

EDUCATION SERIES

JUL-AUG 2026<https://equaleducation.org.za>**ABOUT OUR ORGANISATION**

Equal Education (EE) is a youth-led mass democratic movement of learners, post-school youth, parents, teachers and community members who use mobilisation and public action, supported by research, to empower young activists and ensure equality in South African education.

THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN KWAZULU NATAL: MONEY FOR LEARNERS, MONEY FOR EDUCATION



In this month's education series, we reflect on:

- Spotlighting KwaZulu-Natal's education money challenges and its effects on learners
- Education Equal drafted a circular aimed at protecting learners affected by xenophobia
- Law and Policy

Spotlighting KwaZulu-Natal's education money challenges and its effects on learners

On 03 July 2026, we made submissions to the KwaZulu-Natal legislature's Portfolio Committee on Finance. We argued that the KwaZulu-Natal Appropriation Bill must be evaluated against the constitutional obligation to respect, protect, promote, and fulfil every learner's immediately realisable right to a basic education.

Why the submission matters

The provincial budget determines whether learners have access to essential educational resources such as qualified teachers, textbooks, safe sanitation, clean water, school infrastructure, and learner transport. Equal Education's evidence from schools in eNquthu demonstrates that many schools continue to experience severe resource shortages that undermine the quality of education. Learners in KwaZulu-Natal continue to face many education challenges, such as;

- Overcrowded classrooms.
- Broken toilets and unreliable access to water.
- Shortages of textbooks and learning materials.
- Unsafe and reduced and/or lack of scholar transport.
- Deteriorating school infrastructure.

The education funding crisis

One of the gross concerns we raised in our submission is the shortage of staff posts. The KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education does not have enough funds to finance approximately 8 424 posts during the financial year. Although the KwaZulu Natal Treasury has intervened to support the education department in managing its expenditure and identifying savings, these measures have not been sufficient to address the financial shortfall. In some cases, it has made things worse by delaying payments. The continued lack of funding will lead to further cuts in teacher posts and other education services.

Infrastructure budget reductions

We are also concerned about the significant reductions to infrastructure spending. Approximately R761 million has been reprioritised away from school infrastructure programmes over the next two years. This may have a dire effect on learners as they continue learning in overcrowded classrooms, unreliable water supply, continued use of unsafe pit latrines and learning without school libraries.

SpotlightinSchool underfunding and scholar transport Furthermore, the state of learner funding, in terms of per-learner allocation, is quite concerning. KwaZulu-Natal schools are receiving less funding, with a prescribed per-learner allocation of approximately R1,835 in terms of the national funding norms, while in KwaZulu-Natal, the per-learner allocation is only R955 per-learner. This funding is intended to cover day-to-day operational costs and minor maintenance. However, the current allocation is insufficient to meet schools' basic needs.

The submission also highlights concerns regarding learner transport. Although the overall scholar transport budget has increased, the number of buses servicing schools has been reduced. As a result, many learners are expected to walk extremely long distances, sometimes up to 20 kilometres, to reach school. Equal Education warns that this increases absenteeism, exposes learners to safety risks, and, in some cases, prevents children from attending school altogether.

Our submission highlights that education funding is not merely a financial issue but is a constitutional obligation. Furthermore, the continuing underfunding undermines learners' right to basic education by limiting access to qualified teachers, safe infrastructure, adequate learning materials, and reliable learner transport. Accordingly, we are calling on the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education to ensure safe and reliable scholar transport, sufficient funding for teacher posts, fully funding schools in accordance with the national norms and increasing infrastructure investment.

Education Equal drafted a circular aimed at protecting learners affected by xenophobia

In light of the growing vigilantism and xenophobic sentiments across South Africa and endangering the safety of learners, we drafted a circular along with the Department of Basic Education in an attempt to protect affected learners. The circular also encourages all provincial education departments to provide psychosocial support to all affected learners.

CIRCULAR S7 OF 2026

NO TO VIGILANTISM. YES TO SAFE SCHOOLS.



PROHIBITION OF VIGILANTISM AND VIOLENCE IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS AND PROTECTION OF LEARNERS

DATE: 1 JULY 2026

THE DIRECTIVE IS CLEAR

The Department of Basic Education has directed all schools to prohibit acts of violence and vigilantism in and around schools.

-  Violence
-  Intimidation
-  Harassment
-  Xenophobia
-  Afrophobia
-  Discrimination against any learner or school staff member

These acts are unlawful and may result in criminal prosecution.

EVERY CHILD HAS THE RIGHT TO EDUCATION



No learner may be refused admission on the basis of being undocumented, a migrant or a foreign national. The Constitution guarantees every child the right to basic education.

SCHOOLS MUST



Implement School Safety Regulations



Strengthen School Safety Committees



Work with SAPS and report any incidents



Prevent intimidation, vigilantism and discrimination



Promote safe, inclusive and rights-based schools

WHEN INCIDENTS OCCUR

Schools must report incidents through law enforcement agencies and ensure affected learners receive:

- ✓ Psychosocial support
- ✓ Protection
- ✓ Appropriate referral services

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Provinces must prioritise School Community Engagements to combat racism, sexism, hate speech, xenophobia and all forms of intolerance, and build inclusive, cohesive and respectful school communities.



All schools across South Africa are advised to enforce the implementation of School Safety Regulations and the National School Safety Framework.

**SAFE SCHOOLS.
STRONG COMMUNITIES.
QUALITY EDUCATION FOR ALL.**

Law and policy monitoring

Parliament

Portfolio Committee on Education

On 04 August 2026, the Portfolio Committee on Basic Education received an updated status report and recommendations following the Limpopo state-of-schooling oversight visit by the Department of Basic Education and the Provincial Department. Access the meeting report [here](#).

Calls for comments

The Portfolio Committee on Police is calling for public comments on gang-related violence no later than 19 August 2026. The Committee particularly encourages individuals and communities with lived experience of gang violence to participate and share their experiences, concerns, and proposals aimed at improving community safety and strengthening the State's response to gang-related violence. Access the call for comments [here](#).

Court

Child protection vetting case

On 28 July 2026, the Gauteng High Court ordered the Department of Basic Education to vet all school staff against the National Child Protection Register (NCPR). The Teddy Bear Foundation, represented by Section27, raised concerns about thousands of education employees who are not vetted against the NCPR. The failure to vet education employees against the NCPR exposes learners to risks. The settlement agreement, which has been made an order of court, ordered the Department of Basic Education and Provincial Education Departments to strengthen compliance with the NCPR and vet all the current employees by 31 March 2027. Read about the judgment [here](#).

Invisible without a birth certificate case

Cirangashe and Others v Director General of Home Affairs and Another

On 29 July 2026, the Western Cape High Court held that the Department of Home Affairs acted unlawfully by refusing to register the births of children solely because one or both parents lacked valid immigration documents. This is a victory for undocumented parents and affected children, thereby ensuring that they are able to access other socio-economic rights, such as education, without hindrance. Access full judgment [here](#).

