

Causes of Overcrowded Classes in Rural Primary Schools

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ABSTRACT The provision of quality education to all South Africans remains a commitment of South African democratic government since its inception in 1994. One of the milestones to achieve this is to provide adequate classrooms to more than 11 million learners in South African public schools who continue to receive education in overcrowded classrooms. Different societal organisations are calling upon the Department of Basic Education to address the shortage of classrooms in public schools. The provision of education in overcrowded classrooms has a negative impact on the performance of both educators and learners. The overcrowded classrooms, which are a common sight in many rural schools, create an obstacle in progressive activities of classroom teaching learning process. The research aims to investigate causes of overcrowded classes in primary schools in rural areas. Seven primary schools under Mamaila Circuit in the Mopani District were selected to form part of the research. From each school, two educators were sampled purposefully to participate in the research. The research was qualitative in nature and face to face semi-structured individual interviews were administered to participate in order to collect data. The findings of the study reveal that overcrowded classes are caused by lack of infrastructure such as classrooms. Some of the causes of overcrowded classes are having one school serving big community; the Department of Basic Education (DBE) takes long to build classrooms or to repair those that are damaged; the shortages of teaching staff and; principals who are looking to increase the enrolment of their school so that their salaries can be enhanced.