

Basic Education in Shambles Despite Department Claiming Otherwise

By Noluvuyo Lata
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The class of 2023 received their results on the 19 of January 2024, as the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, shared the outcomes with the country. The pass rate stood at 82.9% for the grade 12 class of 2023.

The matric results for each province were as follows, from best to worst: Free State (89%), KwaZulu-Natal (86.4%), Gauteng (85.4%), Northwest (81.6%), Western Cape (81.5%), Eastern Cape (81.4%), Limpopo (79.5%), Mpumalanga (77%), and finally, the Northern Cape (75.8%).

Minister Motshekga hailed the grade 12 learners saying that they produced good results for the year 2023. On the contrary, according to statistics, the results of the class of 2023 only represent 55% of the learners who started school in 2012. Simply put this means that almost half of the learners that were supposed to be in grade 12 in 2023, have either failed a grade or a few grades and have remained behind or they have quit school.

In an article published by the Karibu on 17 June 2023 titled "Reasons to build a reading movement," the author, Siyabonga Mviko, highlighted some key facts that could be investigated to see what the actual problem with the basic education system is. This indicates how studies have shown that: 1. Grade 4 learners in SA cannot read for meaning 2. That 48% of teachers in the public education system are 50 years and older and 3. SA has one of the highest teacher-to-learner ratios in the world, which means our classrooms in the public sector are overcrowded.

In the same breath, it was also found that the grade 8 and 10 classes did quite badly in the same year. The Free State, although first according to their matric results, were the worst with their grade 8 and 10 results dropping by 4% from last year's. Almost 40% of the grade 10 students in the Free State failed the grade and are now repeating.

"I am a tutor and I help children and I mostly work with children in grades 8 to 12 mainly with maths. I have noticed that there is a big problem when it comes to reading and spelling. Some of the kids struggle with the spelling of the simplest of words and it's concerning. I will not blame it on the children or even the teachers because as someone who is a facilitator at Equal Education, I know better," said Sinenhlanhla Buthelezi.

"As an organisation, we have been fighting the government for years to fix the problems that we have within the education system. The classes are overcrowded, and the teachers are overworked and underpaid. The schools don't even look decent, and they are not an environment that promotes healthy learning. The government needs to spend more on education so that the learners in [the] public education system can get the same education as children that are in private schools," said Buthelezi who is a facilitator at Equal Education.

There is a big need for our government to prioritise the education of the working class children or else this problem will only become worse than it already is. The Minister needs to be honest and face the fact that a lot of work needs to be done to improve the quality of education given to our kids in public schools.

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