

Fact sheet:

Repression of private education by the Western Cape government

Estimate of the extent of “underground education” in South Africa

1. The 2011 census found 57 000 home learners in South Africa, and more than 5000 in the Western Cape. Their parents and supportive adult relatives represent about 20 000 voters in the Western Cape and nearly a quarter of a million country wide.
2. These voters are mostly from the better educated working and middle classes, and are well-distributed across population groups.
3. Home learners save the national education budget nearly R1 billion per year and the Western Cape government more than R70 million per year.
4. Countrywide, more than 95% of home learners are not registered for home education as provided for by law. In the western Cape the figure exceeds 97%.
5. There are similar numbers of learners attending small, unregistered (i.e. “illegal”) private or “cottage” schools all over the country.

Overregulation – the cause of underground education

6. The South African public school system is grossly overregulated and is generally recognised as one of the most dysfunctional in Africa and the world.
7. The Western Cape leads the country in enforcing the entire system of public school education on private schools and home education, imposing an unconstitutional uniformity.
8. In 2013 the Western Cape issued new regulations for private schools, making it the first province to impose the entire National Curriculum Statement on private schools. It is now proposing to do the same with home education.
9. Contrary to claims by officials, the NCS is not a set of “minimum requirements”, but an all-embracing Matrix of subjects, subject content, education and assessment methods, record-keeping and administration, backed up by a comprehensive electronic database of information on learners. It even specifies to the nearest minute the “teaching time” for each subject.
10. The NCS system functions almost not at all without the buttressing of a huge industry of “educational support services” that clouds around rich public and private schools to provide therapies of every kind and many hours of extra lessons. Almost the sole function of these services is to panel-beat children to conform to the “system”. Poor and middle income families cannot afford this – probably the main reason learners from those schools fail in droves.

Conclusion

11. To escape the straight jacket of unlawful and dysfunctional uniformity that is the NCS, desperate parents are evading the system in exploding numbers, either providing effective education themselves or taking their children to “illegal” cottage schools. Voters countrywide scrutinise the Western Cape to see what lies in wait for them if they vote for a similar government.

For **more information**, see “*Why is education a crime in South Africa*”, at www.pestalozzi.org