

Press

Release

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South African Institute of Race Relations

The power of ideas

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Free education from the damaging effects of excessive government control – IRR

The IRR's latest report, 'Thrown under the School Bus – The future of the Class of 2020: Gauteng as bellwether on education', examines grave deficiencies in education in the province and suggests how these can be addressed effectively.

The fate of the class of 2020 – more than a million young South Africans who begin school tomorrow – rests on the quality of the education they receive over the next 12 years, which is largely determined by the nature and quality of the schooling system itself.

The 2019 matric pass rate, the highest in the history of post-1994 South Africa, tells only part of the story of education in the country.

Looking beyond misleading statistics, the IRR's report examines the failures and deficiencies in the schooling system which, if left unaddressed, will stunt the life

chances of far too many of the children entering the classroom for the first time tomorrow.

The report notes: 'These failures manifest in large numbers of students dropping out of basic education before reaching matric and the decline in the number of previously disadvantaged pupils who attain a bachelor pass. The underlying causes of these failures must be understood to be able to chart the future course of the Class of 2020.'

Such failures are reflected in problems arising from cadre deployment, corruption and wasteful expenditure in the Gauteng Education Department under MEC Panyaza Lesufi, problems which the report ascribes to conditions where 'the government has too much power and influence'. This is something that afflicts education across the country.

The report makes the case for 'freeing education through liberalising legislation, giving power to schools and school governing bodies and parents, and making it as easy as possible for the public to organise and build schools' as the path to ensuring that 'South Africa can satisfy its need to educate its populace – both at a basic and an advanced level'.

It argues that the negative features of education in Gauteng 'can be remedied by freeing up education in the province'.

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