

# Management & Leadership

POLICY ■ LEADERSHIP ■ MANAGEMENT ■ GOVERNANCE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

## New year, new curriculum policy

**B**y the time you receive this, the first edition of 2012, you will be well into the first term of 2012 and, we hope, well on your way to achieving your goals for the 2012 school year.

Most of this edition, as is usual for the first edition of the school year, is devoted to an analysis of the 2011 National Senior Certificate results. Our analysis is based on three reports, the National Diagnostic Report on Learner Performance, the School Performance Analysis Report and the Technical Report, all published by the DBE soon after the results were released and which are available on its website. Taken together, these reports provide a comprehensive overview of the entire examination process as well as a fairly detailed data set of the results at subject, school, district, province and national level. Unfortunately, in our view, there are also some shortcomings, particularly in the School Performance Analysis Report, which is filled with errors, and the Diagnostic Report on Learner Performance, which, although helpful, could have provided more detailed data on the distribution of marks in each subject.

The errors in the School Performance Analysis Report mostly appear to relate to the incorrect allocation of data sets to individual schools so that the results assigned to some schools are not those of their candidates. The data provided is also limited to three items, the number of candidates who wrote, the number who passed, and the pass percentage for each of the years 2009, 2010 and 2011. If the DBE wants to champion good results, and particularly results that permit admission to tertiary study, it should also include the percentage of learners from each school who achieve a Bachelor's-level pass.

The Diagnostic Report on Learner Performance is probably the report that contains the most useful data for schools because it includes a fairly detailed question-by-question analysis of learner performance in those subjects that were written by the majority of candidates. Common errors are also identified and recommendations are made for improved learner performance. Unfortunately, the data on learner performance that is provided for each subject is limited to the number and percentage of learners who wrote, the number who wrote and passed at the 30% level and the number who wrote and passed at the 40% level with nothing about how candidates' marks were distributed at the 50%, 60%, 70% and 80–100% levels. It appears once again from this that the DBE is more interested in the performance of learners at the most basic level rather than at the levels that matter in terms of the future prospects of candidates.

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## SM&L

Is published five times a year by Ednews. It seeks to provide the leaders of South African schools with current and relevant information on issues of policy, leadership, management and governance.

# Are we making progress as a nation?

The usual hullabaloo followed the release of the 2011 NSC results by Minister Angie Motshekga on 5 January with claims and counterclaims about whether the 70,2% pass rate represented real progress or had any meaning at all. We tried to answer the question ourselves using the data we have collected over the past few years from the various reports that the DBE and Umalusi produce each year on the NSC examinations. For 2011 we used data provided in three reports published by the DBE soon after the release of the 2011 NSC results. The reports, which can be downloaded from the DBE website [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za), are:

- Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination 2011: National Diagnostic Report on Learner Performance
- Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination 2011: School Performance Analysis
- Report on the National Senior Certificate Examination 2011: Technical Report

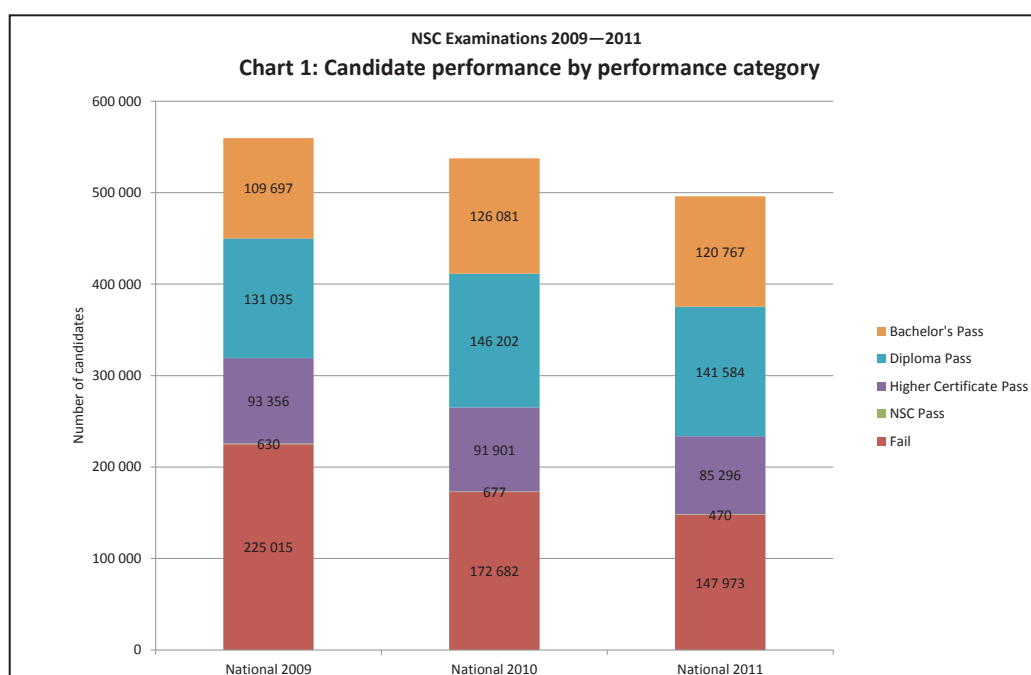
The focus of our analysis was on the NSC examinations for the period 2009 to 2011, because 2009 was the first year in which Grade 12 candidates were examined on the 'new' National Curriculum Statement. While most of the public discussion and debate has been about pass rates, which everyone understands to mean the percentage of learners who meet the minimum requirements for the awarding of a National Senior

Certificate, we have focussed our enquiry more on the absolute number of candidates who meet the requirements for each of the different levels at which a NSC is awarded. Our reason for this is simple and is based on the assumption that the economic and social progress of this nation depends on having a sufficient supply of young people equipped with the competence, skills and ambition to meet its current and future needs. The question therefore is not 'What percentage of candidates passed with an NSC at Bachelor's level?' but rather 'Are there sufficient young people exiting the system with a Bachelor's level pass?' and 'Are they sufficiently skilled and knowledgeable in the critical "gateway" subjects?' The data, graphics and commentary that follow go some way to providing answers to these questions.

### The big picture – the numbers that passed

#### Chart 1: Distribution of candidates by performance category

The chart illustrates the distribution of candidate numbers in each of the five NSC performance categories. The chart illustrates quite clearly that there has been a steady decline in the total number of candidates (represented by the total height of each bar). The total number of candidates who wrote the examinations in 2011 was less than in 2009, which represents a decline of more than 10%. This matter should be of considerable concern to the education

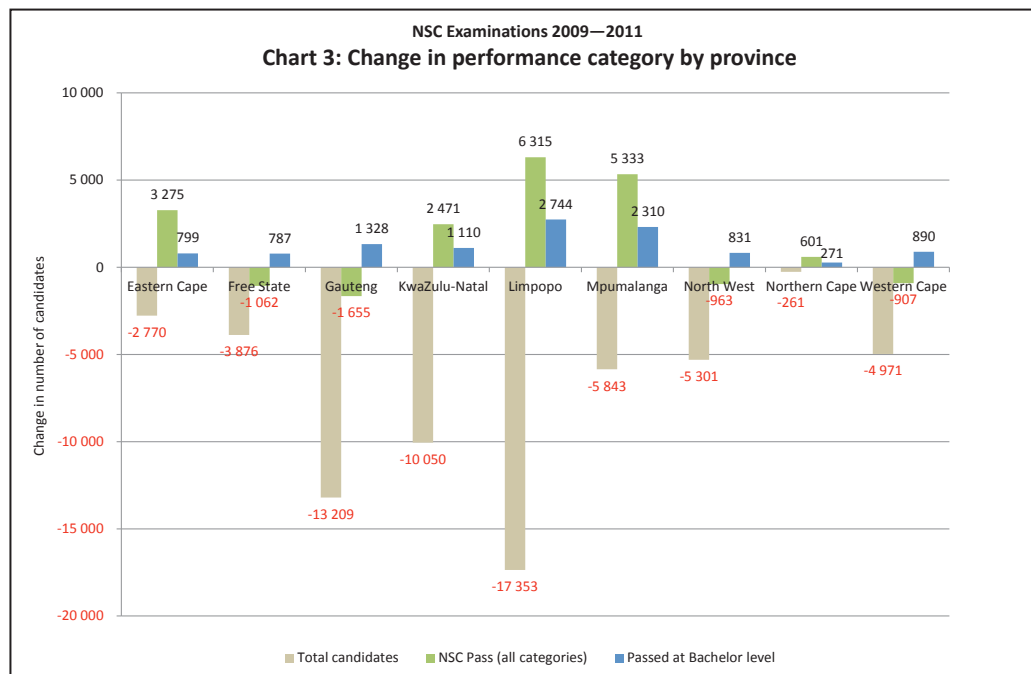
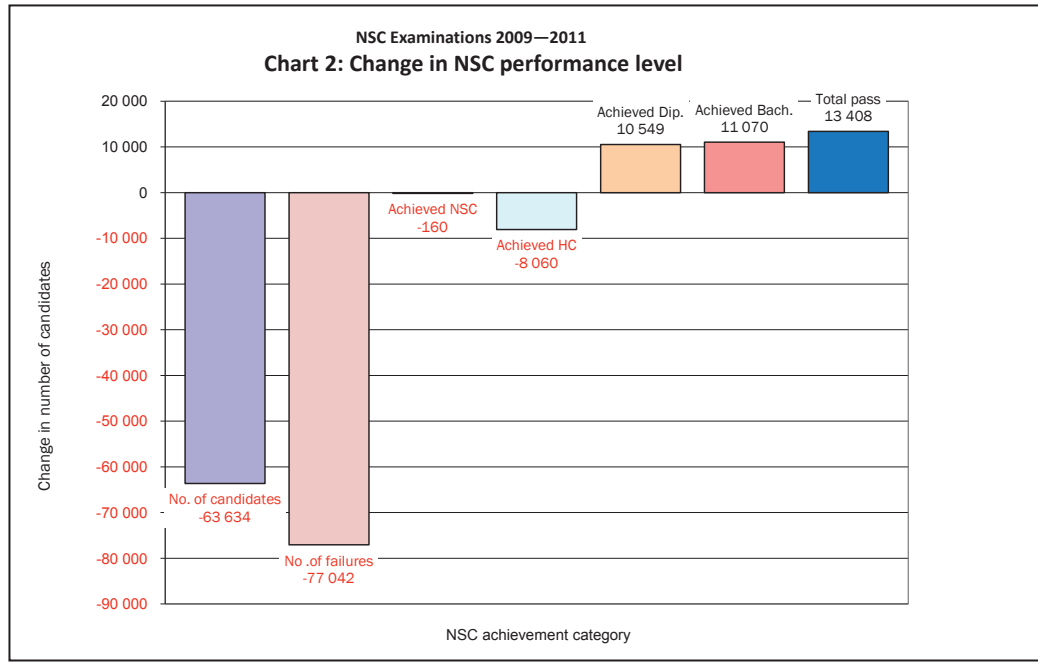


departments (both the DBE and DHE) and ways need to be found to provide those who are exiting the system before they reach Grade 12 with other education and training options. However, the chart also shows that the picture is not all doom and gloom. Not only has there been a steady decline in the overall number of failures – probably because savvy principals, aided

and abetted by district officials, are keeping back learners who they consider to be potential failures – but there has also been an absolute increase in the number of candidates who have passed with the two highest categories of pass, from 2009 to 2011. These changes are better illustrated in Chart 2.

**Chart 2: Change in candidate performance category**

This chart illustrates how the numbers of candidates at each performance level has changed between 2009 and 2011. There has been an increase in three important categories: more candidates have passed, more candidates have passed with a Higher Certificate and more candidates have passed with a Bachelor-level pass.

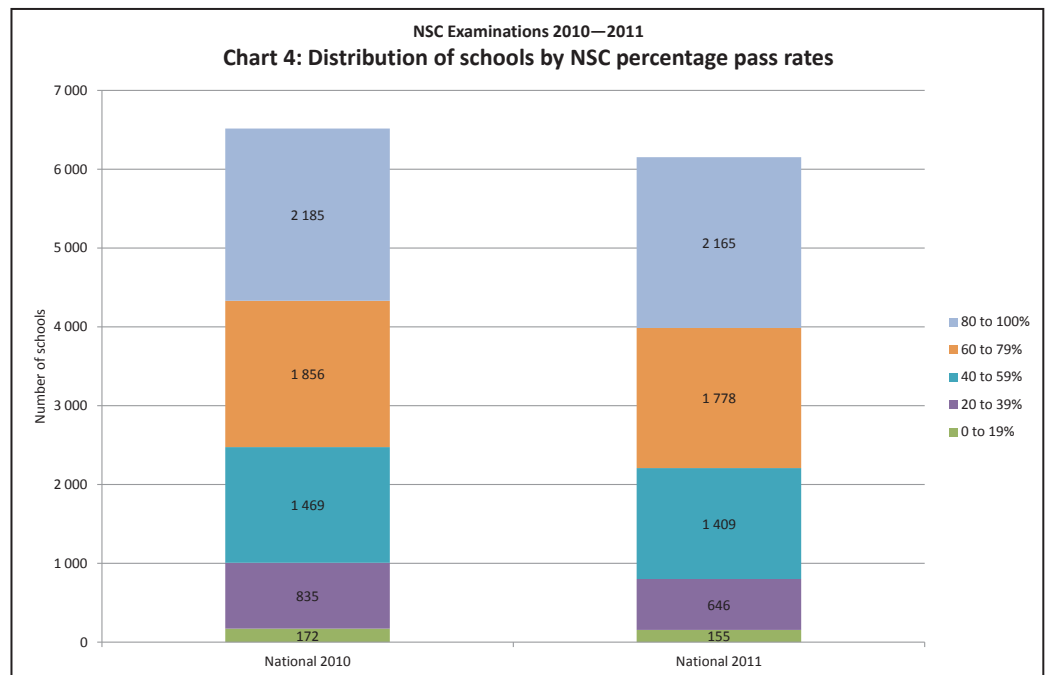


**Chart 3: Change in candidate performance category by province**

This chart illustrates how candidate numbers have changed between 2009 and 2011 in each of the nine provinces. It shows quite clearly that there has been an absolute decline in candidate numbers in every province, but it also shows that the number of candidates passing has increased in most provinces (Free State, Gauteng, North West and the Western Cape being the exceptions), and that there has been an absolute increase in the number of Bachelor-level passes in every province. Are there lessons to be learned from this? Does it perhaps mean with the weaker candidates out of the way teachers are able to provide better support to the stronger candidates?

**Chart 4: Distribution of schools by NSC percentage pass rates**

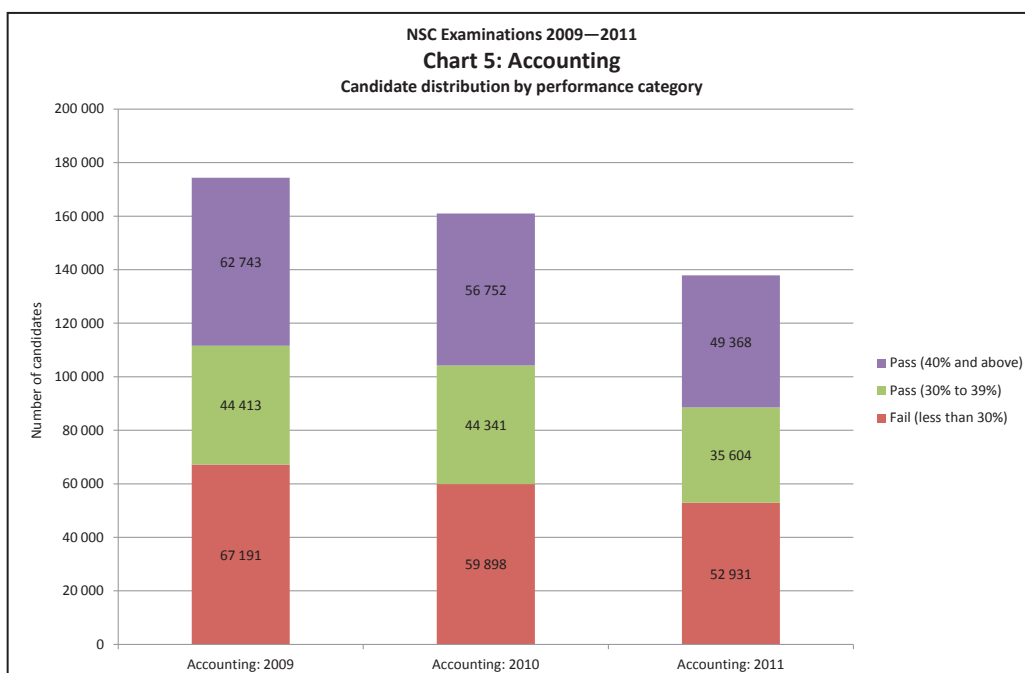
Our analysis of the data set us wondering about the overall performance of schools and the part that they might play in the changes that we had observed. Unfortunately, we only have data from 2010 and 2011 for this chart that illustrates how schools are distributed in terms of the percentage of their learners that pass the NSC examinations. Unfortunately, there is no information readily available on different categories of NSC performance for schools. It is interesting to note that there are fewer schools in every pass category, which begs two questions: ‘Is the decline in candidate numbers a result of fewer candidates entering Grade 12 or is it due to the fact that there are fewer schools?’ and ‘What has happened to the 364 schools that entered candidates in 2010 but not in 2011?’



**What is happening at subject level?**

Subject-level results are another useful indicator of how the system is performing and we have analysed the subject-level data provided by the DBE in one of their technical reports. Unfortunately, meaningful subject-level data is not provided for all subjects and the data that is available only provides information at three performance levels; fail (less than 30%), pass (30% to 39%) and pass (40% and above). This is

the data that we have used to produce the following charts. More data may be forthcoming later in the year for selected subjects if the same system is followed as in 2011, when the DBE published a report in April that provided the code distribution for all seven codes for the subjects covered in the report. We are also hoping that Umalusi will publish a technical report on their analysis and adjustments to the results.

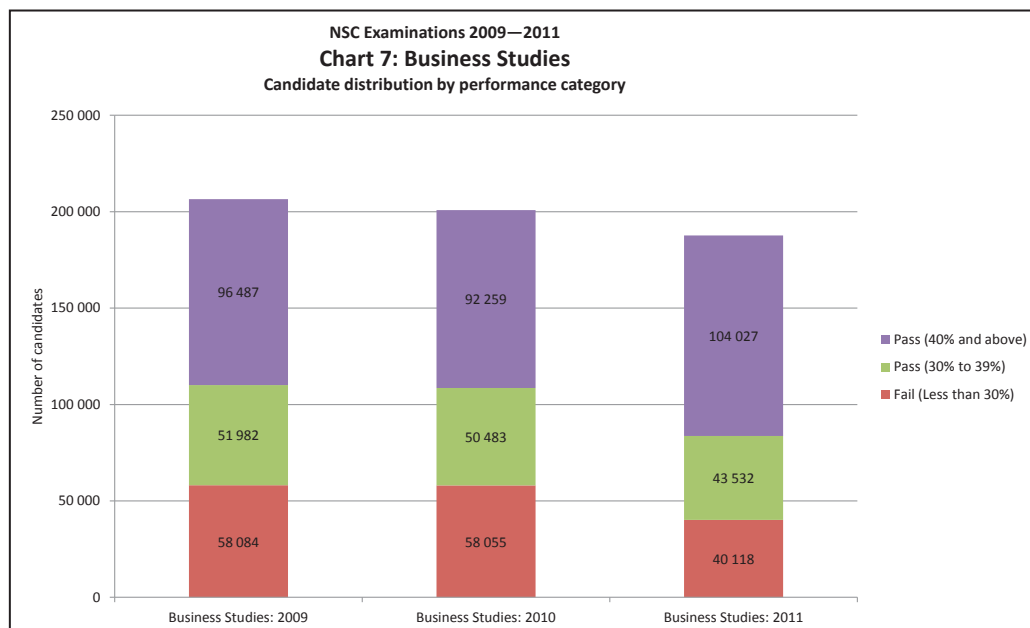
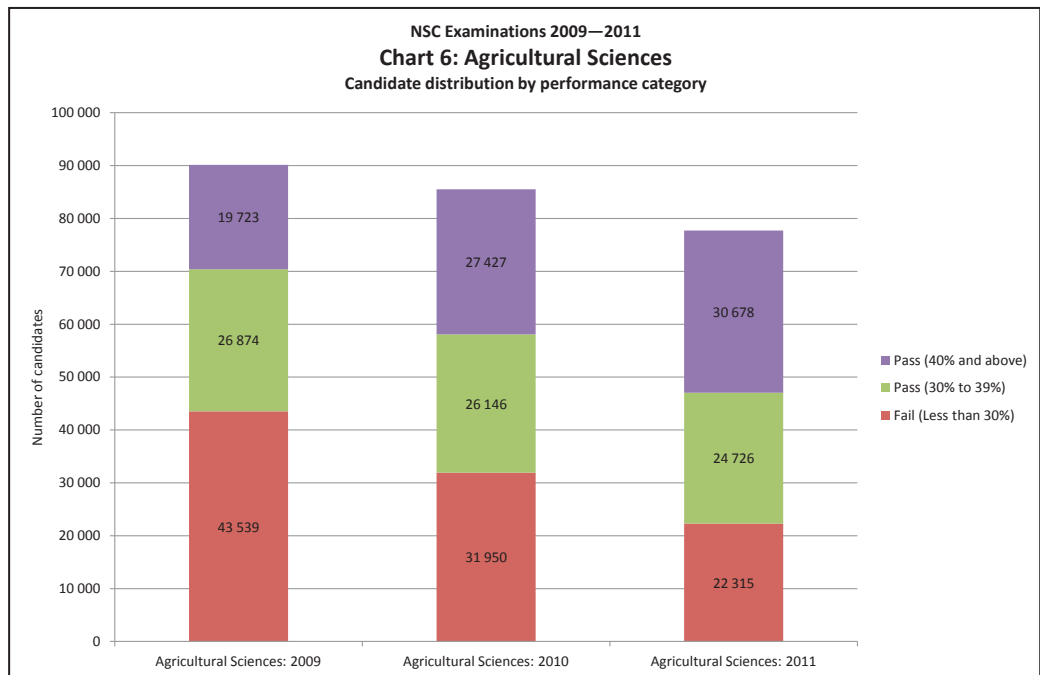


**Chart 5: Accounting**

This chart clearly shows the decline in candidate numbers across the three-year period as well as a very significant decline in the number of candidates who pass Accounting with 40% or more. The declining numbers are probably a consequence of a high failure rate over successive years, which will have discouraged learners from selecting the subject. Poorly qualified teachers are likely to be a major contributory factor.

**Chart 6: Agricultural Sciences**

The decline in candidate numbers in Agricultural Sciences shows a similar pattern to that of Accounting but there is one difference; the number of candidates who pass the subject with 40% or more shows real growth, with the 2011 figure representing a 55% growth in numbers relative to 2009.

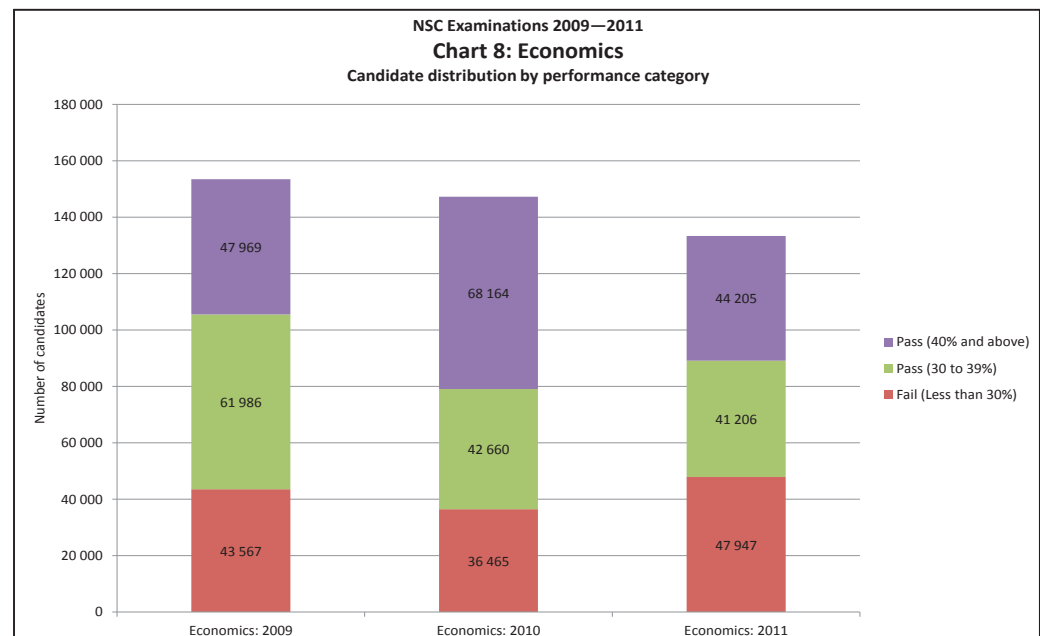


**Chart 7: Business Studies**

The pattern of declining numbers is again evident in this chart. However, this is balanced by the significant increase in the number of candidates who pass Business Studies with 40% or more.

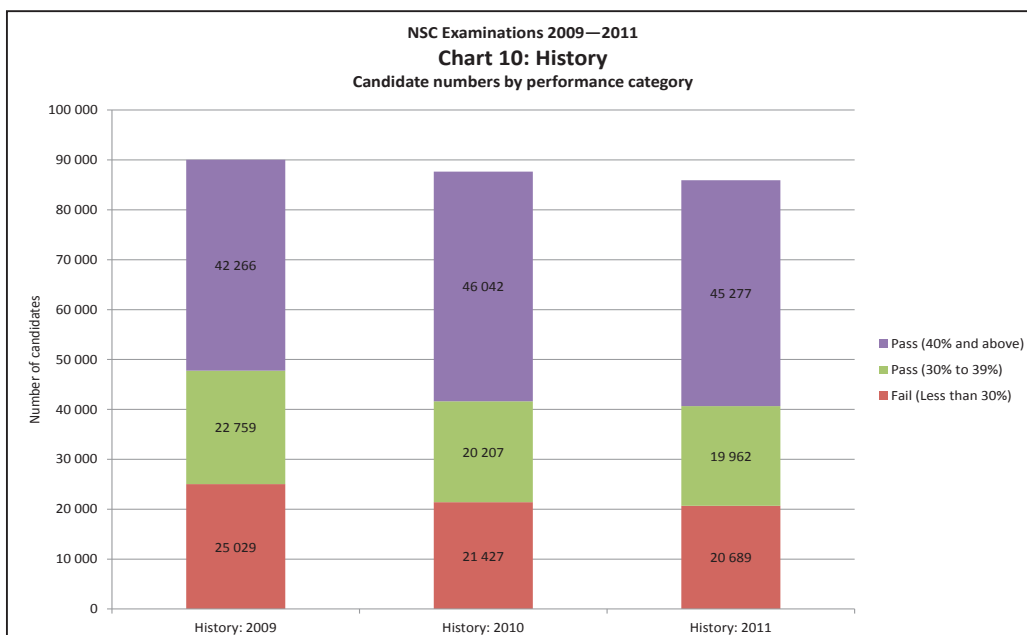
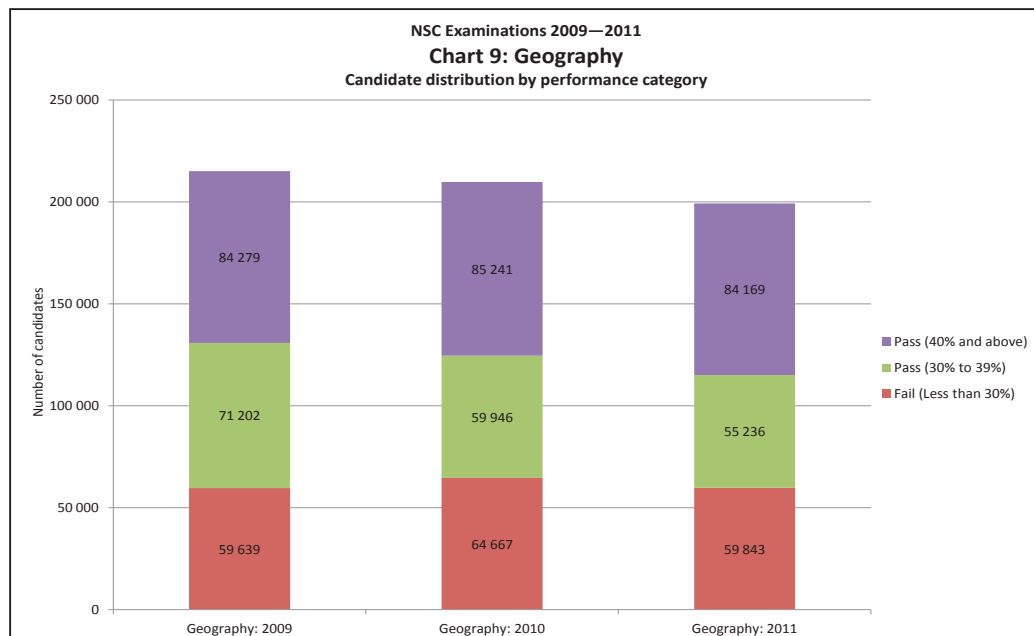
**Chart 8: Economics**

The decline in candidate numbers is repeated once again in Economics. The variation in the pass rate from year to year is a concern and suggests that there may be inconsistencies in the setting and marking of Economics papers.



**Chart 9: Geography**

The decline in numbers is once again evident, although the number of passes and passes of 40% and above appears to be stable.

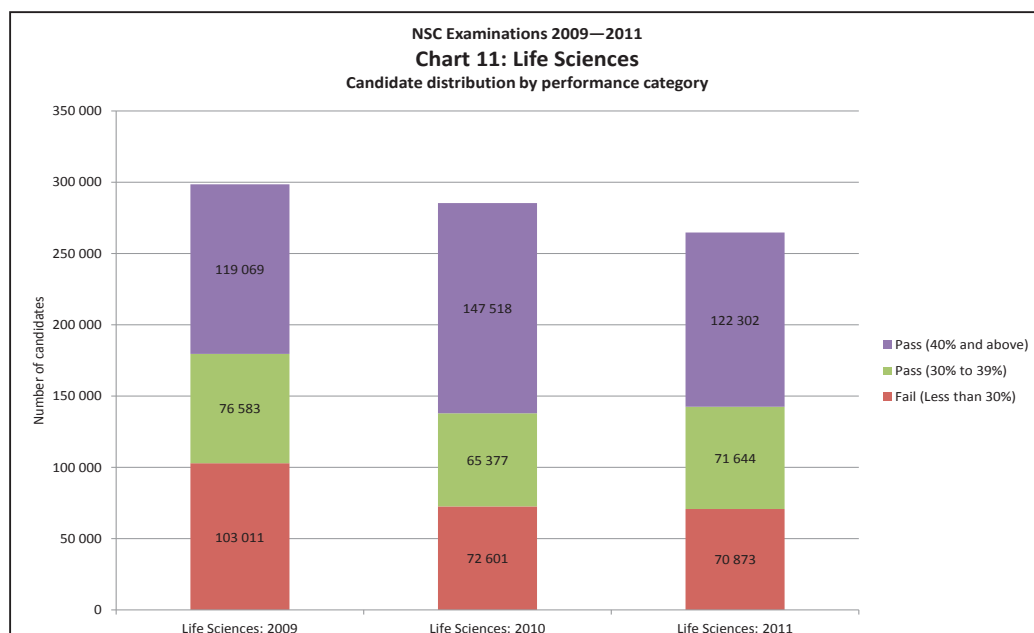


**Chart 10: History**

The decline in the number of candidates writing History is less significant than for most of the other subjects. The proportion of candidates scoring 40% and above is also much higher for History than for most other non-language subjects.

**Chart 11: Life Sciences**

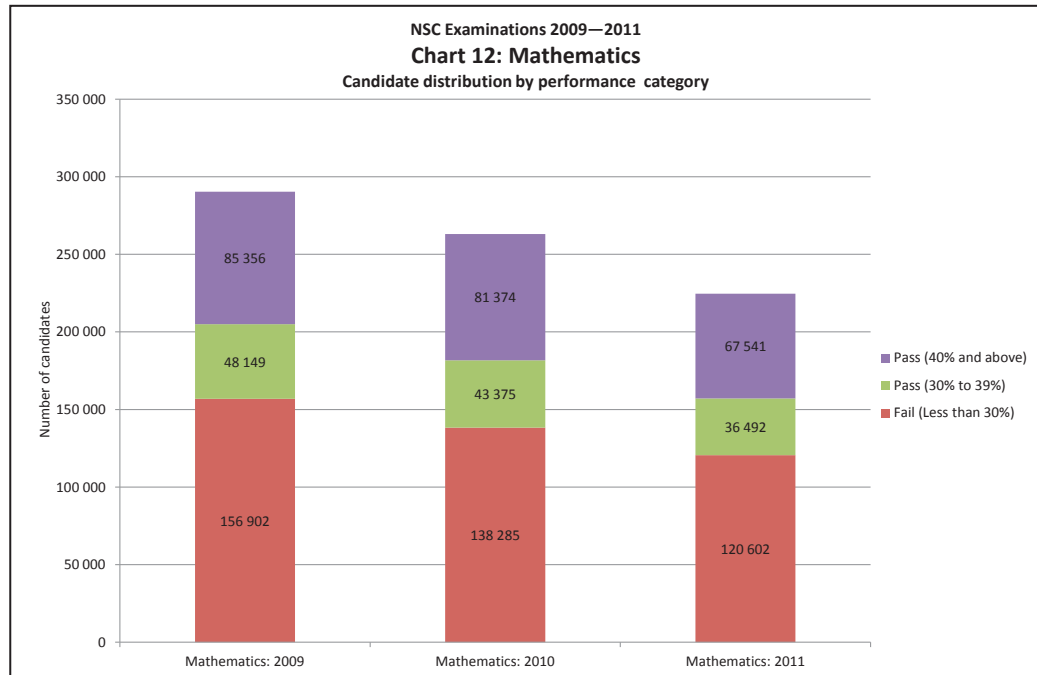
Of the subjects included here, Life Sciences shows one of the greatest declines in the overall number of candidates over the three-year period. The number of candidates who pass in each of the three years in each of the two performance categories listed also suggests that there are inconsistencies in the standards of the papers and/or in the marking.



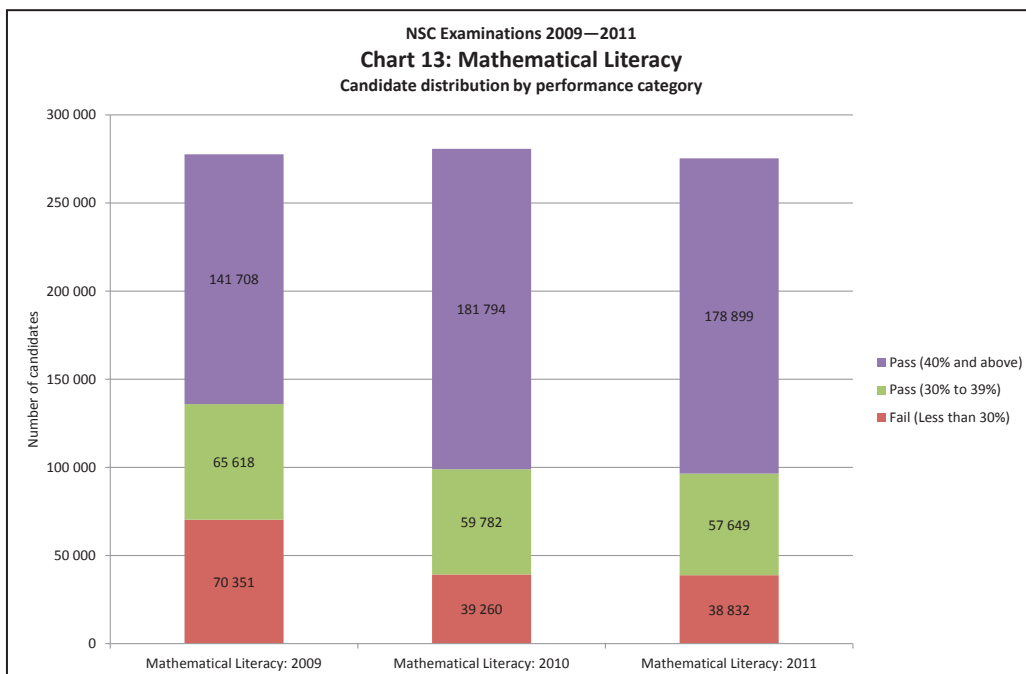


**Chart 12: Mathematics**

The massive declines in the number of candidates offering Mathematics and in the numbers that have passed Mathematics with a mark of 40% or more should set alarm bells ringing in the DBE. In 2011, 36 200 fewer candidates wrote Mathematics and 17 815 fewer passed with a mark of 40% or more, than did so in 2009. Interestingly the proportion that passed with 40% or more relative to the number who wrote is almost identical for the two years.



*There has been a steady decline in the total number of candidates. The total number of candidates who wrote the examinations in 2011 was less than in 2009, which represents a decline of more than 10%. There is a need for more rigorous standards against which the performance of candidates and schools are measured.*

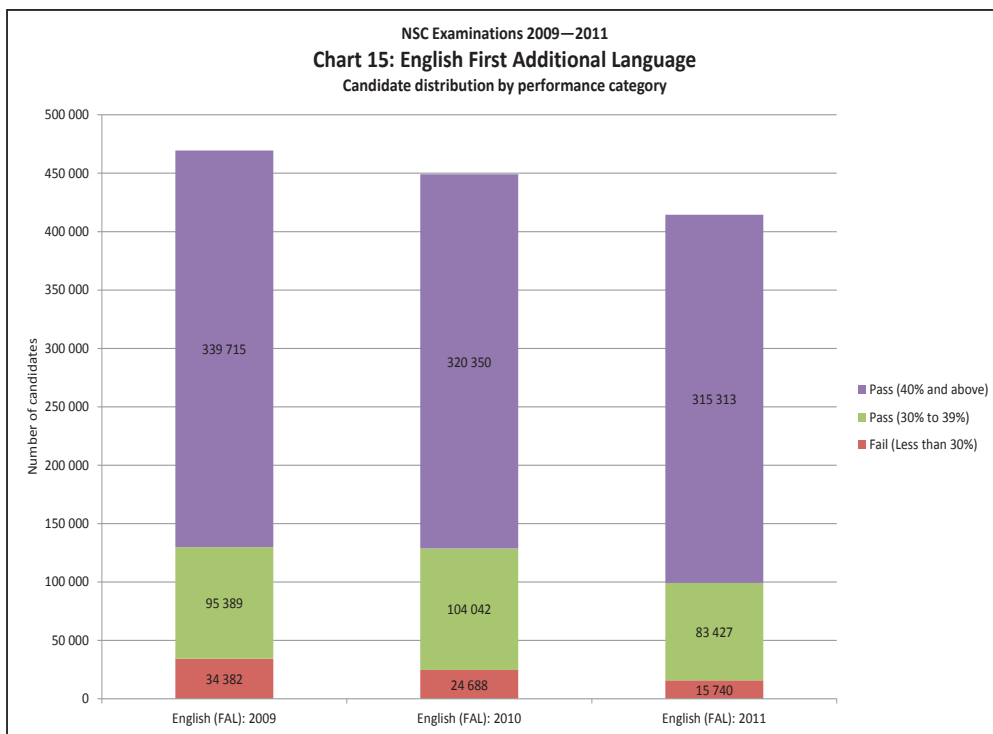
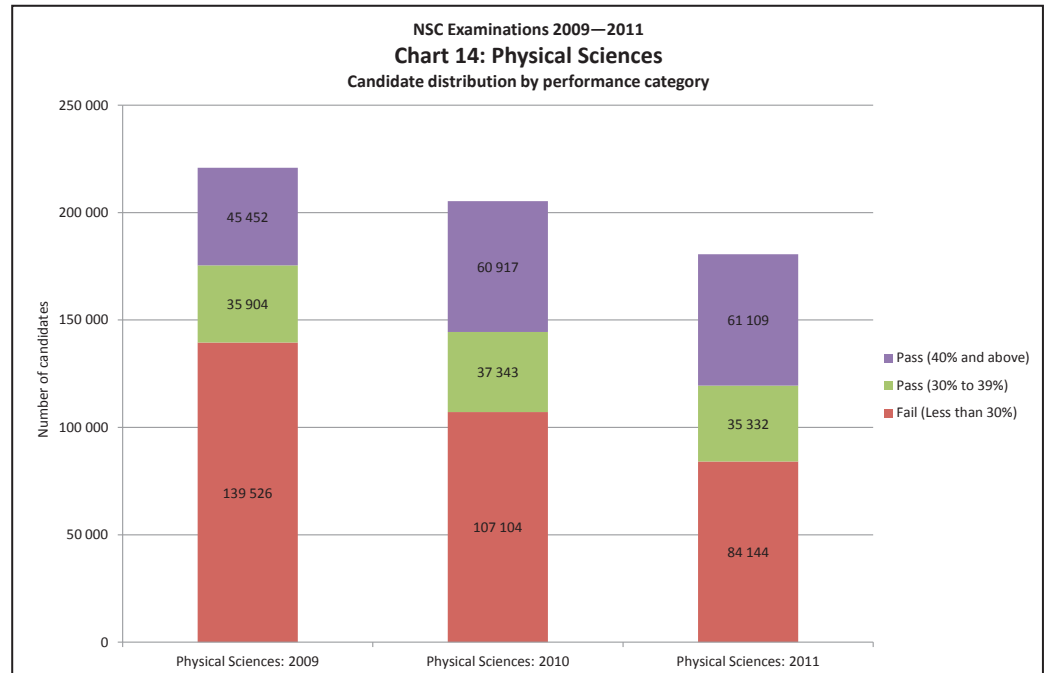


**Chart 13: Mathematical Literacy**

The graphic for Mathematical Literacy is at odds with all of the others and shows that there has been very little change in the number of candidates who wrote the subject across the three years. There has also been a significant increase (37 191) in the number of candidates who passed with 40% or more. This provides clear evidence that schools are ‘encouraging’ weaker candidates to select Mathematical Literacy rather than Mathematics. The number of candidates who failed Mathematical Literacy in 2011 was also relatively few with only History, Agricultural Sciences and English (FAL) recording fewer failures – we have only considered subjects listed in the report.

**Chart 14: Physical Sciences**

In a similar way to Mathematics, Physical Sciences has shown a stark decline in the number of candidates offering the subject, with 55 382 fewer candidates writing the subject in 2011 than did so in 2009. There is some good news, however, as the number who passed with 40% or more, increased by 15 657, which is a substantial improvement.



**Chart 15: English First Additional Language**

English (FAL) is the only language included in this report, and it was no doubt included because it is the language offered by the largest number of candidates. The steady decline in the number of candidates is once again well illustrated in this graphic. What the graphic does not reveal but which our analysis did show was that there was a decline of 3,5% in the failure rate across the period and a small but similar increase of 3,7% in the number of learners who passed with 40% or more.

So what can we conclude from all of this? The answer we fear is that not much that really matters has changed. Yes the overall pass rate has improved but that is more likely to be a product of the system responding to the pressure to achieve high pass rates by culling candidates before they reach Grade 12. Perhaps it is time for the minister and her department to start using other and more sophisticated measures of success. Examples could include the number of candidates who pass and who achieve Bachelor-level passes, relative to the number of learners enrolled in Grades 10–12. Perhaps it is also time to bring back aggregates and to start rewarding candidates who score high aggregates and include critical subjects in their subject choice with automatic bursaries. There is also a need for more

rigorous standards against which the performance of candidates and schools are measured. The only information that the DBE provides in its report on the performance of individual schools are the candidate numbers, pass numbers and pass percentage. Providing the number of candidates who achieved Bachelor-level passes would be a better and more useful measure of school performance. The Western Cape’s systemic assessment test, which we report on elsewhere in this edition, and the results of which were released to schools at the end of January, set 50% as the pass mark. Facing up to their results has been a real challenge to many of the principals we have spoken to but at least they now know what appropriate internationally benchmarked standards are. ■



# Umalusi's report to Parliament's Basic Education Portfolio Committee

Umalusi's report to Parliament's Basic Education Portfolio Committee on 7 February provides some useful and interesting insights into the 2011 NSC examinations.

Umalusi's reports, particularly those dealing with the NSC examinations, are always worth reading because they provide a second view of the examinations from a body that is not only independent but also sufficiently close to the process to examine it in detail and to provide critical and specific comment on what it finds. What follows is a summary of some of its key findings from the report<sup>1</sup> it presented to members of the Basic Education Portfolio Committee on 7 February 2012.

### 1. Moderation of question papers

Umalusi appointed external moderators to moderate all of the examination papers in each subject for both the November NSC examinations and the March supplementary examinations. Umalusi expects the papers for the final and the supplementary examinations to be set at the same time so that their moderators can ensure that they are of similar standard. Each paper is moderated according to its own criteria. The Umalusi moderators focused on the extent to which the paper complied with policy (the National Curriculum Statement and subject guidelines) and in particular on the weighting and spread of the content and cognitive skills that it tested. Papers were only accepted if the deviation in the weighting and spread of cognitive skills was 5% or less than is prescribed in the NCS.

In 2011 a further element of quality assurance was introduced as a pilot project in three subjects (Accounting, Mathematics and Physical Science). The examination papers in these three subjects were written at the offices of the DBE by the Subject Specialists who are the team leaders of Umalusi's post-examination analysis teams.

Just this moderation process is a massive undertaking when one considers that the 38 subjects examined entail the setting of 135 examination papers for November

examinations and 130 for the March supplementary examination papers. Of these, 79 were approved in the first round of moderation, 145 were approved after a second round of moderation, while 41 required three or more rounds of moderation. Two papers – English Home Language Paper 2 (for November) and Sesotho First Additional Language Paper 2 (for March) – were rejected at first moderation.

### 2. Moderation of school-based assessment

School-based assessment (SBA) was moderated for the first time by the DBE in 2011. The moderation process took place during the third and fourth terms last year and involved the moderation of 200 samples of learner evidence per subject from each of the nine provinces. The moderation was done by an independent panel of moderators appointed by the DBE and took place at a central venue in each province. This arrangement made it possible for Umalusi to observe and verify the process in some subjects and venues.

The samples of learner evidence from each province were selected from two districts, with five schools from each district each providing 20 samples of student work – seven low-performing learners, seven medium-performing learners and six high-performing learners.

As would be expected, this first moderation of SBA produced some interesting findings. Good practices identified included:

- Provincially set preliminary examinations were used in some provinces, which helped candidates gain a better understanding of the format and standard of the final NSC examination papers.
- Provincially set common tasks were used in some subjects, one of which is Life Orientation.
- Provincial SBA moderators were appointed in some provinces.
- The Programme of Assessment tasks in Physical Sciences were standardised in Free State.

*Monitoring of the writing and marking of examinations is one of the critical aspects of the entire examination process and the area that is most likely to give rise to problems given the size and scope of the NSC examinations.*

Areas of concern included:

- The setting of substandard tasks with an inappropriate distribution of cognitive skills was a common problem across all provinces.
- Moderation of SBA tasks was generally inadequate and insufficiently rigorous at school, district and provincial level.
- The use of inappropriate rubrics and the poor application of rubrics was a common problem.
- The standard of source-based and extended writing in History was generally poor.
- There was evidence of the use of Grade 10 work in some assessment tasks and in some schools Grade 10-level Life Orientation was taught in Grade 12.
- Pen-and-paper type theoretical tests were used to assess the practical and investigative elements of the curriculum in Physical Sciences.
- Insufficient evidence was given to justify the awarding of marks for the Physical Education Tasks (PET) in Life Orientation.

The Report provides a number of recommendations with regard to the monitoring and moderation of SBA, which we believe need to be adopted and put into practice at provincial, district and school level as a matter of urgency. They include:

- Subject-specific clusters of moderators should be established at district level to ensure that common standards are maintained across the district, that the quality of SBA tasks is of an appropriate standard and that marking is rigorous.
- Increased support should be provided for subject advisors and specialist moderation instruments should be developed that can be used by subject specialists to provide feedback on the moderation and monitoring processes. The instrument should be different from that used for school-level moderation and should provide data that can be used to assess SBA standards across the system.
- Guidance is needed on the setting and assessment of 'hands-on practical tasks' in Life Sciences.
- The poor quality of marking rubrics needs to be addressed. The report stressed the need for rubrics that are clear and appropriate and include criteria that provide specific guidelines on how marks are awarded.
- The assessment of the Physical Education Tasks (PET) in Life Orientation needs to be reviewed as a matter of urgency. There is a need to develop an instrument that can be used to assess PET performance or that provides guidance on the kind of detailed evidence that must be provided to justify the awarding of marks.
- Teachers need to be trained to use analysis grids to assist them in setting tasks of a sufficiently high standard and that include an appropriate balance of cognitive demands.

### 3. Monitoring of the writing and marking of examinations

This is one of the critical aspects of the entire examination process and the area that is most likely to give rise to problems given the size and scope of the NSC examinations. The examinations were written by nearly 500 000 candidates at 6 593 different examination centres spread across the length and breadth of the country. Part of the process involves ensuring that the 135 different examination papers are securely delivered in the right numbers to the correct centres in time to be written on the scheduled date and time. The candidates' scripts need then to be bundled together and delivered to the 123 marking centres where they are marked and moderated by teams of markers. Candidates' marks must then be checked and captured onto the system for final analysis, adjustment where this may be required, and publication. It is not surprising therefore that problems and technical hitches do arise.

Umalusi monitored all of these processes and the report provides a long list of shortcomings, most of which are relatively trivial in relation to the numbers involved and the scope and complexity of the process. This included:

- Markers and examination assistants received late notification of their appointment. In two provinces (Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) examiners were not issued with a formal letter of appointment.
- There were inadequacies in the manner in which markers were selected and appointed, which resulted in the appointment of markers who were unsuitable in terms of their qualifications and experience. Markers previously found to be inadequate were reappointed at some centres in Limpopo.
- Not all marking venues were suitable in terms of space, ventilation and facilities. One venue in KwaZulu-Natal had no water for two days and another, which was situated in a rural area, provided no accommodation for examination assistants who, as a result, had to travel long distances between their accommodation and the marking centre each day.
- There were problems with internal moderators. One internal moderator in Mpumalanga was appointed as internal moderator for three language papers while in Limpopo some moderators were required to moderate papers from more than one centre.

Umalusi's monitors also uncovered a number of irregularities including:

- An examination centre in the Eastern Cape was not registered as a centre and the chief invigilator at another changed the venue without prior approval.
- An Afrikaans Home Language paper in the Eastern Cape included pages 3 to 8 of Mathematics paper 1 as a result of a printing error.
- There were shortages of question papers at some venues – this was a problem reported on in all provinces.

- Candidates were denied access to examination venues in some provinces for ‘trivial reasons’ including ‘wrong shoes, hairstyle and pregnancy’. At one school in Limpopo candidates were barred from writing by the principal because their performance was likely to bring down the school’s pass rate. In all of the above cases candidates were, in the end, permitted to write.
- There were instances of copying, the possession of ‘crib’ notes and the use of cellphones. The worst transgression involved a chief invigilator at a centre in the Eastern Cape who ruled out some questions and assisted candidates in choosing others.

The most important of Umalusi’s recommendations relate to the appointment of suitable markers. Both the Western Cape and Northern Cape used competency tests as part of the selection process when selecting markers for the 2011 NSC examinations and were commended for this. The Umalusi report noted that the inclusion of these tests had been effective in improving the quality of marking. The report recommended that the provinces adhere strictly to the selection criteria. It is interesting in this regard to note that in its presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on the same day, the DBE indicated that competency tests would in future be used to screen all markers and that additional training would be provided for all markers. The DBE also indicated that there would be a phased decrease in the number of marking centres.

#### 4. Verification of marking

The verification process is concerned mostly with the quality and correctness of memoranda and with the marking process. It attempts to ensure that marking is fair, consistent and accurate across the system. For most of the subjects written by large numbers of candidates, special two-day briefing and training meetings are held at which papers and memoranda are dissected and analysed in an effort to ensure that everyone involved in the marking process is quite clear about what is required from candidates. The meetings are attended by external moderators, internal moderators, chief examiners, education specialists and representatives from the provincial education departments in the form of the provincial chief marker for the subject and the internal moderator. Umalusi’s moderators attended these meetings. For subjects involving smaller numbers of candidates these briefings last one day.

One of Umalusi’s major concerns about this process relates to provincial representatives’ attendance at these meetings. Some apparently did not attend the full meeting because of their transport arrangement (mostly flights). There were also cases where provincial representatives were not present at all. This deficiency seems astonishing given the importance of the NSC examinations. We trust it will be rectified in future.

As part of the marking verification process, Umalusi’s own external moderators moderated a selection of scripts from 17 subjects at a central venue. This part of the quality-assurance process revealed some disturbing shortcomings, which included:

- incompetent markers who did not award candidates marks they deserved. This applied particularly to interpretive-type questions.
- internal moderators not moderating the full script of candidates. There were some cases where just one question had been moderated by the internal moderator.
- large variations in the marks awarded leading to the need to adjust some marks by up to 10 marks
- unmarked questions that had not been picked up by moderators
- making changes to the marking guidelines without proper approval.

The report noted, however, that despite these shortcomings there was a general improvement in the quality of marking, that there were high levels of moderation in most subjects and that the training of markers that had been undertaken by some provinces had led to an improvement in the efficiency of the marking process overall.

*The verification process attempts to ensure that marking is fair, consistent and accurate across the system.*

#### 5. Standardisation of marks

The process of adjusting or standardising marks is an issue that makes some people hot under the collar but it is an essential element of any large-scale examining system such as the NSC. Umalusi bases its decisions on ‘the thorough consideration of historical and situational factors, and careful and systematic reasoning’.

Included in the process is:

- the use of historical averages. Umalusi’s Assessment Standards Committee uses the historical ‘three year averages’ at each achievement level for each subject to inform the standardisation process. The averages were based on the NSC results for years 2008, 2009 and 2010.
- pairs analysis, which compares and correlates the average results of the candidates in the subject being standardised with the averages of the same cohort of learners in other subjects
- the use of subject specialists to conduct a post-examination analysis of 11 ‘gateway’ subjects and which examined the cognitive demand of the examination papers and compared these to the 2010 question papers
- a review of the reports compiled by the DBE’s internal moderators and chief markers because these provided an analysis of the question papers from a marker’s perspective.

Umalusi uses six principles to guide its standardisation decision-making. The most important of these are:

- No adjustment to raw score marks is made unless there is compelling evidence to support the adjustment.
- No adjustment will exceed 10% of the three-year historical averages.
- The adjustment effect for individual candidates may not exceed 50% of the marks obtained by the candidate. (This is only likely to affect candidates who are very weak.)

Of the 56 NSC subjects that Umalusi was required to standardise:

- 46 were not adjusted (raw marks were accepted).
- 3 subjects were moderated upwards.
- 7 subjects were moderated downwards.

Umalusi has developed its own standardisation, moderating and resulting modules on its mainframe computer, which generates useful analytical data that it can use as part of the standardisation process. This made it possible for them to detect that Business Studies markers attempted to 'move marks upwards' at the 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70% and 80% intervals. The evidence of these efforts to move marks upwards were kinks in the mark distribution curve at these levels. They recommended that this kind of adjustment be discouraged.

Umalusi plays a critical role in quality assuring the NSC examinations and their abridged report provides ample evidence of their thorough and rigorous approach to fulfilling their mandate. ■

#### References

- 1 Umalusi, Abridged Report on the Quality Assurance of the Examinations and Assessment of the National Senior Certificate 2011.

### *Continued from page 1*

This issue also contains our summary of Umalusi's Abridged Report on the Quality Assurance of the Examinations and Assessment of the National Senior Certificate 2011 that was part of their recent presentation to the Parliamentary Portfolio Committee on Basic Education. This report provides a useful and informative alternative perspective on the 2011 NSC examinations.

We are always on the lookout for schools that perform well against the odds and in this issue feature one of these schools. The College of Science and Technology (COSAT) is situated in the sprawling Cape Town township of Khayelitsha yet was ranked as one of the top 10 schools in the Western Cape based on the performance of its learners in the 2011 NSC

examinations. We visited the school to find out just what it has been doing to achieve this remarkable success.

This year also sees the introduction of the curriculum policy and assessment statements (CAPS) in the Foundation Phase and Grade 10 and Erich Cloete provides some good advice on the processes that schools should follow as they set about implementing the new systems and policies that schools must follow in terms of these new curriculum policy and assessment statements.

We hope that you will find this edition an informative and useful read. ■



## Centre for Science and Technology, Khayelitsha



*False Bay College's Good Hope Campus in Khayelitsha was COSAT's first home. The school's new home is less than 1 km from the College.*

I first visited the Centre for Science and Technology (COSAT) during the course of 2010 when the school was housed in the Good Hope Campus of the False Bay College in the sprawling township of Khayelitsha.

The school has an interesting history. It was established initially in the False Bay College without the permission of the Western Cape Education Department by Mr Cassie Kruger as a specialist centre for children identified from the local community who demonstrated interest and talent in Mathematics and Science. The idea was to provide these children with a solid grounding in these subjects in an effort to ensure that they would realise their potential when they progressed to further study at tertiary level.

In 1999 the WCED granted permission for the programme that operated as part of the College as a 'school' offering tuition to learners in Grades 10–12. For the next 10 years the school was managed and heavily subsidised by the College. There were some advantages to this arrangement, including better teacher-learner ratios, greater control over the selection of teachers and access to the College's resources including such things as computer laboratories and a well-stocked library and media centre.

During the latter part of 2010 construction began on a new school building for COSAT, not far from the College, and it moved into its new, still unfinished premises at the start of 2011, severing its ties with the College to become a public high school under the authority of the WCED. The school also enrolled its first Grade 8 learners at the start of 2011. The start of 2011 was a tough time for Principal Phadiela Cooper and her staff as they had to come to terms with dealing with the additional administrative and organisational matters that had previously been dealt with by the College. The school was also not complete when the year started, with only the most basic furniture, no landline and with power provided by an onsite generator. Builders were on site for most of the first term, completing the construction of the school hall and one of the classroom blocks. The terrain surrounding the buildings was typical of the Cape Flats but denuded of all cover by the builders. The strong southeaster, which blows constantly at that time of the year, meant keeping their new buildings clean and sand-free was a constant challenge.

I visited the school on a number of occasions during the course of the year and was astonished at what Phadiela and her staff managed to achieve despite the challenges

that they faced. I was also delighted to be there on 5 January 2012 when she announced the school's results to those Grade 12 learners and their parents who were able to attend the ceremony that the school had organised. The results were remarkable by any measure but are absolutely outstanding given the challenges that the school had to deal with during the course of the year and the community from which it draws its learners. In many ways this ceremony summed up what this school is about and why it is able to achieve the success that it does. Although none of the learners who attended the event were in uniform – they had after all already left school – they were all neatly dressed and well groomed. They and their parents waited around nervously until they were ushered into the school hall, by now completed, just before 12:00, which was the time when schools were permitted to release the results.

Before she announced the results, Principal Phadeila Cooper reminded the learners of what their school stood for and of the importance of remembering, when they went on to further their studies, that they were from COSAT, which meant they had traditions of hard work, honesty, integrity and respect to uphold. As might be expected, a great cheer went up when she announced that the school had once again achieved a 100% pass rate and that 78,6% of the class had achieved Bachelor-level passes. She went on to announce the top 10 in the class based on the average percentage before calling out the names of candidates who had scored one or more distinctions – the top candidate achieved seven distinctions. Details of the school's performance are given in the tables below. It is important to remember that every learner at COSAT is required to take Mathematics and Physical Sciences so there are no easy options available to them.

Overall results	
Number entered	70
Number passed	70 (100%)
Number achieved Bachelor's	55 (78,6%)
Number achieved Diploma	14 (20,0%)
Number achieved Higher Certificate	1 (1,4%)
Number of subject distinctions	87 (Average 1,2 per candidate)

Subject results				
Subject	Number	Pass at 30%	Pass at 40%	Pass at 50%
IsiXhosa (HL)	70	100%	100%	100%
English (FAL)	70	100%	100%	100%
Life Sciences	70	100%	100%	97,1%
Mathematics	70	98,6%	90%	68,6%
Physical Sciences	70	94,3%	84,3%	55,7%
Computer Application Technology	24	100%	95,8%	33,3%
Mathematics (Paper 3)	25	80%	52%	28%
Information Technology	46	100%	97,8%	69,6%





*Learners cheer as Principal Cooper announces that the school had once again achieved a pass rate of 100% in the 2011 NSC examinations and that 78,6% of learners had achieved a Bachelor-level pass.*



*Past pupils Arthur Mabentsela, who recently graduated with a BSc (Chemical Engineering) from UCT, and Sibusiso Ncangayi, who is a final-year medical student at the University of Stellenbosch, address the learners on the importance of remembering their roots.*

Part of the ceremony included a brief talk by two past pupils, one of whom has recently completed his BSc in Chemical Engineering at UCT and the other who is in the final year of his medical degree at the University of Stellenbosch. Like Ms Cooper, they reminded the students not to forget their heritage or the lessons and positive habits that they had learned as COSAT students. One of my abiding memories of the ceremony was the pride and joy that I witnessed on the faces of the parents and their children as they shared a sense of accomplishment at what they had achieved.

### **Lessons from COSAT**

What are the lessons that schools can learn from the way in which COSAT goes about its business? I have identified 10, which I list here.

#### **1. A disciplined environment**

You don't have to be in the school for long to appreciate the healthy buzz of a working school. There is noise but no loud noise and people move about the school with a sense of purpose. Classrooms, corridors and the school grounds are clean and tidy. This was evident even in the sand-blasted days when the school first moved into its new buildings.



*Pride and joy: Successful candidate Aphiwe Rhonoti shares her joy with proud father Lulamile Simon Bizwaphi. Aphiwe plans to study to become a nurse.*

#### **2. A commitment from all to doing what it takes**

Everyone at COSAT understands what the school is about and that they are there to ensure that learners fulfil their potential. There are no ifs or buts at COSAT – the school's motto 'No excuses, just success' makes this quite clear. Learners are expected to succeed and teachers understand that they are accountable for the performance of the learners they teach. They are not the kind of teachers who think that their job is limited to 'delivering the curriculum' and that their responsibility ends once it has been delivered.

#### **3. Close monitoring of the performance of all learners**

The parents of learners at COSAT are issued with seven progress reports each year – two per term except for the fourth term. Close monitoring and reporting of this kind places big demands on teachers but it does ensure that the performance of every learner in every subject is closely monitored on a formal basis. There are also rewards for those who perform well.

After each reporting period the top four learners in each grade are called onto the stage in assembly and rewarded with a chocolate. The prize may be small but the prestige is significant. More importantly, this kind of recognition sends out a clear message to the entire school that academic performance matters.



*These pictures were taken in the first week of the 2011 school year. The buildings, including the hall, were incomplete and surrounded by a wide expanse of windblown, Cape Flats sand.*

#### **4. Hard work**

The formal school day at COSAT starts at 08:00 and ends at 15:10. This is followed by an additional hour (until 16:15) that is used for homework, remedial extra lessons and enrichment, depending on the individual needs of learners. There are also extra classes on Saturdays, mostly focused on revision.

#### **5. Parental support**

The strength of parental support was much in evidence at the awards ceremony I attended when the National Senior Certificate results were released. The fact that the school has a good reputation and that it is selective gives it a good start in this regard. Parents want their children to attend the school and their children want to be there. This makes the job of garnering parents' support easier but more needs to be done. The regular school reports also help but the school goes further than that and works hard to involve parents in every aspect of their children's education.

#### **6. A sense of community**

Community grows when individuals commit to a system of shared values. I was surprised but also inspired by the manner in which Ms Cooper addressed her matric class of 2011 when she presented them with their results. The fact that she took the time to remind them about the values that the school stood for and that they had tried to inculcate

in them at that time, demonstrated to me just how deeply she feels about them. They were not just words, they had a special meaning for those young people who were about to discover that their hard work had been rewarded. It also served as a reminder that there were other equally important lessons that they had learned during the years at the school and that their future could well depend on their carrying these values with them.

#### **7. Sufficient resources**

As I mentioned earlier, the learners at COSAT have always had access to sufficient resources and the new school boasts a media centre (funded by SERI), two computer laboratories (one funded as part of the Khanya project and the other funded by BMW SA through the Western Cape Education Foundation), Mathematics subject rooms (also sponsored by BMW SA), three science laboratories and a technology centre. Although this represents a considerable improvement in what is available to most schools in the country it is not much different from many of the Dinaledi schools, most of which perform at nowhere near the level that has been achieved by COSAT learners over the years. The full-time librarian who runs the school's library is an ex-COSAT teacher who has volunteered her services for free. She is assisted in her work by a number of past pupils of the school.

### 8. Proper utilisation of resources

Having the necessary resources is important but only if full and proper use is made of them. Resources alone are also not enough and it is only when they are used by skilled, knowledgeable and committed teachers that their value becomes apparent, helping learners to gain a deeper understanding of complex concepts.

### 9. Skilled and knowledgeable teachers

Skilled, knowledgeable and committed teachers are the most fundamental resource and learners are unlikely to perform well if they don't have good teachers. The COSAT staff are a small and diverse group (the school had 16 teachers and a learner enrolment of 276 in 2011 and this has grown to 18 teachers and 400 learners in 2012) but what became clear in my interaction with them was a tremendous sense of loyalty and commitment to the COSAT cause. They are there to make a difference and they can take enormous pride in what they continue to achieve.

### 10. Strong leadership

I suspect that most people, on first meeting Phadiela Cooper, would be surprised to learn that she is the principal of a highly successful school and more

particularly one that is situated in the centre of a sprawling township such as Khayelitsha. She comes across initially as gentle and self-effacing and she is both of these. Yet as you get to know her you discover that she has another side, and it is this part of her personality that has helped her achieve what she has with the school in the three years since she has been principal. Firstly, there is the steely resolve and a determination, driven by a desire to ensure that her COSAT children are provided with the support and the material that they need to succeed. Her second great strength is her commitment and work ethic. She is a person that leads by example, modelling the values, commitment and high standards that she demands of her team. Third is the pleasure that she appears to derive from her work. There is a cheerful warmth that comes from a sense of mutual respect when she interacts with her learners and staff. This not to say that there are not tensions, these are present at all schools, but you get the sense that these will be resolved in a way that will leave individuals with their sense of worth intact and a greater commitment to the success of the school.

COSAT is a great school in the making and we will watch its progress with interest. ■



*These pictures were taken almost exactly one year later and show the transformation of the school site.*

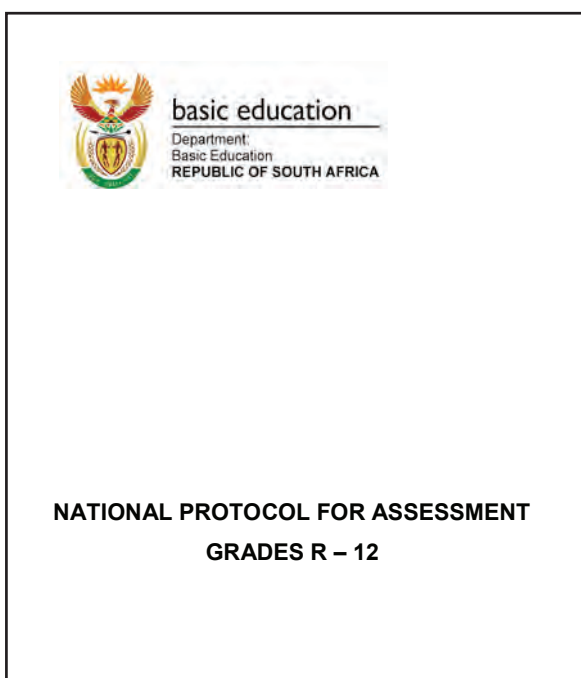
*The gardens in front of the school feature indigenous plants, most of which are native to the Cape Flats.*



# National Protocol for Assessment: Grades R–12

*Erich Cloete*

The curriculum policy and assessment statements (CAPS) are being introduced incrementally, starting this year with the Foundation Phase and Grade 10. Implementing the new systems and policies requires careful planning by school management teams.



The National Protocol for Assessment: Grades R–12<sup>1</sup> standardises the recording and reporting processes for Grades R to 12 within the framework of the National Curriculum Statement for Grades R–12 (NCS), which comprises the following:

- the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements of all approved subjects (CAPS)
- the national policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12
- the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12.

These three documents must be studied with care and read in conjunction as they are equally important. However, it must be kept in mind that the changes, as indicated by the documents, in 2012 apply only to Grades R–3 and 10.

The effective implementation of the Protocol must receive the highest attention. It is therefore suggested

that school management teams (SMTs) follow a structured approach, as follows:

- Establish a good functioning school assessment team (SAT), whose members need to study the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12 carefully.
- Existing SAT policy needs to be adjusted to align with the new National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12.
- The new policy that is developed must be discussed with all the applicable teachers. The implementation of new policy sometimes creates uncertainty so it is important that every teacher clearly understands the changes and precisely what is expected of them.
- The next step is to implement the Protocol and monitor the process. If necessary, amendments must be made.
- It is important to keep the SGB informed through proper communication and, if necessary, also inform the broader parent community about the policy that is being implemented.

The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12 describes and explains various aspects of assessment. The following overview gives a brief description of each chapter of the Protocol. This should assist SATs with implementation. The overview notes the extent to which the new Protocol differs from the ‘National Policy on Assessment and Qualifications for Schools in the General Education and Training Band’ – *Government Gazette* No. 29626 and ‘An addendum to the policy document “the National Certificate: A qualification at level 4 on the NQF”, Regarding the National Protocol for Assessment’ – *Government Gazette* No. 29467 of 11 December 2006. Where necessary, more extended comparisons are made with the previous documents.

The document has a straightforward, clear layout and the presentation of information is simple and clear-cut. This should empower teachers to implement it more easily.

# **NATIONAL PROTOCOL FOR ASSESSMENT GRADES R-12**

## **C H A P T E R S**

**CHAPTER 1: PURPOSE OF THE DOCUMENT**

**CHAPTER 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE NCS GRADES R-12**

**CHAPTER 3: FORMAL ASSESSMENT**

**CHAPTER 4: FINAL END-OF-YEAR EXAMINATION**

**CHAPTER 5: RECORDING AND  
REPORTING LEARNER PERFORMANCE**

**CHAPTER 6: REQUIREMENTS FOR TEACHERS' FILES**

**CHAPTER 7: MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL  
ASSESSMENT RECORDS**

**CHAPTER 8: MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOL LEARNER PROFILES**

**CHAPTER 9: ASSESSMENT OF LEARNERS  
WITH SPECIAL NEEDS**

**CHAPTER 10: REPEAL OF POLICY AND  
TRANSITIONAL ARRANGEMENTS**

## The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12

		Changes with former policy																
		No Change	Change															
<b>Chapter 1</b> Purpose of the document	The document standardises the recording and reporting processes in all schools that offer the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12. It is aimed at quality assurance and provides a framework for the management of school assessment.	✓																
<b>Chapter 2</b> Assessment of the NCS Grades R–12	<p>This chapter contains information about the importance as well as types of assessment. It further states the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The purpose and importance of assessment is to improve the process of learning and teaching and includes both formal and informal assessment as well as various forms of assessment.</li> <li>Assessment is a tool that provides information concerning learner achievement in the most effective and efficient manner and assists teachers, parents and stakeholders in making decisions about learners' progress.</li> <li>Informal assessment is done through observation and teacher–learner interaction while forms of formal assessment include projects, oral presentations, demonstrations, performances, tests, examinations and so on.</li> <li>All formal assessment should be recorded and feedback provided to learners as soon as possible to enhance performance.</li> <li>Assessment should be appropriate the learners' age and their developmental level in order to assess certain knowledge and skills. This means that, through differentiation, various levels of assessment could or should be used in one class.</li> <li>School Assessment Plans must be drawn up in each grade and provided to parents and learners within the first week of the first term.</li> </ul>	✓																
<b>Chapter 3</b> Formal assessment <sup>2</sup>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formal Assessment comprises school-based assessment (SBA) and practical assessment tasks for certain subjects offered in the Further Education and Training Phase and a final end-of-year examination.</li> <li>The number of Formal Assessment tasks for Grades R–3 and 10 that need to be done annually for every subject are discussed in the CAPS documents of the respective grades.</li> <li>SBA is a compulsory component for progression and promotion.</li> <li>The following table reflects the SBA component with end-of-the-year examinations:</li> </ul> <table border="1" style="margin-left: 40px;"> <thead> <tr> <th>Phase</th> <th>SBA component %</th> <th>Examinations</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>Foundation Phase</td> <td>100</td> <td>0</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Intermediate Phase</td> <td>75</td> <td>25</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Senior Phase</td> <td>40</td> <td>60</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10–12)</td> <td>25</td> <td>75</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Practical assessment tasks count 25% of the end-of-year examination mark.</li> <li>Moderation should take place to ensure the quality and standard of all assessment tasks. It is outlined in the CAPS documents, chapter 4.</li> <li>The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12 continuously refers to chapter 4 of the CAPS documents. It must be studied carefully to enhance the understanding of the Protocol.</li> <li>This chapter also provide guidelines with regard to the compilation of assessment and refers to:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>components to be included such as marks, moderation and evaluation the teacher file – teachers are required to maintain a complete record of assessment for every subject taught in respect of the NCS Grades R–12 and explain the assessment tasks</li> <li>what to do if a learner does not comply with the requirements of SBA.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Phase	SBA component %	Examinations	Foundation Phase	100	0	Intermediate Phase	75	25	Senior Phase	40	60	Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10–12)	25	75	<div style="display: flex; flex-direction: column; align-items: center; gap: 20px;"> <span>✓</span> <span>✓</span> </div>	<p>✓</p> <p>There are changes in the number of tasks that need to be done annually.</p>
Phase	SBA component %	Examinations																
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## The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12

		Changes with former policy																								
		No Change	Change																							
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Progression versus promotion: The policy determines that progression from grade to grade remains the norm, as no learner should stay in the same phase for longer than four years, but also specifies guidelines to determine whether a learner should be promoted to the next grade. The intention is that the process be managed in terms of the guidelines and that the progression directive is used as a concession, applying professional discretion.</li> </ul>	✓																								
<b>Chapter 4</b> Final end-of-year examination	This chapter discusses requirements for the Grade 10 and 11 end-of-year examinations, registration of additional subjects, language medium related to the examination question paper, absentees, minimum requirements for an examination and irregularities. SATs of high schools should study this chapter carefully.																									
<b>Chapter 5</b> Recording and reporting learner performance	<p>This chapter deals with all the aspects of recording and reporting for Grades R–3 and Grade 10.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please note that in the NCS Grades R–12 recording and reporting takes place in relation to the assessment task and reporting is in relation to the total mark obtained in all tasks completed in a term.</li> <li>The promotion of a learner in Grade 10 is based on the composite marks obtained in all four terms.</li> <li>Learning outcomes and assessment standards are no longer part of the NCS Grades R–12 and are no longer used to inform the planning and development of assessments tasks.</li> <li>Recording and reporting is done in the language of learning and teaching. (LoLT). The number of formal assessment tasks to be recorded in each phase is set out in chapter 4 of CAPS.</li> <li>In the Foundation Phase, the recording and reporting of learner performance should be done in relation to the four subjects offered as prescribed in paragraph 6 of the policy document. Previously it was done in relation to the three learning programmes offered. In Grades 10–12 it should be done in relation to the subjects prescribed in paragraph 27 of the policy document, 'National policy pertaining to the Programme and Promotion requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12'.</li> <li>The four-code scale previously used in the Foundation Phase is no longer used. It is replaced by the use of a seven-level achievement scale. In the Foundation Phase national codes and their achievement descriptors are used to record and report while in Grade 10 marks are used to record and percentages to report.</li> </ul> <p>Codes and percentages for recording and reporting. Comments should be used to describe learner performance.</p> <table border="1" style="margin-top: 10px; width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse; text-align: center;"> <thead> <tr> <th style="width: 20%;">Rating code</th> <th style="width: 50%;">Achievement description</th> <th style="width: 30%;">Marks %</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr><td>7</td><td>Outstanding achievement</td><td>80–100</td></tr> <tr><td>6</td><td>Meritorious achievement</td><td>70–79</td></tr> <tr><td>5</td><td>Substantial achievement</td><td>60–69</td></tr> <tr><td>4</td><td>Adequate achievement</td><td>50–59</td></tr> <tr><td>3</td><td>Moderate achievement</td><td>40–49</td></tr> <tr><td>2</td><td>Elementary achievement</td><td>30–39</td></tr> <tr><td>1</td><td>Not achieved</td><td>0–29</td></tr> </tbody> </table>	Rating code	Achievement description	Marks %	7	Outstanding achievement	80–100	6	Meritorious achievement	70–79	5	Substantial achievement	60–69	4	Adequate achievement	50–59	3	Moderate achievement	40–49	2	Elementary achievement	30–39	1	Not achieved	0–29	<p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p> <p>✓</p>
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<b>Chapter 6</b> Requirements for teachers' files	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All teachers are expected to keep a file containing evidence of their assessment.</li> <li>Although the protocol allows for a teacher assessment file to be a file, box, folder or any other suitable storage system, a file is recommended.</li> <li>Files should be available at all times for moderation and accountability purposes. This means that even if a teacher takes the file home in the afternoon, it must be brought back to school in the morning.</li> </ul>		✓																							

## The National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12

		Changes with former policy	
		No Change	Change
<p><b>Chapter 7</b> Management of school assessment records</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This chapter provides information on what is expected from schools with regard to assessment records, record sheets, report cards and schedules. It is quite comprehensive but clear on what is expected and schools should be able to apply it without any difficulty if the SAT and Head of Department make an effort to become familiar with the necessary requirements as outlined in the Protocol.</li> <li>The Protocol gives a clear indication of the minimum information these documents should include. The only difference between the new protocol and previous documents is that the new protocol refers to subjects and no longer to learning areas.</li> </ul>		✓
<p><b>Chapter 8</b> Management of school learner profiles</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This chapter gives a comprehensive description of the learner profile and its administration.</li> <li>It gives instruction for a principal to request a learner's profile from the previous school within three months of the learner's admittance.</li> <li>The learner profile is a confidential document that should not be removed from the school while the learner is still enrolled there.</li> <li>Parents and stakeholders have a right to access and view the profile on request but it should be in the presence of school management.</li> </ul>	✓	
<p><b>Chapter 9</b> Assessment of learners with special needs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This chapter focuses on alternative types of assessment that should be available, where possible, in ordinary and special schools.</li> <li>The alternative assessments focus on learners with a significant cognitive disability, learners with disabilities who are working on grade-level content and because of their disability may require more time to master the content or learners who need testing formats that provide them with equal opportunities.</li> <li>The aim of providing alternative types of assessment is to enable learners to achieve their potential within the schooling system.</li> </ul>	✓	
<p><b>Chapter 10</b> Repeal of policy and transitional arrangements</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The policy document, 'An addendum to the policy document "the National Certificate: A qualification at level 4 on the NQF", Regarding the National Protocol for Assessment' <i>Government Gazette</i> No. 29467 of 11 Dec 2006 is repealed subject to the transitional arrangements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12, which will become effective from:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>January 2012 in Grades R–3 and Grade 10</li> <li>January 2013 in Grades 4–6 and Grade 11</li> <li>January 2014 in Grades 7–9 and Grade 12.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>		✓

### References and notes

- Department of Basic Education (2011), *National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12*
- ANA is a critical component of Action plan 2014 towards realisation of Schooling 2025. It serves the purpose of a baseline assessment in Grades 2 and 3. The main purpose of ANA is to improve education. The DBE would like to improve the current average of the ANA, which is between 35% and 40%, to 60%.
- National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12* cover was sourced from [www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatement](http://www.education.gov.za/Curriculum/CurriculumAssessmentPolicyStatement)

# To improve our NSC results we need to start in Grade R

The recent release in the Western Cape of the 2011 results of their Grade 3, 6 and 9 systemic tests exposes the real reason for the persistent poor performance of the majority of learners in the NSC examinations.

In 2002 the Western Cape Education Department (WCED) introduced systemic testing as part of its strategy to improve learner performance. Systemic testing is designed to test the performance of the ‘system’ and not the performance of individual learners, teachers or schools, although it does provide useful data that could be used, over time, to evaluate the performance of individual schools and even teachers. In the case of the WCED, the tests have been developed and are administered and marked by outside agencies. The tests are designed to assess learner performance across the system in the key areas of literacy (language) and numeracy (mathematics) and to report on the extent to which learners are performing at the appropriate level in these two areas for their grade. A score of 50% in the test indicates that the individual who wrote the test is performing at the appropriate level for the grade, which in turn would mean that the individual has demonstrated a mastery of at least 50% of the skills and knowledge set out in the National Curriculum Statement for that grade.

As we noted earlier the first systemic testing took place in 2002 and involved all Grade 3 learners in the province. For the following few years learners were tested in Grade 3 and 6 in alternate years. In 2010 similar tests were piloted for Grade 9 and in 2011 for the first time all Grade 3, 6 and 9 learners in the province were tested. The Grade 3 literacy tests were initially offered only in English and Afrikaans but more recently these tests have assessed learners in their home language if it is one of the province’s three official languages, which are English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa. Although there has been some improvement at a provincial level in both literacy and numeracy over the past few years, sufficient

for the WCED to be included as one of the improving education systems in the 2010 McKinsey study ‘How the world’s best performing school systems keep getting better’,<sup>1</sup> the results still show that the majority of learners, at every level in the system, perform well below the required standard. This is well illustrated in Table 1.

General Editor Alan Clarke has been working with two high schools in the Cape Town suburb of Khayelitsha for the past two years in an effort to help them improve their NSC results. He soon came to realise that one of the major challenges faced by these two schools in their effort to improve their NSC results related to the initial basic academic competency of the learners entering their schools in Grade 8. The two schools were, until recently, Dinaledi schools and as Dinaledi schools were expected to place at least 60% of their learners in a Mathematics stream in Grades 10–12 with at least 20% of these offering Physical Sciences as one of their other optional subjects. The consequence of this policy had a catastrophic effect on the NSC pass rates of both schools because the majority of their NSC candidates who offered these two subjects failed the NSC examinations because they failed these two subjects. Many had never passed Mathematics in their high school years or if they had passed the subject in Grade 9 had done so by the slimmest of margins in the internal examinations of questionable standards.

As part of a long-term project to significantly improve the results of their schools, the principals of the two schools made a decision to invite their feeder primary schools to become partners in a school-improvement project. Towards the end of 2011 a group of six schools,

**Table 1: Provincial results 2011**

Subject	Grade 3	Grade 6	Grade 9
Literacy/language	38,7%	31,5%	44,2%
Numeracy/mathematics	47,2%	23,4%	10,4%

the two high schools and four of the invited primary schools started working together on a project that they named 'Better schools – Khayelitsha'. The group also decided to meet fortnightly initially with the meetings hosted at a different school each fortnight. Part of each meeting included a walk-about at the hosting school as way of assessing resources and the sharing of ideas on good practice. The response to this model has been good and the meetings have already begun to produce some benefits and positive feedback.

The release of the WCED's 2011 systemic results to schools on 30 January brought the issue of the basic literacy and numeracy skills of the learners at these schools into sharp focus and has helped the principals to understand the extent of the challenges they face, and how the lack of a solid grounding in basic literacy and numeracy

*The lack of a solid grounding in basic literacy and numeracy impedes learners' development and prevents them from fulfilling their potential.*

impedes learners' development and prevents them from fulfilling their potential.

The tables that follow illustrate the extent of the problem and helps explain why so many high schools find it difficult to improve their NSC results in any significant way. It also explains why this country's ambition to increase the number of learners who pass Mathematics and Physical Sciences at a reasonable level (50% and above) is such a challenge. The data presented in the tables is derived from the 2011 systemic results of the two high schools and three of the four primary schools. We were not able to obtain the data from the fourth primary school in time to include it in this analysis but it is unlikely to differ significantly from that of the other three schools.

**Table 2: Literacy/Language**

	School A (Primary)	School B (Primary)	School C (Primary)	School D (High)	School E (High)
Grade 3 Literacy (Pass %)	8,9	13,9	2,9		
Grade 6 English (Pass %)	3,8	3,4	1,3		
Grade 9 English (Pass %)				19,4	18,1
NSC English FAL (Pass %)				61,0	51,5
NSC isiXhosa HL (Pass %)				93,3	98,0

**Table 3: Numeracy/Mathematics**

	School A (Primary)	School B (Primary)	School C (Primary)	School D (High)	School E (High)
Grade 3 Numeracy (Pass %)	33,9	34,8	35,7		
Grade 6 Mathematics (Pass %)	11,4	3,8	1,3		
Grade 9 Mathematics (Pass %)				3,7	0,4
NSC Mathematics (Pass %)				8,7	5,2
NSC Mathematical Literacy (Pass %)				17,4	14,3

### Table 2: Literacy/language

The systemic tests assess the language levels of learners in their home language if it is one of English, Afrikaans or IsiXhosa in Grade 3, and in the language of learning and teaching (LOLT) of the school in Grades 6 and 9. We have included the pass rates of learners in English (First Additional Language) and isiXhosa (Home Language) in the 2011 NSC examinations for the two high schools for purposes of comparison. The figures given represent the percentage of candidates who scored 50% or more in the NSC examinations because a 50% pass rate is used in the systemic tests.

### Table 3: Numeracy/Mathematics

This table once again uses pass rates that are based on a pass mark of 50% and not the NSC pass rate of 30%. It is quite apparent from these results that there are massive weaknesses in the teaching of Mathematics in these schools that need to be addressed but this should not overlook the impact that the poor language skills of learners may have on their performance in Mathematics and most other subjects.

The data from Tables 2 and 3 suggests that the two high schools are doing rather well with both schools producing pass rates in these subjects that are significantly better than those of their primary feeder schools. For another and more honest explanation for their better performance one needs to compare the learner numbers in Grade 11 with the number of candidates who end up

writing the NSC examinations. For school D the relative numbers for Grade 11 and NSC candidates are 283 and 105, and for school E they are 208 and 99. It would be easy but completely unfair to blame the principals and teachers of the two high schools for this state of affairs given the challenges that they face in dealing with Grade 8 learners who enter their schools each year with very few of the basic competencies that they need to progress academically.

*There is a significant drop in learner performance in the Intermediate Phase.*

The Systemic Test results provide more detailed data than simply the percentage of learners who pass the tests at a particular

level, and it is this disaggregated data that provides more useful and specific pointers about the nature of the problems and the strategies that may need to be employed to fix them.

The literacy/language tests provide data on learner performance in the following sub-categories:

- reading and viewing
- thinking and reasoning
- writing
- language use and structure.

We have used this data to produce Chart 1, which shows the average overall performance of the learners from the three primary schools and two high schools together with their performance in each of these four sub-categories.

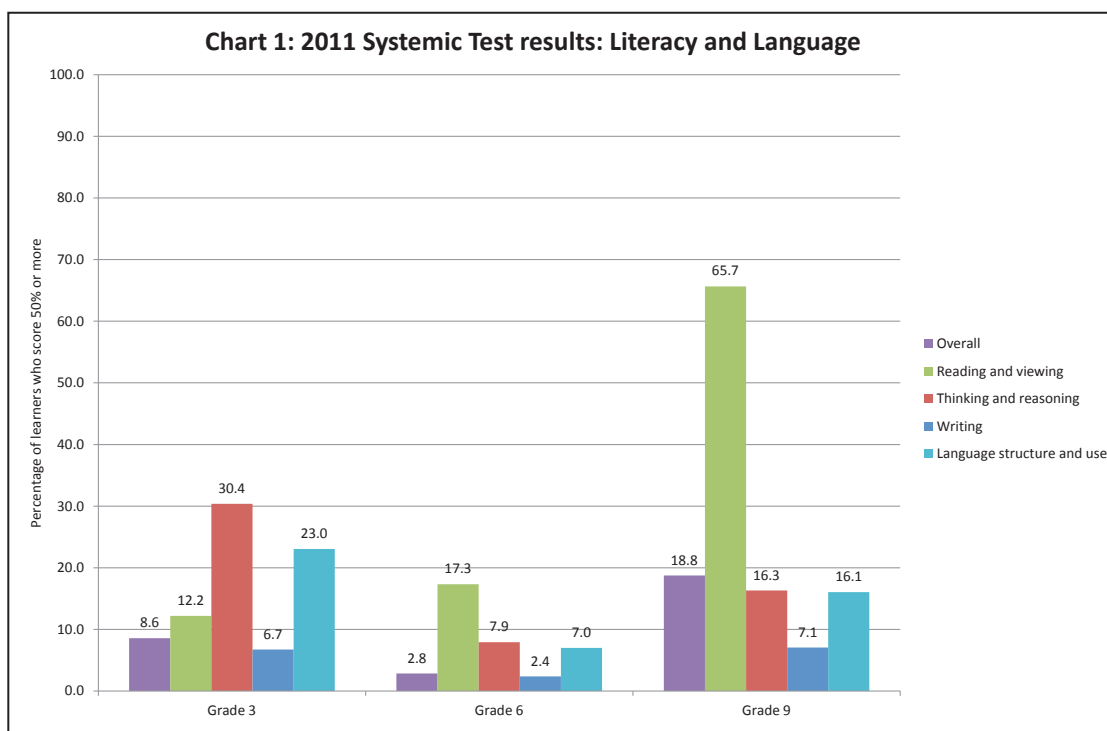
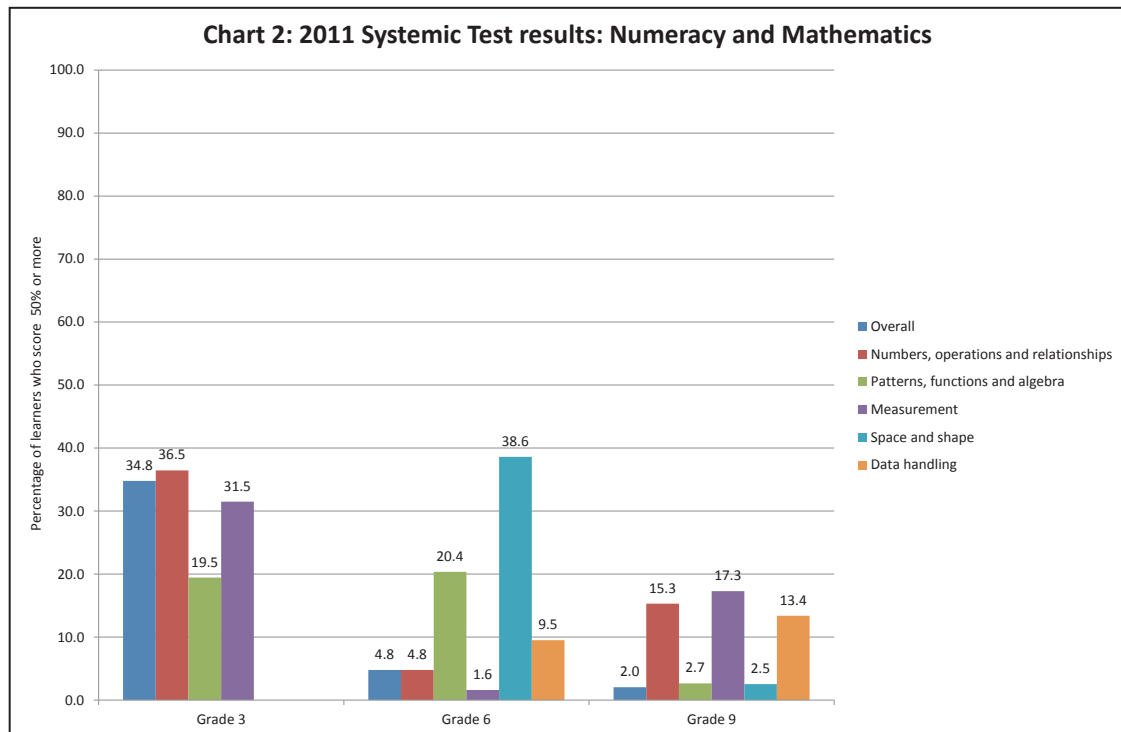


Chart 2 provides the same kind of breakdown for the five categories of Numeracy/Mathematics that were assessed, namely:

- numbers, operations and relationships
- patterns, functions and algebra
- measurement
- space and shape
- data handling.



### Chart 1: 2011 Systemic test results in Literacy and Language

This chart provides a clear illustration of some of the problem areas. These include:

- The overall performance of learners in all three tests is generally poor.
- Reading and viewing is the only sub-category in which the learners show consistent progress and improvement as they move through the system. Reading and view zing in Grade 9 is also the only skill at which most learners perform at or above the required standard.
- The results are weakest in the Grade 6 assessment, which represents the end of the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4 to 6), and there is clearly a major problem in this phase of schooling. Part of the problem will relate to the fact that when these learners enter the Intermediate Phase their medium of instruction changes from isiXhosa to English. This is a massive challenge for the majority of schools in this country and is one of the reasons why English has now been introduced as a subject from Grade 1 in schools where it is not the language of learning and teaching of the school. The problem

is exacerbated by the fact that many of the teachers who teach at this level may also have relatively poor English language skills.

- The teaching of ‘Thinking and reasoning’, which is a measure of the ability of learners to formulate answers to higher-order questions, and of ‘Writing’ is also clearly a problem. The poor performance of learners in these two critical areas may have more to do with classroom practice and lack of basic drill than in the ability of learners.

### Chart 2: Systemic Test results: Numeracy and Mathematics

One of the interesting and disappointing features illustrated by this chart is the steady decline in the performance of learners as they ‘progress’ through the system with the best performance in virtually every category found in Grade 3. As in Chart 1, this data shows that there is a significant drop in learner performance in the Intermediate Phase, the only exception being in learners’ understanding of ‘Space and shape’. Perhaps most concerning of all, however, is the bleak picture that it projects of learner performance in Mathematics in Grade 9. ■

#### References

- 1 McKinsey & Company (2010), How the world’s best education systems keep getting better



# The remuneration of State employees by the school governing body

**New regulations published in December 2011 bring clarity and some control to the remuneration of State employees, including teachers.**

For good reason most businesses are reluctant to permit their full-time employees to take on additional paid work. This is understandable as they expect their employees to be fully committed during the course of their working hours to the tasks that have been assigned to them, and to using their non-working hours for dealing with their own personal affairs and for rest and relaxation. An employer is likely to feel aggrieved if an employee chooses to use some of his working hours for 'outside' work and is likely to respond by either increasing the employee's work allocation so as to ensure that he or she 'earns' his or her pay, or by reducing the employee's working hours when there is insufficient work to keep the employee busy.

The State is no different and has a duty to ensure that its employees, including its teachers, devote themselves fully during the course of their working hours to the tasks for which they are employed. Taxpayers should demand no less for it is, after all, their money that pays the salaries of teachers and other State employees. This is particularly true in the case of the teaching corps, which has a poor public image because of repeated reports of high levels of absenteeism, late-coming and industrial action.

The conditions of employment of State-paid teachers require them to 'account for' 1 800 hours of work per year, which roughly translates into 9 hours of work a day for the approximately 200 working days of a typical academic school year. In addition, teachers are expected to be present at their place of work (school) for at least 7 hours of each working day. One must assume that the 2-hour difference each day represents time that teachers are expected to devote to such things as lesson preparation, marking, learner-counselling, attending meetings and the school's co-curricular programme.

While many of the country's best teachers devote far more time to their work than this, there is also plenty of evidence to suggest that this is not the case for the majority of State-employed teachers.

Regulation R.1043: 'Relating to the prohibition of the payment of unauthorised remuneration or the giving of financial benefits in kind to certain State employees', published in the *Government Gazette* of 15 December 2011, is an attempt by the State to regularise the additional remuneration that some school governing bodies pay to State employees and to ensure that the work for which they are paid is not work for which the employee is remunerated by the State. As the primary employer, the State also needs to ensure that the teachers they employ are not exploited by governing bodies and principals by being 'forced' or 'encouraged' to work additional hours of 'overtime' because of the demands of ambitious school programmes.

The Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA), as its name suggests, sets out to protect the rights of employees by, amongst other things, prescribing minimum benefits and limiting the working hours of all employees. Section 10 of the BCEA (Act 75 of 1997) limits the working hours of an employee (except certain groups of employees such as child-minders and farm workers for whom there are special dispensations) to a maximum of 3 hours of overtime a day or 10 hours of overtime in one week. These BCEA prescriptions provide some justification for the DBE's decision to limit the amount of 'overtime' that State-employed teachers could devote to their SGB-assigned 'work'. The regulations place a limit of 2 hours per school day and 6 hours on any other day on governing body-paid work by State-employed teachers.

*The new regulation is an attempt by the State to regularise the additional remuneration that some school governing bodies pay to State employees and to ensure that the work for which they are paid is not work for which the employee is remunerated by the State.*

The new regulations also prescribe the hourly rates of pay of State-employed teachers who perform additional work for the governing bodies. The hourly rate is based on the teacher's 'total salary package'. The formula used to calculate this rate is simple: the 'annual total package' that the state pays the teacher divided by 1 800. This in essence is the hourly equivalent of what the teacher is paid by the state. One must assume that the 'annual total package' means the 'cost of employment', which is the total cost to the State of employing the teacher and which includes not only the teacher's basic salary (including a 13th cheque), but also the Rand-value of the other benefits enjoyed by State employees, including pension-fund contributions, housing and medical aid subsidies. Taken together these represent about 25% of a teacher's cost of employment. Many teachers and SGB members may well be surprised by what teachers earn when these amounts are included.

It is also interesting to note that the regulations do not make allowance for any variation in this amount, which means that the hourly amount that a teacher can earn is strictly tied to his or her salary notch and will be the same whether the assigned task is supervising a chess match on a Friday afternoon or standing in the hot sun umpiring the first cricket team on a Saturday afternoon. It will also mean that the young enthusiast responsible for coaching the first rugby team earns considerably less per hour than the grizzly old-timer coaching the U14G team from his car parked at the side of the field.

Another aspect of the regulations that may prove troubling for some governing bodies and principals is that teachers may only be paid for work done. The payment of performance bonuses (i.e. for good work rather than hours of work), gratuities and 'responsibility-pay', a term often used to describe payments for teachers who serve in internally created promotion posts (subject head, head of department, deputy-principal and so on), are specifically excluded. Perks, which could include such things as the exclusive use of a 'school' vehicle, or free petrol or subsidised travel, or school-fee waivers for teachers' children,

will need to have a monetary value attached to them. One must also assume that these perks and the value assigned to them may only be 'awarded' (paid) for work done based on the hourly rate of the person who receives the perk.

Whatever one's view on these regulations, they do bring clarity and some control to an element of public schools that has been a bit of a murky free-for-all in some schools the past. Another aspect that may prove troubling to some schools and individuals will be the extent to which this extra remuneration is or has been included in the tax return of individual teachers and in the school's SARS returns as an employer.

Many of the schools who remunerate state-paid employees on a regular basis already have fairly sophisticated and transparent systems in place and for these schools these regulations may require little more than an 'upgrade' to ensure compliance. For some schools, however, these new regulations are likely to prove problematic and the process of making themselves compliant is likely to be troublesome and result in a great deal of staff unease as is always the case when money is involved.

*There is also no doubt that the governing bodies of schools with established traditions of excellence and supportive parents and communities will find ways to remunerate the teachers that they value and wish to retain despite this legislation.*

There is also no doubt that the governing bodies of schools with established traditions of excellence and supportive parents and communities will find ways to remunerate the teachers that they value and wish to retain despite this legislation. Many of these schools began exploring these options when the rationalisation of State-paid teachers was first mooted post 1996 and for them it will require no more than the drawing of a file and a call to parents, past pupils, friends of the school and sponsors.

We need to be grateful for this foresight as it is this country's great public schools that provide by far the majority of the undergraduates and graduates that our economy needs if we are to prosper. They are beacons of hope and a reminder of just how good public education can be if it is properly nurtured and given the freedom to excel. ■

# Waiting for the mangoes to drop, beneath an apple tree

**In this opinion piece that first appeared in the daily online publication Politicsweb, Vince Musewe, an economist, suggests that the government should declare education to be an essential service.**

I agree with Andile Lungisa, Chairperson of the National Youth Development Agency, on the issue of making education an essential service. However, the irony is that we declare something an essential service but are unwilling to pay top dollar for that service. Granted the government is currently spending a fortune on the education sector (R189 billion) but if we are to truly transform this economy we cannot put a cost to the benefits of a prosperous South Africa.

SADTU is also quite correct in pointing out that the problems in our education sector are systemic and we have to change the structure of the sector for us to achieve meaningful results. There are numerous intelligent suggestions out there on how we should deal with this sector. In other words, everyone understands the problems with the education sector in South Africa. What continues to confuse me is that the Cabinet lekgotlas continues to have these private to analyse problems we already know about. What we need is action, decisive public and private sector action.

Blaming and penalising teachers, principals and parents will not result in the improvement of the quality of education in this country. For me the crux of the problem is the issue of quality and process.

I do not think that the education sector should be headed by one individual. The problems of social change are just too complex to be fathomed by an individual. What we need is a think tank that manages the education sector. In my opinion the politicians involved in education, despite their knowledge and qualifications, cannot be expected to deal with the ever-changing variables of change. If I were the president, I would appoint a think tank made up of those with change management and academic experience who have worked elsewhere where education systems work to run the education department for the next five years or so and have a mandate to deliver a system that will meet the demands of a fast-changing world.

According to MIT and Fudan University professor Yasheng Huang, in his analysis of whether democracy hinders or promotes economic growth, he finds that the competitive advantage of nations such as China is not infrastructure but how the countries manage their human capital and the work ethic. With all the growth objectives, the job-creation initiatives, the large spend

on infrastructure, the South African economy will go nowhere until we make our priority the development, preservation and recognition of our human capital. In this regard, education is a key success factor and cannot be treated lightly as we are doing now.

The education sector cannot be left to unions to determine policy nor can it be left to this government alone. It is a national crisis that all South Africans must now address. This of course includes the private sector. It is evident that it is not about financial resources but about management of the process of education.

Education will continue to suffer as long as the quality of our teachers and the teacher-to-pupil ratio remains as it is. South Africa needs 25 000 teachers per annum but currently has 6 000 who are predominantly women, educated and trained during apartheid Bantu education. This is while the country has thousands of Zimbabwean-trained teachers who are performing menial jobs in restaurants, as gardeners and as security guards. Obviously, organisations such as SADTU and COSATU will not accept such a solution because these teachers will probably accept lower wages.

We must also ensure our education syllabus meets international standards such as the Cambridge curriculum. The issue of teaching children in their home language will clearly be a disadvantage to South African learners in the future. We are letting our emotions disadvantage millions of children who will need to survive in the information age and most of that information is in English.

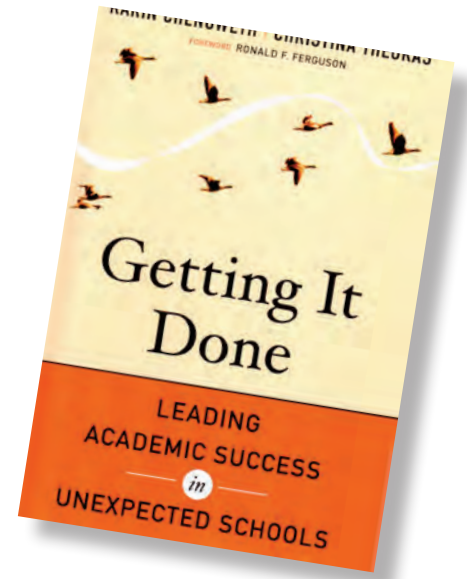
We cannot expect mangoes from an apple tree and so we must not expect to produce educated, articulate competent learners as long as we retain the current management systems. I am probably the umpteenth person to say the above but at this rate we all need to drum into the ANC that despite having all the resources and the right intentions, they are failing dismally to create a future generation that can compete in the global economy.

I can't claim to be an expert on education yet, but as an economist it is my opinion that the whole education cocktail in this country is just too toxic and lethal to human capital development. ■

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## Book reviews



***Getting It Done: Leading Academic Success in Unexpected Schools***  
By Karin Chenoweth and Christina Theokas, Harvard Education  
Press, Cambridge, MA, 2011  
ISBN: 978-1-61250-101-7 (paperback); 978-1-61250-102-4 (hardcover)

This is the third book that Karin Chenoweth has written about public schools in the United States that have achieved success despite their circumstances and the circumstances of the communities that they serve. She is 'writer-in-residence' of The Education Trust, a national education advocacy organisation that works to improve the academic achievement of all children but particularly children of 'colour' and children from low-income families. Her co-author Christina Theokas is director of research at The Education Trust, and the combination of good writing and rigorous research has produced a book that provides carefully structured, evidence-based guidance on how the leaders of the 33 schools they report on have achieved their success.

Chenoweth uses the phrase 'It's being done' to describe the schools and principals that she writes about and it is a phrase that aptly describes their approach to the work that they have done, and what they continue to do, to ensure that every child in their schools achieves success. The schools included in the study include primary, middle and high schools from across the United States; some are small while others are quite large, in terms of learner numbers. What the schools all have in common is that they serve communities that are poor and include a high proportion of children of colour, many of whom have English as their second language and parents who are poorly educated. As happens in many parts of the world, these kinds of communities and the schools that serve them are often written off as being hopeless cases, yet these principals have shown that this need not be the case. The author describes a visit to a school in Boston in the early stages of her work when in her discussion with the principal she made the statement, 'They say this work can't be done,' to which the principal replied, 'It's being done', which became the mantra for the work that the authors have done in finding schools that have been able to achieve high levels of academic success despite their circumstances.

The book is divided into seven chapters and a 'conclusion', with each chapter covering a specific aspect of the improvement processes that led up to the schools achieving the successes that saw them stand out from their peers and do better than many serving wealthier, largely 'white', middle-class communities.

Chapter 1 'Why Should We Listen to These Guys?' provides detailed data on the schools together with the hard evidence used to justify their inclusion in the study. Chapter 2 'So, What Do We Know About Principals and School Leadership?' provides a useful summary of what research reveals about management and leadership practices that are associated with effective schools and high levels of learner performance. Chapters 3 to 7 each cover a different element of school leadership as it relates to the school-improvement process, providing useful examples of the kinds of things that the 'Getting It Done' principals did as they led their schools from chronic underperformance to high performance. In the concluding chapter 'Not Superman: A New Kind of School Leader', the authors look to define what it is about these school leaders that enabled them to succeed where others had failed.

The following extracts from the chapter encapsulate some of the key elements of the manner in which these leaders approached their task:

'The thirty-three school leaders in this study whom we call It's Being Done principals work at a high level of expertise, weighing factors that non experts may not even realize exist but that often make a difference between successful schools and mediocre ones.

There is something else they share that is a little hard to define but is enormously important, and that is a democratic persona of the small d variety. These are not the baseball-wielding law-and-order principals barking orders like Joe Clarke, made famous by the



movie *Lean on Me*. They approach the students, teachers, parents and staff in their buildings with the kind of open, frank, and respectful attitude that the founders of the United States of America envisioned as the way free citizens should treat one another. They are hopeful without being unrealistic; hardnosed without being mean spirited. They are all nice people – but with a character of iron – who expect everyone around them to excel.’

‘– we don’t need superheroes who never make mistakes. We need experts, and expertise can be developed and cultivated by educators with the honesty to discriminate between excellence and mediocrity, the courage to do things differently to improve, and the discipline to reflect on what factors lead to success and what can be learned from failure.’

*Getting It Done* is an excellent book and should be compulsory reading for every district official in this country and part of the prescribed reading of all ACE: School Leadership courses. For any principal faced with the multiple challenges involved in turning around an underperforming school it will provide a beacon of hope and useful guide on what matters and what doesn’t. Knowing the difference is mostly what separates those who succeed from those who fail. ■

*Getting It Done* is published by Harvard Education Press and can be ordered directly from their website <http://www.hepg.org/main/hep/Index.html>. The book is available in paperback or hardcover. The paperback edition costs \$26,95.

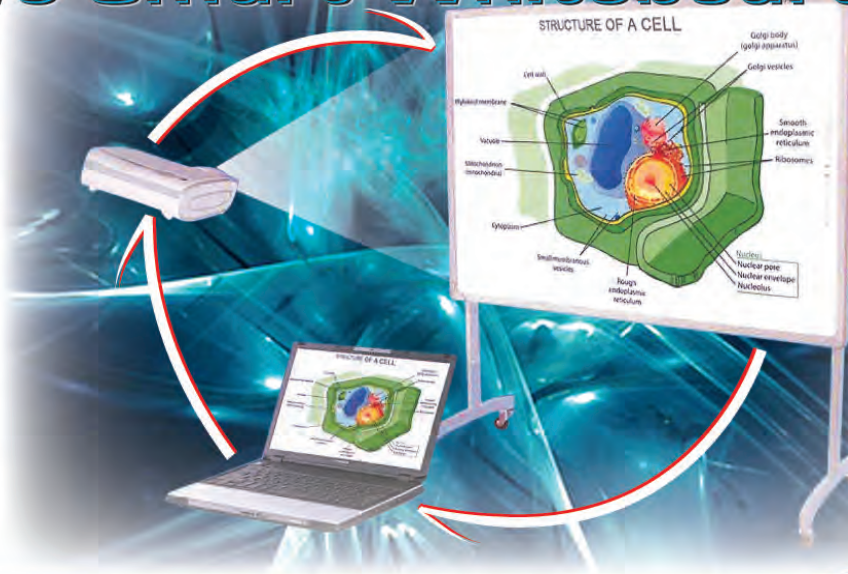
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***The Principal of Fun: 134 Ideas to help grow a school with heart***  
 by Almarie Mead. Published by Evansmead Publishing in paperback  
 Price: R180

This self-published book is a brave initiative by Almarie Mead, principal of Sea Point Primary School. It is a book of ideas rather than of instruction, and provides a wealth of interesting, useful and sometimes quirky ideas that schools can use or adapt to suit their specific purposes. The ideas are listed alphabetically with each idea given a separate page that includes a brief explanation of the idea and an adjacent textbox that lists some implementation guidelines.

Ideas are grouped into seven chapters, each focussed on a different element. The chapters are:

1. Fun; 34 ideas to make a school a fun place to be, which includes ideas such as 'Crazy sock day' and 'Turn off TV week'
2. Ethos: 26 ideas to establish a caring environment, with 'Merit badges' and 'Think about it bench' as suggestions
3. Staff: 28 ideas to show caring towards staff, which includes 'Movie date' and 'Snack-yack'
4. Education: 22 ideas to make learning more meaningful, which includes ideas such as 'Healthy Tuck Shop' and 'Tables Championship'
5. Policy: 8 ideas to establish a well-disciplined school, which includes 'Punch Bag' and 'Swear Box'
6. Fundraising: 8 tried and tested ideas to raise funds, whose suggestions include 'Art Expo' and a 'Readathon'
7. Parents: 8 ideas to involve and encourage parents, including ideas such as 'SMS Communication' and a 'School DVD'.

There is a comprehensive appendix of templates of the various documents that are referred to in the text.



This is essentially a book for primary schools, although many of the ideas could be constructively used in high schools. It is the kind of book that one would reach for when one is stuck for ideas about a fundraiser or when one is looking for something new to stimulate interest at the start of a school term or year. The ideas that are included, however, are not limited to the quirky and to fun; they also include suggestions for dealing with serious and problematic elements of school life, including bullying, improving literacy and numeracy skills and good discipline.

I have just one serious gripe about the book and that concerns the information that is provided in relation to the need for children to drink water in class. The author provides a list of 16 statements in response to the question 'Why should our pupils have water readily available in class?' Although many these statements represent a common populist view about the body's need for water and how it uses water, most are meaningless scientific nonsense and have no place in a book of this kind because they represent fiction as fact. The other is a lesser gripe and may be limited to the review copy of the book, which began to break where the pages joined the spine. That said, however, *The Principal of Fun* is a book that I would recommend to all schools because of the fund of ideas it includes and the comprehensive appendix of sample documents and templates. ■

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