

Management & Leadership

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

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By the time you read this, the school year will be well under way and we hope that it will be a good and successful one, not only for all of our subscribers but also for education in this country. With party politics in a state of flux and government elections scheduled to take place on 22 April, the next few months - on the political front at least - should be more exciting than most. Politicians are a bit like fishermen, particularly when they are vying for our vote and we need to take what they say with a pinch of salt - the magnificent fish they promise may well turn out to be a minnow when it arrives on our plate - so don't get too excited at promises of better deals for teachers or more money for schools. The reality is that we, like the rest of the world, are facing some major economic challenges and it is at times like this that it is worth reflecting on the fact that a teaching post in a public school is one of the most secure jobs in troubled times. Perhaps now is a good time to promote teaching as a profession!

It is not only in government that elections will take place this year. Later in the year, probably in July, the next round of School Governing Body elections is due to take place and schools should begin their search for suitable parents who may be willing to stand as candidates. In doing so, schools need to guard against the possibility of their SGB elections becoming politicised along party lines, given the juxtaposition of the two events - political affiliations have no place in the SGB election process. Rather, what schools need are people who value education, who understand the community that the school serves, and who are committed to ensuring that the school provides the best possible quality of education for the pupils in its care.

In this edition of *SM&L* (the first since the release of the 2008 NSC results), we have devoted considerable space to analysis of, and commentary on, these results. It could be argued that there has been so much in the media about the results that there is nothing more to say. We would disagree, not because we do not think that enough has been written, but because much of what was published was sensationalist, negative and unsubstantiated. We have included some of this commentary in this edition and in the first edition of our electronic supplement, *School Management & Leadership Update*, distributed earlier this year. We have also done some homework on the results and you can read more about our interpretation of what they tell us about the state of education, together with graphical representation of the data we drew on when formulating our view. In the first of a two-part article, "More teachers, better teaching", Managing Editor Alan Clarke makes some suggestions about the things we need to focus on to improve the quality of our public schools.

"Getting the right things done", an article based on interviews with two experienced principals in the United States, provides useful advice on priorities for new principals and those who may be struggling to deal with the many conflicting demands of leading and managing schools in their working day.

Lastly, here are some thoughts about our plans for the year. Many of our subscribers will have received the first issue of our new electronic supplement, *School Management & Leadership Update*. It is sent out by e-mail and unfortunately, because of this, is not

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SM&L

is published 10 times per year by Ednews. It is editorially and financially independent and it not affiliated to any organisation. It seeks to provide the leaders of South African schools with current and relevant information on issues of policy, leadership, management and governance.

Management

Getting the right things done

Advice from two veteran principals on the need to focus on priorities when managing your time.

In an article¹ published in the March 2008 edition of *Principal Leadership*, an official publication of the USA-based, National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), Bob Krajewski garners advice from two experienced principals on how they have learned to use their time more efficiently. Although Fr. Carl Markelz and Harold Maldonado are both principals of inner city schools, their schools are in other ways very different. Fr. Markelz is principal of Mount Carmel High School, an all-male high school of 900 pupils in Chicago; Maldonado, on the other hand, is principal of a school of 3 100 pupils in San Antonio, Texas.

One of the interesting features of what they had to say is that both focused on the importance of making people, and especially pupils, their priority. To them this meant deferring administrative tasks to times outside of the normal school day and dealing with these tasks either in the late afternoon or evening or early in the morning before the start of the school day. During the school day, Maldonado focuses on being visible, visiting classrooms, meeting with subject co-ordinators and on what he calls doing things on purpose. By this he means doing the things that he feels must be done in that week and includes such things as planned class visits to specific teachers or meetings with pupils, staff members or parents about specific matters which may need their input. To remind himself of these things, he carries an index card on which they are listed and sets aside specific times in his diary to deal with them.

“People need to know I care”

Fr. Markelz describes his approach to managing his day slightly differently and has adopted the ‘win – win’ approach defined by Covey in his book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Successful People*². Markelz, however, defines ‘win’ in the school context as “what is important now” and manages his school day on this basis. Essentially this means dealing with the people issues as they arise and leaving paper work and other administrative tasks to quieter times outside of the school day. His approach is perhaps best summarised by his comment: “People need to know I care”.

Each of the two veteran principals was invited to offer three tips to colleagues on how best to use time and support priorities. Below is a summary of the advice that they provided.

Fr Markelz

Put pupils first

Markelz explains it like this:

“When you get to the office in the morning, there will be multiple issues to solve and many different people will seek a bit of your time during the day. I like to live by the principle of putting students first”.

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As Markelz points out, schools exist to serve the specific educational needs of pupils – they are its customers – and giving them the time that they seek at the expense of other matters shows them that the needs are his priority. He also likes to leave his office from time to time to walk through the school to see what is going on. This includes visiting classrooms, avoiding where possible interrupting the lessons and quietly talking to pupils to find out what it is that they are working on. He makes the point that understanding the environment in which pupils must learn provides useful insights into factors that may influence the success of their learning.

Affirm staff members

Hand-written notes thanking people for good work or for extra effort in support of a project help staff to feel that their contribution has been recognised and valued. Markelz believes that this personal approach, together with joint decision-making, is more important in promoting collegiality and commitment than formal performance appraisals.

Take time for yourself

Effective leaders need to live balanced lives and this means scheduling time to do the things which take them away from their work and which they enjoy – hobbies, or

Effective leaders need to live balanced lives and this means scheduling time to do the things which take them away from their work and which they enjoy – hobbies, or exercise or just relaxing at home

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exercise or just relaxing at home. The importance of these breaks from work is that it is during these times that leaders become re-energised, refreshed and ready to face the challenges that the new school day or week will bring.

Maldonado

Behave on purpose

Maldonado uses an analogy of a car to describe what he means by this. In his analogy, the front wheels of the car represent his thoughts and what he is doing and the back wheels the emotional and psychological components of his behaviour. Being purposeful in his analogy means ensuring that the front wheels remain in control by giving direction to the energy and drive provided by the back wheels. This, he says, ensures that his anger and emotional responses are controlled by his intellect, allowing him to defer action until he is calm, has made time to listen to all parties and perhaps to consult a trusted peer.

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Analyse your actions

Reflective questions are a regular part of the vocabulary at Maldonado's school. These include questions such as: What do I want? What am I doing? Is what I am doing helping or hurting getting what I want? If it is not working, what else can I do that will work?

The use of these question means that the work of the school is constantly being evaluated and the answers used to either continue doing the same thing or to make changes in an effort to improve pupil success.

Put people first

Maldonado explains it this way:

"If I have a choice between completing a report during working hours and visiting with people, or between catching up on paperwork and having an open door and being visible and present, then I will do the people-intensive activity hands down".

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He emphasises the importance of making better use of face-to-face time to have deeper discussion about goals because everyone's time is valuable. It is this time that matters and which makes the difference in accomplishing goals. In his words, "If we don't pay attention to building relationships then all is lost". ■

References

¹ Bob Krajewski, Getting to it: Here's what I've learned, Principal Leadership, March 2008. Krajewski is a professor of educational studies at the University of Wisconsin - La Crosse.

² Steven R Covey, The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People (London, Simon & Schuster, 1989)

NASSP: <http://www.principals.org/>

SM&L Comment

What are your thoughts on this advice? We would particularly like to hear from our experienced principals and invite them to share their tips and advice on things that they do to help them manage their leadership and management responsibilities more effectively. Post, fax or e-mail your responses using the address information provided at the bottom of the page. Your contribution is important to us.

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available to those subscribers who do not have an e-mail address or e-mail access. If you have an e-mail address and did not receive a copy, please contact us by e-mail at editor@ednews.co.za to inform us of this and include the e-mail address you would prefer us to use to distribute copies to you. It may be that we do not have your e-mail address on our database or that the address has been incorrectly recorded. We shall also try to fax copies of *SM&L Update* to subscribers who have fax machines but not e-mail addresses as an experiment and shall continue to use this method if it proves to be viable. Some of the material from *SM&L Update* will also be carried in the normal editions of *SM&L* as a courtesy to our subscribers who do not have e-mail access.

SM&L Update is not the only innovation we have planned for 2009 as part of our mission to provide added value for our subscribers. We are also hoping to bring out a number of curriculum-linked supplements, probably under the title "Curriculum Matters". The success of this innovation, however, will depend on the extent to which you, our subscribers, are willing to contribute your expertise or to encourage your staff members who have subject expertise to contribute material. More about this can be found on page 16.

We wish you a very good year. ■

NSC Results Analysis

A summary of the main points of the DoE's *Technical Report on the NSC 2008 National Examination Results* with commentary.

Much has been written about the NSC results, most of it critical and unsubstantiated, or based on superficial evidence gleaned from results published in newspapers and hearsay evidence. Some of these comments are included elsewhere in this edition and were also carried in our electronic supplement, *School Management & Leadership UPDATE*. We have included them in this edition because a significant number of our subscribers do not have ready e-mail access.

We are fortunate to have been provided with a copy of the DoE's *Technical Report on the NSC 2008 National Examination Results* and have used it in the compilation of this article.

Before undertaking any detailed analysis of the results, it is useful to consider the strategies employed by the DoE and particularly the Chief Directorate: National Assessment and Measurement (NEAM) to establish some form of international benchmark for the examinations and to ensure that schools, teachers and pupils were adequately prepared for the first writing of the NSC.

Preparation for the NSC examinations

Besides the in-service training provided for teachers as part of the roll-out of the revised National Curriculum Statements (which in many instances is alleged to have been of questionable quality), the NEAM directorate developed exemplar question papers and distributed them to all secondary schools in the country.

- in 2006 exemplars in all 28 subjects were developed and distributed for Grade 10.
- in 2007 exemplars were similarly developed and distributed for Grade 11
- for the Grade 12 class of 2008, 108 exemplar question papers for the 28 subjects were set and distributed to PEDs on 30 November 2007 to ensure that they were available to teachers on the first day of the 2008 school year. We are aware that in some provinces these exemplars were distributed to schools only much later in the year.
- Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs) for those subjects with a practical component were set for Grade 12 and released to schools in Agriculture Management Practices, Agricultural Technology, Dance Studies, Dramatic Arts, Music, Visual Arts, Computer Applications Technology, Information Technology, Consumer Studies, Hospitality Studies,

Tourism, Civil Technology, Electrical Technology, Engineering, Graphics and Design and Mechanical Technology. Guidelines were sent to schools to assist them in setting their own PAT for Life Orientation.

This level of support was far better than anything provided when the old NATED 550 curriculum was introduced many years ago and schools, teachers and pupils should certainly have had a good understanding of what to expect when candidates sat the NSC examinations. If there is a criticism, it may be that teachers and candidates were too well informed about the nature and content of the paper and that this may be the reason for the surprisingly good results - relative to expectations based on past SC results - in subjects such as Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy.

International Benchmarking

In an effort to ensure that the NSC was comparable in standard to equivalent examinations internationally, the DoE took a strategic decision to benchmark the exemplar question papers with three international assessment bodies that are respected worldwide. The assessment bodies used were the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA), Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) and the Board of Studies New South Wales (BSNSW). Grade 12 exemplar question papers for Mathematical Literacy, Physical Science, Life Sciences, Accounting, Economics, Business Studies, History, Geography and English First Additional Language were sent to these three assessment bodies for their comment. This was done prior to the setting of the Grade 12 examination papers so that the feedback from these bodies could help examiners to establish the appropriate standard when setting these papers. The strengths of the question papers set and administered were identified as follows:

- Most question papers were judged to have been of high quality and of a standard comparable to that of CIE and SQA.
- Some sections of the question papers were considered to be equivalent to the standard of SQA advanced level, which is pre-university entry level.
- The content assessed was, 'in the main', comparable to the CIE, SQA and BSNSW.
- The skills assessed by the curriculum were internationally comparable and 'prepare[d] learners



appropriately for the global community’.

- Most subjects assessed the critical thinking and problem solving skills demanded by the curriculum.

One apparent concern was the extensive content coverage included in some papers, which is said to have resulted in lengthy question papers. The DoE has, in response to this, developed examination guidelines to provide greater clarity on the scope and depth of syllabus content coverage.

Evaluation of question papers

The DoE evaluated all 108 question papers on the following criteria which were used by both the internal and external moderators:

- adherence to assessment policies and guideline documents
- content coverage
- cognitive skills
- language and bias
- predictability
- marking memoranda / guidelines
- technical criteria
- internal moderation
- overall impression.

Of the 108 papers, 40% were approved by Umalusi after the first moderation and a further 35% conditionally approved. The remaining 25% were approved after further moderations.

Appointment of markers

In terms of PAM, a teacher who does not teach Grade 12 is prohibited from marking. The DoE also included a ‘recommendation’ (this is because it is not in a position to impose its decision on the provinces) that only markers whose pupils scored 50% or more in their subject in previous years, be appointed as markers. The purpose of this recommendation was to ensure that only those teachers whose pupils performed well were considered as markers. Unfortunately only 3 provinces, North West, Western Cape and Gauteng acted on this recommendation. This is a cause for concern and we trust that in 2009 and beyond, all teachers appointed as markers will be vetted for subject knowledge and teaching competence.

Training of chief markers and moderators and the standardisation of the marking process

Chief moderators and moderators marked a sample of scripts prior to holding standardisation meetings with their markers. For some subjects all chief markers and moderators met to finalise the marking guidelines while in other subjects standardisation meetings were held in the DoE buildings and were attended by a select number

of chief markers from the provinces. The marking standardisation meetings incorporated the views of teachers and subject specialists canvassed by chief markers prior to the standardisation meetings.

Based on information provided in this report, it would seem that there may be room for improvement in this area in future. Two areas in particular need to be looked at:

- the qualifications and teaching competence of markers
- the manner in which the marking process is standardised because it is at this point that significant inconsistencies may arise, particularly in subjects such as the languages and History, where legitimate answers may include a range of views and where a candidate’s ability to think critically and to build a coherent argument may be more important than content and facts. This is particularly true in instances where the language of the examiner and the language of the candidate may not be the same.

Some of the questions – in line with the cognitive demands of the new curriculum – were open-ended and invited a range of responses but there is anecdotal evidence that these were not accommodated in memoranda which were restrictive. Markers were not crediting valid responses because they were not on the “official” memorandum.

Feedback on teaching and learning

The DoE designed a new instrument called “Internal Moderators’ Report Format” to collect assessment data derived from the marking process. The report notes that most of the subject reports were “well constructed” and commends North West province on the detailed reports on the analysis of candidates’ responses which it plans to publish and circulate to all of its schools. KwaZulu-Natal was also commended on the comprehensive reports produced by its moderators. Internal moderators at marking centres produced a total of 976 internal reports. The DoE plans to make a number of changes in future, based on the information provided in these reports. These include:

- A review of the setting of the papers in Accounting, Physical Science, Agricultural Science, Mathematics, History and Geography which were found to be challenging. Part of the problem appears to relate to language use, which was apparently not sufficiently accessible to the majority of candidates.
- The institution of ‘quality promotion meetings’ which will involve meetings between the national panel, provincial chief markers and subject specialists. The meetings will be used to analyse and



discuss questions and provide advice on how questions can be improved. Subject experts could also identify aspects of the marking process which need to be corrected to ensure validity and reliability in the awarding of marks. It would appear from this that there may have been some problems in this area, which reinforces our view that only markers who have a thorough knowledge of the subject they mark and who have a good track record as successful teachers of the subject at Grade 12 level should be appointed as markers.

Both of the above two recommendations are to be welcomed.

Standardisation of examination results

This has been an area of great concern to the general public and debate about the level of manipulation of the results filled many newspaper columns in the weeks following the release of the NSC results. Needless to say, most people have little understanding of what is involved or why such a process is necessary other than of course “to maintain standards artificially”.

Standardisation of the NSC results took place on 22 December 2008. This was apparently the first time that Umalusi has hosted a single national standardisation meeting for all 29 subjects. There were no provincial standardisation meetings. Umalusi, the Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training, is the body charged with responsibility for ensuring that the examinations of the current year compare in standard and quality with those of previous year. This begs the question of how the standard and quality of the examinations can be improved if the statutory body responsible for quality assurance has a statutory mandate to keep them the same! The national standardisation meeting is attended by representatives of the DoE and PEDs and the Umalusi Council. Higher Education South Africa (HESA), SAQA and teacher unions are also invited to attend the meeting as observers and to lend credibility to any decisions taken. The raw marks were accepted in 30 of the 68 subjects and in the remaining subjects, ‘minor’ adjustments were made either upwards or downwards. The report does not provide any information on which subjects were adjusted.

School-Based Assessment (SBA)

It is clear from the report that the moderation of SBA is a problematic. There are no set guidelines and the moderation process varies quite significantly from province to province. Some provinces use a centralised system, while others use a cluster-type process. In a

number of provinces, there is no system of quality assurance, neither are there systems to ensure that there is consistency in the moderation of standards across districts and at a provincial level. This should be a major area of concern given the fact that past reports have provided evidence of significant discrepancies between the performance of pupils in SBA and their performance in national examinations. In an effort to improve the situation and bring greater consistency to the process the DoE plans to develop a policy that will outline the processes and procedures to be followed in the adjustment of marks. Included in the policy will be control measures aimed at limiting the authority to moderate and adjust marks to designated officials, together with guidelines specifying the parameters within which these adjustments can be made. This is to be welcomed. The following extract from this section (8.1) of the report provides an interesting insight into the DoE’s understanding of the nature of the problem:

“Quality assurance cannot correct poor teaching, learning and assessment. The focus of the quality initiatives of the PEDs seems to be at the district and provincial level and the classroom, where the actual assessment takes place, is neglected”

“Quality assurance cannot correct poor teaching, learning and assessment. The focus of the quality initiatives of the PEDs seems to be at the district and provincial level and the classroom, where the actual assessment takes place, is neglected”. We fully endorse this view and feel that far more could be done in this regard.

Life Orientation

This has been another problem area because assessment is entirely school based. The report notes that “all provinces indicated that evidence of learner performance and teachers’ portfolios were subject to a rigorous moderation process at school, district and provincial level. The DoE established its own moderation team made up of selected subject specialists from the provinces. This team was trained in the moderation process to be followed and the criteria to be utilised in the moderation process. This team conducted on-site moderation of evidence of learner performance in Life Orientation. Its findings were that there was an 80% compliance with the 5 assessment tasks prescribed in Life Orientation.

The DoE plans to establish, during the course of this year, a national moderation team to take responsibility for ensuring standards for Life Orientation are maintained across all PEDs.

The technical report includes four Annexures which provide tables of results and graphical representations of these results. Annexure A provides an analysis of the results at a national and provincial level, Annexure B





provides a similar breakdown at district level, Annexure C provides a more detailed breakdown of results by subject and Annexure D provides data on the results for Mathematics over the past decade under the heading "The Great Mathematics Debate". We shall include more

information about Annexure D and the data it provides in the next edition of *SM&L*.

It is clearly impossible for us to include all the information provided in these annexures in *SM&L* and we trust that some of the information included in these annexures will be distributed to schools by PEDs and Education districts. We have, however, reproduced copies of some of these tables - and the other data included with them - elsewhere in this edition as we believe it is in the interests of our readers to do so. Schools who wish to contact us about specific information that they feel would be useful to them are encouraged to do so and we will do our best to extract the information they need from the technical report, if it is available from the report. ■

A sense of perspective

The DoE and PEDs are often criticised for their inability to deliver a quality product. Implicit in the criticism is suggestion that the private sector could do a better job. Therefore it is interesting to compare data about some of this country's larger corporates with the statistics of the DoE.

ABSA

750 branches, 8 338 teller machines and 40 011 permanent employees

Pick 'n Pay

19 Hypermarkets, 162 supermarkets and 147 family stores (Total: 328)

Spar

800 stores

NSC examinations

533 561 candidates from 6 332 schools which were mostly also the examination centres, wrote a selection of 108 different question papers set by 192 examiners and moderated by 38 internal moderators over a period of one month.

DoE Totals (The figures include both public and independent schools)

25 875 schools, 400 953 teachers, 12 239 363 pupils

Independent Schools

1 124 schools, 22 893 teachers, 366 201 pupils

These figures show that the DoE is responsible for more than 30 times as many schools as ABSA has branches and employs more than 10 times as many people.

Although this is not an excuse for poor quality it does give an indication of just how difficult it might be to turn it around.

References

<http://www.absa.co.za/absacoza/>

<http://www.picknpay.co.za/static/>

<http://www.spar.co.za/Aboutus75.aspx>

Curriculum Matters

During the course of this year, as part of our mission to provide added value for our subscribers, we plan to publish 5 curriculum-based supplements under the title "*Curriculum Matters*". They will be full colour, hard copy, A3/A4 format, and either 4 or 8 A4 pages in extent. The success of this initiative will depend very much on the extent to which you, our subscribers, are willing to contribute your expertise or to encourage your staff members who have subject expertise to contribute material. We have identified the following 5 curriculum areas for the first supplements because we believe there is a need for sharing and support in these areas. We are, however, willing to consider revising this list if there is demand for this. You are encouraged to support this initiative by providing material and/or by contacting us in this regard by e-mail, fax, phone or letter. Our contact details are given at the bottom of the page. The school and author of all material used will be acknowledged and if funds permit we hope to pay a small honorarium to the authors of the material that we publish.

Proposed phases/subjects to be covered in the first five supplements

- Foundation Phase Literacy and Numeracy
- Intermediate Phase Literacy and Numeracy
- Physical Science (FET)
- English Home Language (FET and GET)
- Mathematics (FET and GET)

NSC Results analysis: What the data tells us

On this and the adjoining page are graphical representations of aspects of the 2008 NSC results. The graphs are based on information provided in the DoE's technical report and the representation of the information gleaned from it is presented in this way in order to demonstrate certain features of the results that demonstrate how schools and the schooling system in general are performing.

Chart 1

The first graph provides a good summary of how schools from across the country have performed using the percentage of their candidates who passed the 2008 NSC examinations as a measure of success. The picture presented by these results is perhaps the most disturbing because of the poor performance that it reveals. Schools are divided into 5 categories according to their NSC pass rate. The groupings are:

- those with a passing % between 0 and 19.9%
- those with a passing % of 20 – 39.9%
- those with a passing % of 40 – 59.9%
- those with a passing % of 60 – 79.9%
- those with a passing % of 80 – 100%

What is clearly evident from this graph is that just 28% of the schools that entered candidates achieved a pass rate of 80% or more in the NSC examinations. This really is a shocking indictment of our schools and education system. Any pupil who is promoted through the system and enters Grade 12, after 11 or more years of schooling, should surely have a reasonable expectation of passing

at the end of the year? The fact that this did not happen in 72% of secondary schools suggests the need for a thorough investigation into what is actually happening at these schools in an effort to discover why they are failing children in their care and wasting the taxpayers' money. One simple check would be for district officials to track these schools' pass rates in Grades 8 – 11 to determine the extent to which it correlates with the Grade 12 pass rate. Approving pass rates of 80% or 90% in Grades 8 – 11 make no sense if the Grade 12 pass rate for the school is much less than this. Consistency and predictability should be key elements of the assessment policy of every school because these help establish standards and help pupils to understand what is expected of them in terms of effort. A contributing factor to this poor performance at Grade 12 level could be a perception by the principals and teachers at these failing schools that what comes before Grade 12 does not matter and that an intense effort in Grade 12 can fix 11 years of educational neglect. These results show just how wrong principals with that attitude can be.

Chart 1: Number and % of schools achieving NSC pass rate categories

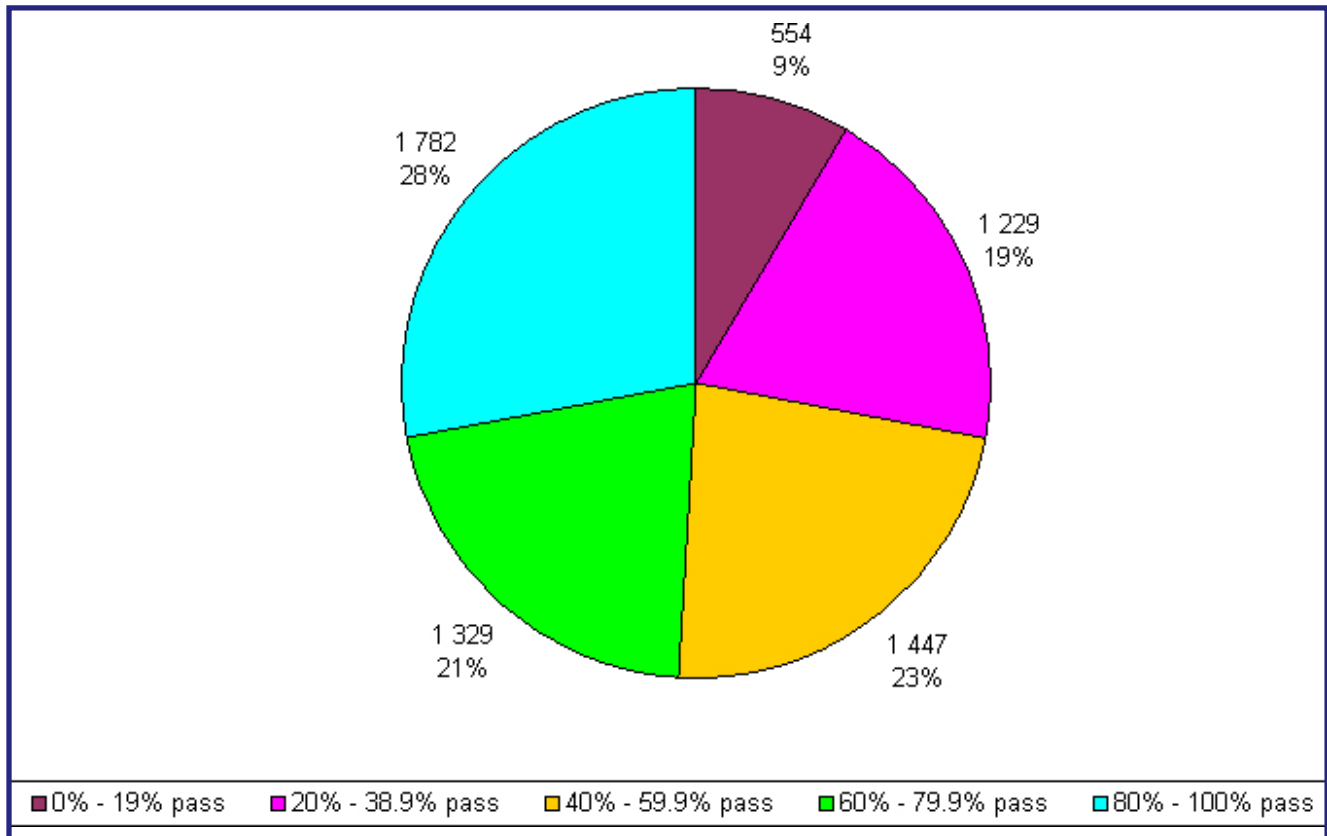
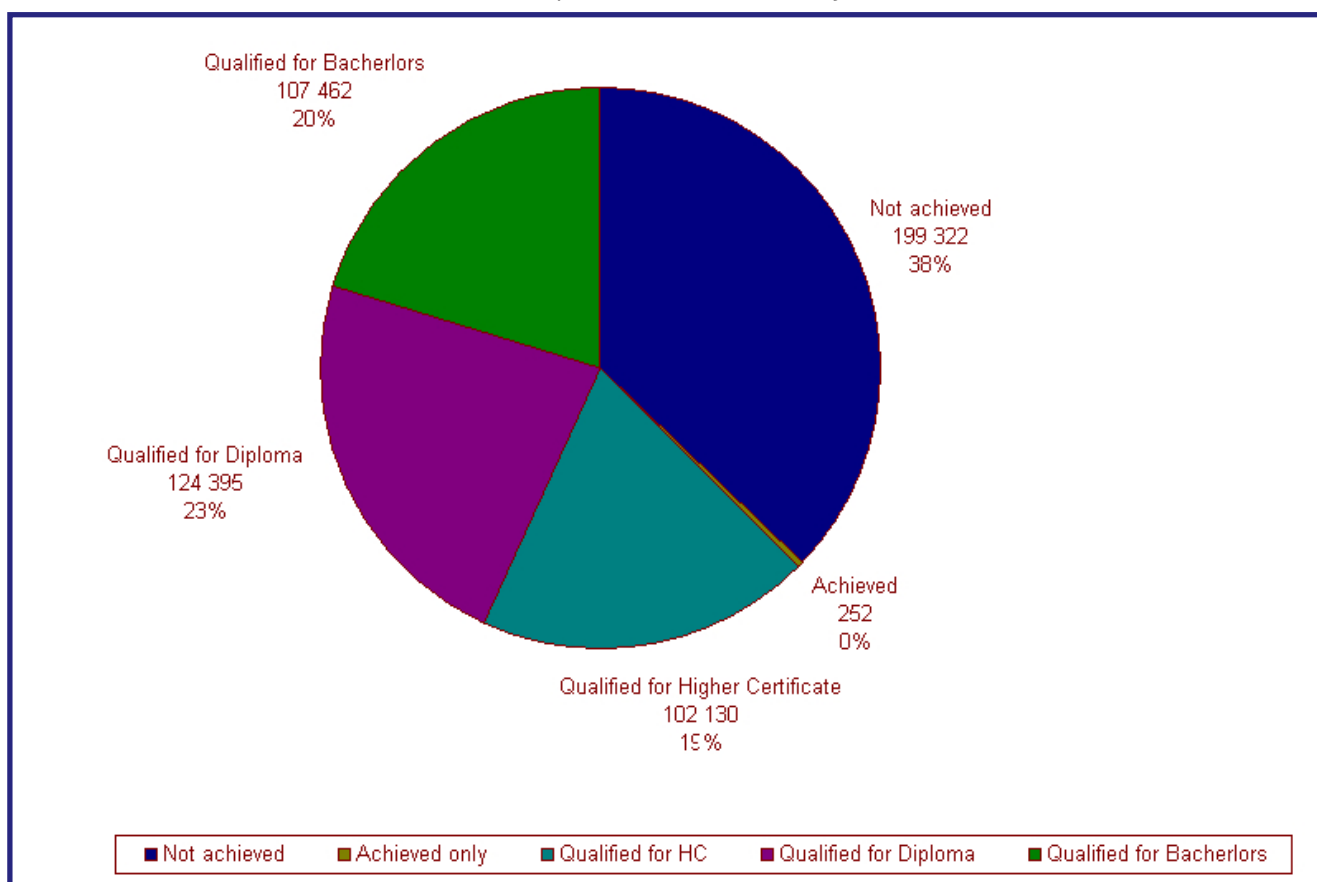


Chart 2

This pie-graph provides a graphic breakdown of the 'quality' of NSC achieved by candidates. Once again, these results illustrate the extent of our under-performance and just how much work needs to be done if we are to achieve the kind of the results that we need to succeed as a nation. Most of the criticism of the NSC results has focused on the number of candidates who have failed. Of greater concern, in terms of providing the kinds of skills that a modern economy needs, are the relatively few candidates who meet the minimum requirements for admission to a basic degree course ('Bachelors'). In economic terms, more value may well be derived from focusing on improving these numbers

rather than on increasing the number of basic passes. A great deal of fuss is made of those schools that achieve a 100% pass rate and this, as a result, has become the ambition of most failing schools. It would be far better to focus on the extent to which schools produce candidates who meet the criteria for admission to a basic bachelor's degree. Certainly, pupils attending a school which regularly delivers a 90% pass rate with 60% of candidates meeting the minimum requirement for admission to a bachelor's degree are getting a better deal than those who attend a school with a 100% pass rate and with 20% of candidates meeting the minimum requirements for admission to a bachelor's degree.

Chart 2: Level of performance achieved by candidates



School Calendar 2010

The DoE has published the school calendar for 2010. It contains some important differences from the 'normal' school calendar which are driven by the need to

accommodate the World Cup which runs from 11 June to 11 July. There is no difference between the calendars of the Coastal and Inland Provinces.

Term	Term Dates	No. of Weeks	No. of Days	No. of Public Holidays	No. School Days
1	(11) 13/01 - 26/03	11	(55) 53	1	(54) 52
2	12/04 - 09/06	9	43	2	41
3	13/07 - 23/09	11	53	1	52
4	4/10 - 10/12	10	50	0	50

Chart 3

This chart shows the same kind of information as the previous one but reflects the information by province.

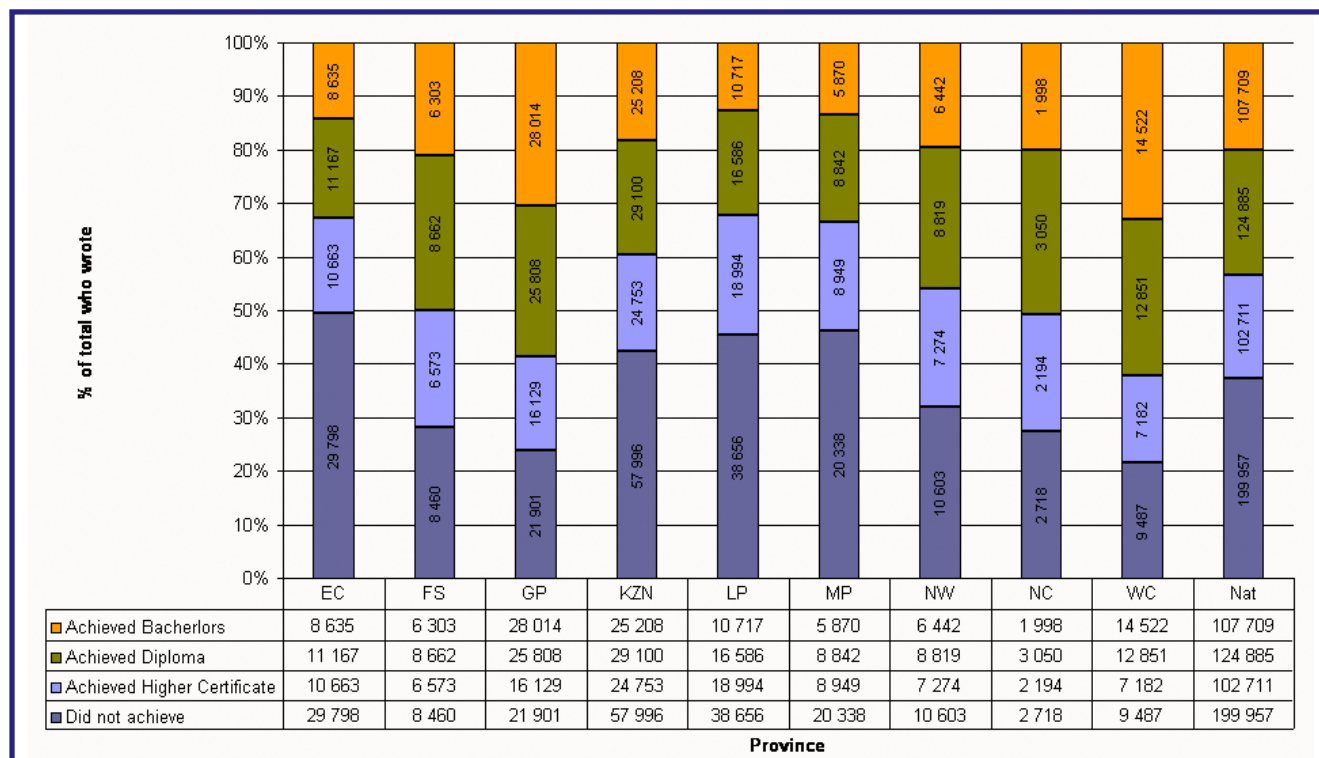


Chart 4

This graph shows the distribution of achievement categories in a number of selected subjects. This graph has been produced because it highlights the extent to which those who were recorded as having passed in a subject had done so at a minimal level (between 30% and 39.9%) and who were therefore likely to struggle if

competence in the subject was a requirement for further study or employment. The graph also allows comparisons across subjects and shows the extent of the difference in the distribution of results of Life Orientation, the languages and to a certain extent Mathematical Literacy from that of the other subjects.

Chart 4: Achievement by category in selected subjects

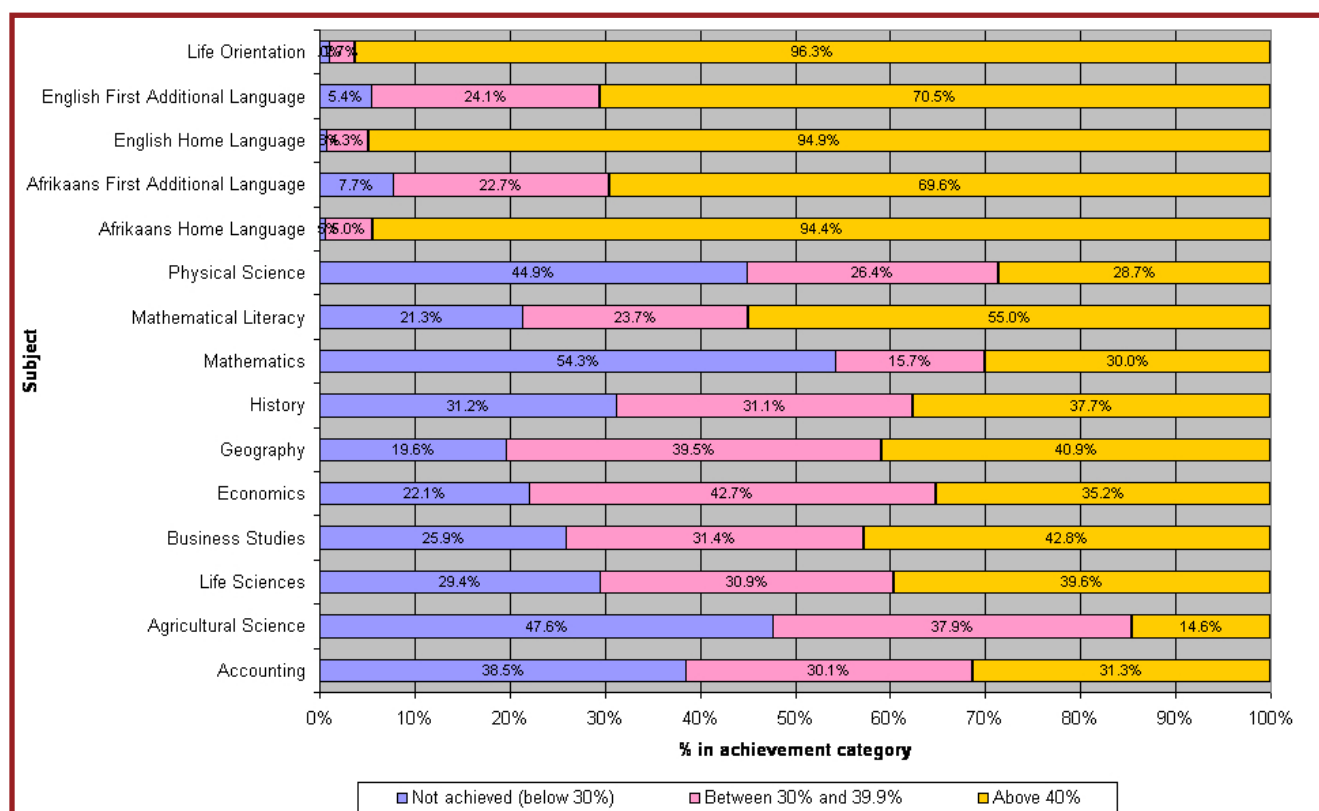
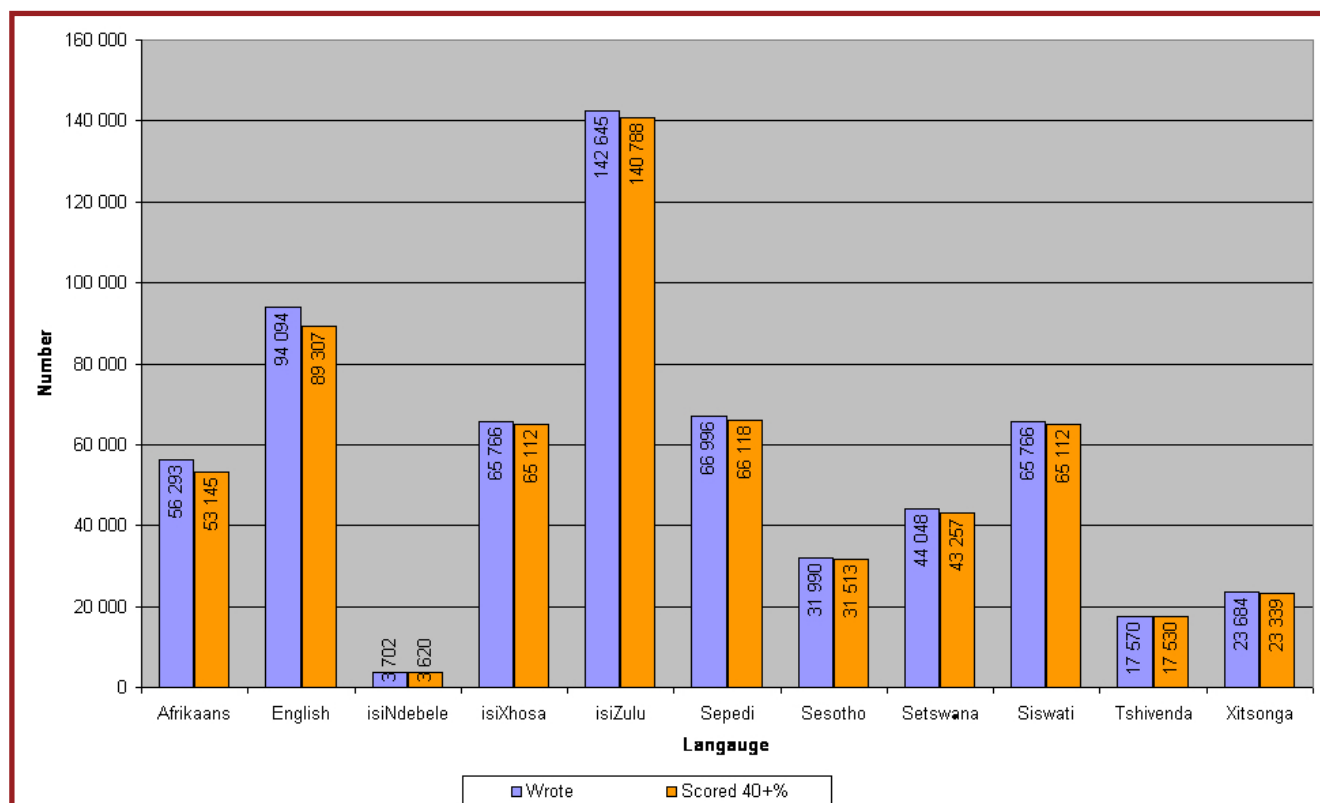


Chart 5

This graph illustrates the Home Language distribution of candidates who wrote the NSC examinations as well as the percentage of candidates who passed each Home Language at a level of 40% and above. It was felt that it would be interesting to provide a similar graph for the First Additional Languages but in this group the difference in candidate numbers between English and the other languages was so great that it was not feasible. Instead,

a table has been provided to illustrate these numbers, showing quite clearly just how unsuccessful schools and communities have been in promoting our indigenous languages. The one exception to this is perhaps Afrikaans. If Afrikaans is excluded, just 2% (11 242) of candidates chose an indigenous language compared to 83.5% (327 335) who chose to study English at First Additional Language level.

Chart 5: Home Language distribution and Home Language achievement rates of candidates



Minister Unimpressed

According to a report published on the Independent Newspapers online website www.iol.co.za under the heading "Matric pass rates 'pathetic'", there were a number of schools where principals and teachers simply did not arrive to issue Senior Certificate candidates with their results on the day on which they were due to be released.

Minister Pandor was clearly not impressed with this and was quoted as saying: "I am very concerned and unhappy about this... A number of provinces failed to provide marks on time. When I called on Tuesday I found district officials on a beach in Cape Town with marks in the boot of their car." She promised that action would be taken against these officials. (we hope she does - Ed.)

2009 National Senior Certificate Examination Timetable

This has now been published and is available on some provincial websites. The official date of commencement of the 2009 NSC examinations is Monday 2 November 2009 with the last examination being written on Thursday 3 December. Some subjects – those with practical components, non-official languages and those with small enrolments - will be written in the week of 26 October to 30 October.

Opinion piece

More teachers, better teaching

This is the first of a two-part series by Managing Editor Alan Clarke in which he argues that the best and most effective remedy for our educational ills lies in a massive increase in the recruitment of teachers and in more and improved training of new and serving teachers

Part 1: More Teachers

Elsewhere in this edition, we feature a number of extracts from the press containing comments made in the wake of the release of the 2008 NSC results. Typically, the comments are mostly negative and highly critical of the performance and functionality of the DoE, schools and teachers. They also offer very few suggestions about what should or should not be done to improve them - other than a kind of 'sack the lot of them' approach. The Minister's statement on the release of the results was, in contrast, rather more muted and although she put a positive spin on the information that she presented, she also acknowledged the extent of the problem. More importantly, we believe, she was also specific about where the problem lies:

"The results that I present today indicate that the difference in performance across schools depends upon what happens in the school and in the classroom. Our focus therefore should be on the classroom and the overall character of the school".

Elsewhere she notes:

"It is clear from the results that many schools and teachers have had difficulty with the curriculum. We must and will provide support for them."

We hope that these comments represent a change of heart by the DoE and a move away from what has been experienced by many teachers (ideologically-driven curriculum reform as the focus of transformation strategy) to a more pragmatic focus on improving the teaching and learning process (what happens in the classroom when the mind of the teacher engages with the mind of the pupils). We would like to suggest that if this had been the major focus of the transformation of our schools since 1994, our public schooling system would have been in far better shape than it is today. We cannot change what is past, however, and the challenge now is to move as fast as we can to do what needs to be done to improve the quality of teaching and learning in public schools. It is not going to be an easy task. History shows that public education systems are notoriously inert and that effort to drive them in a given direction produces much the same effect as is produced when one tries to push a donkey - the harder one pushes, the more it resists!

"The results that I present today indicate that the difference in performance across schools depends upon what happens in the school and in the classroom. Our focus therefore should be on the classroom and the overall character of the school"

The overwhelming majority of business leaders and academics in this country believe that the success and the long-term stability of this country depend on the ability of the public education system to provide South African children with the attitudes, knowledge and skills they need to be thoughtful, informed, contributing citizens. As a minimum, they need to be sufficiently literate and numerate to make sense of the changing world they live in. What everyone needs to be clear about is that "the curriculum" is not some kind of teaching machine that makes learning happen. It simply defines what should be taught and how learning should be assessed to determine the extent to which this curriculum has been mastered successfully.

The single factor that has the biggest impact on the quality of learning is the quality of the teacher involved in this interaction in the classroom - not computers, not the internet, not interactive whiteboards. At best, these can be only tools that enhance delivery. We are talking about real people with real knowledge and a love of the subject that they teach, the professional knowledge and skills to teach the subject and a pride and commitment to helping the children they teach appreciate the value of learning the subject.

We do have teachers like this in the country. There are many thousands of them and there is ample evidence to show that pupils fortunate enough to find themselves in the classrooms and schools where these people teach prosper almost irrespective of their socio-economic circumstances or the location of their school. What we do not have is nearly enough of them. Regrettably, part of the reason for this has been the intransigent attitude of some of the teacher unions and their determination on occasions to place the interests of their members ahead of the needs of this country and its children. But all is not lost and this country has, we believe, the capacity and the resources to turn this around and to produce teachers of the quality and in the numbers that we need, provided there is the political will and managerial capacity to do so. Here are some of our suggestions about what should and could be done.



Recruit more teachers – even more than we think we need.

In a presentation to SACE towards the end of last year, Graham Hall of the Wits School of Education estimated that the country needed to recruit at least 20 000 teachers each year to replace those who are lost to the school system. The country's teacher training institutions, however, produce only about 7 500 qualified teachers each year, leaving a shortfall of 12 500 teachers each year. It is not surprising, therefore, that principals and school governing bodies complain about the difficulties that they face in trying to attract competent, qualified teachers. There appears to be no comprehensive, reliable data on the composition the qualifying teachers in terms of school phase, learning area or subject, although Graham Hall does provide some useful estimates in this regard. More on this in the next issue.

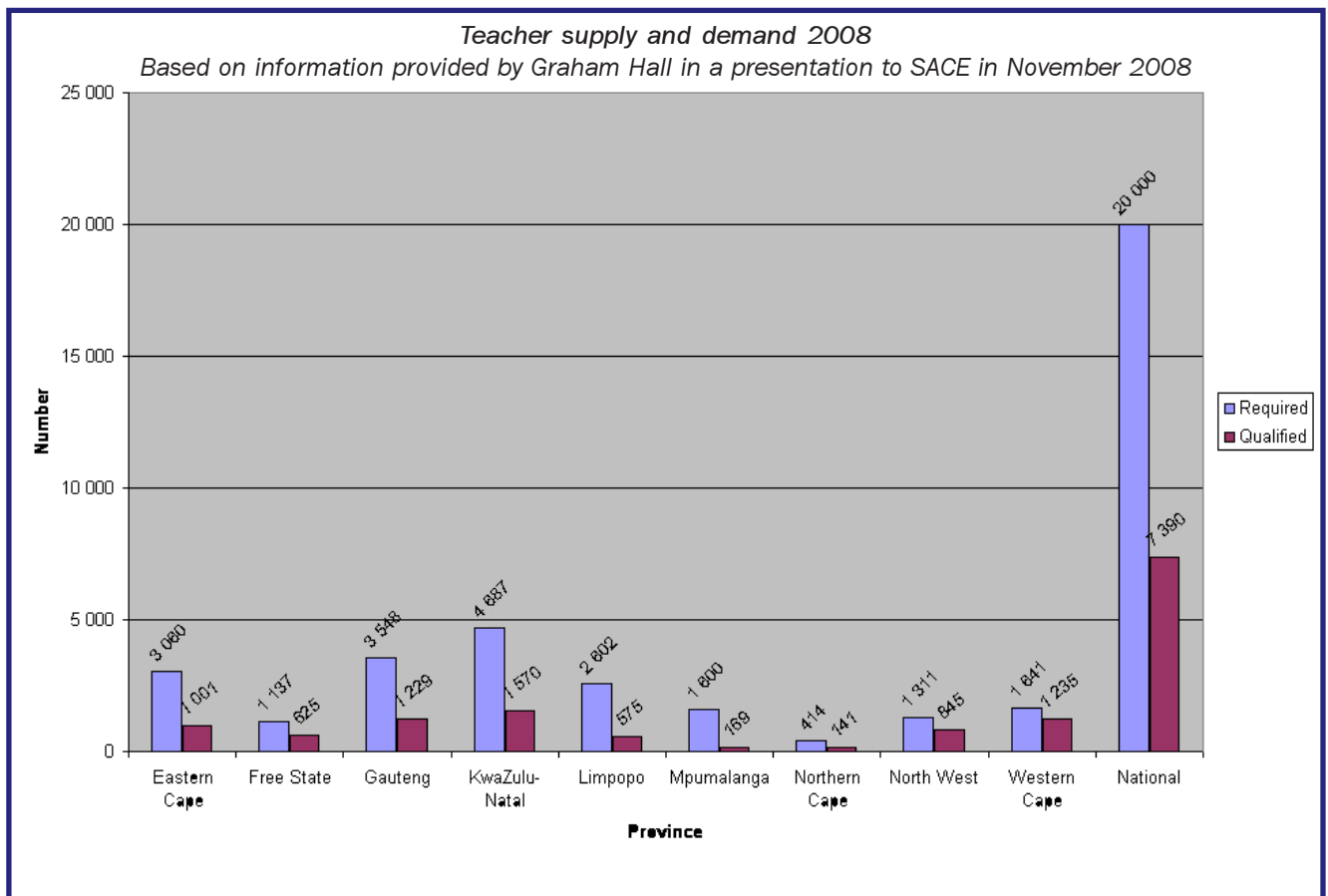
This is a real problem and one that the DoE has finally woken up to after denying it for a number of years. Supported by at least one of the unions, the DOE has consistently told the country that we have an excess of teachers and that there were teachers that could not find jobs! Little was said at the time about the qualifications, quality and teaching areas of these teachers. More about the DoE's plan for teacher education is provided in their publication "The National Policy Framework for Teacher

Education and Development in South Africa", which was published in 2006, interestingly with a subtitle "More teachers; Better teachers" - much the same title chosen for this article.

What is needed is a change of mindset about what constitutes a sufficient number of teachers. We suggest that the DoE should set as its target a recruitment figure which is 20% more than the number that it calculates that it needs. This is not because we are suspicious of the figures that they have provided in projecting their needs but because we believe that having a surplus of teachers in a country is a good thing – it will create competition for jobs and will allow schools to select the best. We also need to believe that in normal economic times (and we recognise that these are not normal economic times) well trained teachers are highly employable and that those who are unable to find jobs in education will be snapped up by business. If that is not the case, we need to look at the quality of training that is being provided.

Recruiting this number of young people into the profession is not going to be easy, given the present perception about the education system in general and the state of schools and the work of teachers. Changing this perception is also not going to be easy and will take time but the DoE at last seems to be making a constructive effort in this regard and there are signs that things are changing for the better.

Continued on page 14



Indications of this change include:

- Active recruiting and the offer of bursaries by the DoE and other agencies

The DoE has, over the past few years, provided significantly increased funding for bursaries for school leavers and undergraduates who wish to train as teachers and has made some efforts to market the profession. More can certainly be done, particularly in the marketing of the profession, and the DoE would do well to look at the work that was done by England's Department for Education and Skills (DfES) in their successful campaign to promote teaching as a profession.

- Improved salaries

There has been a significant increase in the salaries of teachers over the past few years and new salary scales, improved promotion prospects and career options have made teaching a financially more attractive career choice. In this regard, it is to be regretted that not more progress has been made in finalising the non-salary elements of the OSD.

- Active recruitment by principals and SGBs

The principals and SGBs of an increasing number of better-off schools who are faced with the challenges of finding suitable teachers have put processes in place to recruit and train their own. These schools, both public and independent, offer learnerships and financial incentives, mostly funded from school funds, to matriculants and past pupils who wish to pursue teaching as a profession. The students, for their part, must agree to work for the school for the same number of years as the number of years of study that was funded.

- Improving the image of teaching

We were delighted to discover recently that there are some schools that have made a deliberate effort to improve their pupils' perceptions of the work of teachers and to promote teaching as a worthwhile career option.

- Teach South Africa

Teach South Africa is a section 21 company supported by Deloitte, Barloworld and other private sector institutions. It plans to recruit recent graduates into the teaching profession as Mathematics and Science teachers. These "Teaching Ambassadors" as they are called, will spend a minimum of two years in the classroom. This is an exciting initiative and a clear demonstration of just how serious big business is about the need for more and better teachers

While all this is good news for schools struggling to find teachers, it is still not enough. The DoE in particular could do far more: firstly as has been mentioned, by setting its recruitment goal much higher. PEDs, especially at district level in rural areas and in socio-economically

disadvantaged areas, can do more to promote the profession by informing communities of the bursary options available to students and of the benefits that will accrue to communities that are able to recruit a sufficient supply of teachers from their children for their children.

The education faculties at universities and universities of technology could also do far more. It is interesting to compare the active approach of the Business Schools to the recruitment of students for their MBA programmes and special courses to the seeming lack of real interest shown by education faculties and departments. Most seem not to consider teacher-recruitment as part of their job, despite the fact that these faculties have been in decline for most of the past decade in terms of student and staff numbers, as well as in terms of their status within their institutions. The one exception that we are aware of is the School of Education at Wits, where Prof. Mary Metcalf took it upon herself to go on a recruiting drive in an effort to encourage more black students to enrol as teachers. Her efforts involved presentations about the importance of teaching and the need for communities to recruit young people from their own members to train as teachers. She spoke to nearly 40 000 people, mostly church congregations in Soweto, in her campaign and the result has been a significant increase in enrolment for teachers in training at Wits. This is the kind of activism that we need if we are to recruit the numbers and kinds of young people that this country needs.

Schools, particularly high schools, can also do a lot more. Amongst other approaches, high schools can:

- Model teaching as a worthwhile and rewarding career.

Teachers need to make sure that they represent the profession with pride so that their pupils understand the satisfaction that they get from the job. Perhaps serious consideration should be given to making this aspect part of a teacher's professional code. Principals should also include discussion on ways of promoting a positive image of teaching as part of the school's staff professional development programme.

- Identify senior pupils who have the potential to become good teachers

Principals and senior members of staff should make it their business to identify senior pupils who may make good teachers and to encourage them to choose teaching as a career. In doing so, they must make sure that they choose the brightest and the best. Teacher counsellors can also do more and should be required to promote teaching as a career when doing career counselling.

- Provide learnership opportunities at their schools and fund these if funds are available.

Meeting of Council of Education Ministers (CEM)

The CEM ministers, comprising the Minister and Deputy Minister of Education and the provincial MECs for Education, held a special meeting on 12 January 2009. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss the technical report of the 2008 NSC results and other matters relating to the 2008 examinations and 2009 supplementary examinations, as well as proposed interventions to support the implementation of the NCS in Grades 10 – 12.

The following information is based material provided in the press statement released after the meeting:

NSC results not released on 30 December

The failure of the department to release, on 30 December 2008, the results of 56 351 of the 533 561 candidates who registered for the examination attracted a great deal of negative publicity. The department has now determined that 33 448 of these candidates did not write the examinations. The results of those involved in irregularities including 'cheating' have been withheld but all other results have now been released. The press release did not provide information of the number of candidates being investigated for irregularities. In a separate media statement, however, the department listed the following as some of the reasons why results were not released:

- Irregularities
- Outstanding marksheets
- Incomplete capturing
- Cass marks not included
- Outstanding PAT marks

An independent investigation into the late release of results has been instituted by the Minister.

Mathematics

Although the Minister indicated her pleasure at the Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy results, which had exceeded the targets set for Mathematics by nearly 25% and surpassed expectations for Mathematical Literacy, she noted the comments about standards, raised by some critics. As a result, the Minister has requested an expert review panel to consider and report on these concerns.

Dinaledi schools

The majority of Dinaledi schools achieved improved results. In one school, Ivory Park High, an additional 60 hours of Mathematics teaching provided by Alison Kitto, the former head of Pretoria High School for Girls and an experienced Mathematics teacher, had resulted in a significant improvement in the marks of all 50 pupils

taking Mathematics. Ms Kitto had been asked by the DoE to assist the school in this way. To quote the media statement: "This confirms the importance and value of good teachers in our classrooms." (We just wish the Department would do something to ensure that there were enough of them – Ed)

Teacher audit

The Department plans to conduct an audit of teacher skills and qualifications in order to establish the extent to which individual teachers have the knowledge and skills they need to teach at different levels in the system. It will also look at the extent to which they have been exposed to training and development opportunities provided by the Department. The primary focus of this study will be on subjects with a poor overall level of performance. These include Physical Sciences and Agricultural Sciences.

Link between poverty and performance

The initial analysis of the 2008 results demonstrates a clear relationship between poverty and performance in the 2008 NSC examinations, using overall pass rates as a measure of performance.

School Quintile	Pass % (% of pupils who 'passed' the NSC)	No of schools with a pass rate of less than 60%
1	50	1 029
2	53	590
3	59	752
4	67	290
5	84	168

These results raise some interesting questions, particularly in relation to underperforming schools in quintiles 4 and 5. ■

The news material included on this page was initially published in our new electronic supplement *School Management & Leadership Update*. It is included here because a significant number of our subscribers do not have ready e-mail access and are therefore not in a position to receive *SM&L Update*. If you have not received your first edition of *SM&L Update* and have an existing e-mail address please contact us at editor@ednews.co.za and we will forward the first edition to you and ensure that you are included in our e-mail database and that future edition of *SM&L Update* reach you.

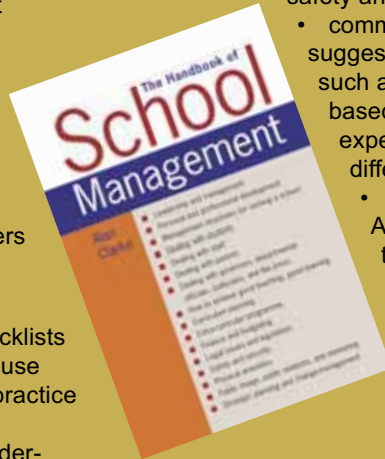
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Kate McCallum

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Here the better-resourced and more successful schools have a special responsibility and need to take greater ownership of the problem. Teachers in training need to be provided with the experience of working in efficient, well-run schools so that they understand what it is like to work in a good school. Equally, they need to have the opportunity to work with dynamic, skilled and experienced teachers so that they can see how these professionals manage the learning process and the effort that goes into preparing lessons and assessing the work of individual pupils. Schools, like communities, need to work at providing sufficient teachers to meet their own needs because if they don't, who will? SM&L is aware that one of the national SGB organisations – the Governing Body Foundation – is currently investigating the possibility of co-ordinating such an approach in its member schools and finding funding for it.

Business must also contribute – and not only in the form of funding. Adopting schools is one option which is already part of the corporate responsibility strategy of a number of big businesses. Generally, these firms do this either as a way of supporting the education of the children of their employees or in the hope of recruiting future employees from the pupils of the school which they support. Businesses could extend this approach by sponsoring learnerships or the cost of training for pupils from the school who are keen on teaching as a career. ■

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