

Management & Leadership

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

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Our public schooling system has reached an important crossroad in terms of its funding and its system of oversight and quality assurance: we highlight some of the challenges relating to these matters in this issue. In the article “New funding model for public schools”, we look at some of the difficulties that may occur if all quintile 3 schools were to be declared “No-fee” schools in 2009 - something to which the state appears have committed itself. The article also identifies some of the existing problems of the current model and makes some suggestions as to how the funding model could be improved. Interestingly, it would appear from a written response to a parliamentary question by a member of the opposition that the DoE is aware of some of these problems and that it is in the process of reviewing its current funding model. This is to be welcomed.

The other major challenge of our education system is that of “quality assurance”. Whilst there are internal systems in place - including the IQMS and WSE - which are meant to quality assure the system, these are not independent of the system and stories abound of teachers inflating one another's scores to ensure that the requirements are met for notch increases. The bottom line is that our education system performs dismally in terms of its ability to provide all children with the basic literacy and numeracy that they need if they are to become productive and contributing citizens. For evidence of the magnitude of our failure in this regard, you need look no further than the latest results of the diagnostic systemic testing undertaken by the Western Cape Education Department since 2002. Despite a range of interventions and some gains in numeracy levels in grade 3 and grade 6 (the two grades that have been tested every alternate year since 2002), the literacy levels are still below 50% of what is required for the grade, while fewer than 15% of Grade 6s perform at a minimum required level for that grade. There is more about this on page 14. We plan to bring you some good news about these results in coming issues, with articles on schools that have made a difference, achieving substantial improvements in their literacy and numeracy scores. We will include material on the resources that they have used and the strategies that they have employed, together with guidelines from research in a bid to help our readers to improve the practice at their own schools.

Given the sluggish response of our education system to the existing quality assurance and improvement initiatives, the decision to introduce an independent “Evaluation and Development Unit” is to be welcomed. There have already been some adverse comments from teacher unions about this initiative but this response is to be expected - after all, the unions are expected to champion the cause of their members rather than to care about the most basic educational needs of those that they teach. Read more about this proposed unit on page 4.

With the approach of the NSC examinations, we have included a summary of the most important points of the recently-published DoE regulations governing the conduct, administration and management of assessment of the NSC examinations. All secondary schools need to make sure that they acquire a copy of this important document.

This issue also contains material on the school budgeting process and news from SAPA and the 14th Public Boys' Schools Headmasters' Conference. We hope you will find it interesting and informative.

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Finance

New funding model for public schools?

The extension of “No-fee” status to quintile 3 schools in 2009 may not be in the best interests of all quintile 3 schools. Now may be a good time to review the whole basis on which public schools are funded.

In terms of the National Norms and Standards for school funding, “No-fee” status should be extended to quintile 3 schools in 2009.

The Minister is required to publish a notice in the Government Gazette determining the national quintiles to be used by the provinces to decide which schools may no longer charge school fees. This announcement should be made in good time for the schools involved to be notified before they try to table and finalise their budgets for the following year. It therefore needs to happen soon. During 2007, the Minister identified national quintiles 1 and 2 as the quintiles where schools were to be declared no-fee schools. A consolidated list of all these schools has appeared in the Government Gazette and is also listed on the DoE website. In a number of provinces, where finance has been available, no-fee status has been extended to national quintile 3 schools **on a voluntary basis**.

In order to allow schools to plan their finances for each year, policy also requires that all public schools be provided with their per-pupil funding allocation and their

Policy also requires that all public schools be provided with their per-pupil funding allocation and their staff establishment by the end of September.

staff establishment (the number of teaching posts allocated to the school) by the end of September. Ideally, in the cases of schools that are able to afford it, Section 38A applications to pay additional benefits to state employees should also have been finalised by the provincial departments. This has almost never been the case.

The figures published in September 2007 which project the per-pupil allocation for the years 2007, 2008 and 2009 should provide a reasonable idea of what these should be. These amounts are given in the adjacent column and depending on their quintile, schools should expect to receive allocations which are similar to these from their respective PEDs for 2009.

It is important that schools understand what being declared a no-fee school means. It means at least the following:

- The SGB loses its existing right, in conjunction with parents, to determine and enforce the payment

of an agreed school fee for the year

- Any payments then generated from parents would have to be a donation or of a voluntary nature
- The guaranteed payment from the province before the school can be declared a no-fee school is the published no-fee threshold payment. For 2008, this amount was set at R581.
- Only if the province pays the school less than this amount is the school then able to raise the difference by a compulsory school fee and this is limited to the difference between what the province pays and the no-fee threshold amount.

Schools must be careful not to be seduced by two things:

- The temptation to rid themselves of the problems of school fee collection
- The misconception that they will receive a subsidy equal to their current school fee income PLUS the per-pupil allocation payable to schools in their quintiles. **This is not the case.**

This is all well and good for quintile 3 schools which are struggling to collect their school fees and/or where there are significant numbers of parents who are exempt from the payment of school fees. For some schools, however, being declared a no-fee school may well spell financial disaster. These are the schools where parents are generally supportive of the school and have a good fee-payment record. For these schools, the small extra

National Table of Targets for the school allocation (2007 - 2009)

Quintile	2007	2008	2009
Q1	R738	R775	R807
Q2	R677	R711	R740
Q3	R554	R581	R605
Q4	R369	R388	R404
Q5	R123	R129	R134
No fee threshold	R554	R581	R605

amount that they will receive from their province when they are declared “no-fee” schools will be substantially less than the revenue that they currently receive from the fees that they levy. This loss of income is likely to

This loss of income is likely to impact negatively on the schools’ ability to provide the kinds of resources that pupils and parents have come to expect.

impact negatively on the schools’ ability to provide the kinds of resources that pupils and parents have come to expect. The kinds of resources that are likely to be affected could include the employment of additional staff and the purchase of computers and other ICT-related resources, library books and sports equipment. The lack of funding could also impact on the schools’ ability to maintain its buildings and grounds adequately. Most parents who understand the benefits of good education willingly make sacrifices to pay their school fees on the understanding that these will be used for the benefit of their children. Their children are not the only beneficiaries, however, as the benefits of these resources are shared by all of the pupils, irrespective of whether the parents have or have not paid the school fee. An unintended consequence for these schools may well be that the better-off parents move their children to quintile 4 and 5 schools. This may further exacerbate the divide between the resource-rich and the resource-poor schools with the net result that our system of public education will mimic the widening socio-economic divide that has become increasingly evident in this country.

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There are already some incongruities in the system which have unintended consequences. The most obvious is the fact that there are different per-pupil allocations for the different quintiles of no-fee schools. The assumption is that because the communities and facilities of a quintile 1 school is deemed to be poorer than a quintile 2 school, these schools should get a better funding allocation. This would be all very well if the funding allocation were sufficient to cover more than the basic operational necessities of a school but this is not so at present. Preventing the no-fee schools from charging fees simply shuts off the one funding source available to them and that have a vested interest in supporting them, namely the parents whose children attend the school. The likely result in the long term is that the additional resources that the school may have acquired using the supplementary funding provided by school fees will simply begin to run down. What is worse, these resources may well become greater liabilities because of the costs that may be incurred in trying to maintain them or keep them operational. Examples include computer laboratories

which quickly become white elephants if not well-maintained and regularly upgraded. The same applies to physical infrastructure such as libraries, additional classrooms and sports facilities - all of which incur maintenance costs. A good argument can therefore be made for all “no-fee” schools to be funded to the same level.

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This, however, does not address the problem of declaring schools to be “no-fee” schools if they serve a community where there are significant numbers of parents who are willing and able to pay fees. One could argue that efforts should be made to encourage these parents to make a voluntary donation to the school. In an ideal world this would be a nice alternative but the reality is that this kind of a plea is likely to be ignored by parents and sadly, those who are most able to make a contribution may well be the ones who plead poverty and refuse to donate.

An alternative model is for the state to pay a school fee for every indigent child enrolled in the school

An alternative model (and one that has worked in the past) is for the state to pay a school fee for every indigent child enrolled in the school, i.e. the contribution that the state makes could be based on the poverty level of the child’s family rather than that of the school and the community it serves. “No-fee” schools could continue as at present, with all other public schools being classified as “state-subsidised” public schools. These schools would operate in much the same way as Section 21 schools do at present - but with a level of subsidy from the state for all pupils who qualified for a complete or partial remission of fees. For those pupils who qualified for a complete remission of fees, the subsidy would be equivalent to that provided at “no-fee” schools. Or, if the authorities feel that there is an additional need to compensate “no-fee” schools for the inadequate infrastructure, the subsidy could be a percentage of the per-pupil allocation of “no-fee” schools. The subsidy for parents who qualified for a partial remission of fees would apply only if the fee they were required to pay was less than the per-pupil allocation of “no-fee” schools. In these cases, the state would simply pay the balance between the parent’s contribution and the per-pupil allocation of “no-fee” schools. A model of this kind has a number of advantages, the most important of which is that it will provide a level of encouragement and compensation for our better resourced and managed public schools to accept pupils of indigent families without the concern that this may undermine their ability in the long-term to maintain and develop their physical amenities and infrastructure.

It is significant that the DOE has now sent out to all quintile 3, 4 and 5 schools a questionnaire aimed at determining the impact of compulsory fee exemptions on the income of the school. This survey states clearly that the information will be used to determine the desirability and cost of providing additional funding to schools with significant numbers of learners whose parents are exempted from fee payments.

This country's best public schools - and there are a significant number of them - are as good as any in the world and easily match our best independent schools, not just in infrastructure but also in the more important measure of educational output. We lose this resource at our peril and the state has an important responsibility not just to support them but to ensure that the number and quality of our public schools grows rather than diminishes. A change in our funding model will be required if this is to happen. An important aspect of such a model would surely be some firm basis for the determining the cost of the delivery of quality education to children in our schools. The amounts involved cannot continue to be merely a function of budgets and equity.

A school inspectorate?

Dr Jonathan Jansen is to chair the Ministerial Committee on National Education Evaluation and Development

The central task of the Ministerial Committee on National Education Evaluation and Development is to advise the minister on mechanisms through which independent evaluation and development of schools can be undertaken. The committee was appointed in terms of Government Notice 970 of 12 September 2008 and is expected to complete its work by 31 September 2008 and to submit its recommendations to the Minister on or before 5 January 2009.

The proposed national education evaluation and development unit will be expected to function as an external unit, outside of the DoE but accountable to the Minister. The unit is expected to monitor, evaluate and report on all public schools and teachers against national norms and standards over a cycle of years. In essence it will be a kind of school inspectorate doing the same kind of work as is done by Ofsted in the UK. Although it will be expected to develop and make use of its own programmes and methods of evaluation, it will be required to ensure that its systems are consistent with existing systems and processes such as the IQMS and WSE.

In fulfilling its task, the committee is expected to work with the DG and to:

- Review all existing policies, mechanisms, structures, processes and tools that evaluate and develop schools and teachers

Continued on page 16

As can be seen from the pictures and this report, SAPA continues to flourish and to play an active and ever more meaningful role in education in this country. Its strength is in its diversity and in the fact that it represents schools from across the length and breadth of the country and from across the socio-economic spectrum. SAPA is not a union and does not meddle in matters relating to the conditions of service of educators as it sees this as the responsibility of the teacher unions. What it does do is to provide a home for principals and deputy-principals and a grouping in which they can meet to discuss their roles and responsibilities and develop their skills and expertise as the leaders and managers of South Africa's schools. Recently, nearly 1 000 delegates attended the 2008 National Conference hosted by SAPA: Gauteng. Speakers included Minister of Education Naledi Pandor, Ann Cunningham-Morris (Director of Professional Development, ASCD) who spoke on "The Principal as Leader of Professional Learning", and renowned motivational speaker Dr David Molapo.

SAPA has a federal structure, with each province having its own provincial president and executive committee. The provincial executives are responsible for selecting their own delegates to serve on the national executive committee and this committee selects the president, general secretary and treasurer from amongst its members. Provinces also hold their own provincial conferences and AGMs at which their office-bearers and executive committee members are elected. It is clear from information provided to SM&L that many of the provincial executives have been actively involved in recruiting new members over the past year.

SAPA:KZN provincial executive has focused their recruitment efforts on Pietermaritzburg and Empangeni, where they hope to establish two new branches. For some time the eThekweni committee talked for some time about a visit to Pietermaritzburg to encourage principals to come on board and this finally became a reality when Andrew Graaff, principal of Alexandra High School, agreed to host such a meeting in July. Speakers included Edie Jacobs,



Some of the delegates at the SAPA:KZN meeting in Empangeni

the National President of SAPA, and Dr Kim Domingo, a psychiatrist who has a practice in Durban North. Her talk entitled *Principal, Partner, Parent and Person* was frank, brisk, exhilarating and de-stressing. She presented a clear perspective on overload and encouraged principals to acquire the skill of saying: "No, but thank you for asking". In August, a second delegation travelled to Empangeni where Edie Jacobs addressed a meeting of some 80 prospective members. The provincial executive hopes that their efforts will result in the launch of two new branches in these two centres and in further growth of SAPA membership in the region.

SAPA: Free State has also been actively involved in launching new branches as a way of growing its membership. It has divided the province into 5 districts with each district represented by 2 members in the executive. The districts are Thabo Mofutsanyana, Motheo, Lejwe-le-putswa, Fezile-Dabi and Xariep.

New branches have been launched in Sasolburg, Parys and Kroonstad in the Fezile-Dabi district.

Matsolo Mojalefa, SAPA member and principal of Hohle Primary School in Botshabelo, is a lucky man. He was given a courtesy ticket to the ICP Conference to be held in Singapore in July 2009 by the organising committee when he attended the 2007 ICP in Auckland, New Zealand in 2007.

SAPA: Western Cape has also been involved in a recruitment campaign and members of the provincial executive visited Vredendal, where Gavin Keller initiated members into the secrets of brain-based learning with an address entitled "Waking the brain". From their report, it appears that the brains of the team that planned the visit were not fully awake in matters of geography. Mistaking Vredenburg for Vredendal, they did not realise that their destination was almost 400km away, more than double the distance that they had expected to travel! Despite this, the trip was a success and the committee remains hopeful that their longer-than-expected outing will soon see membership growing in the West Coast region.



SAPA: Western Cape executive travelled 400km to Vredendal in an effort to encourage principals from the district to join the association



SAPA Northern Cape Executive Committee

L to R (front): Joseph Isaks, Richard Okhaa, Elsabe Heyns, K Nel, DWC Beukes (president), Josephine Balepile (secretary), Sam Bodumele. (back): Marius Germishuys, A Esau

SAPA: Northern Cape has been working hard to cement good relationships with its PED and held a constructive meeting with DDG: Education Management and Governance Development Mr G Mosimane recently. Issues discussed included:

- The set-up of SAPA Northern Cape
- Relationships with DoE, Unions
- Meetings with HOD and MEC
- Plan of action 2008
- Funding



Waterberg District Executive members M.E Moshia (Secretary), D.W Mongwe (Chairman) and M.B Hlako (Deputy Secretary)

SAPA:Limpopo (Waterberg district) has launched its own district newsletter which it plans to publish once a quarter as part of its membership drive. It also held its own district conference at the D’Nyala Nature Reserve near Lephalale which was well attended by both principals and deputy principals. Topics addressed included the OSD as well as leave and tax-related matters. In his message to the district, District Chairperson D W Mongwe writes "Waterberg District must be on top of all the districts in the province in terms of learners’ performance, educators’ performance and good admirable behaviour. Let us hold hands and work as a team for the good of our beloved district."

New Regulations Governing the NSC examinations

Government Notice 872 published in the Government Gazette of 28 August 2008 sets out the regulations governing the conduct, administration and the management of assessment for the NSC examinations

All high schools should ensure that they obtain copies of this important and comprehensive document which, as its title indicates, sets out all matters relevant to the administration and the management of the assessment of the NSC examinations. Copies of the document can be downloaded from the documents section of DoE website (www.education.gov.za/) and can also be obtained from the government printer (Government Printer, Private Bag X85, Pretoria, 0001. Phone 012 334 4508 or 021 465 7531). Be aware, however, that it is a large document (192 pages or 10.66 MB if downloading the pdf file). We have set out below a summary of some of the information contained in the document which is most pertinent for schools.

The document contains 16 Chapters and 15 Annexures. The Chapter and Annexure headings are listed in the adjacent box for reference purposes.

Rules and requirements for internal assessment

Chapter 2 sets out the rules and requirements for internal assessment which include the following:

- An internal assessment mark is a compulsory component of the final promotion mark for all candidates registered for the NSC and it must count 25% of the final promotion mark. Internal assessment in Grade 12 must be moderated by the DoE, the assessment body and Umalusi. The assessment bodies are the 9 provincial departments of education and independent assessment bodies (e.g. the IEB) approved by Umalusi.
- For Life Orientation, the final promotion mark will be based on internal assessment which must be externally moderated. This external moderation will be determined by the DoE, the assessment body and Umalusi.
- In compiling the internal assessment mark, evidence of the learner's performance must
 - comprise assessment tasks that constitute the learner's internal assessment mark
 - include a mark awarded for each assessment task and a consolidated mark
 - be guided by assessment components as specified in the relevant Subject Assessment Guidelines

- be available for monitoring and moderation and be evaluated, checked and authenticated by the teacher before being presented as a learner's evidence of performance.

- The teacher portfolio of assessment tasks must:
 - be a completed record of assessment in that subject
 - be maintained by the teacher for every subject taught in respect of the NSC
 - be available for monitoring purposes at every level
- Failure of a teacher to maintain a portfolio of assessment tasks constitutes an act of misconduct and will be dealt with in terms of the Employment of Educators Act or other appropriate measures.
- The absence of an internal assessment mark in any subject, without valid reason, may result in the candidate receiving an incomplete result for that subject.
- In the event of a learner not complying with the requirements of internal assessment, but where valid reason is provided, the learner may be granted another opportunity to be assessed in the assigned task based on a decision by the Head of the assessment body. Should the learner be granted permission to be assessed in the task, he/she will be required to submit the outstanding work or present him/herself for internal assessment within 3 months of the permission being granted. A "valid reason" is deemed to be one of the following:
 - illness supported by a valid medical certificate, issued by a registered medical practitioner
 - humanitarian reasons which include the death of an immediate family member (mother, father, brother, sister, grandparents, husband, wife, legal partner and children) supported by a death certificate
 - the learner appearing in a court hearing (supported by written evidence)
 - any other reason that may be accepted as valid by the Head of the assessment body or his/her representative

Chapter Headings

- 1 Definitions, objectives, scope and application
- 2 Conduct of internal assessment
- 3 Candidates to be assessed
- 4 Preparation for the NSC examination
- 5 Conducting the examination
- 6 Recording and reporting of assessment for the NSC
- 7 The marking process
- 8 Processing the marks
- 9 Re-marking, re-checking and viewing of examination answer scripts
- 10 Dealing with irregularities
- 11 Security and confidentiality
- 12 Access to examination and certification information
- 13 Historical records (Archiving) and data retention
- 14 Minimum requirements for an examination computer system, and documents and document control pertaining to the examination system
- 15 Education Boards
- 16 Repeal of the policy document “Résumé of instructional programmes in schools, report 550 (2001/08) and transitional arrangements.

Annexures

- A Administrative issues relating to school-based assessment marks
- B The approval process for subjects offered by other assessment bodies
- C Requirements for the offering of music programmes of accredited assessment bodies
- D Appointment of examiners and internal moderators: An excerpt from the Personnel Administrative Measures (PAM)
- E Examination panels
- F Processing of Examination question papers
- G Practical examinations in Computer Applications Technology and Information Technology
- H Pro Forma Service Contracts Entered into by the Provincial Assessment Body and an Independent School
- I Appointment and duties of Chief Invigilators and Invigilators
- J Return of Examination Answer scripts
- K Appointment of markers: An excerpt from the PAM
- L Marking procedures
- M Dealing with discipline and misconduct – examination irregularities
- N Minimum requirements for a computer system
- O Examination Boards

Evidence of the learner’s “valid reason” for failing to comply with an internal assessment requirement must be included with the evidence of learner performance when it is submitted for assessment.

- Where a subject teacher fails to give learners the minimum tasks for internal assessment in the subject, the marks will be adjusted accordingly as stipulated in the DoE guidelines document.
- All internal assessment must be monitored and moderated by the DoE, the assessment body and Umalusi to ensure that the minimum requirements have been met and to ensure that the quality and standards set out in the Subject Assessment Guidelines have been met.

Requirements for admission for the NSC

Chapter 3 sets out the rules and regulations which govern the admission of candidates for the NSC. These requirements include the following:

- Candidates must have complied with the internal assessment requirements as stipulated in the Subject Assessment Guidelines.
- All learners at public schools must write the NSC except in cases where the subject offered by the candidate is not examined by the DoE.
- A Grade 12 candidate registered for the NSC must comply with the following requirements: He or she
 - must register for tuition at a public or independent school offering the NSC
 - must register for the minimum required number of subjects listed in the NCS Grades 10 -12
 - must comply with all internal assessment, oral and Practical Assessment Task requirements
 - must have complied with the promotion requirements for Grades 10 and 11 as contemplated in the policy document “NSC: A qualification at Level 4 on the NQF”.

Additional Subjects

- Learners may register for additional subjects, subject to the following conditions:
 - the candidate must obtain written permission from the Head of the assessment body or his delegate
 - the candidate must have offered and passed the additional subject in Grades 10 and 11
 - the candidate must have satisfied the requirement for internal assessment for the subject

The procedures which need to be followed in terms of internal assessment and the recording of marks, if the

additional subject is not presented at the candidate's school of registration are also listed.

Repeat candidates

- A repeat candidate is defined as a candidate who has failed the NSC examination and/or the supplementary examination and who wants to satisfy the outstanding requirements of the NSC. A repeat candidate will be allowed to meet the requirements within a maximum of 3 years from the date of the first NSC examination that was written by the candidate.
- A repeat candidate need not receive full-time tuition at a public or independent school
- The school-based assessment mark obtained by the candidate in his/her last NSC examinations will be valid for 3 years after the completion of his/her first NSC examination.

Change of subjects

- A learner may change a maximum of two subjects in Grade 10 and one subject in Grade 11. These changes require the approval of the Principal
- A learner may, in exceptional circumstances, change one subject in Grade 12 provided this is done before 31 January of the Grade 12 year. Approval for this change must be obtained in writing from the Head of the assessment body and the candidate is required to provide:
 - a letter of motivation from the learner's parent or guardian
 - a letter from the Principal either supporting the change or providing reasons for not supporting it
 - a letter from the subject teacher, outlining the programme to be followed to assist the learner in covering those aspects of the curriculum statements for the previous grades that were not covered

Registration of candidates

- Deadline for registration for the NSC is 15 March of the year in which the examination will be written. Registration after this date will be approved only under exceptional circumstances and requires the approval of the Head of the assessment body.
- Candidates who write a supplementary examination will be given 15 working days following the release of the supplementary examination results to register for the end-of-year examinations.
- The principal of a school may recommend the cancellation of the registration of a candidate in Grade 12 if the candidate is irregular in attendance or has committed a serious misdemeanour. The

candidate has the right of appeal before a final decision is taken.

Fees

- The DG of the DoE, following consultation with the HEDCOM may determine fees for the writing of examinations, viewing of examination answer scripts, re-checking of examination answer scripts, re-marking of examination scripts and the re-issuing of a statement of results. Candidates may be exempt from paying these fees if they can prove that they have been exempt from the payment of school fees or if they attended a no-fee school.

Absence from an examination

- In the case of illness or other circumstances beyond the control of a candidate, medical certificates or affidavits must be provided by the candidate and countersigned by the principal and these must be submitted to the relevant assessment body.
- Candidates who absent themselves from the end-of-year external examination will not be permitted to register for the supplementary examination.
- If a candidate is unable to write or complete one or more of the NSC examination question papers for reasons other than illness or injury, the principal of the school must submit a written report outlining the circumstances for this. The Head of the assessment body will then decide whether or not the candidate will be allowed to sit for the supplementary examinations.

Irregularities (Internal assessment)

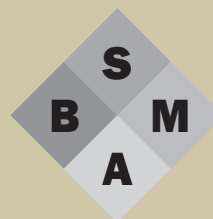
Annexure M deals with irregularities

- Where a candidate does not comply with the minimum requirements for any component of the internal assessment mark, the following apply:
 - a candidate who has a valid reason for his/her failure to comply must be allowed the opportunity to redo the task or where this is impractical, the mark for that particular component of the internal assessment mark should not be taken into consideration
 - where a candidate does not comply with the minimum requirement for internal assessment without valid reason, a "0" (zero) is recorded and is used in the compilation of the mark for the internal assessment. The absence of an internal assessment mark in any subject must result in the candidate receiving an "incomplete" result for that subject.

The above summary covers selected parts of these important regulations which have been chosen because they are of immediate relevance to high schools as they

prepare candidates for the coming NSC examinations. A number of the annexures cover information that schools will need at the start of the examinations and later when they need to advise candidates who may have failed one or more subjects.

We are aware of the fact that some provincial education departments and education districts are less efficient at getting this kind of information to their schools and that many schools do not have ready and reliable access to the internet. As a service to our subscribers who are not able to source copies of the document readily, we are willing to post a copy to you at cost plus 10% commission to cover our administrative costs. Simply call, fax or e-mail us using the information provided at the bottom of the page.



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Laptops for public schools?

The DoE has called for tenders for the provision of 345 000 laptops over the next 3 – 5 years for use in schools



In terms of the tender document, the department is investigating models to provide simple, cost effective mechanisms for individuals to obtain their own laptop computers over a period of 3 – 5 years. As an initial step, the DoE wants to ensure that the private sector is capable of assembling national and international consortia which have the capacity to provide the hardware, software, after-sales support, connectivity and teacher-training support that will be required if an initiative of this scale is to be effective.

Besides the provision of the laptops (hardware and software), the suppliers are invited to provide connectivity and e-mail accounts associated with the laptops, warranties, insurance, local curriculum content and teacher training opportunities.

The suppliers must be capable of providing the services across the whole country including delivery, after-sales care and support services. The laptops will expect to come pre-loaded with appropriate software (spreadsheets, calculators, presentation software, word-processing and database software, multimedia video editing and photo editing software amongst others). They must also come pre-loaded with local contextualised curriculum content for use by teachers and software to support the production of educational rubrics. The DoE will provide curriculum content from its Educational Portal, Thutong, administrative software (SA-SAMS), Mindset content and Microsoft Partners in Learning-ICT skills for teachers. Warranties should include a three-year carry-in warranty,

an insurance package and a functional toll-

free telephone support service for users during the warranty period. Connectivity must include a minimum of 500Mb per month per laptop and at least one e-mail account per laptop.

This is all excellent news for public education in this county. One hopes that priority will be given to providing laptops to principals and district officials, the people who work at the coal-face of education, as this would go a long way to facilitating communication between them and the DoE and PEDs. The largely dysfunctional communication networks in some provinces and districts are a major obstacle to the delivery of quality education. Because of these failures, principals of schools - particularly those in rural areas - are often unaware of policy and curriculum changes and of resources that may be available for their use. This initiative has enormous potential but its success will depend on the extent to which the principals, teachers and district officials who are provided with these resources focus their efforts on ensuring that they are used in the best interests of their pupils.

There will be more about ICT in schools and the DoE's e-education draft white paper in coming editions of **SM&L**. We look forward to the time when **SM&L** and the other services that we plan to roll out can be delivered to all of our subscribers electronically at the push of the button.

Budgeting Advice from the SBMA

The School Business Managers' Association provides advice and guidance on the process of preparing your school budget for the 2009 financial year.

By the time this edition gets to you, the business managers or bursars of most schools will be well into the process of preparing the school budget for the 2009 financial year. To assist them, their SGBs and principals in this process, we provide the following article, courtesy of the School Business Managers' Association. The article is based on a training programme that SBMA offers to their members and to schools who may be interested in making use of their services. Their contact details are given on page 9.

School Budgets

Functions of school budgeting:

Budgeting is a process of relating the expenditure of funds in a systematic way to the achievement of the planned mission and objectives of a school. Budgeting has three major functions:

It provides an operational cost-time framework for the implementation of school programmes. It is therefore the major planning instrument in the school.

It can serve as an instrument for the delegation of authority. The school budget is designed to show which people are responsible for specific programmes. (Note: when a budget is approved, the delegation function is automatically approved.)

It can be an instrument for controlling and evaluating performance.

The school's budget provisions offer the SGB a simple guide to assessing the rate of expenditure in any given activity.

Purposes of school budgeting:

The school budget is a forecast of future financial events showing the anticipated revenue, expenses and financial position of the school. There are basically two purposes of budgeting:

To show what the results will be if the present school financial plans are put into effect, i.e. the purpose of the budget is to disclose areas that require attention and action.

To evaluate the performance of the school: the school budget can be used to control operations, revenues, costs and the persons responsible for the operations and related revenues and expenditures. In effect, the school budget is a yardstick against which the financial performance may be compared. The aim of the SGB should always be to have a budget that promotes cost-effectiveness, i.e. a high level of school output at low levels of expenditure.

5 stages of school budgeting

Budgeting is a process of preparing a statement of the anticipated income and the proposed expenditure, i.e. it is a process for preparing a summary of the programmes of the school, reflecting the expected revenues and expenditures. This statement is the school budget which guides principals through the various school activities, as well as towards achieving the objectives of the school.

- 1 Identification and prioritisation of programmes, projects and activities;
- 2 Identification of resources needed (e.g. manpower, materials, time etc.);
- 3 Costing of resources;
- 4 Preparation of the draft budget;
- 5 Approval of the budget by the SGB.

Suggested sequence of events for bursars

1. Decide when your budget presentation is going to be. The majority of schools have their presentation in the 4th term, usually early in November.
2. Commence work on the budget in the 3rd term. This enables you to present 9 months of the year reasonably accurately and to project the final 3 months relatively easily. Salaries will comprise the highest expenditure in the last term and should be reflected as accurately as possible.
3. If you are drawing up the budget, ensure that you are appointed by your Financial Committee to co-ordinate the preparation of the budget. This must be minuted and passed by the SGB.
4. When considering your budget, you need to consult the budget prescription of your provincial education department (as these prescriptions may differ from province to province), as well as the Education Laws Amendment Act 24 2005. The SGB of a public school is responsible for the budget of that school in accordance with Section 38 (1) of the SASA, 1996 (Act 84 of 1996) as amended.
5. Notify all staff submitting a budget that you are commencing work on the budget – those who need to know this will include heads of phases and subject departments, sports, cultural activities, maintenance, motor vehicles, development, administration, etc. Learners can also be asked to participate in the exercise! Supply them with a print-out of their expenditure to date, and their current budget, and ask that their requests for the following year are submitted to you before 30 August.
6. Ascertain from your Financial Committee the % increase in fees that they envisage. This will be what you will work towards!

7. Prepare your Budget File! Create a Budget Template sheet for all line items in the budget, showing the history of that account for the last couple of years.

8. Print out all accounts from your accounting package and file alphabetically under Income, Expenditure and Capital Expenditure in your Budget File. These accounts will be used to predict the future by analysing the past. Create spreadsheets for each item, graph the trend and endeavour to reach a figure for the following year's budget, bearing in mind the % increase that your Financial Committee has indicated. Do not increase a budget just for the sake of having an increase. Decreasing a budget is permissible! Be very aware of all fixed costs e.g. electricity, water, telephone, HP agreements, motor vehicle licenses, etc. – you have very little leeway in decreasing them!

9. Prepare your spreadsheet. The budget must include the following:

- Audited actual income and expenditure of the previous financial year;
- Actual income and expenditure to date for the current year;
- Projected income and expenditure for the full current financial year;
- Budget of previous year (2007);
- Difference between current year minus Budget 2007;
- Estimated income and expenditure for the next year (new budget year);
- % variance between the actual audited Financial Statements and projections to the end of the current year;
- % variance between the new Budget and projection of the current year.

10. The following items must be included under Income:

- Prepaid school fees;
- Bad Debts;
- Exemptions;
- Discounts;
- PED Allocations: Norms & Standards, (day-to-day maintenance, municipal services and other allocation – if applicable) and Safe Schools, Khanya, Internet, Focus, Pre-Primary TAP allocations. Fundraising, Civvies Days and other functions should also be included under income.

11. Under expenditure the following items must be line items:

- Textbooks;
- Local Purchases;
- Stationery;
- Cleaning material;

- First Aid;
- Municipal Services;
- Day-to-day maintenance;
- Personnel Expenditure: SGB educators and any additional payments to state-employed educators, SGB Non-Educators staff and additional payment to state-employed non-educator staff.
- All other expenses, including any Capital Expenses.

12. A separate budget for hostel income and expenses must be drafted in the same manner as the school's budget.

13. Insert all figures except for the school fees. The balancing figure required will therefore be school fees. The shortfall must be calculated to reveal the school fees, and will be based on the % increase and number of pupils in the school.

14. The total Income less the total expenditure must balance, i.e. they must be equal. The budget must be a zero-based budget.

15. Once you are happy with the % increase, the budget must be presented to the SGB Finance Committee. The treasurer or School Business Manager can do the presentation. If the treasurer does the presentation, he/she must be totally familiar with the reasons for increases in line items. The Finance Committee will discuss the budget, and make recommendations. If changes are necessary, these must be made, and normally approved by the treasurer.

16. Approval of the budget by the SGB follows. It is advisable that all SGB members have sight of the budget before the meeting so that they can familiarise themselves with it. Copies of the budget (in full or condensed form) should be printed and distributed before the SGB meeting.

The sequence of events at the SGB meeting must conform to the following procedure:

- The treasurer of the SGB must evaluate the budget for completeness and accuracy and sign it as an indication of support;
- The budget, together with supporting documents and schedules (i.e. your Budget File), must be presented and explained to the SGB by the treasurer;
- The SGB must consider the budget and minute the adoption thereof before presenting it at the general meeting of parents for their approval.
- The SGB must decide in what format the budget will be presented (condensed or full line item budget), and whether the treasurer should write accompanying notes. If so, the treasurer and principal should sign the notes. The SGB also needs to decide whether to include the previous year's balance sheet.

17. Having decided on your Budget Meeting date, work backwards to get the prescribed dates of notification to parents correct, and diarise these. The following time-line is applicable:

Continued on page 12

- A notice and agenda must be sent to parents at least 30 days before the Budget Meeting, detailing the particulars and purpose of the meeting;
- A notice to parents must be sent to parents at least 14 days prior to the Budget Meeting, showing:
 - A schedule of current and proposed school fees;
 - Notification that the criteria and procedures to be followed for fee exemptions may be obtained from the school;
 - Notification that the budget will be available for inspection (if not sent out, per 15.4 above).
 - An explanation that a resolution will be proposed at the meeting, to be approved by the majority of the parents present and voting, to approve the budget and proposed school fees and that this decision will be binding on all parents.

Book the school hall or the venue where the meeting will take place. (Sometimes other activities do take place in the hall!)

18. Having ascertained your dates as above, get all the necessary photocopying completed, and ensure that documentation is sent out by pupil post, advertised in the school's newsletter, and posted on the school's web page if applicable.

19. Before the meeting date, ensure that your treasurer (or whoever is presenting the budget) has all the electronic equipment that he/she requires, e.g. lap-top, data projector, cable and plugs, screen, overhead projector, etc. Check that the chairs for parents are set out as you would like, and that there is a table at the front for the presenter. Decide on who is taking the minutes.

20. Photocopy the minutes of the previous year's Budget Meeting, which can be handed out to parents for their perusal before the meeting. (These minutes have to be approved at the current meeting.)

21. The Budget Meeting.

- Get to school early to check that all is in order!
- Have spare copies of the notice to parents containing all the details of the budget meeting.
- Hand out the previous year's minutes.

The following meeting procedure should be adhered to:

- An attendance register must be kept – parents can sign this as they come in, or it can be circulated. As parent numbers have to be recorded, it is important that the register is accurate!
- If you are taking the minutes, position yourself in a suitable place in order that you can hear and see!
- The minutes of the previous budget meeting must be read to the meeting, approved and seconded, and signed by the treasurer;
- The school programme must be defined, in order that parents understand what they are getting for their

fees. A motion must be proposed, seconded and minuted.

- The detailed budget for the following year is presented to the parents, followed by questions from the floor.
- On conclusion, the parents must vote. Approval of the budget requires that the majority of the parents present vote in favour. A record of YES, NO and ABSTENTIONS must be minuted.

The following must be voted on individually, being proposed and seconded:

- School fees;
- Payment plan;
- Discount;
- Interest;
- Equitable criteria and procedures for the total, partial or conditional exemption of school fees;
- Additional monetary contributions;
- Confidential information;
- Method of communication from the school.

The SGB must ratify the budget as approved by the parents. The principal, treasurer and chairperson of the SGB must sign the budget.

22. Should the budget not be adopted by the majority of the parents, the adjustments as proposed by the majority of the parents present and voting, must be implemented by the SGB.

23. Full minutes must be typed and filed in the Budget File and in the SGB Minute Book.

24. The SGB must ensure that full details regarding the school fees for the following year, with notification that the criteria and procedures for exemption are available at the school, are published in the next school newsletter, sent by pupil post and published on the school's web page if applicable. This is usually done by the Bursar/ School Business Manager.

25. A full copy of the signed budget and minutes of the Budget Meeting must be sent to the relevant Education District Director by no later than 1 December of each year.

26. Inform all participants (those having budgets) of the budget outcome, and notify them of their budget for the following year.

27. It is important to keep all budget documentation in one file that is easily accessible, and understandable. Keep the file in a safe place – you will be referring to it frequently in the following year.

28. The SGB, in law, has the right to draw up a budget and cannot be made to accept a budget proposed by the parents. In the case of a rejected budget, the SGB has to review the situation and present a new set of proposals at another duly constituted meeting. The SGB may incorporate ideas presented at the first meeting into the new proposal but is not obliged to accept another budget at the meeting.

14th Public Boys' Schools Conference 2008

Keith Richardson, Headmaster of Wynberg Boys' High School provided this report on the conference

The 14th annual Public Boys' School Conference was hosted by Bill Schroder of Pretoria Boys' High School at the end of August. It was attended by 24 Headmasters from Public Boys' Schools throughout the country. The Conference was facilitated by David Williams, Associate Deputy Editor of the *Financial Mail*, himself a former teacher at KES.

The theme of the Conference was *Making a Difference* and a number of prominent educationalists were invited to address this topic. One cannot do justice in a few lines to the speakers who were all given ninety minutes to speak, but these are the highlights which struck me.

Duncan Hindle, Director General of the Department of Education, was first up. He urged schools to continue their role as Models of Excellence but warned the schools present to beware of complacency. Their role was to reach out to other schools and offer programmes to help in curricular and extra-curricular spheres.

"Good schools" he said, "are good because of what they do – not because of what they say they will do."

Professor Brahm Fleisch from the Department of Education, Leadership and Policy at the University of the Witwatersrand, spoke on the problems of literacy and numeracy which High Schools were inheriting from Junior Schools. Benchmarking against the rest of Africa showed that South Africa's results were very bleak. He showed how poverty, poor health, language difficulties and poor teaching were handicapping many of South Africa's schools.

Former Dean of Education from Pretoria University, Professor Jonathan Jansen, was scathing in his opinion of leadership in South Africa – corporate, political, religious and educational. He maintained that leaders in this country were not living their values and that South Africa needs its well-resourced schools to engage with the community at

large and, by their example of total teacher involvement, to transform teacher commitment to education.

Deputy Director General of the Department of Education, Penny Vinjevold, encouraged all the Heads to keep positive as "surrounding yourself with negative people is bad for your health". The national curriculum needed greater input from resourced schools which should be encouraging far more pupils to be doing Mathematics and Science. These schools should also be encouraging matrices to take up teaching, thus ensuring succession planning.

Callie Pistorius, Vice Chancellor of Pretoria University, stressed that schools had to make a difference to society and to their products. In a most thought-provoking talk, he emphasised the essential values which a good education needed to instil. "Children must be educated, not just taught and trained."

Our final speaker was Enver Surtees, Deputy Minister of Education (at that time – Ed.), who commended the schools present on their insistence on high standards and for the opportunities which have been provided in many spheres to so many pupils of all colours. He said that schools can be proud of the fact that they instil a feeling of self-belief in their pupils – especially their black pupils. The challenge he laid was not to sit in ivory towers but to continue with outreach programmes and extending influence into other less privileged schools. "You be the agents for change" were his parting words.

One of the features of a Conference of this nature was the networking which took place over social functions. Problems facing schools were raised, discussed and argued. The real purpose of the Conference was summed up by Mike Fennell, Head of KES, who remarked on the last day that "with so much ongoing negativity, running a school today is demanding and energy sapping, yet this Conference always manages to re-enthuse us with its positivity".



Back Row: Johan Volsteed (Grey College); Pierre Edwards (Affies); Dave Magner (D HS); Anton Dempsey (Jeppe); Tony Jordan (Northwood); Mike Fennell (KES); Neil Crawford (Grey High); Bill Schroder (Pretoria).

Middle Row: Martin Barker (Rondebosch); Trevor Hall (Westville); Sam Gunn (Selborne); Martin Cartwright (Potchefstroom); Keith Richardson (Wynberg); Jannie van der Westhuizen (Paul Roos); Derek Swart (Paarl BHS); Dave Williams (Facilitator).

Front Row: Bun Hopley (Muir); Ron Jury (Maritzburg); Trevor Kershaw (Glenwood); Ken Ball (SACS); Peter Reid (Graeme); Dudley Daniels (Kimberley); Chris Harker (Queens); Tom Clarke (Parktown); Mike Eddy (Dale).

Diagnostic testing

Literacy and Numeracy in the Western Cape

Some gains in literacy but numeracy results remain dismal

The Western Cape Education Department is the only PED which systematically assesses the numeracy and literacy levels of pupils in their primary grades. The diagnostic tests are set and administered by an external agency. This helps to counter the likelihood of claims of bias or the manipulation of marks for political ends.

Two grades, Grade 3 and Grade 6, have been selected for testing and are tested in alternate years. In 2002, a randomly-selected group of Grade 3 pupils from a representative sample of schools was the first group to be tested. This sample of 29 220 pupils represented about a third of the total number of pupils enrolled in Grade 3 in the province that year.

A similar system using a representative sample of Grade 6 pupils was conducted again in 2003 and in 2004 (Grade 3) and 2005 (Grade 6). In 2006 (Grade 3) and 2007 (Grade 6), all pupils in the grade were tested. While the generally poor performance of pupils in these tests is extremely perturbing, the results do at least give the WCED an understanding of the nature of the problem. More importantly, the results provide a reality check of what is happening in schools and can form the foundation from which the WCED can begin to develop strategies to address the problem. This is something that they have already started to do.

The summarised results, which were provided to **SM&L** by the Deputy Director General, Mr Brian Schreuder, are given below.

Western Cape Diagnostic Tests

To interpret these results, one needs to understand what the figures provided on the table represent and for this one needs to go back to the original purpose of the tests and how they were structured.

Firstly and most importantly, one needs to understand that the tests are diagnostic tests and that they were designed to measure the competency of pupils in certain specific Learning Outcomes across the grades from Grade 3 to 7. A pupil was deemed to be competent at Grade 3 level for a specific outcome if he or she scored 50% or above on the Grade 3 level tasks.

The 2002 Grade 3 provincial pass of 35.7% in the Literacy test therefore shows that 35.7% of Grade 3s tested in 2002 scored 50% or more on the Grade 3 level literacy tasks. There were also some tasks set at the Grade 4, 5, 6 and 7 grade levels. These were used to determine the extent to which pupils may be performing at better than their grade level. The great disappointment and disturbing thing about the 35.7% Grade 3 Literacy score in 2002 is that this means that 64.3% of those tested scored less than 50% on the Grade 3 tasks. It begs the question regarding what the future holds for these children who have failed to master the language that they will need to further their schooling.

There are a number of important issues that become apparent once these figures are understood.

- the literacy and numeracy levels are disturbingly low

	Literacy			Numeracy		
	2002	2004	2006	2002	2004	2006
Grade 3						
No. of schools	844	1093	1086	844	1093	1086
No. of pupils	29 220	34 487	82 879	29 220	34 487	82 879
Pass %	35.7	39.5	47.7	37.1	37.3	31.0
Grade 6						
No. of schools	1 079	1 040	1 034	1079	1 040	1 034
No. of pupils	34 596	31 726	71 854	34 596	31 726	71 854
Pass%	35.0	42.1	44.8	15.6	17.2	14.0

Results of diagnostic testing for Literacy and Numeracy of Grade 3 and Grade 6 pupils in the Western Cape (2002 - 2007)

- there was a small but encouraging improvement in literacy levels from 2002 to 2006 in Grade 3 and from 2003 to 2007 in Grade 6, although the improvement in Grade 6 is less marked
- there was a disturbing decline in the numeracy levels in Grade 3 between 2002 and 2006 and in Grade 6 between 2003 and 2007
- there was a dramatic drop in numeracy levels between Grade 3 and Grade 6

These trends also need to be seen in the context of two further factors:

- the efforts that the WCED has made, particularly over the last few years, to put in place measures to address these problems
- the WCED is one of the best resourced and most functionally effective provincial education departments.

What these figures do not show are the very wide disparities between the best and worst performing schools although one can gain some understanding of the differences by a careful analysis of the award-winning schools. These are the schools which were given monetary “incentives” and certificates for their achievements. Altogether 60 schools were presented with these awards in 4 different categories. The categories were:

- Performance Excellence in Outcomes (with three categories)
- Improvement in Performance in the context within which the school operates (with three categories)
- Improvement in Literacy – Language Transformation schools
- Improvement in Performance in the context of the 21 areas of the premier.

A list of the award-winning schools is given on page xx.

The WCED media release about the awards included the poverty level quintile in which the schools fall in terms of the Norms and Standards for school funding. This information is also helpful if one is to make some sense and draw inferences from the data provided.

Four schools were given awards for “consistently meritorious outcomes” in both literacy and numeracy in terms of both the best pass rate and mean scores. Two of the schools (Rondebosch Boys’ Preparatory and Oakhurst Girls’ Junior School) are quintile 5 schools and, interestingly, close neighbours in Rondebosch. Oakhurst scored an overall 88.1% and Rondebosch Preparatory 87.5%. The other two schools listed in this category are quintile 4 schools: Buffelsfontein Laerskool in Mosselbaai had an overall average of 72.8% and Bonnievale High School, a combined school in the village of Bonnievale, achieved an average of 65.1%. The significant differences in performance that exist are already obvious from these figures.

Differences of a similar magnitude are evident if one examines the six schools listed under the heading “Excellent in outcomes in Literacy” and the three listed under the heading “Excellence in outcomes in Numeracy”. For literacy, two schools are listed from quintile 5 and one each from quintiles 1 to 4. The difference between the best and worst of these best performers is 30%. What is interesting is that Gelukshoop NGK Primary School, Bonnievale (a quintile 1 school) performs better than the quintile 2 and 3 schools that are listed. For numeracy, two of the schools are from quintile 5 and 1 from quintile 4; and the difference between the best and worst is 34%.

For the remaining schools listed in the document, only their improvement percentage was given. For the majority, the percentage improvement for the period 2003 – 2007 was in excess of 20%, with greatest improvement listed being that of Sandberg KGK Primary School on the West Coast (a quintile 1 school), which has improved its numeracy levels by a huge 50.9%. Given the other results, one must assume that this improvement comes off a very low base but that it is not to say that an improvement of this magnitude should not be applauded.

It is in extrapolating these figures to relate them to the rest of the country that the source of the failure of our public education system is most starkly revealed, together with the magnitude of the problem we face if we are to achieve a significant improvement. If more than 50% of the children in the Western Cape with its good resources and its largely better educated and more affluent population are failing to reach an adequate standard of literacy by the time they reach Grade 6, and more than 80% are failing in numeracy, then we have an educational crises. Consider the fact that the Western Cape has 34.6% of its schools in quintile 5 and 6.5% in quintile 1, compared with the Eastern Cape where the figures are 10.9% and 34.8% respectively. Add to this the fact that in 2007 the Western Cape had an 80.6% SC pass rate and a 24.7% endorsement rate in comparison to the 57.1% and 9.4% of the Eastern Cape and the size of the challenge becomes increasingly apparent. There are no readily available figures on literacy and numeracy levels in the Eastern Cape but one must assume that they would be significantly worse than those of the Western Cape. The reasons for skills shortage, poor SC results, high drop-out rate in schools and tertiary institutions lie here in what is or is not happening in the first few years of schooling. Of course, the problem is even deeper than this and lies in the poverty and illiteracy levels of the parents of these children but public education and public health are meant to address at least some of these problems. They are meant to make it possible for most of the country’s children to be given a reasonable start in life and to make it possible for them to escape the socio-economic problems faced by their parents. For this to happen, however, we will need to use the resources that we have at our disposal more effectively and efficiently. The state is at last making some moves in that direction. These include:

Continued on page 16

Grade R rollout

Government Notice 26 *South African Schools Act (84/1996): National Norms and Standards for Grade R Funding* sets out the DoE's planned funding model for the rollout at Grade R at all public schools. Like all DoE funding, it is pro-poor and requires the PEDs to target schools in quintiles 1 and 2 initially. To qualify, schools need to meet certain basic criteria. Only schools which already offer Grade 1 are eligible and in addition, they must show that they have the necessary management and governance capacity to manage the school's finances; and that the quality of teaching and learning at the school is of an adequate standard. (This could pose something of a dilemma given the results of the WCED diagnostic testing! – Ed)

National Testing

The Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation Report, which followed a similar project which assessed Grade 3 learners, provides useful insights and sound practical recommendations based on its findings. This form of systemic evaluation needs to become a regular feature of our education system to ensure that funding and improvement strategies are focused where they are most needed.

Better training for teachers

The introduction of the ACE courses and other forms of in-service training are also a step in the right direction, although there is a need to ensure that these focus on improving practice and that they do not distract teachers from their primary task of teaching. The lack of professionalism of a significant proportion of the teachers in this country and of a commitment to the needs of their pupils is a major problem. Sadly, the prevailing attitude of "minimal effort" by teachers is aided and abetted by officials in some unions. An example of this is a memo distributed by a union official in Gauteng, instructing its members not to attend PED meetings if these took place after 15:00.

School Evaluation

The recent appoint of Prof. Jonathan Jansen, the outspoken former Dean of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria, to chair the Ministerial Committee on School Evaluation is another development that has the potential to drive improvement in our school system. The central task of the committee is to recommend to the Minister the kinds of mechanisms through which the independent evaluation and development of schools and teachers can be undertaken. This committee is expected to act as "an 'arm's length' authority external to the Department of Education but accountable to the Minister of Education". The committee is required to submit its final report to the minister before 5 January 2009. More about this committee and its terms of reference are given on page 4.

- Review the international literature on similar school evaluation development bodies in other countries
- Make recommendations about all aspects of the unit including its structure, composition, functions, governance and financing.
- Advise on the relationship between the unit and existing policies aimed at school evaluation.

It is important to note that the notice repeatedly adds the word 'teacher' and 'learner' when it uses the term "school evaluation". Clearly the unit is expected to provide mechanisms for evaluating the performance of teachers and pupils as well as systems and structures to support their development and improve their performance. The committee is to be chaired by Dr Jonathan Jansen and will include two representatives from School Governing Bodies and two representatives of trade unions in education.

Committee members

Dr Jonathan Jansen
Dr Cassius Lubisi
Dr Peliwe Lolwana
Ms Francine de Clercq
Ms Amanda Sanger
Ms Sussana Muller
Dr Peter Matthews
Prof Lind Darling-Hammond

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