



Stocktaking on Safe School Reopening and School Readiness Assessment

A Perspective/ Example from South Africa: TEACHER UNION SURVEYS OF SCHOOL READINESS TO OPEN

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CONTEXT: 2020 SCHOOL CLOSURES AND RE-OPENING IN SOUTH AFRICA

1. FACTORS AFFECTING SCHOOL CLOSURE/ OPENING

- **National stages of lockdown** relative to Pandemic Risk (regulated)
- **School readiness** and stakeholder consultation/ confidence

2. EXTENT OF SCHOOL CLOSURES IN 2020

- **54% of school time lost in 2020** – great variation by grade
 - Whole country ‘lockdown’ closed all schools from **March 27**, 2020
 - Grade 7 (last grade of Primary) and Grade 12 (last grade in Secondary schools returned on **8 June 2020** (after 2.5 months)
 - Grade R, 6 and 11 returned **6 July 2020** (after 3.5 months)
 - The rest of the grades returned **24 September** (with rotational attendance) – after 6 months - and continued until the (extended) end of the school year in December 2020

3. URGENCY OF KEEPING SCHOOLS OPEN

- Difficulties of ‘learning at home’
- Social and emotional support – including school feeding
- Schools can function as a **barrier to transmission** if properly resourced and effectively managed



ASSESSING SCHOOL READINESS TO 'OPEN' SCHOOLS: THE CONTRIBUTION FROM THE 5 MAIN TEACHER UNIONS

1. PURPOSE OF THE UNION READINESS SURVEYS

- To rapidly access perceptions of **principals of public schools** on readiness to open so that the necessary steps could be taken to support re-opening and strengthen system resilience
- To **provide independent comparative data**, disaggregated **geographically** and repeated over **time**, to assess progress in key areas and identify challenges nationally and by province
- To provide a basis for **collaborative discussion** with the national and provincial education departments so that problems could be solved, schools could open safely, and teaching and learning continue

2. REACH OF TEACHER UNIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA:

- Unions represent $\pm 95\%$ of teachers in public schools

3. A SURVEY PLATFORM WAS USED THAT COULD:

- Be distributed on WhatsApp through union data bases
- Provide links for on-line completion in a specified time-frame

4. FIVE COMPARATIVE SURVEYS WERE COMPLETED IN 2020

- The response rate from schools ranged from 40% to 20%

The Survey Data was used extensively by the Unions in responses to the media to provide evidence of their concerns





HOW DID THE SURVEYS USE THE TERM '*READINESS*'?

1. MATERIAL READINESS

- **Regulations** and SOP received
- Adequate **water** for COVID cleaning
- Water tanks delivered (if needed)
- All Offices cleaned
- All Classrooms **cleaned**
- Enough **cleaning material** (surfaces, several times a day)
- **Sanitation** facilities with **soap and water**
- **Face Masks available**— 2 per person
- Sufficient **hand sanitizers**
- **Line Manager** in touch
- Discussion with **School Governing Body**

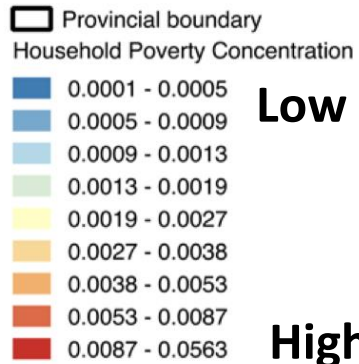
2. INSTITUTIONAL READINESS

- **Physical distancing compliant timetable** (1.5m distance between learners)
- **Sufficient Teachers to deliver curriculum** on this timetable
- **Confidence** to assess temperature
- **Plan in place to screen** all daily
- **Confidence in cleaning classroom** twice a day
- **Confidence: systems to wash hands** entering/ leaving classrooms
- **Confidence: systems to dry and discard paper towels** after washing hands entering/ leaving classrooms
- **Confidence: systems to wash hands entering/ leaving sanitation facilities**
- **Confidence: systems to disinfect surfaces** twice a day
- Completed procedures for at risk educators
- Principal has communicated with parents re School Governing Body decisions

3. TEACHING READINESS

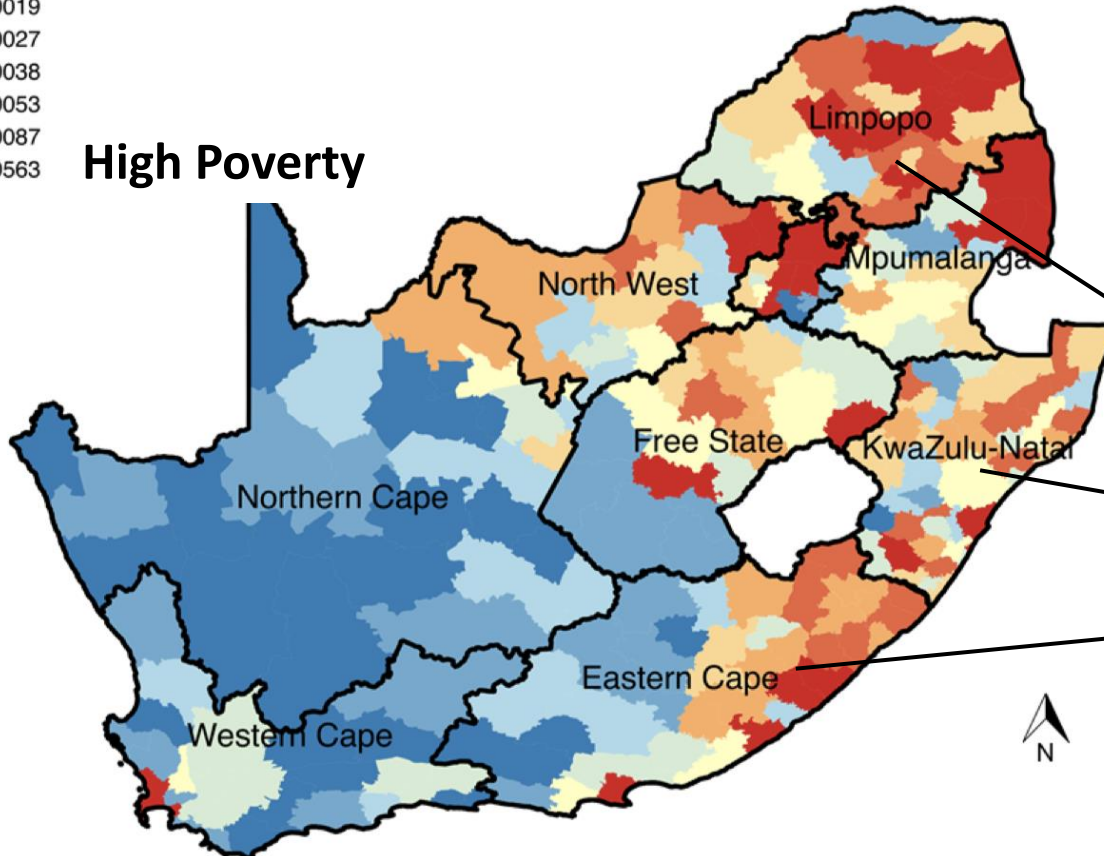
- **Subject /phase teams have met and reviewed the curriculum guidance** received from national/ province
- Subject phase/ teams have planned for what **work learners will need to do at home when not in school** (rotating attendance)

SOUTH AFRICA POVERTY MAP 2011: HOUSEHOLD POVERTY DENSITY AT MUNICIPAL LEVEL



Low Poverty

High Poverty



- Three provinces which have some of the **highest levels of household poverty** have **62% of schools** in the country
- The surveys showed that these provinces 'lagged' in school readiness

PROVINCE	% of schools
Limpopo	16
KwaZulu-Natal	24
Eastern Cape	22
3 provinces:	62%

PROVINCIAL VARIATIONS IN ESTABLISHING **MATERIAL READINESS**

An **example** of the high-level data produced by the Union Survey
(analyzed by 11 components of school readiness by Province)

Such data was shared with the Education Department
and the Media

Readiness below 50%

Readiness between 50 and 80 %

Readiness above 80%

1. **KEY MATERIAL CHALLENGES NATIONALLY**

- Water, sufficient cleaning material, face masks

2. **PROVINCIAL VARIATIONS IN SCHOOL READINESS** (%age schools ready)

- KwaZulu-Natal below 80 on 7 measures, Eastern Cape 10, Limpopo 9



CHALLENGES ENCOUNTERED

1. ...AS A COUNTRY

- **Material inequalities** – across and within provinces especially with long-standing infra-structural challenges (water and sanitation)
- **Differing capability** across provinces to support schools managerially
- Aligning protective measures with **rapidly developing science**
- **Costs** of PPE/protection measure taken from the infrastructure budget
- **Learning loss** – schools serving the poor disproportionately affected
- Increase in ‘drop-out’

2. ...WITH THE UNIONS SURVEY

- Survey **fatigue**

3. ... WITH GOVERNMENT/ UNION COLLABORATION

- Maintaining a commitment to **meaningful collaboration**



KEY LEARNINGS

- **Continuity of education** for children for their overall well-being, health and safety should be at the forefront of all consultation, considerations and decisions.
- **School leaders can solve contextually-relevant problems that administrators have not yet imagined – *trust in, and agency of, school leaders is critical***



THANK YOU
