

Management & Leadership

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

In this Issue

Management: Dealing with officious officials 2
Some advice and a letter from the minister to help you cope with officials who try and bully your staff.

CHOPS Conference 4
We report on the Conference of Heads of Primary and Secondary (Independent) Schools held in Kasane, Botswana.

Howard Gardner and Multiple Intelligences ... 6
How Gardner's theory of Multiple Intelligences helps us understand the way we learn.

SAPA News 7
News about SAPA-KZN's provincial conference.

The labour market of the future 8
Consulting editor Clive Roos looks at the things schools should take into account if they are to prepare pupils for successful participation in the future labour market

Why SA pupils perform poorly in Mathematics . 10
What recent research published by the HSRC tells us about the way we teach Mathematics.

Leadership Lessons from Madiba 14
What leadership lessons can we learn from Madiba who turned 90 recently?

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.

A Bumper Edition

This is another bumper 16-page issue which we hope you will find informative and useful. I have been doing a fair amount of travelling over the past month, most of it related to my work with *SM&L*. This has included a visit to KZN to attend the provincial conference of SAPA-KZN and a visit to Botswana to attend the Conference of Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools (CHOPS), which represents a group of independent schools in that country. What I enjoy most about being able to participate in events such as these, is the opportunity it provides me to meet with principals of schools and to discuss with them the challenges that they face and how they deal with these challenges. What continues to fascinate me - and I have been fortunate to have attended many principals' conferences over the years, both in South Africa and across the world - is the similarity of the problems that heads face, irrespective of where their schools are situated. That is not to say that every school is not unique, but the fundamentals are the same: the quality of teaching and learning and the obstacles that challenge the quality of this process. For some it is poverty while for others in may be problems associated with the excesses that wealth and indulgence may bring; but mostly it is about people, the children and their parents, teachers, governors, departmental officials, members of the community and strangers. Schools are people-intensive places: that is what makes them such wonderful, exciting and challenging places to work in. It is in this area the principals must have (and nearly always do have) special skills and it is these skills and their commitment to the needs of the community that make their company so rich and entertaining. They know how to work and (as the photographs of the SAPA-KZN Conference show), they also know how to celebrate and to play.

Also included in this issue are advice and material which principals can use to deal with difficult DoE officials and Curriculum Advisors, including a letter from Minister Pandor, which I hope will prove useful. Other items include a summary of an article published in "Time" on Leadership Lessons from Madiba, in honour of his 90th birthday; some ideas about the teaching of Mathematics based on a pilot study on the teaching of Grade 6 Mathematics at 43 schools in Gauteng, by a research team from the HSRC, and some material on learning styles which was stimulated by a presentation by Brendan Brady, principal of Chelsea Preparatory in KZN at the CHOPS Conference. Clive Roos, our consulting editor, was prevailed on to produce the first of a two-part article on "The labour market of the future", based on a presentation that he has made about this important topic.



Party principals. Edie Jacobs, President of SAPA with some of the delegates at the SAPA-KZN Conference

Enjoy.

Management

Dealing with officious officials

Don't let subject advisors and other departmental officials from the DoE or provincial education departments bully you or your staff. Even the minister is on your side!

Our editorial and the article *More hedgehog, less fox* in the last edition of *SM&L* seems to have struck a chord with some of our readers. (See Tony Reeler's letter elsewhere on this page.) The good news for principals is that Education Minister Naledi Pandor supports you - and makes this quite clear in a letter to the Letters Editor of *Beeld*. She has also written on the DoE website that "the academic performance of learners and the professional management of a school" are the responsibility of the principal and that "no official should interfere with these roles and responsibilities". She goes on to say "district and regional officials must understand that their mandate is to support schools to enhance their success". The full letter is published elsewhere on this page and we would encourage principals to show it to officials who act beyond their mandate.

This does not mean that principals and teachers can ignore policy. On the contrary, teachers and principals need to ensure not only that they have a thorough understanding of all policy requirements but that these policies are correctly applied in their schools. With a good knowledge of policy requirements, a principal or teacher is in a far better position to deal with fractious officials who attempt to impose additional demands on teachers and schools out of personal preference, misguided zeal or bureaucratic incompetence. If as a principal, you suspect that an official is pushing to impose his or her own conditions or those set by the local district office on you or your school, ask for a copy of the policy document where the requirements are set out as policy. Only the head of a provincial education department (PED) and the Minister have the right to determine policy. Any policy document, whether a circular or other departmental publication, must therefore carry their signature. If an official cannot provide such a document in support of his demands, then you have every right as principal to tell him to take a jump - in the nicest way of course!

SM&L is certainly not advocating that principals adopt a confrontatory approach when dealing with officials or that they should be dismissive of them. They are there to serve a purpose and many can and do provide excellent and constructive support to schools. However, those who are misguided or ignorant of their role need to put in their

place, firmly if needs be, particularly in instances where they have attempted to brow-beat or threaten inexperienced members of staff.

To protect themselves and their staffs, principals need to make sure that the school's own policies are in place and that they meet the prescriptions of national and

provincial policy. One suggested approach is to put copies of these together and to send them with a covering letter to the head of education with a request for their formal approval. Include in the letter a statement to the effect that the school will assume that

approval of the policies has been formally granted if there is no response from the department within 30 days of their submission. This puts the ball firmly in the department's court and will provide the school ultimately with a set of policy documents that have formal approval, either in reality or by default. At worst, if there is a response from the PED identifying short-comings in the school's policy, these can be amended and re-submitted.

Once approval has been granted (whether in fact or by default), teachers can be informed of this

and if necessary provided with a letter to this effect by the principal. An example of a letter of this kind is given below.

To whom it may concern

This school's assessment policies have been formally approved by the Head of Education in a letter dated xx/xx/xxxx.

While our teachers are always ready to accept constructive criticism and advice about appropriate approaches to the teaching and assessment of their phase/learning area/subject, they will be expected to apply these within the framework of this school's policies and procedures.

Please contact the principal directly if you have any queries or concerns about the contents of this letter.

Yours faithfully

Principal

One hopes that the time will come when the vast majority of interactions between principals, their teachers and the office-based officials will be constructive and cordial, when phones will be answered, letters responded to promptly and documents properly secured, tracked and filed. Everyone has a responsibility in this regard: proper management training can certainly make a difference but equally important will be an attitude which makes good service a matter of pride.

Minister Pandor's letter to Beeld

District officials must support principals

Letters Editor, Beeld

23 June 2008

Dear Sir

I read the recent report ("Headaches and brain-racking", 17 June 2008) on school principals and the challenges they sometimes face with great dismay. Having spoken to many school principals, who receive excellent support from regional-office officials, I suspect your focus was probably on the 'bad' rather than the good.

I wish to repeat my policy perspective here. Principals, teachers and district officials are critical to our pursuit of better education. In schools where these three stakeholder groups work collaboratively, there is success. In schools that face undue interference or where principals refuse to observe policy and regulations, we always have problems.

In 2006 we made changes to the Schools Act. One of the most important changes was to define the roles and responsibilities of a principal in regard to the academic performance of learners and the professional management of a school. No official in education should interfere with these roles and responsibilities. District and regional officials must understand that their mandate is to support schools to enhance their success.

Our principals must have the space to do their work, and be respected as education leaders.

Principals must support teachers to play their full role in achieving better learning outcomes.

Education officials must work with schools as partners and not as overlords. No education official should intimidate, bully or interfere with schools' normal activities. All interaction must be professional.

I have directed our Director-General to draw the Beeld article to the attention of provincial heads of education so that we all act to curb excesses and to support school principals to do their jobs.

Yours sincerely

GNM Pandor, MP

Minister of Education

One readers view

10 June by e-mail

Dear Alan

At last there is someone who is listening to a gripe we have had for the past two years and publishing these concerns! The term "Curriculum Advisors" is a misnomer for the duties and functions these people perform. There is precious little advice and support that is given, save in a few areas such as Mathematics. Most of the "advice" given is one-way, autocratic and confrontational which stems largely from insecurities on their part. They do not have the answers to the questions teachers ask and are not empowered to make decisions. Most have simply done their own thing. Specific examples of this are as follows:

- They cannot answer questions about curriculum matters with any authority
- They provide spreadsheets for the recording of marks that then change halfway through the year requiring teachers to re-enter marks
- They contradict the National Director for Curriculum Development, Penny Vinjevod, who told me we should do what we believe is best for our school. When we did this, our teachers were publicly and privately castigated for their efforts and told to get in line with their (the CAs) own requirements
- Our teachers feel threatened at meetings and are tired of being lectured to
- There are unreasonable demands made by language CAs wrt marking and tasks
- They schedule meetings during school hours for all Grades
- They hand out material at these meetings that should be delivered to schools
- They expect teachers to perform the moderation role – in my mind totally unacceptable.

CHOPS Conference

Editor Alan Clarke attended and was a key-note speaker the 2008 annual Conference of Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools (CHOPS) held at the Kasane Marina Lodge in Kasane, Botswana from 17 to 21 June.

SM&L has a very small subscriber base in Botswana. Editor Alan Clarke was therefore rather surprised but delighted to receive an invitation to speak at and participate in the 2008 annual Conference of Heads of Primary and Secondary Schools (CHOPS) in Botswana from 17 to 21 June at the Kasane Marina Lodge, on the banks of the Chobe River. Other speakers included 567 Cape Talk presenter John Maytham; Michael Francis - an Australian with wide experience in international schools across the world; and Brendan Brady, head of Clifton Primary School (Nottingham Road, KZN) and who represented the Independent Schools Association of South Africa (ISASA) at the Conference.

CHOPS is a body representing a group of about 25 independent schools in Botswana and is the approximate equivalent of ISASA in South Africa. Because of the small number of schools represented, it does not yet have a permanent administrative secretariat in the same way that ISASA does. Administrative matters are therefore dealt with at planning meetings set aside for this purpose at the annual conference and at the AGM. The current chairman of CHOPS is Phil Hess, principal of Kgaswe School, which is situated at Kgaswe, a mine village on the outskirts of Palapye.

Botswana has a population of just fewer than 2 million people and its education sector is therefore tiny relative to that of South Africa. It is regarded as one of Africa's model states as a result of its commitment to sound democratic values, its political stability and its economic policies.

Kasane is wonderful venue for a conference of this kind, particularly for those interested in the indigenous flora and fauna of Southern Africa. It abuts the Chobe National Park with its vast herds of elephant and buffalo and wonderful variety of game and bird species. The Chobe River, which forms the northern border of the town, offers excellent opportunities for game viewing, birding and fishing (tiger fish and bream) and the hazards of the small but appealing 9-hole golf course on the edge of town include warthog, the occasional hippopotamus and crocodiles in the larger water hazards! The Victoria Falls are a short 2-hour drive from the town.

The relatively small number of conference delegates made it possible for delegates and presenters to engage far more actively with one another than is the norm at conferences of this kind. There was, as a result, good interaction and some vigorous, thought-provoking and productive debate in most sessions.

That should be the role of the CA themselves.

We have taken the following steps:

- We will NOT attend meetings that take a teacher away from class time.
- We will NOT attend cluster meetings for Grades 8, 10 and 11 as we believe this information could be disseminated via email and is a waste of our teachers' time. We only attend Grade 9 and 12 meetings.
- We have complied with the spreadsheet requirements if only to save time at the end of the year.

I am deeply concerned with this level of support at schools for what is, we believe, an exciting and innovative curriculum. There is precious little scope for teacher individuality and initiative these days as check-lists are called for time and time again. While I can protect my staff as much as possible, they are the ones getting harangued at meetings and are, for the sake of peace and their own sanity, simply complying with the demands on their time. I feel the level of professionalism of CAs in general to be very poor and they are defensive when questioned.

Have a good day and thanks for an excellent publication

Regards

Tony Reeler

Tony is a high school principal in Cape Town (Ed)

Thank you for your positive comments about *SM&L* and for your forthright letter. I hope that our article and Minister Pandor's letter will help you to persuade your Curriculum Advisors that a more supportive and co-operative approach is what is needed. Give your teachers a copy of this edition of *SM&L* to take with them to their next meeting and they can wave it under the noses of the CAs if they get too bolshie.

For your contribution you win a copy of the OUP publication, *Education Management and Leadership: A South African perspective*, should reach you shortly. The book was donated by Oxford University Press (Southern Africa) and was reviewed in Vol. 2 No. 3 of *SM&L*.

In his session “Who is the gorilla in the classroom?” John Maytham challenged delegates to look at the way in which they did or did not use the teaching and learning opportunities that modern technology and the internet can provide. He also provided some interesting examples of how internet-based communication forums such as Facebook can be used to promote and encourage teachers, pupils and parents to communicate more openly about emotionally-charged issues that many may not be prepared to discuss face to face. This induced some lively debate about the merits of this kind of anonymous discussion and the extent to which it helped or a hindered constructive dialogue about sensitive issues.

John’s second presentation centred on the fascinating places that he has visited while indulging his passion for birding and his interest in primates. These include some of Africa’s remotest regions. It was a captivating presentation was richly illustrated by his excellent photographs of the birds, the people and the places that he has visited. We can recommend him most highly as a thought-provoking and entertaining speaker for parents, staff and pupil groups.

Michael Francis talked about the work that he did at the University of Victoria in Queensland, Australia, as part of their teacher-training programme, prior to his appointment as principal of Westwood International School in Gaborone. Westwood was founded 1988 under the sponsorship of the British and American governments and several local companies in collaboration with the Botswana Ministry of Education. Its educational programme extends from kindergarten to Grade 12. The curriculum is designed to meet the needs of students transferring to or from the US, British or international schools abroad. It has an enrolment of just under 600 pupils and 58 members of staff.

As the titles of his presentations “Developing and explicit common language of Teaching and Learning” and “Using principles of teaching and learning in your school” suggest, the focus was on the teaching and learning process. He particularly looked at how the terms and

definitions we use can be used to drive improvement in classroom practice. The model he used was based on one that has been developed by the state of Victoria in Australia – “Principles of Learning and Teaching P-12” or PoLT and has many similarities with our own IQMS and WSE process. Michael is in the process of implementing the model at Westwood and his presentation included interesting insights into the challenges of introducing programmes of this kind into schools which mirrored problems similar to those that are being experienced in our public schools.

In his presentation “The Magic Classroom”, Brendan Brady talked about the manner in which he has set about a process of completely overhauling the teaching and learning process at Clifton Preparatory on the basis of the latest research findings on Learning Styles. The school has completely restructured and reorganised its classrooms (“learning spaces”) to make them more accommodating of the different learning styles of pupils. All teachers and pupils are tested to identify their preferred learning styles. They are then provided with feedback on how their preferred learning style affects the way in which they learn and are given guidance on strategies they can use to optimise their learning. Teachers are encouraged to adapt their teaching and “to facilitate the learning process” using a range of approaches so as to accommodate the differing learning styles represented within their classes. Parents are also brought into the process and are provided with feedback on the learning styles of their children at one-on-one meetings with the child and the teacher of the child. The result is a better understanding of how each child learns best and the manner in which his or her learning style can best be accommodated in the classroom and home. We hope to bring you more about learning styles and the work that it is being at Clifton Preparatory in future editions of *SM&L*. We would also like to hear from other schools which are adopting this approach or are involved in other innovative approaches to teaching and learning.



Pupils from Gr R at Gaswe School, Gaswe, Botswana rehearse for a concert

Research

Gardner and Multiple Intelligences

For most of the middle part of the last century, "intelligence" in most western world countries was viewed as a single factor which could be measured using tests that provided a single score or "Intelligence Quotient" - or IQ as it was commonly called.

IQ was norm referenced and was used extensively in education to measure and predict the likely academic success of students. School guidance counsellors and teachers would use it to provide advice on subject and career choice and to admonish or praise pupils for their performance in tests and examinations. Pupils with high IQs were expected to do well and those with low IQs were expected to struggle academically and - as so often happens in education - the majority tended to live up (or down!) to the expectations that their teachers and parents had of them.

In 1983, Howard Gardner brought a fresh perspective to the idea of intelligence with his Theory of Multiple Intelligences which he set out in his book "Frames of Mind". His theory was based on his work as professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, his work as a psychologist researching brain injuries, and his long interest and involvement in the arts. Gardner suggested that intelligence is not a single attribute that can be measured and given a number; and pointed out that IQ tests measure primarily verbal, logical-mathematical and some spatial intelligence.

He initially identified 7 kinds of intelligence but suggested there may be more and added an 8th type later. The 7 kinds of intelligence that he identified are:

Linguistic intelligence – as found in authors and poets

Logical-mathematical intelligence – as found in scientists and mathematicians

Musical intelligence – as found in musicians

Spatial intelligence – as found in artists, particularly sculptors, and in architects and pilots

Bodily-kinaesthetic intelligence – as found in sportsmen and dancers

Interpersonal intelligence – as found in teachers, salespeople and politicians

Intrapersonal intelligence – exhibited by people who have a good understanding of themselves and their own strengths and weaknesses.

Gardner's work has had a significant influence on educational thinking and has spawned a whole new educational industry dedicated to measuring the different forms of intelligence of individuals and the learning styles associated with them. Learning style inventories (tests to

measure your learning style) are readily available on the world-wide web and can be taken live with results available almost immediately, together with advice about the ways of learning that will best suit your learning profile and recommendations about areas of study and career choices.

A list of some of these sites is provided in a separate box, as is a list of 8 learning styles and some information about each.

Like most educational innovations, one needs to be cautious about how one interprets and uses the information that tests of these kinds provide. Everyone except perhaps the most severely disabled will exhibit different levels of each of these forms of intelligence and their value in the end lies more in what individuals learn about themselves and their own strengths and weaknesses than the scores they provide.

Reference

Gardner, H. *Intelligence in Seven Steps. New Horizons for Learning* (1991).

<http://www.newhorizons.org>

Learning Styles

As you would expect, a wide-range of information on learning styles is available on the internet. Some sites allow users to download learning style inventories free of charge. It is also possible to use these inventories to determine your own learning style.

Clifton Preparatory (see the report on the CHOPS conference on pages 4 and 5) is using the "Creating Opportunities Group" for the material that they use and as their consultants. You can find out more about them at www.cogsa.co.za. They have developed a model which represents an individual's learning style in the form of a pyramid with 6 layers:

Left/Right information dominance which indicates your preferred style of processing information on a analytic – holistic/global continuum

Sensory modalities or perception which indicates whether your preferred learning style is auditory, visual, tactile, or kinaesthetic

Physical Needs which indicates the extent to which you prefer to be moving or to be stationary, whether you need to be eating or nibbling when learning and the time of day when you learn best – your personal biorhythm

Environmental Conditions - which looks at whether you prefer quiet or some sound (music), low or bright light, cool or warm and formal or informal

Social groupings - which indicates your preference for working alone, with a partner, with peers or in a team, and whether you prefer to work with or without an authority figure

Attitudes - provides an indication of motivating factors (extrinsic or intrinsic), persistence, conformity (conformist or rebellious), responsibility (high or low), the need for structure (being self-directed or needing guidance), and variety (needing routine or preferring change).

Some background information on Learning Styles and the work of Howard Gardner is provided on the following pages. The following websites may also be of interest to readers:

www.learning-styles-online.com

www.newhorizons.org

<http://www.ldpride.net/learning-style-test.html>

<http://www.chaminade.org/INSPIRE/learnstl.htm>

<http://www.engr.ncsu.edu/learningstyles/ilsweb.html>

SAPA-KZN Executive

Thembi Ndlovu (Khanyanjalo Primary School)

Edie Jacobs (Gardenia Primary School)

Clive Nel (Chelsea Preparatory School)

Farouk Bayat (New West Secondary School)

Soobs Soobramoney (Newhaven Secondary School)

Gona Pillay (Southlands Secondary School)

Steve Pillay (Meadowlands Secondary School)



Thembi Ndlovu, Provincial President SAPA-KZN, with a conference participant

The KZN Branch of the South African Principals' Association held their Annual Conference at Chelsea Preparatory School in Durban in May.

Speakers included Dr Teddy Blecher (CEO and founder of CIDA City Campus, a free university for indigent students which has startled experts with its success), Prof. Fikile Mazibuko (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Humanities at UKZN), Prof. MK Angajan from Poona in India, who describes himself as a "Leadership and Management Philosopher" and SM&L editor Alan Clarke, who led two breakaway sessions.

The conference was well supported, with nearly 200 SAPA members from across the region in attendance. Besides the main presentation, there were also two panel discussions: on 'Teacher Supply and Demand' chaired by Prof Samuels (Deputy Dean of Initial Teacher Education at UKZN) and on 'Schools Coping with Changing Youth in the 21st Century', chaired by Ms Govender, a lecturer at UKZN. Both sessions engendered lively debate.

Dr Taddy Blecher's presentation was particularly interesting in that it focused on the importance that he places on Transcendental Meditation (TM), a practice which he regards very highly and which forms an important element of the educational process on the CIDA campus. His fascinating address included the following sobering statistics, which motivated him to give up his lucrative career as a corporate consultant to found CIDA (there is more about CIDA on page 9):

Out of 100 children in South Africa, only 40 make it through to the final year of school. Only 28 of these pass matric.

Only four of these students enter higher education.

And only one student, out of the original 100, graduates.

Prof. Angajan's talk - which ended the conference - was a high-energy, entertaining and thought provoking presentation, the kind that you would expect from a speaker who is invited with the aim of sending delegates on their way with a spring in their step, inspired and refreshed ready to tackle the many challenges that await them at their schools.

Like all good conferences, the KZN Conference offered delegates time to socialise and even to dance to the music of Eddie E, an entertainer provided to jazz up the conference cocktail party. SAPA National president Edie Jacobs and KZN Provincial president Thembi Ndlovu were prominent in this regard.

The Labour Market of the Future

In this first of a two-part article, consulting editor, Clive Roos, consider the things that schools should be taking into account if they are to prepare pupils for successful participation the future labour market

SM&L consulting editor, Clive Roos, was invited recently to address a meeting of educators on the subject of The Labour Market of the Future. Naturally, the brief included a request to consider how schools prepare learners for successful participation in this future labour market. **SM&L** will report on his presentation in two parts in this and the next edition.

Clive Roos pointed out that realistically, of course, what we refer to as a future labour market is already with us and the many concerns and uncertainties that arise about preparation are, in fact, challenges we should have been addressing for some time. Some schools have been doing so – but certainly not enough schools.

On 29 January 2008, the BBC News website carried the following report on preparing young people for future employment from the annual meeting of the World Economic Forum in Davos:

The millionaires and billionaires attending last week's World Economic Forum in Davos are just as concerned about their offspring.

A lunchtime session called "What Job Should My Child Take in a Globalizing Economy?" was completely booked out, filled with mothers and fathers at a loss of what to do. However, those hoping for clear answers were quickly disappointed.

"Don't tell your child to be an engineer or be this or that, because we have no clue where future jobs will be," warned one participant.

"The world is developing so rapidly, whichever job you recommend now will be out-of-date by the time they are out of university," another chimed in. And all agreed that the notion of a lifelong job with the same company was obsolete.

What we so often – perhaps because it is comforting to think that we still have time to prepare for it – refer to as the future is clearly here in many parts of the world. And in a globalised world, South African learners can expect to work anywhere.

Clive Roos highlighted four reasons why our schools may be uncertain about how well they are preparing their learners in 2008. These are:

1. Having to deal with new material in new ways – the uncertainty caused for many schools by curriculum change

2. Having to understand and interpret a changing world
3. The rate of change
4. The relatively unchanging school

Uncertainty caused by curriculum change

The point made here is not about the quality and relevance of the new curriculum, but rather whether or not its implementation engendered confidence in what they were teaching and how they were teaching it on the side of teachers in South African schools. Have teachers been professionally sure of what they are doing?

The following words of various role-players and commentators from 1997 to 2008 illustrate the dilemma that arose for many teachers:

1

PRESS RELEASE BY PROF SME BENGU ON THE OCCASION OF THE LAUNCH OF CURRICULUM 2005

24 MARCH 1997

- Eight areas of learning have been approved for the new curriculum.
- The new curriculum will be phased in as follows: Grade 1 and 7 – 1998; Grade 2 and 8 – 1999; Grade 3 and 9 – 2000; Grade 4 and 10 – 2001; Grade 5 and 11 – 2002; Grade 6 and 12 – 2003. All teachers will be introduced to the outcomes-based approach in 1997.
- During 2004 and 2005 a fundamental review of the new curriculum will be undertaken in order to improve and refine the achievements of our curriculum goals.

2

CURRICULUM 2005 HAS FAILED ITS FIRST TEST

Business Times 23 August 1998

The Curriculum 2005 implementation plan is much like an outdated train timetable or an antiquated atlas - still a source of information but not entirely useful for helping you get from A to B.

3

MINISTER ASMAL

- The Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 appointed in February 2000

- The Revised NCS published in May 2002 after extensive consultation

4

EXTRACT FROM AN OPEN LETTER TO THE NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION

by Jonathan Jansen: Dean of Education, University of Pretoria: May 2004

And tell teachers that they are not idiots, and that the new curriculum should not have sold the message that their accumulated competence and experience from the past were completely flawed and irrelevant.

5

CRONJE: REPORT AT SPECIAL SITTING OF KWAZULU-NATAL PROVINCIAL LEGISLATURE (24/10/2005)

The implementation of the National Curriculum Statement in grades 10-12 from 2006 to 2008 is a logical conclusion of the curriculum transformation process, which the Government began in 1998, with the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in grade 1.

6

MEDIA CONFERENCE BY PENNY VINJEVOLD

31 August 2006

The implementation dates are shown in the table below.

Year	Grades
2004	Grades R – 3
2005	Grades 4 - 6
2006	Grades 7 and 10
2007	Grades 8, 9 and 11
2008	Grade 12

7

CAMERON DUGMORE: WESTERN CAPE EDUCATION MEC

22 April 2008

In October and November 2007, the WCED assessed the literacy and numeracy skills of 71,874 Grade 6 learners from 1,034 schools in the province. Some of the key facts and findings are as follows:

- Literacy score was 35% in 2003; and 44.8% in 2007, an increase of 9.8%.
- Numeracy increased from 15.6% in 2003 to 17.2% in 2005, and then a decline to 14% in 2007.

8

NEW NATIONAL SENIOR CERTIFICATE?

Despite the wealth of preparation this examination remains and unknown quantity.

Do the 8 extracts above constitute grounds or a reason for uncertainty? For many teachers [and parents] the answer is likely to be yes. Did we as teachers contribute to our own uncertainty by not exercising our professional judgement at all times? Is there more truth in Professor Jansen's claim than is recognized?

During a time of curriculum change in Canada, teachers in Saskatchewan were constantly reminded that:

Curriculum renewal is a challenging professional task that involves reflection on the balance it offers between effective, equitable education and manageability.

A combination of the finalization of the roll-out of the NCS, on-going evaluation of the outcomes and the steadily increasing assertion of teachers' professional judgement should lessen the impact of curriculum change as a source of uncertainty.

In the next edition of *SM&L* we will examine the changing world and the rate of change as causes of uncertainty.

CIDA City Campus

CIDA City Campus provides a fully accredited, practical four-year Bachelor of Business Administration qualification that emphasises entrepreneurship, business and technology. From the donations it receives from companies and individuals worldwide, CIDA offers students further funding for housing, transport and food, as most students have literally no money, and tuition fees are not the only cost of obtaining a degree.

The current enrolment is over 1,300 students, all of whom were found through community networks around South Africa. 10% of these students come from sub-Saharan African countries other than the RSA.

CIDA City Campus is situated in the centre of Johannesburg and occupies buildings that were donated by several companies that used to have headquarters there. Students are given a well-rounded education, covering over 35 academic subjects during the four-year academic programme. In addition to the academic programme, students are also offered programmes which assist them with personal development and life skills. Many come from rural areas and have little experience or awareness of city life. The students can specialise in a wide range of chosen fields, including: Entrepreneurship, Information Technology, Finance, Marketing and Human Resource Management.

Continued on page 16

Numeracy

Why SA pupils perform poorly in mathematics

A recently-published article in the *HSRC Review* provides some interesting insights into why South African pupils perform poorly in mathematics when compared to pupils from other African countries.

A recently-published article in the *HSRC Review*¹ provides some interesting insights into why South African pupils perform poorly in mathematics when compared to pupils from other African countries. The article summarises some of the initial findings of research (undertaken by Martin Carnoy, Linda Chisholm and members of their research team at 40 primary schools in Gauteng), presented in the report “Towards understanding student academic performance in South Africa: A pilot study of grade 6 mathematics lessons in Gauteng Province”².

The purpose of this small-scale empirical pilot study was to focus on the role of teachers’ skills and practice in pupils’ learning within the socioeconomic and administrative conditions that prevail within the schools. The main purpose of the pilot study was to test the instruments and assess the viability of the authors’ models.

Questionnaires were used to gather information from pupils, teachers and principals and the pupils were tested at two points in the year to measure the extent to which their performance had improved. The teachers’ grade 6 mathematics classes were videotaped and analysed. Interestingly, although pupils could choose to do the test in English, Afrikaans or an African language, all chose either English or Afrikaans (this despite the fact that, for many, their mother tongue was an African language). The teacher questionnaire included questions about mathematics teaching, focusing specifically on content and pedagogical knowledge questions.

Given the nature of this study – that it was a pilot study and that it was essentially testing the efficacy and viability of its instruments and models – one should be cautious about interpreting its results and giving too much credence to its findings. The findings do however, support to an extent what we would describe as “a professional common sense view” of the reason why the majority of pupils in South Africa under-perform in numeracy. South African pupils perform poorly because they are poorly taught. It’s as simple as that. This is not to say that they teachers are to blame for this sorry state of affairs. It is simply that they have neither the pedagogical knowledge nor the skills necessary to teach mathematics in a way that helps children to gain the deep understanding of the fundamentals they need if they are to master mathematics.

The study looked at the way in which teacher knowledge may influence the “depth” of teaching and, in turn, student learning, the hypothesis being that teacher content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge is related to the depth of their teaching in the classroom. Content knowledge (CK) refers to a teacher’s knowledge of mathematical processes and concepts – the mathematics that they would have learned as part of their initial training. Pedagogical Contents Knowledge (PCK) refers to the ability of the teacher to select and use those processes and techniques, when teaching mathematics, which will best help pupils to develop a deep understanding of the mathematical concepts that are part of the curriculum. It has to do with the way the teacher links what he or she is teaching to other parts of the curriculum and to the kinds of questions that they pose. A teacher’s content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge, when taken together, provide a measure of a teacher’s capacity to teach mathematics at a particular level - in this case, grade 6.

What the research team attempted to unravel was the extent to which this factor – the teacher’s capacity to teach mathematics - and two other factors which they termed Opportunity To Learn (OTL) and Students Socioeconomic Status (SES) affected Student Learning Gains (pupil learning). Opportunity to Learn includes absenteeism (of pupils and teachers), curriculum completion (which is often linked to absenteeism) and class size.

Student Socioeconomic Status was determined using four factors:

- the quintile of socioeconomic level of the district in which the school is located
- the fees charged by the school
- the school average of the student’s reported “highest level of education attained” of the primary parent or guardian
- the school average of the student’s reported “number of books, magazines, and newspapers in the home”

Their tentative findings summarised below bear this out:

- The teacher’s reported level of education matters much less to pupil test scores than the type of education institution the teacher attended

(classified using the categories university; white, Indian, coloured or African urban or homeland college of education)

- The primary school system is characterised by both low average levels of pupil and teacher mathematical knowledge and by considerable inequality in the distribution of mathematical knowledge among those who teach pupils of lower and higher socioeconomic background.
- There is a high correlation between the average socioeconomic level of pupils in the school, the total mathematical content knowledge of teachers and the average pupil's mathematics test score in the school.
- Teachers' pedagogical content knowledge is a critical issue in the low achievement of pupils. This applies particularly to the application of mathematical knowledge for teaching.
- A typical mathematics class is about one-third teacher-led, in which the teacher talks to the class, about 25% of class time is spent by the teacher asking questions, which are answered by individual pupils or in chorus (termed "recitation time"), and about one-third of the time is dedicated to seat work.
- In more affluent schools, more time is spent on whole-class teacher presentation and on seatwork, and less on recitation.
- In the poorer classrooms, students are more likely to be seated with their desks grouped into 4 - 6 students facing each other; but when the students in such grouped situations are doing seatwork, it is almost entirely individual.
- Actual work in groups uses only about 4% of class time.
- Although it was possible to characterise typical lessons, there was a large variation between lessons.
- There was a lack of coherence in a large percentage of lessons.
- Teachers tend not to have a clear goal for the lesson.
- There was a lack of whole-class discussion on activities or worksheets. The discussion that did take place was often just a "chorus of agreement" to a given answer or the completion of "comments-prompted answers" which gave no indication of whether or not pupils actually were able to give the answer themselves.

Although the authors of the study feel that they are not able to draw causal inferences from their results, they do indicate that there is empirical evidence to suggest a link between the quality of teacher training, with better training reflected in "higher teacher-measured content

knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge". They also see a potential link between what they term "opportunity to learn" and pupil learning differences.

Despite the authors' reservation about drawing causal inferences from these results they do support the view that the qualities of the teacher and of the teaching are key determinants of pupil performance. Opportunity to learn (time on task or contact time) is another important determinant of pupil performance. This is not rocket science and we suspect most heads know the importance of these two elements of the teaching and learning process. We also trust that our political leaders and those who have the power and authority to do something about the poor state of our education system share this belief. The question is: Are they are willing to confront the issues of inadequate teacher training and mismanaged schools to ensure that pupils receive the quality of teaching and the lesson time that is their right?

References

¹ *HSRC Review*, Vol. 6 No. 2, June 2008

² Carnoy, M., Chisholm, L., et al, (2008) *Towards Understanding Student Academic Performance in South Africa: A Pilot Study of Grade 6 Mathematics Lessons in South Africa*. Report prepared for the Spencer Foundation. Pretoria: HSRC.

SM&L Comment

Improving mathematics

The research paper, "Towards Understanding Student Academic Performance in South Africa: A Pilot Study of Grade 6 Mathematics Lessons in South Africa"¹, provides some useful insights for principals who may not be mathematically inclined into what constitutes good mathematics teaching. It also identifies some of the shortcomings, in terms of lesson structure and process, in the way the less competent teachers (of those that were video-taped) taught their lessons.

One must assume, in an exercise of this kind, that the teachers involved would be making a real effort to teach well in those lessons that were videotaped and that any inadequacies in the way in which the lesson was taught were a result of their lack of skill or knowledge, rather than a lack of effort. Therefore it should be of concern that the research team identified some basic shortcomings in the way the lessons were taught and structured. These include the following:

- there was a lack of coherence in a large percentage of lessons
- teachers had no clear goals for the lesson

What constitutes good mathematics teaching?

- there was a lack of whole class discussion on activities and worksheets
- answers to questions were simply a “chorus of agreement” and comment-prompted answers.
- pupils were seated in groups but very little group work was taking place. (The blame for this must surely rest with the manner in which OBE and Curriculum 2005 were sold to schools with the huge emphasis on the need for “group work”, particularly in primary schools.)
- mini-lessons took place at the start of the lesson, with no follow-up to consolidate what had been learned
- a lack of substance in lessons – the substance that is needed if pupils are to gain a deeper understanding of the mathematical processes involved and to consolidate what they have learned
- the failure of teachers to pose questions to individual pupils and to the class as a whole (a method which would have forced pupils to think about and articulate the mathematical processes they were dealing with).

These kinds of teacher inadequacies are not easily fixed. Teachers, particularly experienced teachers, may be affronted or become discouraged if their teaching is criticised. It is a problem, however, that needs to be addressed if we are to improve the quality of our mathematics teaching and ultimately of the performance of our pupils.

One approach that can avoid some of these issues is to encourage mathematics teachers to visit one another's classes and to assess lessons critically in terms of some of these components. Another would be to arrange for teachers to visit and observe the lessons of teachers who are known to be highly competent or to arrange for one or more of the lessons of these teachers to be videotaped for later observation and analyses.

Ultimately, the remedy for the situation rests with the DoE but that does not mean that principals and curriculum advisors should sit back and wait for this to be addressed. What is needed is leadership at every level. This country's poor literacy and numeracy levels are a national disgrace, given the level of funding that education enjoys and it is time that everyone in education takes some responsibility for it.

The paper, “Towards Understanding Student Academic Performance in South Africa: A Pilot Study of Grade 6 Mathematics Lessons in South Africa”¹, provides some guidelines on the kind of elements that are necessary in a lesson if pupils are to develop the deeper understanding that they need for mathematical proficiency. Four critical elements of mathematics teaching are identified:

- the level of mathematical proficiency of the lesson
- level of cognitive demand of the lesson
- the mathematical content of the lesson
- the teacher's mathematical knowledge

Their definition of Mathematical Proficiency is based on “Adding it up”, a study of mathematical instruction by the National Research Council of the USA. The term covers five key interrelated components:

- conceptual understanding - comprehension of mathematical concepts, operations and relations
- procedural fluency - skill in carrying out procedures flexibly, accurately, efficiently and appropriately
- strategic competence - ability to formulate, represent and solve mathematical problems
- adaptive reasoning - capacity for logical thought, reflection, explanation and justification
- productive disposition - habitual inclination to see mathematics as sensible, useful and worthwhile, coupled with a belief in diligence and one's own efficacy.

These components in themselves provide a useful framework which teachers of mathematics can use as a basis for discussion of lessons that they have observed or when thinking about their own teaching and the way in which they plan their lessons.

The cognitive demand of lessons, not only mathematics lessons, is another aspect which teachers need to think about. The authors derive a rubric from the work of Steyn² and list four levels of cognitive demand:

- memorisation - the recollection of facts, formulae or definitions
- procedures without connections - performing

problems that have no connection to the underlying concept or meaning

- procedures with connections – the use of procedures with the purpose of developing deeper levels of understanding concepts or ideas
- doing Mathematics – using complex thinking to explore and investigate the nature of the concepts and relationships

Good lessons should involve pupils in all of these processes. What the researchers found, however, was that the less competent teachers devoted most of their time to the first two and little time to the last two. In most instances, the reason for this is likely to be related to the teachers' own lack of understanding of the mathematical concepts and processes that they are trying to teach. The remedy lies in better training - not only in pedagogy but also in basic mathematics.

References

¹ Carnoy, M., Chisholm, L., et al, (2008) Towards Understanding Student Academic Performance in South Africa: A Pilot Study of Grade 6 Mathematics Lessons in South Africa. Report prepared for the Spencer Foundation. Pretoria: HSRC.

² Steyn et al (2000). This reference is not listed in the list of references provided.

Oakhurst is tops

Oakhurst Girls' Primary School was one of 60 Western Cape primary schools presented with awards by the WCED for meritorious achievement in literacy and numeracy. The awards were made according to criteria "based on excellent and progressively consistent performance in Grade 6 tests from 2003 to 2007". Oakhurst scored the highest "Overall Average %" of the 1 034 schools tested in the province.

There will be more about this in the next edition of *SM&L*.



Oakhurst girls performing at the opening ceremony of the 2007 SAPA Conference

DoE News

The following Press Release is published at the request of the DoE

The Minister of Education, Mrs N Pandor, MP has agreed to make an announcement on Friday 11th July 2008 in Pretoria for the second half of the academic year.

STATEMENT

This is an important message for all learners, teachers and parents.

The 14th of July 2008 is the first day of the third school term. There are 140 days left in the school year and only 110 days left to Grade 12 examinations

All learners must attend school every day until the end of November 2008 and all Grade 12 learners until 24th October 2008.

All Grade 12 learners please look out for *Study Mate* where you will find examination exemplars. The Department of Education is publishing two books of examination exemplars, one in the first week of August and one in the third week of September. Make sure you get both books and complete all the examination papers and activities.

All teachers make sure that you get your Foundations for Learning documents and ensure that your learners do homework in addition to their classwork.

Parents, make sure your child reads, writes and calculates every day.

Study Mate and Foundations for Learning are available at your local district office.

Enquiries

Ms P A Vinjevold
Deputy Director General
Further Education and Training
012 3125313/14

This press release makes it clear that all pupils are to remain at school until the end of November 2008.

Friday 28 November is therefore the last school day for pupils in Grades 1 – 11. The last school day for Grade 12 pupils is Friday 24 October.

SM&L hopes that schools will adhere to these rulings and ensure that their pupils receive a full year of teaching, unlike in the past when many schools stopped teaching at the end of the third term and set aside the fourth term purely for revision and examinations. In many instances this simply translated into pupils staying away - supposedly to study- and teachers staying away - ostensibly to set papers and mark.

One trusts that, having made the statement, the powers that be in the DoE and PEDs will ensure that principals and teachers who do not abide by this ruling are firmly dealt with: something that has not happened in the past.

Leadership

Leadership lessons from Madiba



In the July 21 issue of "Time", managing editor Richard Stengel writes about Nelson Mandela at 90 and the 8 leadership lessons that we can learn from his life. Stengel worked with Mandela on his autobiography, "Long Walk to Freedom", for almost 2 years. The leadership lessons which Stengel has put together, and which he calls "Madiba's rules", are based on his many conversations with Mandela and from observing him "up close and from afar". These are the lessons he lists.

1 Courage is not the absence of fear – it is inspiring others to move beyond it.

Stengel quotes a number of instances in which Mandela was able to hide his own fear or anxiety and in so doing to calm and strengthen the resolve of his followers or those who were with him. These included the Rivonia trial, his time on Robben Island and an instance when Stengel was with him on a flight in a light aircraft in 1994, when one of the two engines failed. While some in the plane began to panic, Mandela continued to read his newspaper as if nothing had happened. This helped calm those who were with him. Later, when safely on the ground Mandela admitted privately that he had been terrified.

2 Lead from the front – but don't leave your base behind.

Mandela, Stengel notes, is a pragmatic idealist who throughout his life made a clear distinction between tactics and principles. His time in prison also helped him take a long view. The overthrow of apartheid and the achievement of 'one man one vote' was his immutable goal. How to get there was a tactic. It was while he was separated from his colleagues in prison following a prostrate operation in 1985 that, on his own, he decided that it was time to negotiate with the government of the day. It was a risk he took which was at odds with the ANC policy of armed struggle at the time, as "prisoners cannot negotiate". However, having taken the risk, he then needed to persuade his followers that his was the correct decision. It was something that took time and his most persuasive powers.

3 Lead from the back – and let others believe they are in front.

This leadership notion is based on Mandela's experience herding cattle as a boy and also from lessons in leadership he learned from Jongintaba, the tribal leader who raised him. When holding court, Jongintaba would gather his followers in a circle, allowing them to speak first before he had his say. This approach - listening before speaking – allows a leader to get a far clearer and more

honest opinion of what his followers are thinking than would be the case if he put his point of view first. The trick is "to persuade people to do things and make them think it was their own idea".

4 Know your enemy – and learn about his favourite sport

Mandela began studying Afrikaans in the 1960s because he wanted to understand the worldview of his oppressors. Mandela's willingness to speak Afrikaans, his knowledge of Afrikaner history and of rugby, and his understanding that blacks and Afrikaners had something fundamentally in common, in terms of their sense of being African and the experience of colonial persecution and prejudice, were valuable tools when it came to negotiating a new dispensation.

5 Keep your friends close – and your rivals even closer

Mandela uses his great charm and his charisma, not only on his friends and followers but also on rivals and those who had persecuted him. He also understands that people will generally act in their own interests and does not see that as a fault but rather a fact of human nature. Including rivals, mavericks and opponents in your circle of influence is a way of both understanding them and of controlling them.

6 Appearances matter – and remember to smile

Mandela, like most astute politicians, understands the importance of appearance. He has also been blessed with a tall and handsome stature and a smile which Stengel describes as being like the "the sun coming out on a cloudy day". As a leader of the ANC's underground military wing, he always insisted that he be photographed in proper fatigues. As president, he wore a suit and later the "exuberant-print shirts that declare him the joyous grandfather of modern Africa", which have become, with his smile, his trademark.

7 Nothing is black or white

An ability to appreciate the complexity of modern political life and to live with seemingly contradictory or competing factors is one of Mandela's great strengths as a leader. He sees life as "nuanced" with a full range of colours and shades rather than as a series of stark black and white and either/or alternatives. His loyalty to Muammar Gaddafi and Fidel Castro are examples of this. When challenged about this by Stengel, he suggested that Americans tend to see things in black and white and

fail to appreciate the historical and social contexts within which people operate.

8 Quitting is leading too

Stengel recalls Mandela's proposal that the voting age be reduced to 14. SM&L readers may remember the astonishment that this evoked in the country when he made this suggestion in 1993. He apparently tried to sell the idea to his colleagues in the ANC but was the only supporter of the idea. His acceptance of this rebuff is an example of his humility. As Stengel notes, his willingness to abandon a failed idea is one of his greatest attributes, particularly in the context of African leaders – those who take office and then refuse to step down when their time has come. Mandela's decision to step down after only one term in office, Stengel suggests, may be one of his greatest legacies, because in doing so he set a precedent which future leaders both in South Africa and across the continent may feel a moral obligation to follow.

In a final poignant comment about Mandela the man and the leader Stengel writes as follows:

“Ultimately, the key to understanding Mandela is those 27 years in prison. The man who walked into Robben Island in 1964 was emotional, headstrong, easily stung. The man who emerged was balanced and disciplined. He is not and never has been introspective. I often asked him how the man who emerged from prison differed from the wilful young man who had entered it. He hated this question. Finally, in exasperation one day, he said, ‘I came out mature’. There is nothing so rare – or so valuable – as a mature man. Happy birthday, Madiba.”

References

Stengel R. Mandela: His 8 Lessons of Leadership. *Time* 21 July 2008.

Letters

SM&L is always interested to hear the views of its readers. We would also encourage you to share the ideas and practices which have worked in your school with our readers.

Dear Sir

Thank you for your informative, thought provoking and topical publication.

I was most interested to read the articles relating to the duties that should be assigned to senior teachers within a schools' management team.

It is felt that the articles need to be followed with a discussion of the problems that arise when senior teachers are allocated more and more non-academic

responsibilities. These teachers are taken out of the classroom and they are not able to pay full attention to their teaching as the demands of their other responsibilities take priority.

It is our best teachers who are appointed to the school's Senior Management Team and this compounds the problem with regard to the lack of quality teaching in the classroom.

In attempting to address this problem, one experiment that has met with some success is to create promotion opportunities for top teachers within their areas of expertise. For example one might create a "School of Maths and Science" within the school with the top Maths or Science teacher as its 'Head'. In this way the staff member gets recognition, can be remunerated accordingly yet remains focused on his/her subject area. That staff member becomes responsible for the administration of the students in the 'school' regardless of their grade.

The differentiated salary scales that have been introduced by the state would in effect re-inforce this experiment.

As the scarcity of skilled teachers continues to grow, it is imperative that more innovative ways of keeping these teachers in the classroom will need to be found. Promoting them out of the classroom is not an option, but their legitimate career aspirations cannot be ignored.

I look forward to your comments and suggestions in this regard. Yours faithfully

MACOLM LAW
MANAGING DIRECTOR
ABBOTTS COLLEGE

Thank you for your positive comments about *SM&L* and for your suggestions for ways of keeping good teachers in the classroom. Your published letter wins you a copy of the OUP publication, *Education Management and Leadership: A South African perspective*, should reach you shortly. The book was donated by Oxford University Press (Southern Africa) and was reviewed in Vol. 2 No. 3 of *SM&L*.

Ed.

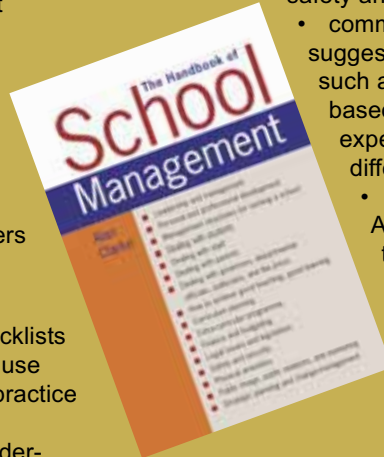
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Dr Taddy Blecher, CEO and co-founder of CIDA City Campus with SAPA-KZN executive member Gona Pillay at the provincial conference

Continued from page 9

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