

# South Africa

## Demographics for South Africa

Population:	44,344,136
GDP (by PPP method):	US\$2,491.4 billion
Currency (inc code):	Rand (ZAR)
Language(s):	IsiZulu, IsiXhosa, Afrikaans, Sepedi, English, Setswana, Sesotho, Xitsonga, others
Internet country code:	.za

## Elementary and secondary education

In the post-apartheid era a more coherent education system is slowly being shaped in South Africa, not only to deal with issues around the distribution of learning opportunities, but also to allow the country to successfully compete globally. Educational authorities envisage a seamless system starting with early childhood development and progressing through general education and training, or adult education and training, to higher education.

In 2002, 11.9 million learners were enrolled at South African schools. Of these, 11.6 million studied in public schools and the rest in independent (private) institutions. The average annual growth rate of learners for the first decade of the new century is expected to be negative.

Total government expenditure earmarked for education in the 2004/2005 budget is still inadequate to provide free and compulsory education for a ten-year period. There remains a scarcity of qualified and properly remunerated educators, financial resources are stretched and the HIV/AIDS pandemic is expected to have major negative impacts on the education sector.

### **Higher education**

Before 2004 graduates of high schools could continue their education at a technical or vocational institution, a *technikon*, or a university. In 2003, about 480,000 were enrolled at the then 21 universities in the country, while about 225,000 students were enrolled at the 15 technikons. At that time university enrolment had stagnated, but technikons experienced booming enrollment figures.

The new public higher education landscape further consists of 22 public institutions: 11 universities, five universities of technology and six comprehensive institutions brought about by the merging of universities and technikons. The mergers have created some very large institutions seven institutions will have enrollments of above 30,000 the new distance education institution an enrollment of more than 200,000 students.

After the political transition in South Africa, there was a proliferation of both local and foreign providers of private higher education. Private higher education has been estimated in 2004 to have a headcount of between 30,000 and 35,000 comprising about 93 institutions and 382 programs. Ultimately, however, only 14 providers were nationally accredited, with additional accreditation granted to a further 30, due to poor quality offerings from the private suppliers.

A Bachelor's degree at a tertiary institution usually requires three years of course work. This may be followed by an Honors degree (one year) and a Master's degree (at least one year). Academic coursework is usually transferable between institutions of similar standing. Professional schools, usually located within universities, offer professional degrees in fields like medicine, dentistry, pharmacy, law and engineering.

Corporate charters for tertiary institutions are issued by the national government, which has oversight over higher education and is responsible for quality control through the Higher Education Quality Committee which operates under the auspices of the Council for Higher Education.

The largest proportion of students enrolls for commerce, followed by education and health sciences. There remains a serious imbalance between the arts and humanities on the one hand and science and technology on the other. The graduate output in the fields of science and technology should increase, as should the ratio between technikon and university students. It is believed that the new configuration of tertiary institutions will correct this imbalance to a significant extent.

Most tertiary institutions in South Africa operate using a semester calendar with a new intake at the beginning of each calendar year.

### **Business and management education**

Management education in South Africa is provided by a wide range of organizations. Almost all management education that leads to a degree at any

level is provided by the 22 tertiary institutions referred to above, with the exception of a limited number of private suppliers. Business programs within a university are usually managed and delivered by an academic unit often referred to as a faculty of management, economic and management science, business etc. Business schools may form part of these faculties, but are usually entities reserved for MBA training and/or executive education.

During 2003 a comprehensive audit was done on all suppliers of MBA degrees with the result that after a glut of MBA degrees before the audit, today only 17 fully accredited MBA programs are in existence, at 15 higher education institutions (the greater majority of them public). Three institutions still have conditional accreditation.

Undergraduate education (leading to a Bachelor's degree) in business and management is also provided by these tertiary institutions. The program generally involves at least three years of general studies. Degree titles vary depending on institutional preferences, but do not necessarily signal significant curricular differences. The most commonly offered titles are Bachelor in Commerce, Bachelor in Economics or Bachelor of Business Science. Most degree programs allow students to select at least one major emphasis within business, which usually requires at least four semester courses in the speciality area.

Graduate business education includes Honors, Master's and Doctoral level instruction or research. Master's level business education programs lead either to a general degree (e.g. Master of Commerce, Master of Economics) or a specialised degree (Master of Accountancy). A strong trend reflects training in a multi-disciplinary field, usually under the name of Master in Philosophy. Substantial variation has developed within each type of program.

Most business Doctoral programs in South Africa prepare candidates to do independent and original scholarly research. A Master's degree is usually required as well as preliminary course work. Doctoral students then usually have to participate in advanced seminars and write a comprehensive Doctoral thesis which is externally examined, internally moderated and which the candidate has to defend in an oral examination.

Business school faculty usually are career academics who are appointed on the basis of their lecturing and research records. Of late, MBA schools are also targeting well-qualified individuals from the world of business. Promotion within university structures, however, is still very much research driven. Generally full-time tenured faculty are expected to research, teach, consult, administer and provide services to the community. A greater proportion of courses each year, however, is taught by part-time, or so-called virtual faculty, who bring the latest thinking and developments in business into the classroom.

It is very difficult to estimate student numbers due to definitional problems, but in 2000, 19,200 degrees, diplomas and certificates were awarded in the field of commerce by public universities and technikons. In the same year 3,846

degrees were awarded in the field of public administration. The enrollment trend, however, still is in the direction of commerce.

### **Issues facing business schools**

All business schools attached to universities suffer from cuts in government funding. This leads to an insufficient number of faculty positions, non-market related remuneration of staff and the inability to draw and retain good academics. There exists a real danger that the intellectual capital base of business schools may shrink and become shallower. The lack of sufficient resources also becomes visible in the upkeep of facilities, the ageing of technology and the general downgrading of the educational environment.

Furthermore, it must be kept in mind that South African business schools now have to compete in the global arena and are faced with international salary structures. On the positive side the weak currency does help to keep courses internationally competitive.

South African schools face the further challenge of creating racial diversity in faculty composition in a situation where black faculty is relatively scarce and commands a high salary premium. This leads to intense competition to obtain the services of a finite pool of well qualified black academics.

All institutions are faced with similar demands in a transforming economy:

- coping with a vast array of diverse national and organizational goals and imperatives, as well as mutually exclusive pressures and expectations from a variety of stakeholders;
- tightening financial constraints accompanied by rising expectations; and
- remaining faithful to the ideal of academic excellence while pursuing secondary objectives.

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