

Education sector assesses Covid-19 disruptions

The Department of Basic Education has encouraged all stakeholders in the education sector to support its efforts to ensure that learning is not disrupted or delayed any further during this school year.



Source: August de Richelieu from [Pexels](#)

Director for Research at the department, Dr Stephen Taylor, says the department's observations show that large parts of crucial learning time were lost last year due to Covid-19 related disruptions.

"We have now begun to measure Covid-19 related learning losses in South Africa by comparing how much children learned in 2020 with how much they learned in a normal school year before that. These measures indicate that between 50% and 75% of a normal year's worth of learning was lost during 2020.

"Although we only have this information for certain grades and learning areas, it is likely that learners across grades and subjects would have been similarly affected," Taylor said.

He said further delays in the reopening of schools at the beginning of the year and an extended winter holiday would have a negative effect on society and the education sector.

Early Childhood Development

The department also raised concern about children attending Early Childhood Development (ECD) centres and primary schools.

“The impact on early learning for children attending ECD centres is also likely to have been significant, since attendance rates at ECD centres have dropped considerably since the pandemic. There is now evidence from the NIDS-CRAM [National Income Dynamics Study – Coronavirus Rapid Mobile Survey] ...that more school-aged children are not attending school than usual.

“It is not clear whether this is temporary non-attendance or will become permanent,” the department said.

The department warned that if the schooling system does not recover to pre-pandemic levels, the knock-on effect will be felt in years to come.

“[It is] predicted that grade 12 outcomes may be expected to be lower over time. In the long run, the learning losses in primary school may lead to an increase in dropouts when these children reach grades 10, 11 and 12. This creates an urgent need to recover learning that has been lost,” the department said.

Despite these challenges, the department said the introduction of comprehensive school Covid-19 safety protocols and the vaccination of teachers has now “created the possibility to keep schools open and return to everyday attendance”.

“The second step, which will take some time, will be to introduce measures to catch up what was lost,” the department said.

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