

Management & Leadership

POLICY • LEADERSHIP • MANAGEMENT • GOVERNANCE

for South African Schools

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SM&L

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How to be top

The writer of this article was alerted to the material contained in it by a media release of the DoE regarding a presentation made by Minister Pandor. In her presentation, she referred to an article that had appeared in "The Economist" which, in turn, cited measurable results identified in a report published by McKinsey & Company with the title "How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top".

The report is a result of research carried out by McKinsey & Company between May 2006 and March 2007. The objective of the research was to "understand why the world's top performing school systems perform so very much better than most others and why some educational reforms succeed so spectacularly, when most others fail".

It is a fascinating report and one which should be compulsory reading for every person involved in the formulation and implementation of educational policy in this country. The answers it provides are simple and common sense. What is surprising is that with a few exceptions, politicians, policy-makers and educational bureaucracies the world over find the few simple solutions to improving the quality of education so difficult to accept.

McKinsey's findings are that the three things that matter most are:

- getting the right people to become teachers
- developing them into effective instructors
- ensuring the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction to every child.

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- developing them into effective instructors
- ensuring the system is able to deliver the best possible instruction to every child.

What makes the report so fascinating is that the countries that are doing this and that are most successful at providing their children with quality education are not those that spend the most on education or those with the smallest teacher-pupil ratio or class size. What they do have are systems in place and a focus that ensures that these three things happen. As report states in the last paragraph of the executive summary:

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“These systems demonstrate that the best practice of achieving these three things work, irrespective of the culture in which they are applied. They demonstrate that substantial improvement in outcomes is possible in a short period of time and that applying these best practices universally could have enormous impact in improving failing school systems, wherever they may be located.”

these three things work, irrespective of the culture in which they are applied

The research focused on what it is that successful school systems do which influences what happens in the classroom – how they ensure that better teaching and greater learning occurs in the classroom. To do this the research team analysed the achievements of the best-performing school systems in terms of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). They also did a survey of the literature, interviewed more than 100 experts, policymakers and practitioners, and visited schools from across the world. They used their findings to benchmark school systems which represented two categories of school system: the world’s top ten best-performing school systems according to the OECD’s Programme for International Student Assessment; and those systems that are improving rapidly following recently-introduced reforms that are raising student outcomes.

It is worth noting at this point that in the USA and Canada the control of education rests with individual states/provinces and that there are wide policy variations between states. Because of this, the individual states in the USA are treated as separate educational systems in terms of this study.

Benchmarked systems

Systems in the top ten in the OCED’s PISA (2003) (Listed alphabetically):

Alberta (USA)
Australia
Belgium
Finland
Hong Kong
Japan
Netherlands
New Zealand
Ontario (Canada)
Singapore
South Korea

Systems with a strong improvement trajectory in the OCED’s PISA (Listed alphabetically):

Atlanta (USA)
Boston (USA)
Chicago (USA)
England
Jordan
New York (USA)
Ohio (USA)

One of the interesting things to come out of this study is the type of strategies and policy interventions that have had little or no effect on pupil outcomes (performance). Examples of these include:

- Increased public spending per student
- Employing more teachers
- Reducing pupil-teacher ratios
- Decentralising power to schools
- Curriculum reform, assessment standards and testing
- The establishment of new and/or additional regulatory bodies

The report provides a number of examples of education systems that have failed to produce significant improvement in pupils’ outcomes, despite intensive reform efforts over protracted periods of time. One example is the USA, which increased per pupil public spending on education by 73% (after allowing for inflation) between 1980 and 2005. During that same period it employed more teachers, the teacher pupil ratio fell 18% and by 2005, class size in public schools was the lowest it had ever been.

Strategies and policy interventions that have had little or no effect on pupil outcomes

- Increased public spending per student
- Employing more teachers
- Reducing pupil-teacher ratios
- Decentralising power to schools
- Curriculum reform, assessment standards and testing
- The establishment of new and/or additional regulatory bodies

Many other initiatives were introduced by Federal and State governments, school districts, principals, teacher unions and non-profit organisations and yet student outcomes as measured by the DoE's own national assessment programme remained almost the same.

England is another country that embarked on a series of reform efforts which have produced few returns in terms of pupils' outcomes. In 1996, the National Foundation for Education Research concluded that reform efforts for the period 1948 to 1996 had produced no measurable improvement in standards of literacy and numeracy in English primary schools.

Reducing class size and pupil-teacher ratios is one of the most commonly-introduced reform initiatives and yet only 9 of 112 studies in the report that looked at the impact of reduction in class size on pupil performance found any positive relationship between class size and improved pupil performance. The other 103 studies found either no significant relationship or a significant negative relationship!

variations in teacher quality completely dominated the effect of class size

Far more important was the evidence from every single one of the studies that variations in teacher quality completely dominated the effect of class size.

The value of teacher quality as a driver of quality learning and pupil performance is highlighted by a study undertaken 10 years ago in Tennessee and which is cited in the report. The research showed that if two eight-year-old pupils were given different teachers – one of them a high performer, the other a low performer – their performance would diverge by more than 50 percentile points within three years. Similar research in Dallas showed that the performance gap between pupils assigned three effective teachers in a row and those assigned three ineffective teachers in a row was 49 percentile points. By way of comparison, similar research based on class size showed that reducing class size from 23 to 15 is likely to result of an improvement in pupil performance by just 8 percentile points.

It is repeated evidence of this kind of research which provides the basis for the findings of the McKinsey report. What they found was that high-performing school systems, though varying widely in construct and context, maintained a strong focus on improving instruction. They did this because of its impact on pupil achievement.

The best performing systems did three things well:

- They got the right people to become teachers (as the report notes "the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers")



The best performing systems provide targeted support to ensure that every child is able to benefit from excellent instruction

- They developed their teachers to become effective instructors (i.e. they focused on the quality of the teacher input and impact in the classroom)
- They put in place systems and targeted support to ensure that every child was able to benefit from excellent instruction. The focus here was on interventions which supported underperforming pupils earlier rather than later and which ensured that they were not left behind.

"the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers"

Perhaps the most pertinent issue to come out of the report is the identification of strategies that the best-performing education systems use to get the right people to become teachers. The answer - as some may expect - is not money although good starting salaries for teachers do seem to make a difference.

The difference between the top-performing and lower-performing school systems in terms of their ability to attract well-qualified graduates into teaching is quite significant. Teachers in South Korea are recruited from the top 5% of graduates, in Finland from the top 10% and in Hong Kong and Singapore from the top 30%. In the lower-performing school systems, teachers tend to be recruited from the bottom third of graduates.

The top-performing school systems use rigorous systems to assess and select the best and most suitable applicants

Continued on page 4

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for teaching. In Singapore only 20% of students who apply for teacher education are accepted. As a result, significant status is associated with gaining admission to a teacher training programme. It is the stringent acceptance criteria used to select aspirant teachers prior to their admission to teacher training programmes that distinguishes the top-performing systems from the lower-performing systems.

The top-performing systems have also developed ways of recruiting more experienced graduates into teaching by removing the barriers that may make it difficult for these people to be recruited into the profession.

Another interesting difference between the top-performing systems and those that perform less well is that they realise that they may still make mistakes in recruiting people into the profession and have developed mechanisms to ensure that they are able to remove those who do not perform well in the classroom. In England and New Zealand, teachers do not gain their teaching licence until they have completed one or two years of teaching respectively and in Boston (USA) teachers are not made permanent until they have been teaching for three years. Strategies to recruit better-quality applicants to teaching need not take decades to have an effect. England has made teaching the most popular profession among undergraduates and graduates in just 5 years.

Despite what has been said earlier, money does matter. It matters in terms of starting salary and it matters in terms of the funding teachers receive during their initial training. In Singapore students selected for teacher training are employed by the Ministry of Education and are paid a salary while they are training.

The report provides an interesting insight into the relationship between class size and teachers' salaries and makes the point that bigger class size allows systems to employ fewer teachers at better salaries at a funding level that is equivalent to a system that has small classes and more teachers with lesser salaries. The top-performing systems are those that opt for bigger classes with fewer but better qualified and compensated teachers. Good starting salaries are seen to be of significant importance.

Having recruited the best people into teaching, the top-performing systems work to ensure that their teachers continue to develop professionally and hone their skills throughout their careers. Emphasis is placed on professional development of teachers with significant funding provided for this purpose. Part of this emphasis is directed at ensuring that quality education is provided for all pupils and that there is a sufficient supply of teachers and education specialists to meet the needs of pupils who fall behind. How this is done will form the basis of a follow-up article in the next issue of **SM&L**.

How to be top: Lessons for schools

The McKinsey report contains many lessons for our Department of Education and one hopes that Minister Pandor and her Department take heed of the evidence that it provides.

There are also lessons to be learned for schools, their principals and governing bodies, not least of which is that high schools should work to persuade their best and most talented pupils to consider teaching as a career.

Other ways in which schools could address the present situation are:

- Invest in talented pupils who are interested in taking up teaching as a career by helping them:
 - to gain admission to the best teacher training institutions (do you know which are the best?)
 - to access funding in the form of bursaries and student loans
 - to access funding from the ETDP Seta, to obtain learnerships or to provide contact details of schools offering learnerships
 - by supporting them financially with school funds in return for a commitment to undertake some of their practical training at the school and to commit to accepting an appointment to teach at the school, once qualified, should a post become available at that time
- Promote the status of teachers in your school and your community by ensuring that you and your teachers are good role models in terms of your professionalism in your work and in your dealings with the community.
- Establish exacting criteria for the professional performance and behaviour of your staff
- Closely monitor and mentor beginner teachers and teachers new to your school to ensure that they understand and commit to meeting the professional standards set for your school.
- Supplement the salaries of your teachers - especially new teachers - if funds are available for the purpose
- Invest in the professional development of your teachers, focusing on practical strategies that promote good teaching and learning
- Enhance the status of subject heads by providing them with the time and funding they need to:

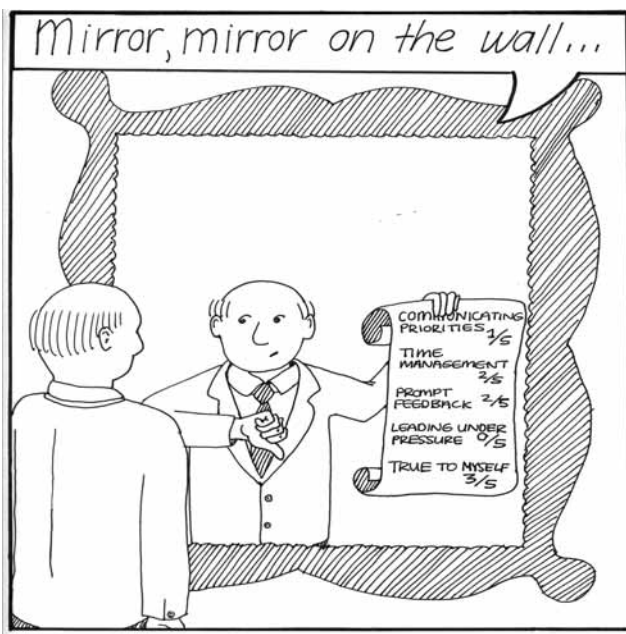
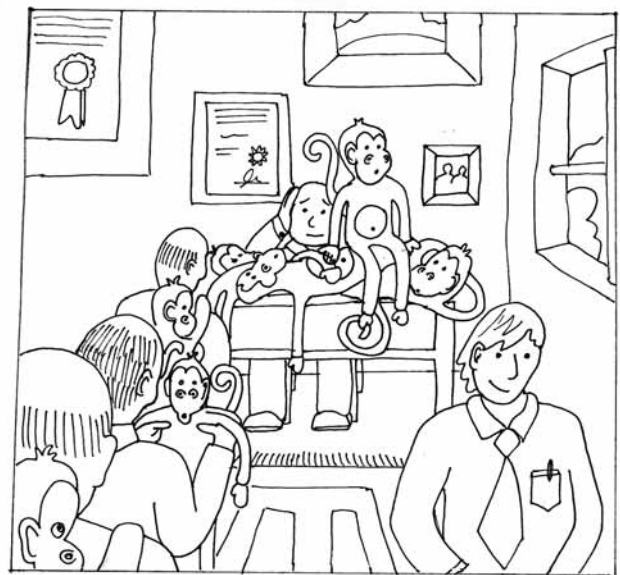
- promote the teaching of their subject speciality and
- to monitor and mentor less experienced or qualified members of their subject teams
- Encourage subject heads to work cooperatively with subject heads from other schools and to share their knowledge and skills
- Make it possible for teachers to visit one another's classes on a regular basis by
 - providing funding for the occasional employment of substitute teachers to supervise classes or
 - by allocating a fixed number of every teacher's unallocated teaching periods (free periods) to supervising the classes of teachers involved in a lesson visit.
- Insist that subject heads visit the class of every member of their subject team at least twice each year.
- Include discussion on lesson observation as part of your school's staff professional development programme
- Focus on delivering the best possible teaching to every child by developing systems to
 - identify early those who are struggling or falling behind and
 - by putting in place interventions which will help them improve
- Provide funding and/or support for staff who wish to improve their expertise in identifying and supporting pupils who struggle.

More than an artist

Jessye Grundlingh, the Westerford pupil, now past pupil, who was responsible for almost all of the illustrations that we published during the past year, produced a stunning set of Senior Certificate results – distinctions in all six subjects that she wrote: English First Language (HG), Afrikaans Second Language (HG), Mathematics (HG), Physical Science (HG), Art (HG) and History (HG), and an aggregate distinction. Well done, Jessye. We are delighted that Jessye has agreed to continue as our illustrator in 2008.



Below we have reproduced some of her best illustrations from the year.



Effective strategic planning

Things you can do to ensure that your strategic plan delivers on its promise

Strategic planning is a process used by organisations of every type and across all sectors to initiate change and/or improvement in the hope of achieving their goals more successfully. Strategic planning is also frequently used by the newly-appointed leaders of organisations in an effort to improve their understanding of the organisations they lead and in an attempt to sell their personal visions for the organisations and to infuse them with their particular style of leadership and management.

Unfortunately, the majority of strategic planning initiatives end up delivering nothing more than a plan. This final plan may be very grand and beautifully presented in the form of a full-colour brochure with supporting PowerPoint, video or interactive DVD presentations. The consultants or leadership team that produced it may feel a deep sense of satisfaction with the good work that has been done - but if what they have produced turns out to be nothing more than a plan, then the whole exercise will have been of little value. For strategic plans to be effective and to deliver on their promise, they need to include action plans for delivery: what needs to be done.

Failure to deliver on their promise is a common occurrence. Writing in the *Harvard Business Review*¹ about strategic planning in big international corporates, Michael Mankins and Richard Steele suggest that most strategies deliver only 60% of their potential financial performance. They use the term “strategy-to-performance gap” to describe this shortfall and they make a number of suggestions regarding things that can be done to reduce this gap and to ensure that strategy delivers on its promise. They offer a number of interesting observations about this gap and its consequences, including the fact that “performance bottlenecks” are frequently invisible to top management and that the gap fosters a culture of underperformance. Too often the result is that the strategy is abandoned and a new strategic planning process is initiated, only to result in a similar, mediocre conclusion.

We are not suggesting that schools are international corporates but the pattern of repeated strategic plans and their failure to deliver on their promise are things that many schools may be familiar with and the reason why long-serving and middle-management level staff sometimes groan at the thought of another session of strategic planning.

Mankins and Steele make a number of suggestions about how things can be done to reduce the “strategy-to-performance gap” which may be of use to principals

contemplating a strategic planning exercise for their schools. These include the following:

Keep it simple and make it concrete

Avoid lofty ideals and abstract, ethereal descriptions which cannot be put into practice. Strategic planning is not about vision and mission; it is about improved performance in specific areas. Ensure that your strategy statement explains in clear, simple and unambiguous language what you will (or won't) do. It should describe your planned course of action so that those who are to do the work understand exactly what is required of them and where they must focus their efforts.

Debate assumptions, not forecasts

Any forecasts – the results, goals or projected outcome of the strategic plan – will inevitably be dependent on certain assumptions that you make. If the purpose of your strategic plan is to produce better results in the form of improved literacy levels or more Higher Education Endorsements or greater involvement of pupils in co-curricular activities, the goals that you set will inevitably be based on assumptions that you make about such things as the operations of your school, the curriculum and the competence of your teaching staff. Mostly these assumptions are simply taken as a given, despite the fact that they are likely to be the critical determinants of the success or failure of the strategy. Questions about such factors as the willingness of teachers to accept and support any new initiative, the possible impact of increased teacher turnover or the loss of individuals with specific skills, the availability of resources and/or funding, and the potential impact of externally-imposed events or interventions from the DoE cannot be discounted or ignored. It is in debating these issues that underlying difficulties and insights emerge, to produce a better, more rigorous and potentially more effective strategic plan.

Discuss resource deployment early

The strategic plan needs to include a clear indication of what resources - including human resources - funding and time-allocation will be available. People need to know what they will be given to work with. There is nothing quite as threatening to commitment to a new strategy than for those who are expected to implement it finding that it is simply an add-on - something that they must do in addition to their current work with the same resources; or that the promised resources, be they funding, in-service training or additional time, simply don't materialise.

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Mentoring new and beginner teachers

Mentoring beginner teachers and teachers new to the school has many positive benefits including improved teaching and better discipline

One of the best strategies schools can use to improve the quality of teaching and learning is to implement a system of mentoring beginner teachers and teachers new to the school. The great value of effective mentoring systems is that they benefit both the mentor and mentee, as both are forced to reflect on their practice. If they are to work, however, mentoring systems need to be carefully planned and properly managed. They require a willingness of all involved to commit additional time and energy to the process. Equally importantly, they must be seen to be endorsed and supported by the principal and Senior Management Team.

Before embarking on a programme of this kind, the principal and leadership team need to have a clear idea about what they see as its purpose. Is its purpose to help new and beginner teachers to understand the hierarchy and ethos of the school? Or is it to help them become better classroom practitioners or to give them an opportunity to share their possibly new and innovative ideas with the present staff of the school? Thought also needs to be given to the organisation and structure of the programme; about whether it should include class visits, about issues of confidentiality and about the resources that may need to be provided if peer mentoring is to become part of the ongoing professional development of staff. Resources requiring consideration include making time available when mentors can meet the teachers they are mentoring, as well as the allocation of venues for meetings. Funding may also be needed for the training and support of the teachers who are to become mentors and for struggling teachers who may need additional support. In addition, to be effective, mentoring programmes need to be seen as a long-term investment with the view that mentoring will, in time, become embedded within the ethos of the school.

In the school context, mentoring is usually perceived to be a process for helping beginner teachers, that is, teachers who are in their first term or year of teaching. It is less often seen as a way of helping teachers new to a school to settle in and find their feet, particularly if they are experienced teachers or are people who are taking up leadership positions within the school. It is also not often that teachers who are promoted or assigned more senior management responsibilities within their current school are provided with the mentoring support they may need as they tackle their new roles and duties. Yet support in the form of a carefully constructed mentoring programme could help all of these people grow into their new roles and develop

the skills that they need more quickly and with greater understanding.

In their *2004 - 2005 Draft National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching*, the UK Department for Education and Skills¹ (DfES) identifies three kinds of mentoring/coaching. These are:

- Mentoring, which they describe as a structured, sustained process for supporting professional learners through significant career transitions.
- Specialist coaching, described as a structured, sustained process for enabling the development of a specific aspect of a professional learner's practice.
- Collaborative or co-coaching which they see as being a structured and sustained process between two or more professional learners to enable them to embed new knowledge and skills from specialist sources in day-to-day practice.

All three of these approaches to the ongoing professional development of staff have great value but for the purposes of this article we will focus on Mentoring as defined by the DfES. The authors identify 9 elements of mentoring which involve activities promoting and enhancing effective transitions between professional roles. The nine elements are:

- identifying learning goals and supporting progression
- increasing learners' control over their learning
- active listening
- modelling, observing, articulating and discussing practice to raise awareness
- shared learning experiences e.g. via observation or video
- providing guidance, feedback and, when necessary, direction
- review and action planning
- assessing, appraising and accrediting practice
- brokering a range of support.

They support the view expressed earlier in this article - that mentoring can play a part in the continuing professional development of staff throughout their career but that it has most value during transitional periods, that is, at a time when a staff member is entering a new phase in his or her career or is taking on new responsibilities.

They identify three key phases in a teacher career when mentoring is most needed:

- Mentoring for induction, which is used to support newly-qualified teachers when they begin their careers, as well as to support teachers when they join a new school.
- Mentoring for progression, which is used to support teachers when they take on new roles and to help them understand the responsibilities that those new roles bring.
- Mentoring for challenge, which aims to help teachers to address significant challenges that may be inhibiting them or their pupils' progress.

The roles and responsibilities of mentors

When selecting a mentor, it is important to choose a member of staff who has a good knowledge and understanding of the duties, roles and responsibilities that will be / have been allocated to the individual(s) they are to mentor. They must also have had experience in performing the duties and fulfilling the roles and responsibilities that have been assigned to the person that they are to mentor. This enables them to talk from experience and to identify the challenges that are peculiar to the roles and responsibilities that have been assigned.

In practical terms, if you plan to introduce a mentoring programme in your school it is best to begin with the mentoring of beginner teachers and as their mentors to use experienced post level 1 teachers who have had at least 3 years of experience teaching at the school. This is to ensure that they have a good understanding of the ethos of the school and its expectations. Principals can use the allocation of mentoring assignments to provide young, competent and ambitious teachers with the opportunity of taking on leadership roles. Mentoring of beginner teachers could also be seen as one of the duties assigned to Senior and Master Teachers. Where possible, there should be a team of monitors who can meet, share their experiences of mentoring and work together to develop their mentoring skills. Overall responsibility for the programme should rest either with the principal or with a deputy or other senior member of staff. This is to ensure that the role of mentor and the importance of mentoring are perceived to be an important element of the school's professional development strategy.

The individuals identified as potential mentors will need to be given clear and specific instructions about their roles and responsibilities as mentors and they will also need to be given an outline of the topics and materials to be covered during the course of the year. This should include all of the school's policies and a year plan listing the events of the school year. The mentoring team can then use these to plan their mentoring programme for the year, making sure that those whom they are mentoring are briefed about coming events, about due dates and deadlines and about the expectation that the school will have of them and the duties and responsibilities that may be assigned to them. These are also the key documents for mentoring teachers who may be new to the school but not beginner teachers.

For beginner teachers, assuming that guidance on subject-related matters will be provided by their subject or phase head, the other key priority for mentors is to provide them with guidelines and support for issues of classroom management and discipline, as these are the areas that are likely to be most challenging. It is also in these areas where mentors can be most helpful, not only by providing advice and support – and occasionally also comfort – but also by offering the beginner teacher opportunities to observe them modelling appropriate classroom management strategies. If there is a real commitment within the school to support the mentoring of beginner teachers, that commitment should extend to a willingness by all staff to welcome beginner teachers to their lessons as observers. Classroom observation with follow-up discussion (either with the teacher who taught the lesson or with their mentor) provides beginner teachers with valuable opportunities to observe effective classroom practice in action. Perhaps most valuable of all are the lessons that may be learned from observing competent and experienced teachers managing the classes and/or pupils that they themselves teach and which they have found to be challenging to manage.

Mentoring of beginner teachers and teachers new to a school should be a key ingredient in every school's professional development programme. Its value lies in the benefits it offers, not only to those who are mentored but to the entire staff because the mentoring process initiates a dialogue around approaches, teaching strategies and school policies and out of this dialogue comes greater awareness of what constitutes good and best classroom practice.

Reference

¹ Department for Education and Skills. *Mentoring and Coaching CPD Capacity Building Project: 2004 – 2005 Draft National Framework for Mentoring and Coaching.*

Management

Planning for the induction of new staff

Help teachers new to your school to learn the ropes and understand the ethos of your school with a well planned induction programme

Elsewhere in this periodical there is an article dealing with the mentoring of teachers which focuses particularly on the needs of beginner teachers and teachers new to a school. Mentoring can play a valuable part in the professional development of staff and have a significant effect on the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore principals and their SMT should give serious thought to introducing a system of mentoring if it is not currently part of their staff professional development process. One way to initiate the process is to introduce a formal orientation and induction process for teachers when they join the school.

An orientation and induction programme should aim to do five things:

- provide the new members of staff with the critical information that they need to function effectively in their new environment. [These would include: their personal timetables and a list of their duties and responsibilities, the timings of the school day, lists of names of the pupils in the classes they teach, a staff list and organogram of the school management structures so they know whom to approach with specific queries.]
- provide them with the materials that they need to meet their teaching and co-curricular obligations. [These would include the textbooks, stationery and other resources that they may need.]
- introduce them to the key role players in the school and to those with whom they will work most closely
- help them become physically orientated to their surroundings within the school site – parking areas, school entrances, staffroom, their classroom, staff toilets etc.
- advise them of the school's policies and specific expectations regarding staff appearance and dress, punctuality/late-coming, absence, attendance at school functions and relationships with pupils.

Putting in place an induction and orientation programme for teachers who join the staff at the start of the school year is a relatively simple process because some of what they need to know would be covered in the normal briefing of all staff which would be expected to take place at this time. This does not, however, mean that there is less of a need for the orientation and induction of new staff at this time of the year - far from it. Many schools with established

orientation, induction and mentoring programmes bring their new staff in for their first orientation briefing the day before the formal start of the school year for teachers. An example of a programme for an initial orientation meeting of this kind is given on the adjacent page.

As can be seen from this list, new teachers are expected to cope with an extensive range of "new" policies, events and people when they first arrive at a new school, an experience that those who have been at the school for some time often forget. Because of this, the first year can be a very daunting and stressful experience for the beginner teacher with little or no experience of what is really involved in teaching. It is for this reason that principals and their management teams should put in place programmes and procedures to help and support beginner teachers and teachers new to their schools. In doing so, they go a long way to helping these teachers to cope more easily and successfully with their new surroundings and to reduce the time it takes for them to become well integrated, fully functioning and effective members of the school's staff.

Minister Pandor media statement

Minister Pandor, in her statement on the release of the 2007 Senior Certificate examination results emphasised the critical importance of the foundation skills of reading, writing and numeracy and the need for all involved in education to commit to improving the teaching of these essential skills. We have included part of her statement below because we feel that in it she has identified the critical weakness of our public education system and the importance of addressing the fundamental problems associated with the teaching of reading, writing and numeracy.

"Every school should commit to ensuring that basic skills for learning are provided to every child. Foundation skills of reading, writing and numeracy must become unambiguous objectives of every primary school. We must eliminate curriculum jargon that is diverting us from understanding these simple truths. Learning begins with reading, writing and numeracy. Advanced learning is made possible through our building on these core skills."

Induction programme for new staff (example)

1 New members of staff meet and are issued with name badges

2 Welcome by principal and introduction by person with overall responsibility for the orientation, induction and mentoring of new staff. (We will use the term New Staff Mentor or NSM as this person's title)

3 Briefing by NSM

- Programme for the morning/day
- Administrative matters
 - . Parking
 - . Staffroom use
 - . Distribution of post / use of pigeon-holes
 - . Staff lockers
 - . Classroom keys
 - . School times
- Key policy requirements / expectations (If the school has a policy file which it issues to teachers, this can be issued at this point and the briefing can be used to highlight the key policies. The important thing is to focus on those policies which are likely to impact on the immediate daily activities of a teacher new to the school.)
 - . Staff dress code
 - . School telephone use
 - . Use of cell phones
 - . Smoking
 - . Staff absence and late-coming
 - . Leaving the school premises during working hours
 - . Photocopying
 - . Use of computers and internet

4 Introduction of key members of staff

- Administrative staff
 - . Bursar
 - . Secretary, receptionist, switchboard etc.
 - . Caretaker
 - . Caterer / person responsible for staff tea
- IT manager / members of IT staff
- Members of SMT
- Subject head (if they have not already met)
- Mentors
- School counsellor / social worker

5 Tour of school

The school tour should be planned to take each teacher to the classroom(s) that they will be using and should include:

- Staffroom
- Staff workroom
- Staff toilets
- Library / media centre
- Hall / Assembly venue
- Bursar / finance office
- Reception

Remember, however, that the purpose is not to promote the school's resources as you would to a potential parent or member of the public but to familiarise new teachers with the layout of the school so that they can easily find their way around. If the school is large with extensive buildings, it is a good idea to provide them with a simple map of the building and site.

6 Meeting with subject / phase head

- The subject / phase head should be responsible for issuing the new members of staff with the documents and materials that they will need for their professional duties including:

- . Textbooks and stationery
- . Class lists
- . NCS
- . Assessment guidelines
- . Markbooks

- The subject / phase head must brief them about how they should approach their first lesson with each class (a point to consider: will someone be there to introduce them to the class?) and about any specific activities / tasks that need to be completed in the first lesson with a class.

7 Meeting with grade head or tutor

If the school uses a system of grade heads or tutors to deal with issues relating to pupil welfare and discipline then the new staff member needs to meet the individual grade head / tutor that he / she will work with. This is also the person most suited to go through the basics of the school's code of conduct and disciplinary policy with a new teacher.

8 Meeting with Mentor

If the school has a mentoring programme, then ideally the mentor should meet the teacher that he / she will be mentoring at the start and end of any initial orientation and induction programme. The mentor could also take responsibility for covering a great deal of the material listed in this example of an orientation programme. If not, then at least some mentoring responsibilities should fall to the lot of the subject / phase head.

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Clearly identify priorities

Everyone in the school needs to know what his or her priorities are in terms of the strategic plan. As one executive put it, "Everyone needs to know: 'If I have only one hour to work, here is what I am going to focus on'."

Continuously monitor performance

The strategic plan needs to include a process which allows the principal and senior management team to monitor performance continuously. They need to do this on a regular basis by gathering evidence which will measure the extent to which they are meeting their goals. Tracking these results on a regular basis will provide a clear idea of progress. As importantly, it will give early warning of where things may be going wrong, making it possible for them to intervene and/or adjust their strategy to keep them on track to reach their target/goals. For example, tracking attendance records of each class and the follow-up procedure of individual teachers on a weekly basis is the kind of monitoring process that could be used if the strategy was aimed at improving pupil attendance. A further example of a performance-monitoring process is monthly monitoring of teachers' markbooks (assessment records) and pupils' portfolios, if the purpose of the strategy was to improve pupil performance.

Reward and develop those who deliver

Monitoring progress makes it possible to identify those members of staff who are meeting their obligations in terms of the strategy and delivering the measurable results identified in the strategic plan. Those members of staff need to be publicly acknowledged and rewarded for their achievements. By doing so, the principal and his/her management team send out a clear message about what they want.

Strategic planning has an important part to play in all organisations including schools, and has the potential to bring about change and significant and sustained improvement if used correctly. For it to be effective, care must be taken not only in who is involved in the strategic planning process but also in ensuring that the final plan includes processes and procedures to monitor and measure the extent to which the plan, in its implementation, is achieving its purpose.

Reference

¹ Mankins, M.C & Steele, R. *Turning Great Strategy into Great Performance*. Harvard Business Review. July-August 2005.

Thank you for your support

The launch of *School Management & Leadership* in January 2007 with the distribution of a sample edition to nearly 3 000 schools was an exciting event for all involved with *SM&L*. Although we were convinced that there was a need for a publication which catered specifically for principals and others involved in leadership and management positions within the school sector, we were not sure whether there would be sufficient support to make it a viable proposition.

Although the initial response was good there was a time in the middle of the year when the slow growth in our subscriber numbers made led some to question its viability. Thanks, however, to the encouragement and support from our early subscribers and some good publicity provided by an article about *SM&L* published in *The Teacher* we are now convinced that *SM&L* is not only viable as a publication but that it has a bright future.

Our contact with the leaders of schools from across the socio-economic spectrum and the urban-rural divide has convinced us that there is an enormous need for support and for simple, sound, practical advice on the many issues of management and leadership that are part and parcel of the daily routine of every principal, management team member and DoE or PED district official. Governors too are struggling to fulfil their multitude of responsibilities. *SM&L* is committed to serving this leadership group by providing information and advice that is relevant and topical and that meets the varying needs of our subscribers. It is our hope, that in doing so, we will contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in our nation's schools.

We wish all our subscribers and readers all the best for 2008

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