

Management & Leadership

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

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Literacy, Leadership and the importance of taking a long view

With the financial world in crises brought about by imprudent policies and politics at home in flux, it is important as leaders to keep a sense of perspective and to take a long-term view as we lead and manage our schools. For more about this read our article "The importance of taking a long view" on page 11 which lists some of the political, social and economic challenges Winchester College in the UK, with its motto "Manners Makyth Man", has survived since its founding in 1394. Talking of History, there is good advice for Trevor Manuel and other involved in managing the finance of our nation, from Cicero the Roman statesman and philosopher, who in 50BC wrote "The budget should be balanced, the Treasury should be refilled, public debt should be reduced, the arrogance of officialdom should be tempered and controlled, and the assistance to foreign lands should be curtailed lest Rome become bankrupt. People must again learn to work, instead of living on public assistance."

In this issue we also begin a series on primary schools that are achieving success in the teaching of literacy and numeracy with a report on our visit to Zimasa Community Primary School in Langa in the Western Cape. Zimasa is a "Language Transformation School" – one of a group of schools that has chosen to use isiXhosa, the mother tongue of its pupils, as its language of learning and teaching (LOLT). It has also managed to improve the literacy performance of its Grade 6 pupils in the WCED's diagnostic testing programme by 23.3% between 2003 and 2007. Our next edition will carry a similar feature on Rondebosch Boys' Preparatory which was one of two schools with the best overall performance in both numeracy and literacy in these tests. Our focus there was on the work that they are doing in the Foundation Phase which we see as key to their success and to the success of any school which wishes to improve the literacy and numeracy levels of its pupils.

Other items in this issue include an article by Paul MacIntyre and experienced head from the England on the leadership training provided by their National College of School Leadership, and the judgement handed down by the Equity Court in Durban on a case involving the provision of Home, First Additional and Second Additional languages for pupils whose home language is not the LOLT of the school.

Like schools we are now starting to put together our plans for 2009 including budgeting and decisions about subscription costs. Having held our subscription unchanged since our launch in January 2007, we will unfortunately be forced to increase our subscription fee for 2009 by 10% to R330. However, as a concession to our current subscribers we will accept all renewals of subscriptions for 2009, paid before the end of 2008 at our current fee of R300.

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Leadership

Lessons from England and the NCSL

Schools in England have made remarkable improvements in terms of standards over the last 10 years. An emphasis upon the training and development of school leaders has played a crucial part in this success: what lessons can be learned? Paul MacIntyre – an experienced school Leader from the UK – looks at the work of the National College for School Leadership as part of leadership development.

Every one of our children deserves to be in a well led school.

We all wonder why schools in similar circumstances achieve very different results, and how some schools deemed to be 'failing' get turned around and become successful without any significant investment of additional resources? Almost without exception it is the quality of leadership displayed, not by just one individual but by a significant group of people in schools that makes the difference. It is a truism that we all know what good school leadership looks like: as parents, teachers, students, neighbours and employers we all know it when we see it but probably find it hard to define. What we know with certainty is that school leadership is crucial to the success of any education system, and, in turn, any community and nation.

..it is now more important than ever that schools have good and effective leadership in order to deliver on the challenging promises made by politicians

Education has never been more central to the life of the nation; it is now more important than ever that schools have good and effective leadership in order to deliver on the challenging promises made by politicians. This is particularly true in terms of economic development and social cohesion. Having worked as part of the leadership team of six schools, and having been the Headteacher of three of them, I am very aware of the demands placed upon school leaders. I have been very fortunate to visit and work alongside other school leaders in Japan, Australia, the USA and now South Africa, and while I know these pressures are world wide, I also know that in spite of the challenges, there has never been a more exciting and important time to be a school leader. It is simply one of the most important jobs in the world.

In England a good deal of work has been undertaken in the area of Leadership Learning in the education sector and for very good reasons. Research internationally would suggest that the quality of leadership in schools is of crucial importance in establishing an education system which is both resilient in terms of the social and political demands of the 21st century, but also one which enables an economy to maintain a competitive advantage in an increasingly global market place.

In England the Thatcher government placed the spotlight on education through the introduction of the National Curriculum, testing, devolving budgets to schools, inspection and the publication of performance tables among other measures. For many school leaders this was seen as a time of more challenge and little support, morale was poor and there was strike action. The present government has refined the challenge but added significant levels of support. This support is not just in terms of badly needed resources but also in terms of the self-esteem of the teaching profession and the investment in school leadership.

The investment of energy and resources into this area reflected the priorities of central government published in 1998 –

'Our goal is a world-class education service for all children. Every pupil should become literate, numerate, well-informed, confident, and capable of learning throughout life and be able to play an active part in the workforce and the community Pupils will need education for a world of rapid change in which both flexible attitudes and enduring values have a part to play' (British Government Education Green Paper, December 1998)

To the government's great credit they have recognised that a significant improvement in the quality of school leadership is crucial if they are to have any hope of meeting this challenging goal.

'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning'

In *Seven strong claims about successful school leadership* Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris and Hopkins start by claiming that 'school leadership is second only to classroom teaching as an influence on pupil learning'. I know they are right although as a school leader I always felt the acid test of my leadership was whether we had good and excellent teaching and learning going on in our classrooms. The other six 'claims' they make about leadership in schools are;

- 1 Almost all successful leaders draw on the same repertoire of basic leadership practices.
- 2 The ways in which leaders apply these basic leadership practices – not the practices



themselves – demonstrate responsiveness to, rather than dictation by, the contexts in which they work.

3 School leaders improve teaching and learning indirectly and most powerfully through their influence on staff motivation, commitment and working conditions.

4 School leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed.

5 Some patterns of distribution are more effective than others.

6 A small handful of personal traits explains a high proportion of the variation in leadership effectiveness.

If these claims are even only partially true, then it is clear that we can start to define good leadership behaviours. This research also reinforced what we already knew: that school leadership can be 'learned' and existing school leaders 'further developed'. What we needed was a more systematic and consistent framework for our development, one which is flexible and influenced by the people actually running schools. As a school leader I think that one of the most significant sources of support that government has provided has been the establishment of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL). While Higher Education still plays an important role in developing leadership skills through their programmes, the College not only acts as a conduit for training and development but is also an advocate for school leaders and their needs. Since it started in the 1990s thousands of school leaders have attended programmes, been assessed, shared experiences and accessed resources through the National College. As a busy school leader I always found time to access its website on a daily basis, and as a keen supporter I was very pleased to be asked to work for two days a week as a Regional Leader for the College in my last year in England because I am firmly of the belief that the College belongs to school leaders and should be influenced by practitioners and schools.

What does the College do?

The mantra of the National College for School Leadership is simply 'every child in a well led school'. As a parent as well as a teacher I find this compelling.

The thrust of their work is in two areas;

- the development of existing school leaders and the enhancement of their abilities develop the capacity of their schools and colleagues and the succession planning and
- development for school leaders of the future

Within these areas, programmes have developed which see the development of school leaders through from middle leadership to senior leadership and headship, and increasingly into networked leadership, with leaders

working and supporting other schools and networks. This process also helps to define the career path for school leaders with the final part of their careers as Consultant Leaders who can pass on their learning and experience through collaborative activities. All of these areas have accredited courses available from the NCSL and their National Qualification for Headship is now a requirement for headship (although interestingly you do not have to be a qualified teacher to take this course). I have personally gone through the process which I found to be very useful and have now completed the Consultant Leader programme which encouraged me to support others and develop my coaching skills.

The NCSL defines six key areas of Leadership Learning and these have been embodied into the new (2007) National Standards for Headteachers in England. They are based upon existing research on leadership both within and outside education and the themes are developing continuously as the educational leadership 'landscape' changes. The themes interrelate and are shaped by the perspectives and context of the individuals using them for development.

A) Leading Learning and Teaching

Learning is the core business of schools at every level and the leadership of learning is fundamental to this purpose. In England 'Learning Centred Leadership' is a growing force in developing new ways for leaders to influence classroom practice with a real focus on student learning.

B) Developing Ourselves and Working with Others

Leadership is about getting the best out of people and good and effective relationships underpin this. To build positive relationships leaders must first understand themselves and the impact they have on others: this means they must be clear about their values and moral purpose and base their actions upon them.

C) Creating the Future

Developing school leaders as 'leaders of change' is crucial in a fast paced educational system in the 21st century - it is crucial to building systems and networks; and it is also important in developing the capacity of schools by enhancing their own resources. Successful school leaders promote a shared vision of the future and secure commitment from those around them. Successful school leaders capture hearts and minds.

D) Managing the Organisation

It has never been more important for school leaders to build efficient and effective organisational systems and processes. Successful organisational management complements leadership in that it ensures that things get done. It is important to distribute leadership to continue to move the school on and to build leadership capacity.



E) Strengthen Community through Collaboration

Effective relationships and the building of trust between members of the organisation is a central part in building capacity in schools. The networks across schools and the manner in which people work together strengthen community and collegiality.

F) Being Accountable

School leaders have both formal and informal accountability for what their schools do. The state and public determine this formal relationship through statute and Governance. However, accountability goes well beyond the formal as school leaders should have a professional desire to know how they are doing and how they can improve further. This professional accountability is a deep commitment and has a profound effect upon how school leaders see themselves and their role.

What can we learn?

It is clear from the themes being developed through the National College and beyond that school leadership in the 21st Century will be increasingly networked, globalised, distributed and focused on student performance as never before. The definition of someone in a school leadership role is changing as Business Managers and Organisation and Administration Directors, who are not teachers, become more common in schools. The demands upon school leaders will not diminish: a key aspect in determining the future success of a school will be the ability of school leaders to enhance capacity through collaboration with others and through developing human resources from within. The most effective school leaders will develop as coaches and develop their organizations as real learning environments. School leadership needs to be continuously developed and government has a role in working with the profession to establish a flexible Leadership Learning framework. 'Every child in a well led school' should be a very real expectation and it is the educational leaders of today who are going to make that happen for the schools of tomorrow. ■

Paul MacIntyre, the author of this article, is currently supporting his partner's secondment to South Africa and is taking a 'career break' from his role as a Consultant Headteacher in England. If you would like to follow up any of the ideas in this article with Paul, please email him at pmacintyre@live.com.

Finance

Grade R Funding for Schools

National Norms and Standards for Grade R funding

Amendments to the National Norms and Standard for School Funding published earlier this year provide details of how the DoE seeks to roll out the introduction of Grade R in public schools and how it plans to fund the introduction of Grade R. This is an important initiative, given the generally inadequate performance of pupils in literacy and numeracy. Research has shown early intervention can significantly reduce the disadvantage suffered by children raised in families which are not able to provide them with the stimulus and resources that they need. The introduction of Grade R will make it possible at least to partially meet this need. Primary schools without a Grade R group should therefore make the introduction of a Grade R part of their literacy and numeracy improvement strategy.

The published amendments provide guidelines for the PEDs on the steps that they need to take and the funding model that they are to use to phase in Grade R. Schools in quintiles 1 and 2 are to be targeted initially but in order to be eligible for funding, they must meet 2 criteria:

- The school must have a Grade 1 class
- The school must demonstrate management readiness to implement a publicly-funded grade R class. This includes:
 - quality financial management in relation to school funds
 - general effectiveness of the SGB
 - the quality of teaching and learning relative to the level of disadvantage of the school community

The document suggests that the measures used to determine the quality of financial management and of general effectiveness of the SGB could be the same as those used to determine whether a school qualifies for Section 21 status.

To qualify, a school also needs to show that it has sufficient physical space in the form of a suitable teaching venue to accommodate the class and that it has -or will be able to acquire - the other resources that it needs.

A more recently published document, "Guidelines for costing basic minimum package of Grade R inputs"2, provides more details of the physical resources such as basic furniture and the consumable and non-consumable teaching materials (games, storybook sets, paint and paper, etc.) that are the minimum requirements for a class

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Numeracy and Literacy Awards

Earlier this year the WCED prestend awards to 60 schools for their performance in the Grade 6 diagnostic tests in literacy and numeracy for the period 2003 to 2007. The results of some of the best are given below

In the last issue we published an article detailing some of the results and findings of the ongoing programme of literacy and numeracy diagnostic testing of Grade 3 and 6 pupils conducted by the WCED for the period 2002 to 2007. The best performing schools in a range of categories were presented with awards for Meritorious Achievement by the then MEC for Education Cameron Dugmore earlier this year. The awards were based on the outcomes achieved in the Grade 6 Diagnostic tests. The awards which consisted of certificates and monetary incentives of between R12 000 and R15 000 for the purchase of teaching and learning support materials were presented to 60 schools.

SM&L has visited some of these schools and plans to visit others as we search for answers to the questions that the poor literacy and numeracy outcomes of our primary schools pose for education in this country. What is it that the best performing schools are doing that differentiates them from those that are underperforming and are their lessons to be learned from their best practice that can be shared to benefit of all schools? We plan to find out and to share these lessons with you.

We list below some of the award winning schools together with their results.

Performance for Excellence in Outcomes measured in both pass rates and mean scores for the years 2003, 2005 and 2007.

Excellence in overall outcomes Numeracy and Literacy		
School	Quin- tile	Av. %
Oakhurst Girls' Primary School	5	88.1
Rondbosch Boys' Prep. School	5	87.5
Buffelsfontein Laerskool	4	72.8
Bonnievale High School	4	65.1

Excellence in Outcomes: Literacy		
School	Quin- tile	Av. %
Rustenburg Girls Primary School	5	89.9
The Pinelands Primary School	5	89.6
Grabouw High School	4	73.3
Gelukshoop NGK Primary School	1	65.3
Ruiterbos Laerskool	2	62.1
Herbersdale Laerskool	3	58.9

Excellence in Outcomes: Numeracy		
School	Quin- tile	Av. %
Rhenish Primary School	5	85.8
Stellenbosch Laerskool	5	83.6
FD Conradie Laerskool	4	51.8

Language Transformation Schools

These schools chose to write the Literacy tests in isiXhosa. Zimasa Primary School is featured in an article starting on page 6.

Improvement in Literacy		
School	Quin- tile	Av. %
Zimasa Primary School	3	23.3
Sakumlandela Primary School	2	15.1

Literacy

Zimasa is making a difference

Zimasa Community Primary School, a language transformation school on the outskirts of Langa is winning awards for the work it is doing to improve the literacy levels of its pupils

Zimasa Community Primary School situated on the outskirts of Langa, in Cape Town, is one of the schools which merited a special award earlier this year for the improvement it has achieved in literacy.

What is of particular interest about this achievement is that Zimasa is one of a number of "Language Transformation Schools" in the Western Cape. "Language Transformation Schools" are schools that have chosen to use an indigenous African language - in this case isiXhosa - as their language of instruction to the end of Grade 6. This is based on evidence from research that second-language learners (i.e. those who learn through a language other than their mother tongue) do best if they have had a solid grounding in their mother tongue up until at least the end of Grade 6. More about this project is provided in the box on xx.

Zimasa is the oldest school in Langa and was originally a missionary school established by the Anglican Church in 1934. When these schools were closed down by the apartheid government in xx it became a community school but continued to be supported by additional funding from the Anglican and Catholic churches. A new school was built in 1995 with funding provided mostly by the Swedish government and the school moved into these new premises in 1996. These are functional but not elaborate. The school is a section 21 school and is classified as a Quintile 3 school by the WCED but continues to receive additional funding from a number of donors including the DG Murray Trust, the IDT and the Swedish NGO Bofor. It does not charge school fees.

Principal Gerald Njangele has been head of the school since 1988 and received his original teacher training at Lovedale, which at one time was the only institution that offered training to black teachers. He holds those who trained him in high regard, acknowledging that they were not only good teachers but that they also understood that practice and a good understanding of subject method form the foundation of good teaching. He is a traditionalist and believes that a thorough grounding in basic literacy and numeracy are essential if children are to succeed academically. Like many of his colleagues, he bemoans the fact that the training that accompanied the introduction of Curriculum 2005 and OBE confused teachers about the importance of teaching the basics. From my visits to the classes at Zimasa it became very

evident, however, that at this school there is no such confusion.

From the moment one arrives at the front gate it is clear that Zimasa is a well-run school. I arrived there about 10 minutes after the scheduled start of the school day.

The automatic gate was closed but, unlike some township schools, there were no pupils or teachers milling around outside the gate waiting to be let in. There is further evidence that this is a school that means business when one enters the front doors. The corridors and quadrangles are empty except for the odd child or teacher hurrying purposefully about their business while in the background there is the buzz of a school at work: not silence but also no raised voices or wild shouting and the banging of doors. This is surprising when one considers that this is a school of 1 400 pupils from Grade 1 – 9: clearly this is a school that recognises the value of order. The glass cabinets in the front portal are filled with trophies and pictures of pupils and their achievements and the corridors, classroom and playgrounds are clean and litter free. I was to learn later that the expectation is that pupils will not litter but that in addition to this, each class has an allocated clean-up duty and is expected to pick up any remaining litter at the end of breaks on the days when they are on duty. Again - good evidence of a well-managed school.

In an effort to improve the literacy levels of its pupils, Gerald has introduced a number of initiatives. These include a 30-minute reading/literacy period at the start of each day, when all pupils are expected to be involved in some form of literacy-based activity. This includes silent reading, pupils reading aloud either singularly or in groups, teachers reading to pupils, pupils writing about what they have read or pupils answering questions about their reading. In Grades 1 – 6, all of the reading and writing is done in isiXhosa; while in Grade 7 – 9, some of



Zimasa Principal, Gerald Njangele

As a Language Transformation School the Language of Teaching and Learning to the end of Grade 6 is isiXhosa

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Reading aloud - all pupils are involved in some form of literacy-based activity for 30 minutes at the start of every school day

it is in English. The school does not have sufficient textbooks or class readers to provide one for each pupil but photocopies pages of some texts so that in most instances each pupil is provided with at least a copy of the text that is being read. There is also plenty of evidence in the classrooms that teachers are using a range of strategies to improve the literacy levels of their pupils. There are posters with text and/or word lists everywhere in all classrooms - most of them clearly made either by the teacher or by members of the class. These are nothing fancy and certainly are not expensive to make, but are colourful and effective. Pupils in the Grade 1 class that I visited were working in groups on different activities - as happens in classrooms in this phase. (As a person whose experience has mostly been in high schools I am always astonished at the way in which teacher in the Foundation Phase teachers manage to keep 30 and more pupils happily involved in range of different tasks.) There was a library corner which housed a collection of well worn but still usable readers, a group at the teacher table getting some individual attention, a group practising their word-sounds led by one member of the group who used a pointer to point out the next word for them to sound out and the remaining groups practising either their reading or their writing. Not only were they all very busy but they were also not too distracted by my presence - a clear sign that they were engaged in their work.

What was notable about all the classes that I visited was there was clear evidence that the classrooms were places where the focus was on teaching and learning. Mostly, besides a formal greeting when I entered the class, the lessons continued. Neither the teacher nor the pupils seemed to be too distracted by my presence, even when I took photographs. Clearly at this school (unlike at some others), classroom visits are not seen as a threat by the teachers and, given the relaxed way in which they dealt with my presence, visits by outsiders must be a relatively common occurrence at the school. The person who accompanied me was Joanna Tshaka, a dynamic teacher

Language Transformation

In 2007, the Western Cape Education Department launched its Language Transformation Plan which promotes six years of mother-tongue-based bilingual education and envisages that all learners in the Western Cape will have some basic conversational trilingualism by the end of Grade 9 (the official languages of the Western Cape are English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa). The PED has established 16 project schools, which have adopted this policy, in consultation with their parent bodies. These schools wrote their Literacy tests in isiXhosa. Interestingly, although the option of writing the tests in any one of the three official languages was available to all schools, it was only the project schools that chose this option. Two of the project schools, Zimasa Primary (Quintile 3) and Sakumlandela Primary (Quintile 2), received awards for improvements in their literacy results. There were no awards in this category of school for improvement in numeracy results. Given the fact that this initiative was launched only in August 2007, it is difficult to determine whether the change in the medium of instruction has had any bearing on these results.



Ms Johanna Tshaka listens to the reading of some of her Grade 7 pupils

and the person responsible for the school's ICT systems. She is a past pupil of the school and besides having a teaching qualification, is also a qualified LAN administrator.

The school is part of the Khanya project and has two fully-equipped computer laboratories provided by the project. These are in constant use with every class being given 2 lessons a week in a computer laboratory. One of the classes I visited in a lab - a Grade 8 class - was involved in revision exercises using the CAMI Maths programme. The other was doing some work in geography. In each of the classes that we visited, Joanna engaged with the teachers, discussing what they were doing; further evidence that in this school the hows and whys of teaching form part of the conversations of all staff. When we visited her own class - which was being supervised by

Literacy Leadership Strategies

There are four key elements to improving literacy from a school management perspective.

1 Lead by example

Be a reading role model. Make sure that everybody in your school, including the pupils, knows that you are a person who reads and who considers good literacy levels to be your school's priority. Demonstrate your interest in and love of reading by reading aloud to the school and by talking to pupils and teachers about the books you read and the benefits that can be gained from being literate. Invite pupils to come to read to you or visit classes to listen to them read and to read what they have written and the value that you see in books.

2 Teacher competency:

Make sure that your teachers have the skills and knowledge that they need to teach literacy at the level at which they are required to teach it. This includes knowledge of the subject matter (in this case the language that they are teaching) as well as knowledge of the pedagogy of teaching literacy.

3 Allocation of teaching time:

Insist that sufficient time is allocated each day to literacy on the school timetable. In the Foundation Phase, insist that teachers devote at least the minimum number of stipulated hours to the teaching of literacy each day. If the literacy levels of the pupils at your school are below the expected standards for the grade, then more time should be allocated to the teaching of literacy. Language competence is the key to all other learning, including numeracy, and should be seen as the primary academic responsibility of Foundation Phase teachers.

4 Monitoring compliance and performance

If the pupils of your school are underperforming in terms of their literacy levels (as are the majority of pupils in the Western Cape), then it is imperative that you closely monitor what happens daily in the classrooms of your school. You and the members of your SMT also need to check teacher portfolios and a sample of pupil portfolios regularly to ensure that work complies with and meets the requirements of the National Assessment Standards.



Zimasa is a Khanya School and has two computer laboratories provided by the Khanya Project. The computers are firmly secured in plastic housing. This is a Grade 8 Mathematics class with teacher Ms Nomathamsanqa Fihlani

another member of staff - she was unhappy with the way in which the pupils were phrasing and enunciating their words. I was forgotten for a few minutes while she corrected them and made them re-read the passage several times until they got it correct, to her satisfaction. The piece they were reading was an extract from a play or story involving three characters and she finally brought three pupils up to the front and had them read the piece as characters in context.

Zimasa is not a wealthy school and its pupils come from a wide range of family and socio-economic backgrounds including wealthy business people who live in fine homes to impoverished unemployed who live in shacks. Most come from Langa although for a time some children were bused in from Delft, a squatter camp some distance from Langa, after their shacks in Langa had been destroyed by fire. What the school does have, however, is a number of the essential elements that research has shown to be the key to successful schools. The most important of these



Reading aloud. At the start of the lesson each group took a turn reading aloud from their common reader.



The Grade 1 classroom showing the colourful displays and the seating arrangements of the pupils.

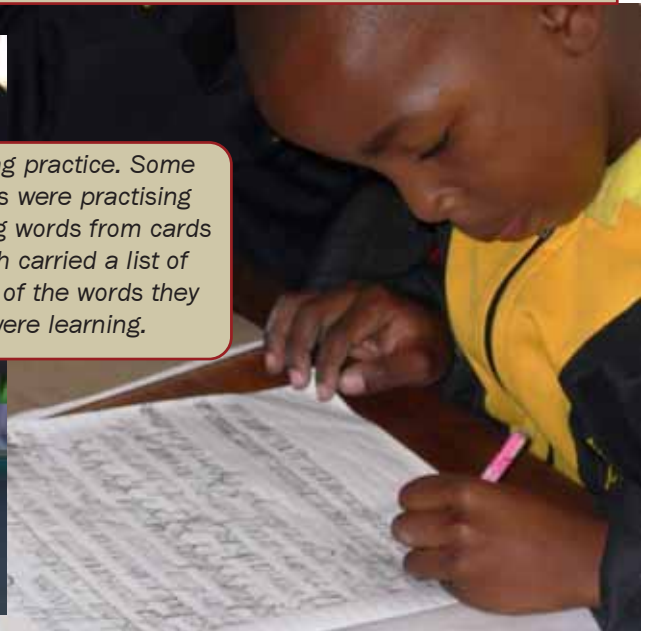


The "mat" group receive individual attention from the teacher. In this instance pupils were being asked questions about the surfaces of a rectangular wooden block.

Teacher, Nomfundo Toleni provided a good example of the kinds of activities that should form part of the daily literacy routine of a Grade 1 class. The classroom is bright and cheerful with range of literacy and numeracy-related posters on the walls. She also has a library / reading corner at the back of the classroom, where pupils have access to a range of age and stage-appropriate readers - all well thumbed from regular use. The tables at which the pupils work are placed in groups, which is how the children work. Each group works on a different task, including some writing and some reading tasks. Each group also spends some time at the front with Ms Toleni and it is during this time that she checks the progress of individual pupils and introduces them to new material. The pictures illustrate some of the activities in which the pupils were involved during the time that we visited her class.



Practising the phonics of isiXhosa. One member of the group pointed to one of the words on the list and the group then had to say the word.



Writing practice. Some pupils were practising copying words from cards which carried a list of some of the words they were learning.

are the quality and commitment of the teachers and of the principal. The principal and teachers at Zimasa are not people that feel that their work ends at the end of the school day or that it is the responsibility of the PED and DoE to take care of all their needs. They take responsibility for the school and the children that are placed in their care. They are also prepared to go out of their way to find and produce the additional resources that they feel they need. It is not by chance that the local community supports this school or that well-qualified local businessmen and professionals serve on its governing body and support the school with additional funds, or that local and international funders provide money for the maintenance of the school's facilities. It is because all these people see that the school provides value for money: that value being the quality of teaching and learning that the pupils enjoy and the success that they achieve when they leave. Other schools could do the same, provided that the people responsible start by doing the right thing. The right thing is teaching and learning and the people responsible are primarily the teachers and the principal. They can make a difference, irrespective of the resources and perhaps when they start making this difference, as has happened at Zimasa and at many other similar schools for that matter, the resources will follow.



Community members Nomathemba Mpashe, Sindiswa Tom, Thembakazi Magelela and Vuyelwa Jameson prepare soup in the school kitchen. Meals are provided each day from the school's own funds for pupil whose parents are unable to provide them with lunch.

WCED Literacy and Numeracy Awards

Improvement in Performance measured in both pass rates and mean scores for the years 2003, 2005 and 2007, in the context within which a school operates.

Improvement in Overall Performance		
School	Quin-tile	% Improve-ment
Heidendal Primary School	2	47.1
Prince Albert Primary School	2	41.1
Karookop Primary School	1	37.4
Rooirivier VGK Primary School	1	29.0
Hazendal Primary School	5	28.7
Ongelegen Primary School	1	27.5
Kommandantsdrift Primary School	1	26.9
Primrose Park Primary School	4	26.9
Plantation Primary School	5	25.9
Lutzville Primary School	1	25.3

Improvement in Numeracy		
School	Quin-tile	% Improve-ment
Sandberg NGK Primary School	1	50.9
Dagbreek Primary School	4	44.5
Augsburg Landbougimnasium	5	42.1
Slanghoek NGK Primary School	3	40.3
Kuilsriver Primary School	4	32.9
Sonop Primary School	1	22.2
Kromland Primary School	1	21.7

Leadership

The importance of taking a long view

With the financial world in crises and politics at home in flux, it is important to remember the value of taking a long view

Frequently, when in the midst of a crisis, we tend to get carried away in the heat of the moment and respond in a way which may not have been appropriate, had we been able to view the situation more objectively from a distance. Most principals will have had the experience of having a teacher storm into their office, threatening to walk out if something is not done about a truculent pupil. This conversation usually includes comments about falling standards and lack of support. Then there are the occasions when an irate parent phones about the unacceptable behaviour of a teacher. Worse are those incidents in which the staff is up in arms about the implementation of the new curriculum or when a child is seriously injured or suffers from some life-threatening illness.

When one is in the centre of the storm, it is difficult to imagine that there may be a calm beyond its perimeter but as leaders we need to be able to do this. One way of doing this is to view the event and your school in an historical perspective and to consider whether the event will have any lasting impact on the school.

An example of how little the traditional model of schooling has been changed by events is Winchester College, considered to be the oldest school in England and also one of the best. The school was founded by William of Wykeham, the Bishop of Winchester and Chancellor to Richard II. The charter of foundation of the school was granted in 1382; the buildings were begun in 1397 and the first pupils (all boys as was the tradition then) began their education at the school in 1394. They were of two kinds: "scholars" and "quiristers" (choristers). There were 70 scholars in the original group and 16 quiristers. This tradition of 70 scholars and 16 quiristers is still in place but to this has been added over 600 "commoners". In the current set-up at the school, all pupils are boarders with 70 scholars and 16 quiristers receiving scholarships which cover part of their fees. The scholars and quiristers are selected from applicants for these positions using admission tests. Scholars and quiristers have their own hostels and there are 10 hostels for the "commoners". This is all very medieval; yet the school remains one of the top academic schools in England. Its motto, "Manners makyth man", is equally medieval and also a little sexist in these times of gender equality but a subtext to the motto goes on to say: "Manners makyth man reminds all who teach and learn at Winchester that civility, intelligent application of sound training and service, whatever the circumstances, are good things in themselves and of genuine value in helping

to make the world a better place". These values are difficult to fault.

Thinking about a school like this helps develop a sense of perspective in what we are constantly being told is a rapidly changing world, particularly when one considers how different the world was when this school was founded. The printing press had yet to be invented – Johan Gutenberg was born only in 1396. The earth was believed to be the centre of the universe – Copernicus was born only in 1473 and Galileo first faced the inquisition for his views on astronomy in 1615. The Europeans had yet to discover America and Australia and it would be more than 100 years before Vasco da Gama rounded the Cape. For most of the first 100 years after the school was founded, the English were engaged in civil war – the Wars of the Roses started in 1455, were at war with the French or were fighting the crusades. The next 100 years were not much better. There was no Shakespeare or Bach or running water (let alone water-borne sewerage!) or coffee or tea in Europe at that time. Calculus had yet to be invented and the symbols + and – came into common use only in 1489. One wonders what the boys at Winchester College learnt.

Besides wars, they also faced pestilence and famine. Between 1618 and 1648, the population of Germany declined from 17 million to 8 million as a result of war, famine and the plague. In 1563, 20 000 people (of a total population of 180 000) died of the plague in London and a further 68 596 died in the Great Plague or 1655. This was followed by the Great Fire of London which destroyed most of the city in the following year. Clearly there have been some changes in the world during the more than 600 years that Winchester College has stood.

So next time you are faced with a crisis in your school, it may be worth recalling the long history – and survival as a school of note - of Winchester College and seeing the problem in a realistic perspective of the past, the world outside the school gates and the school's long-term future.

It is not only in dealing with crises that it helps to take a long view. It also helps to take at least a three to five-year view when preparing your school's budget.

Subject and sports heads as well as those involved in maintaining and developing the school's ICT system also need to plan with a longer-term view than a single school year. Encouraging them to use this kind of planning, together with rigorous stock control, will help the school to build up stocks of textbooks to the extent that classes

Literacy

The Bitou project

Literacy improvement strategies at seven schools in the Bitou district focus on emergent Literacy and the need for extended writing

have access to textbooks from more than one publisher and that a wider variety of readers are available to pupils. The same would apply to the use and availability of sports equipment. Those responsible for ICT should develop a system of planned obsolescence for equipment, with older PCs and printers being made available to pupils and teachers who require little more from a PC than its word-processing or spreadsheet functions.

The aspect of the school where the long-term planning is most important is in the development of the school's physical infrastructure – the additional classrooms, laboratories, libraries and sporting facilities that the school hopes to build at some future date. Before any major building operations are planned, invite stakeholder representatives of all groups within the school to a planning session to brainstorm a wish list of the things the school would like to have at some future date. This kind of exercise should normally be part of a process used to develop the school's strategic plan but can be done as a separate exercise. The exercise should involve not only listing the items but also in arranging the list in order of priority. The next step is to ask an architect or some similar competent and qualified person to use the school's site plan to establish the best places to site each of the items. In doing so, the designers will also look at usage and traffic flow (pupil traffic from venue to venue) and make sure that when the items are eventually built, their designs contribute not only to the effective and efficient use of the new facilities but also - if they are good at their job - to the overall aesthetic appeal of the school. This a valuable exercise and schools that have not done this prior to the construction of some addition have often found that what was to have been valuable resource is underused because of where it is sited or that its siting becomes a major obstacle to some future development.

One last point regarding adopting a long-term view: build using the best materials and best quality you can afford. If your school is to last for 600 years you need to make sure, in the words of Jim Collins that it is "built to last".

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In the JET Education Services Bulletin No. 191 of April 2008, Nick Taylor, the CEO of Jet Education services writes about the work that Jet has been doing with a group of schools in the Bitou municipality - better known as Plettenberg Bay, the holiday playground of some of this country's wealthiest citizens. The municipality, which is at the extreme eastern edge of Western Cape, is also home to some of our poorest families.

In 2004, two literacy "experts", Marlene Rousseau and Beulah Foley, began working with seven Bitou primary schools in an effort to improve their literacy levels. They identified two key strategies for successful literacy teaching: frequent reading by pupils with an emphasis on reading for meaning; and writing, which they see as the key to the development of literacy.

Their approach is based on the emergent literacy model of language acquisition. The notion of emergent literacy first came into use in the early 1980s and became firmly entrenched following the publication of "Emergent Literacy: Writing and Reading" by Teale and Sulzby in 1986. The term was used to distinguish what was then a new approach to the teaching of literacy which differed from the more traditional approach of the day, which was based on the theoretical concept of reading readiness. The latter approach suggested that children should be taught to read only once they were sufficiently mature to read, that they needed to be taught a series of prerequisite skills prior to reading and that writing should be delayed until children were reading conventionally.

The theory underpinning the emergent reading model suggests that children learn to read and write as a part of a developmental process which starts at birth and continues to the age of 5 or 6 when children are in pre-schools and their first years of formal schooling. In terms of this model, literacy development is promoted by providing children with rich sensory experiences by reading to them, through story-telling, through the use of illustrations and by encouraging them to tell and recount stories based on their own experience and what they may have remembered from what they has been read to them. Writing is also encouraged even if initially it is seemingly meaningless scribbles. Play and the acting out of events and stories are seen as important parts of this process. One of the advantages of the emergent literacy model is that it helps explain why children from disadvantaged and poorly resourced environments fall so behind their peers from more advantaged and resource-rich homes. It also provides a clear indication of the kinds of strategies and resources that need to be provided if the education

system is to help children from disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome their initial setback in life.

In their work with the seven Bitou schools, Rousseau and Foley focus on the use of both narrative (story-telling) and informative (information-providing) text in the belief that text lies at the heart of learning to read and write. The sources of the stories are varied: some are provided by the children themselves, some by the teacher and some come from books that they read either independently or in groups. Stories told by the children are first written on the board by the teacher to help them make the link between the story and the text. The same approach is used where children provide information. The children are also encouraged to write about what they have read and experienced because writing is seen both to advance their reading skills and to develop their cognitive skills. Their learning grows as they search for words and syntax to tell their story or express their feelings. The children are encouraged to read and write from their very first weeks in Grade 1, even if their initial efforts are mostly illegible and meaningless. Practice and encouragement are seen to be critical elements in developing their emerging literacy skills.

Part of Jet's involvement in the process was to evaluate the extent to which the efforts made and strategies used had made a difference. One of the things that they did was to analyse the quantity and quality of the writing undertaken by Grade 3 children. This was done by counting the number of written exercises in the language workbooks of the best learner in each class observed. The writing was classified as 'simple' if it consisted only of words or sentences and 'extended' if it was in the form of paragraphs or longer.

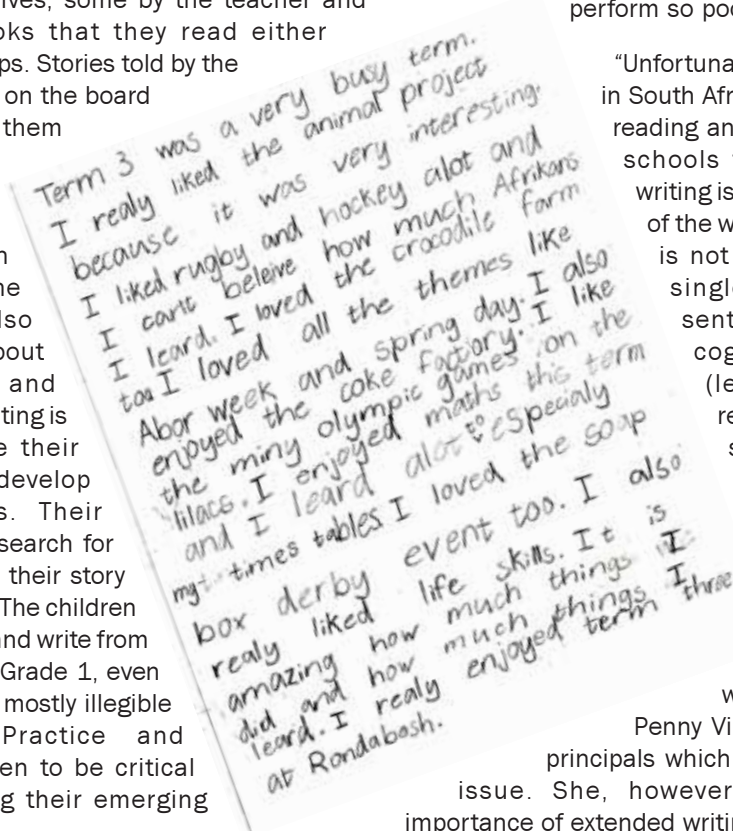
The researchers were particularly interested in the number of extended passages written by the children. The extended passages consisted of stories, description, expressive passages and transactional writing such as letters. Extended passages are seen to be important because they contain complex thoughts and therefore require more complex language structures.

The Jet researchers compared the performance of each of the seven schools in the WCED's Grade 3 Literacy tests

with the quality and quantity of writing undertaken by each of the schools. A graph of these results shows a close correlation between the number of extended passages written over the year and the overall literacy achievement of the pupil in the test. The association between total writing and achievement is less clear. Nick Taylor, the author of the article, makes clear his own opinion of why the majority of children perform so poorly in literacy tests:

"Unfortunately, the majority of children in South African schools do far too little reading and writing. Even in the Bitou schools the amount of extended writing is small in most schools. Most of the writing our children do, which is not a lot in total, consists of single words or isolated sentences involving very low cognitive skills. At Grade 3 (level) children should be reading and writing in every subject every day. They should be doing up to three pieces of extended writing per week."

Interestingly, a similar view about the value of extended writing was expressed by DDG: FET Penny Vinjevoid in her meeting with principals which we reported on in the last issue. She, however, was emphasising the importance of extended writing for pupils in high schools and particularly in Grades 10 – 12. There is good evidence from research that supports the value of extended writing. Principals, curriculum advisors and subject heads should insist that effective literacy strategies, including extended writing, are a core element of all language classes. In primary schools, literacy development should be the central element of all teaching and should occupy the majority of time in every classroom on every school day.



The children are also encouraged to write about what they have read and experienced because writing is seen both to advance their reading skills and to develop their cognitive skills.

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Language equity in schools

A recent judgement by the Equality Court of the Durban Magistrate's Court has important implications for the DoE, PEDs and schools in the way in which they formulate and apply language policies.

A recent judgement by the Equality Court of the Durban Magistrate's Court has some important implications for the DoE and PEDs as well as for schools in the way in which they formulate and apply their language policies.

The complainant in the case was N.R. Nkosi, CEO of the Pan African Language Board, whose son who was a pupil at Durban High School. Her complaint revolved around the school's language policy and its failure to provide her son with option of receiving tuition through his mother tongue which is isiZulu and of being able to study isiZulu as a subject at either Home Language level (LLC1) or 1st Additional Language level (LLC2).

At the time of her original complaint, when her son was enrolled in Grade 8 at the school, the language policy of the school made provision for the following:

- English as the language of teaching and learning. In his submission at the time of the trial the principal submitted that English was the home language of between 80% and 90% of pupils enrolled at the school. This was not disputed.
- In Grade 8 and 9, Afrikaans was offered as a First Additional Language (LLC2) and isiZulu was offered as a Second Additional Language (LLC3). As an optional subject, the number of lessons allocated to isiZulu was also fewer than the number allocated to Afrikaans.
- In Grades 10 – 12 both Afrikaans and isiZulu were offered as First Additional Languages (LLC1).

In giving judgement, the magistrate identified 3 issues as being pertinent to the case:

- Was the language policy adopted by DHS discriminatory of the complainant?
- If discriminatory, on what grounds was the discrimination based?
- If discriminatory, was such discrimination fair or unfair?

In clarifying the legal position, the magistrate quoted from the Constitution, constitutional case law, the National Language Policy Framework, and from the

Promotion of Equality and Prevention of Unfair Discrimination Act (Equality Act). The finding, in terms of this legislation, was that the complainant and her son had been discriminated against by the language policy in comparison to other language groups in that:

- pupils whose home language was English who were in Grade 8 in 2007 were afforded the benefit and opportunity to study their home language at Home Language level (LLC1)
- pupils whose home language was Afrikaans who were in Grade 8 in 2007 were afforded the opportunity and benefit of studying the home language at First Additional Language level (LLC2)
- the complainant and her son were not afforded these same opportunities and her son was able to study his home language only at Second Additional Language Level (LLC3), which is the lowest level of language tuition on offer.

...the discrimination suffered by the complainant in relation to those boys who speak English as Home Language was fair in the prevailing circumstances.

The form of discrimination falls within the definition of discrimination in terms of the Equality Act.

The magistrate then went on to rule on whether the form of discrimination outlined constituted fair or unfair discrimination. It was found that the discrimination suffered by the complainant in relation to those boys who speak English as Home Language was fair in the prevailing circumstances. This decision was based on the fact that the school had traditionally catered for pupils whose home language was English and that the overwhelming majority of pupils at the school had English as a home language. The school's policy of offering Afrikaans at LLC2 level and isiZulu at LLC3 level was, however, ruled as being unfair.

Part of the reason for this was that no evidence was led to suggest that the number of pupils who spoke Afrikaans as their home language was significantly different from the

number of pupils who spoke isiZulu as their home language.

The court was not prepared to make a finding on whether the school should provide isiZulu at Home Language level, despite a request to do so from the advocate representing the complainant. The magistrate ruled that in doing so the court would be expecting the

school “to meet an ideal standard which no school in the province or in the country meets”.

It is worth noting that prior to this ruling, DHS made changes to its language policy and both Afrikaans and isiZulu are now offered at LLC2 level in Grades 8 and 9.

Reference

Judgement: Equality Court of the Durban Magistrate's Court. Case 77/2007. In the case between NR Nkosi (complainant) and Mrs Vermaak: Deputy-Principal - First Respondent and Durban High School Governing Body - Second Respondent. 30 September 2008

Lessons for Schools

There are lessons for all schools from the Equity Court ruling on the application of language policies at DHS

There are lessons in this for all schools whose pupil body includes speakers of two or more different home languages, particularly if there is no home language group which is dominant in terms of pupil numbers.

- If there is no dominant home language group then, in terms of this ruling, the school should offer, as far as is possible, tuition in the home language of the dominant groups, i.e. the school may be obliged to offer two or even three Languages of Learning and Teaching (LOLTs)
- If there is no dominant home language group, a school is obliged to offer language instruction at LLC1 level for the major language groups represented in the school
- All pupils whose home language is not the LOLT of the school and cannot be accommodated at LLC1 level in their home language must be offered at LLC2 level
- In practical terms and based on this ruling, one must assume that LLC3 level language offerings must be seen as “optional” subject offerings and that they cannot be offered as substitutes for LLC2 level languages.



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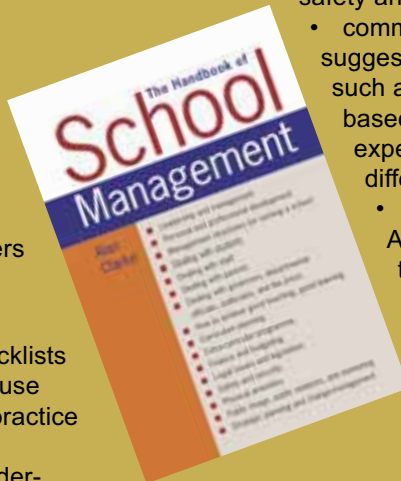
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of 30 Grade R pupils. The minimum requirements are listed in an annexure to the document. The recommended learner-teacher ratio is 30: 1 and the recommended minimum qualification for a Grade R educator is ECD NQF Level 4 unit standards. The funding of Grade R should be at least 70% of the per pupil funding allocation of a Grade 1 pupil at the specific school.

References

Government Notice 26: South African Schools Act (84/1996): Norms and Standards for Grade R Funding. GG 30679 of 18 January 2008.

Guidelines for costing basic minimum package of Grade R inputs (June 2008) from www.education.gov.za

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