

Equal Education's Victory as Department Takes Action to Eradicate Overcrowding

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08 November 2023

Background: Equal Education (EE) is a movement of teachers, learners, parents, and the community fighting for quality and equality in the education system through analysis and activism.

In 2021 EE started a campaign which they named #Nospaceforus. The purpose of the campaign was to end overcrowding in schools.

The campaign had four demands, namely: Infrastructure, school capacity norms, budget, and teachers. Equal Education's staff then realised they could not achieve all these demands simultaneously and chose one demand which could be achieved in a short period. This demand was infrastructure. Following this, Equal Education visited schools to measure classrooms, check the furniture, and record the number of learners the school could handle and how many learners were really present at that school.

After the visits, they chose one school in each of their organising areas as their site of struggle. They chose Amos Maphanga Secondary School in the Daveyton area, Tembisa West in the Tembisa area and Tholulwazi Secondary School in the so called KwaTsaDuza area (KwaThema, Tsakane and Duduza considered together).

Abednego Makamu (21) from Etwatwa, Mandela, who is a Facilitator from EE said they had youth groups where they combine different equalisers (school going members of EE) from different schools to help them draft and design the letter that was sent to the Department of Education and share their personal experiences on overcrowding.

After the youth groups, in September 2023, Equal Education drafted the letter and submitted it, the Department responded by saying they'll deliver chairs and tables in the selected schools.

"In Amos Maphanga Secondary School, we found out the school only has mobile classrooms most of which are in [a] poor condition and have been there for at least 13 years. Tholulwazi Secondary School was originally built for 1200 learners but now has to accommodate an additional 564 learners. Most of the classes we inspected at Tembisa West Secondary School had more learners than they should contain. In all three schools, we found that there were not enough desks and chairs in many of the classrooms and the furniture that was there was in poor condition," said a statement from EE.

Late last year, the Department finally delivered new furniture. They delivered 200 chairs and 100 desks in Amos Maphanga; 200 desks and 200 chairs in Tholulwazi Secondary School and 140 desks in Tembisa West Secondary School.

"[The]...Delivering of furniture to the schools is not enough, the state of the schools is extremely bad in a way that is not a conducive environment for teaching and

learning. Yes, I appreciate the DBE's efforts by delivering furniture but that doesn't do away with overcrowding as that's the main issue. The schools need adequate infrastructure to support the teaching and learning process. What I expect from the DBE is for them to work hand in hand with the public and Equal Education members to put in place an infrastructure forward-looking development plan as one of the measures in eradicating overcrowding in schools. However, I am joyful to see that the DBE took learners' demands for table(s) and chairs seriously," said Marvin Sibande (21) from Daveyton, also part of the Equal Education movement.

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