority of the population from training institutions under apartheid. The new educational reforms are intended to address the former problem while the Skills Development Act of 1998 is intended to address the latter one.

In order to obtain baseline statistics against which to measure change, the Census '96 questionnaire included three questions relating to education. The first question enquired as to the highest school grade completed by the person. The second question asked whether the person had completed any technical or artisan certificate, diploma or degree. The third asked whether the person was attending school, college, technikon or university at the time of the census.

This report examines the patterns revealed by the responses to these census questions. It focuses, in particular, on what the census tells us about the links between education and various characteristics of individuals and households. It shows aspects of the education situation two years after the first democratic election. It pays special attention to gender issues both because of the government's stated commitment to gender equity, and because of the perception that education for women is key to attaining this goal. Focus is also given to rural–urban differences.

Section 2 of this report provides a background against which to contextualise the statistical picture revealed by the census. It provides a brief history of educational provision in South Africa prior to 1994 and since the democratic elections.

Section 3 focuses on people aged between five and 25 years of age. It distinguishes between those who were studying and those who had finished studying. Government policy promotes lifelong learning. In practice, however, educational attendance is concentrated in the younger age groups. This is particularly the case in respect of school education, which is the main aspect of education covered by the census questions. The 5-15 age group covers those who were most likely to be still at school and less likely to have completed their education. The analysis looks at school attendance of this younger age group. It then looks at the educational achievements of those aged between 16 and 25 years. These individuals were beyond the compulsory schooling age but might still have been attending educational institutions. It also looks at the number of women who were still studying despite having given birth to at least one child.

Section 4 looks at people aged 26 years or more, most of whom would have completed their formal education. It analyses achievement in terms of school grade passed and post-school qualifications. It also examines the links between educational achievement, employment and income.

A short Section 5 looks at what the census tells us about those people who were resident in South Africa on census night but were not born in the country. It looks at the educational achievement of people from different regions of the world. It also reports on what proportions of these non-native

residents were still studying at the time of the census. These people will generally not have benefited from South Africa's schooling system. As current residents, however, they constitute part of the human potential on which the country could possibly draw.

Section 6 looks at education from the perspective of living conditions and life circumstances. The census questionnaire provides us with a range of household-level indicators of these dimensions. This section examines the link between these indicators and educational levels, particularly of the person named as household head. The different links do not necessarily establish causality in a particular direction. They are nevertheless important in establishing where the educational gaps are.

DEFINING EDUCATION LEVELS

In 1996, South Africa's schooling system comprised primary schooling, from grade 1 through grade 7, and secondary schooling, from grade 8 through grade 12. Grade 0 constitutes an optional pre-school year before grade 1 but was not widespread at the time of the census. At the end of grade 12, scholars write the school-leaving or matriculation examination. Grade 12 is thus commonly referred to as 'matric'.

For the analysis in this report we generally use five categories in looking at highest education level achieved.

- No schooling includes those who have no formal schooling as well as those who have only completed grade 0.
- Incomplete primary includes all those whose highest grade completed is between grades 1 and 6 inclusive.
- Incomplete secondary includes those whose highest grade completed is between grades 7 and 11 inclusive. It also includes people who have a diploma but have not completed grade 12.
- Matric only is those who have completed grade 12 but have not studied further.
- Higher than matric comprises those who have completed grade 12 and then obtained further qualifications.