

Why intervene in primary school (rather than high school)?

According to the Education Statistics 2013 published by the Department of Basic Education South Africa the majority of South Africa's learners attending ordinary school education can be found during the primary school phase. The Western Cape shall be used as an explicit example, which is illustrated in the following graph.

Table 10: Number of learners, educators and schools in the ordinary school sector, by province, district municipality and metropolitan municipality, in 2013 (concluded)

District and Metropolitan Municipality	Learners							Educators		Schools		
	Pre-Gr. R	Gr. R	Primary Gr. 1-7	Secondary Gr. 8-12	Other	Female	Total	Female	Total	Public	Independent	Total
Western Cape												
Cape Winelands	874	10 863	86 839	53 325	293	76 222	152 194	3 589	5 322	273	20	293
Central Karoo	2	863	9 159	4 824	47	7 472	14 895	292	469	29	2	31
City of Cape Town Metro	2 128	36 999	398 321	235 466	650	344 302	673 564	16 874	23 481	750	133	883
Eden	259	5 358	64 702	36 617	288	54 067	107 224	2 444	3 621	193	18	211
Overberg	194	2 480	26 651	13 183	107	21 466	42 575	1 035	1 481	82	14	96
west Coast	95	3 765	40 184	17 752	187	31 366	61 963	11 429	2 077	131	10	141
Total	3 552	60 308	625 856	361 147	1 572	534 915	1 052 435	25 663	36 451	1 458	197	1 655
South Africa	43 361	779 370	7 063 649	4 593 497	9 571	6 198 525	12 489 648	296 292	425 023	24 136	1 584	25 720

Source: 2013 SNAP Survey.

Note 1: Data are for ordinary schools only and exclude learners, educators and institutions associated with stand-alone ECD sites and special schools.

Note 2: Owing to a shortage of space in the table, the figures for male learners and male educators are intentionally omitted.

1) Learners not grouped in any of the grades provided.

Figure 1: Education Statistics 2013¹

Figure 2 demonstrates this circumstance too, but adds the view on the learners' gender. This graph shows that even most of the female students attend school during primary education in Western Cape and South Africa.

Table 5: Number of learners in ordinary schools, by province, sector, gender and grade, in 2013 (concluded)

Province	Sector	Gender	PET Band				Other	Total Primary (Gr. 1-7)	Total Secondary (Gr. 8-12)	Total (Gr. 1-12)	Grand Total
			Gr. 10	Gr. 11	Gr. 12	Total					
Western Cape	Independent	Female	1 910	1 732	1 756	5 397	47	11 829	8 613	20 742	23 724
		Total	3 748	3 478	3 471	10 696	107	23 758	17 325	41 134	46 969
	Public	Female	43 821	31 300	26 241	101 362	575	296 476	154 888	481 345	511 191
		Total	79 485	55 689	46 073	181 248	1 405	602 097	343 772	945 869	1 035 466
	Both	Female	45 731	33 032	27 996	106 759	622	308 405	193 682	502 087	534 915
		Male	37 503	20 124	21 546	85 185	950	317 451	167 465	484 916	517 520
Total		83 234	59 156	49 544	191 944	1 572	625 856	361 147	987 003	1 052 435	
South Africa	Independent	Female	20 388	19 757	22 192	62 337	529	136 438	100 296	236 734	261 740
		Male	19 894	17 340	19 556	56 790	919	132 389	90 415	222 801	252 064
	Total	39 372	37 097	40 751	117 430	1 148	278 827	190 711	461 535	513 804	
	Public	Female	571 170	433 731	396 594	1 311 495	2 722	3 289 200	2 261 634	5 501 134	5 936 788
		Male	535 743	383 573	349 851	1 148 167	5 191	3 503 625	2 140 652	5 644 677	6 039 059
	Total		1 106 913	797 304	746 445	2 460 662	7 913	6 792 825	4 402 286	11 195 511	11 975 847
Both	Female	597 358	453 488	328 786	1 373 842	3 561	3 624 638	2 382 230	5 796 868	6 195 525	
	Male	504 727	381 113	289 410	1 204 290	6 020	3 029 211	2 231 267	5 870 478	6 291 123	
Total		1 102 085	834 601	618 196	2 578 132	9 581	6 653 849	4 613 497	11 667 346	12 486 648	

Source: 2013 SNAP Survey.

Note 1: Data are for ordinary schools only and exclude learners at stand-alone ECD sites, special schools.

Note 2: Owing to a shortage of space in the table, the male enrolment figures for ordinary public and independent schools are intentionally omitted in the provincial data, but they are included in the national data.

1) Learners not grouped in any of the grades provided.

Figure 2: Education Statistics 2013-Gender²

Therefore intervening with the Boxgirls projects in primary schools in (Khayelitsha) Western Cape means to reach most of the girls during South African students' whole

¹ Department of Basic Education 2015:19

² Own representation based on Department of Basic Education 2015:10

school education. This fact implies a lot more than only having the chance to get in contact with most of the girls or students attending school. The Department of Education South Africa defines early childhood development as “the processes by which children from birth to nine years of age grow and thrive physically, mentally, emotionally, morally and socially.”³ This reveals that this period of a children’s life is the crucial phase where the foundation for a prospective successful learning during the schooling system is developed.⁴ Consequently appropriate education concepts during this time “prepare children for adulthood, providing them with the necessary opportunities for social, cognitive, spiritual, physical and emotional development.”⁵ In conclusion intervening in existing problems during primary school education refers not only to encourage the kids for the moment but also to prepare them for their fundamental future.

Boxgirls aims to support the learners with difficult school issues. So it is important to have a closer look at South Africa’s school system. One of its biggest challenge is the teaching language. As English is mostly not the learners' first spoken language primary schools’ lessons are often taught in the home language of the school’s district.⁶ This circumstance causes two main problems for the students. First, the mother tongue education lacks, as mathematical terms frequently cannot be translated into these African languages or the expressions are uncommon and unknown by the students. Therefore the kids often have to use the English expressions.⁷ Thus teaching and supporting the children in English from the beginning of schooling helps them to deal with these home language problems as early as possible. Also especially in view of the second challenge South Africa’s pupils who don’t speak English as their first language have to face: From Grade 4 English is one of the two main teaching languages.⁸ Studies reveal that these students often have insufficient English skills. Insufficient proficiency in English often impacts problems in learning and hence great difficulties for the children’s future education in general.⁹ Researches ascertained that students “speaking African languages had very bad English language proficiency as compared to other second language learners. [...] Above all, children need to be encouraged to read in their leisure time, but they also need to be given opportunities to write in English and more so than at present, so that they become familiar in articulating thoughts and knowledge in English.”¹⁰ Summarized it can be stated that tutoring in English and therefore generally intervening already from a younger age on helps South Africa’s (or the Boxgirls’) learners to overcome or even prevent the depicted language problems and to pave the way for a successful school education.

³ Department of Education 2001:unpaged

⁴ Biersteker & Dawes 2008:185

⁵ Atmore, van Niekerk & Ashley-Cooper 2012:122

⁶ Howie 2003:1f.

⁷ NEEDU 2012:35f.

⁸ Lafon 2009:8

⁹ Lafon 2009:12

¹⁰ Howie 2003:13

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