

Some implications for education of Census 2011

The South African National Census of 2011, published on 30 October 2012, is a comprehensive census performed by Statistics South Africa, the latest in a series conducted once every ten years. At the request of the Human Resource Development Council of South Africa (HRDCSA), chaired by deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe, the HRDC undertook an initial analysis of the implications of the Census of 2011 for the education and skills development agenda for the country, reflected in the following three articles:

WHAT CENSUS 2011 TAUGHT US about the state of education

The formulation of targeted policies and plans is dependent on accurate, up-to-date information to enable policy makers and other interested parties to monitor the effectiveness of current policies and plans. When *Vijay Reddy* and *Andrea Juan* did a statistical analysis of key results of Census 2011, they found some positive changes in participation rates in education and in levels of education. But they also found an alarming decline in schooling in the higher grades and in post-school education.

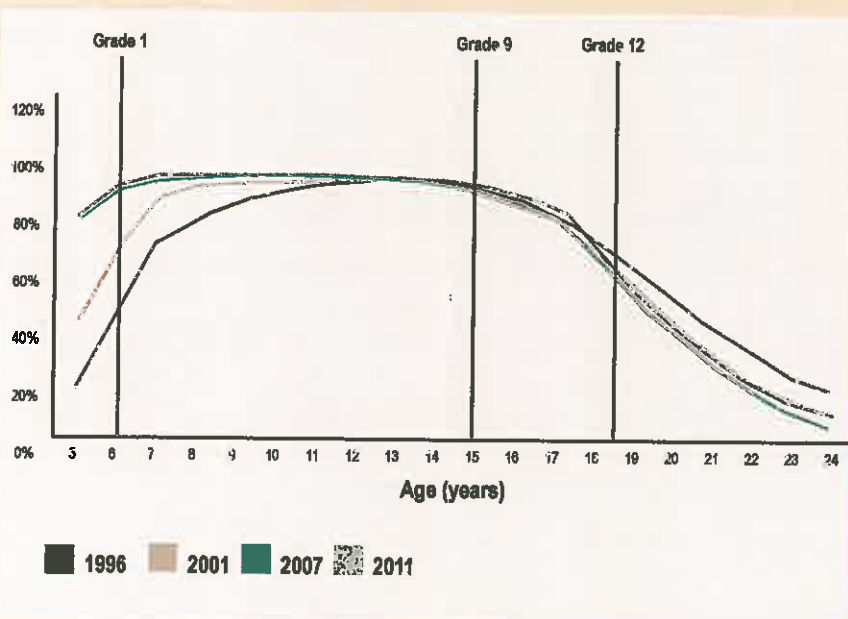
Participation in education has improved since 1996 (Figure 1). Across the time periods, over 80% of eight to 17 year olds have participated in formal education institutions.

A trend analysis of census data from 1996 to 2011 shows an increase in participation levels for children between five and 10 years old. Participation for five-year olds has increased significantly from 23% in 1996 to 81% in 2011.

This is a welcome finding as research suggests that early participation in educational institutions contributes to improved cognitive development and can thus improve future academic performance. This increase may be attributed to the attention that early childhood development has received since 2001. The Department of Basic Education has set a goal of universal access to the reception year of schooling (grade R) by 2010. Evidently this goal has not been met, however the progress made cannot be discounted.

While there was a relatively high rate of participation for the compulsory years of schooling from grades 1 to 9, there is a sharp decline in participation thereafter. This has been a trend from 1996 to 2011 - with slight improvements in 2011. This trend continued for participation in educational institutions for 18 to 24 year olds, raising alarms regarding the provision of post-schooling education. Only 4% of the population aged below 24 years are attending colleges.

Figure 1: Participation rates by age from 1996 to 2011
Source: Statistics South Africa (2012)



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or universities. Census 2011 found that 3 726 110 (20%) of five to 24-year olds were not in education, employment or training.

Increased education levels of the population

A long-term goal of the South African government is to develop a more skilled and capable workforce with a view to being categorised as a knowledge society and a knowledge economy. The education levels of the population allow us to make a rough estimate of the potential human capital of the country. Figure 2 represents the trends in education levels of the population 20 years and older.

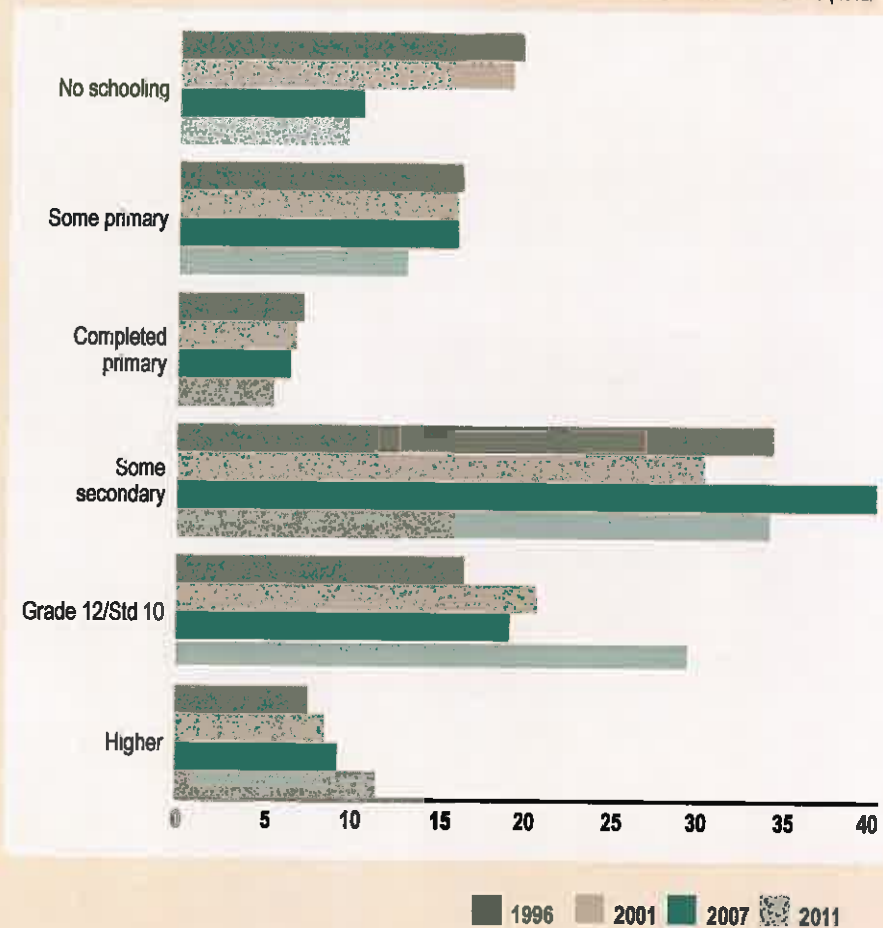
Trends in education

Three noteworthy trends emerge from the Census 2011 results. The first is the decrease in the percentage of adults with a primary school education and below. However, there are 6 456 000 people who have no education, or some primary education, pointing to the need to facilitate adult basic education and training (ABET) opportunities.

The second trend is the increase in the percentage of the population who have completed grade 12 and those who have gone on to complete post-schooling qualifications. This implies improved levels of education of the adult population that could contribute to improved education and training skills sets, as well as the improved education levels in the household.

Parental education is found to be the best predictor of educational performance of children. This increased educational level of the household will contribute to higher educational achievement of the children. A third trend is the large percentage of the adult population who have not completed secondary school education. A total 59% of the population fall into this category with

Figure 2: Highest level of education of persons aged 20 years and older 1996-2011
Source: Statistics South Africa (2012)



34% of the population having incomplete secondary education. Research shows that the employment opportunities for those with incomplete secondary education are limited and the policy challenge is to create further training opportunities.

Conclusion

While the Census 2011 key findings point to advances made in raising the education levels

of the country's citizens, there is still further progress to be made. This is critical in light of the economic and development trajectory that the South African society hopes to achieve.

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