

## Management & Leadership

POLICY ■ LEADERSHIP ■ MANAGEMENT ■ GOVERNANCE FOR SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

### Are our learners making progress?

By the time this edition reaches you, you will be well into the new school year and more than likely will have largely forgotten about your school's performance in the ANA and NSC examinations unless there were some glaring anomalies – either significant improvements or a disappointing fall in results at school or subject level. While we do not have access to the detailed results of individual schools, save those that we are working with, we have, as we have done in the past, used the data provided by the DBE's various technical reports to do our own analysis of the overall performance at a national level and in some cases at a provincial level. The fact that this year for the first time we have reliable data on learner performance in languages and Mathematics at four levels in the system (Grades 3, 6, 9 and 12) means that it is possible to get a vertical snapshot of what is happening in the system at each of these levels. The results paint a troubling picture of a steep decline in learner performance, particularly in Mathematics, as learners move through the GET phase of their schooling. Interestingly, things seem to turn around during the FET phase with better pass rates in this phase than in most of the GET phase. You can read more about our findings and commentary on pages 2 to 6.

Also in this edition is a comprehensive summary of the Supreme Court of Appeal judgement in a case involving an attempt by the Gauteng Education Department to force the principal and SGB of Rivonia Primary School to admit a learner to the school. The judgement provides some important guidelines on the processes that need to be followed in dealing with the admission of learners to schools and on the extent and limits of the authority of principals, school governing bodies and departmental officials when managing these processes.

Erich Cloete continues to write for us this year and we carry two of his articles in this issue, one on the use of 'Systems thinking' as a management tool and the other on the latest amendments to the latest regulatory updates to the National Curriculum Statement which were published in a *Government Gazette* on 28 December last year. There are three documents involved:

- the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) for all approved subjects
- the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 12 (NPPPR)
- the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R – 12.

Although we would recommend that you get your own copies of these documents if you don't already have them – they can be downloaded from the DBE website – we think that you will find Erich's critique of them useful.

Also in this issue is a report on our visit to an extraordinary school in the township of Tamahole on the outskirts of the Free State town of Parys where Grade 12 learners and their teachers are putting in 14-hour days in an effort to produce excellent results and their hard work is paying off.

We hope that you will enjoy the read. ■

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AMESA 19th Annual National Congress	

### 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.

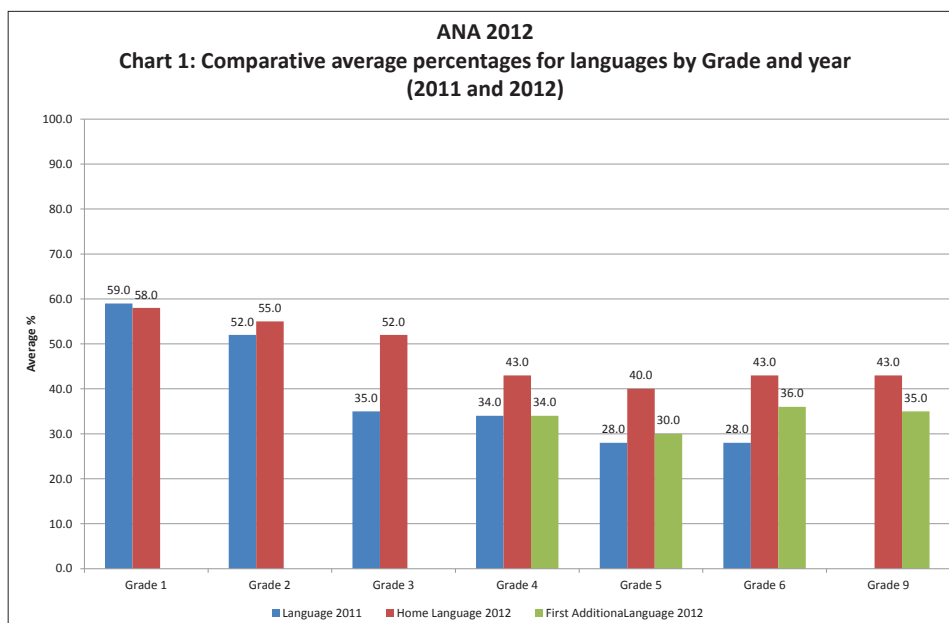
# Testing, testing, testing...

We analyse and review the 2012 ANA, NSC results and Western Cape's Litnum test results.

System-wide assessment of learner performance has recently become a significant element of the government's school improvement efforts, providing useful performance data on the overall effectiveness of the schooling system. Although most of the data points to system-wide failure in absolute terms, there is also considerable evidence that suggests that we have turned the corner and that things are beginning to improve.

The provision of high-quality education for all children is still a long way off and the data from these tests provides useful information on those areas that are most in need of attention.

We have analysed the data and produced the following charts to help you understand where we were at the end of 2012 and which areas are in most need of urgent attention.



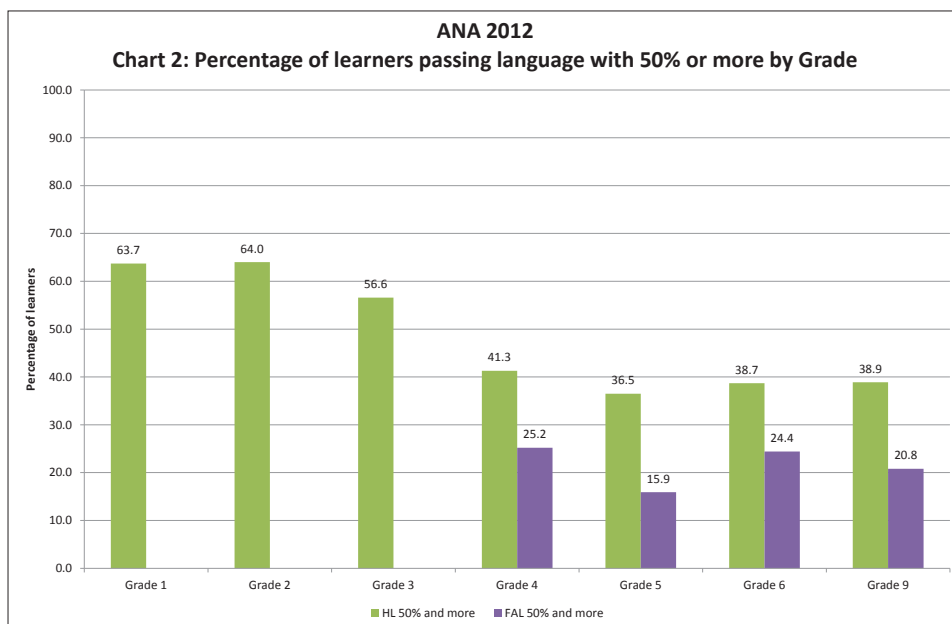
**Chart 1: Comparative average percentages for languages by Grade and year**

This chart illustrates the changes in the average percentages for languages for the six primary grades tested in 2011 and 2012 and for Grade 9, which was tested for the first time in 2012. The 2011 language tests were not designed as either 'Home Language' or 'First Additional Language' tests but this changed in 2012 to ensure that the learners in the Intermediate and Senior Phase were provided with the option of writing either a test set at Home Language (HL) level if their home language was the same of the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) of their school, or at First Additional Language (FAL) level if their home language was different from the LoLT of the school.

In the Foundation Phase tests were set in all 11 official languages but the Intermediate and Senior Phase tests were offered in English or Afrikaans only.

While the chart suggests that there is a general improvement in the pass rate in 2012 relative to 2011 across all grades, it also suggests some disturbing trends including the following:

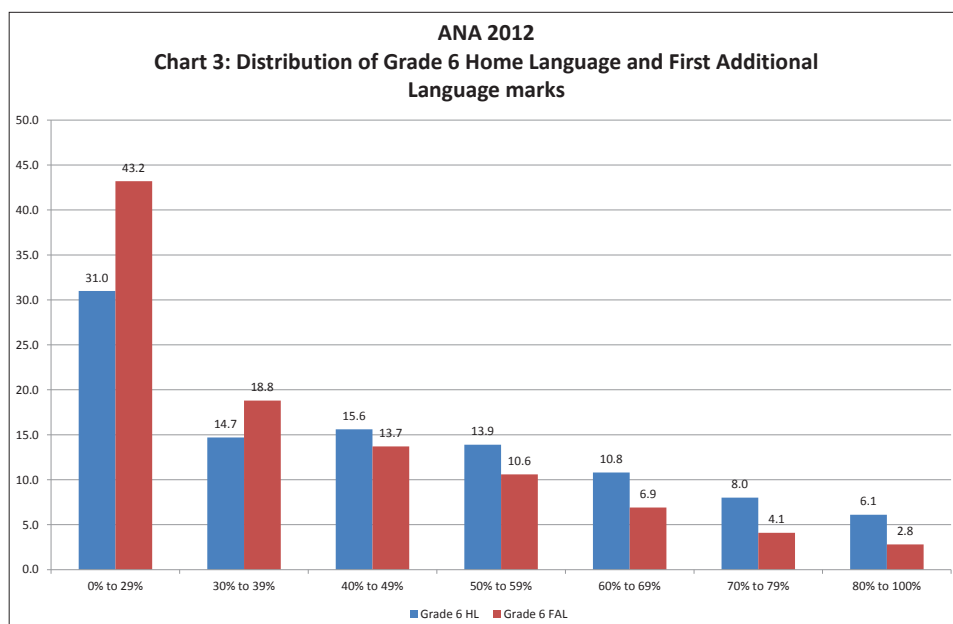
1. A general decline in the pass rate, starting from Grade 1, as learners progress from grade to grade in primary schools, leading to a low point in Grade 5, which seems to be a turning point, with slight improvements in pass rates in Grades 6 and 9.
2. Learners who wrote the HL tests performed considerably better than those who wrote FAL tests.



**Chart 2: Percentage of learners passing language with 50% or more by Grade**

Although the Foundation Phase ANA tests are not designated as either HL or FAL, they are provided in all 11 official languages so we have assumed that most learners in these grades wrote these tests in their home language. In the Intermediate Phase the tests are provided in English and Afrikaans only with learners whose home language is one of these two languages writing the tests at HL level and all other learners writing tests set at FAL level, either in English or Afrikaans.

This chart, like the previous chart, shows a steady decline in learner performance from Grade 1 to Grade 5 with a small improvement in Grades 6 and 9. The chart also shows quite clearly that those learners who attempted papers in their FAL, which in almost every instance is also the LoLT of the school, performed significantly less well than their 'HL' peers. The poor language skills of these learners in the LoLT of the school must create a severe impediment to their ability to master their other school subjects, including Mathematics, as they struggle to make sense of their texts and the language of their teachers.

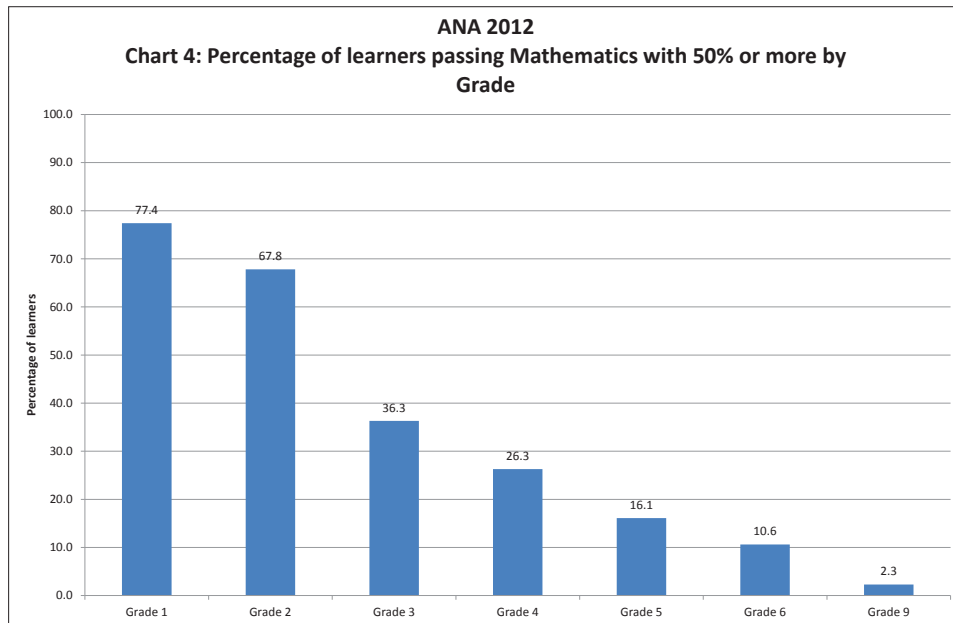


**Chart 3: Distribution of Grade 6 Home Language and First Additional Language marks**

This chart illustrates two disturbing trends in relation to the performance of learners in the LoLT of their schools. The first is the high percentage of HL learners and FAL learners that score below 40%, which is the minimum score required to pass the grade. For HL learners 45,7% of the learners scored less than 40% and for FAL learners this increases to 62,0%. The poor competence of both the HL learners and the FAL learners in what for most will be the LoLT of the school goes some way

in explaining why achieving a significant improvement in the overall NSC results at national level is such a challenge. The majority of learners entering high school simply don't have the language skills to master their content subjects.

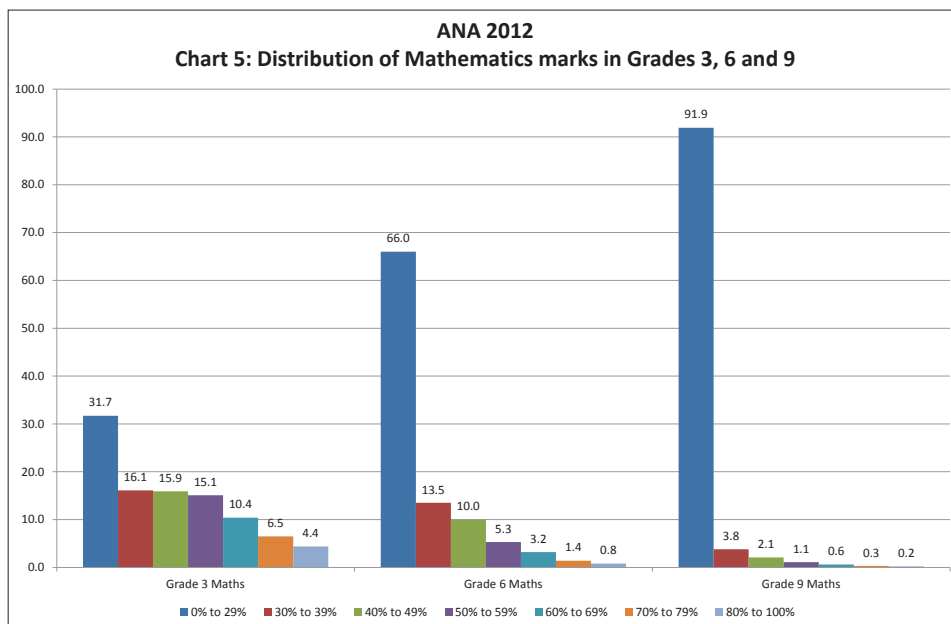
The second disturbing trend is the significant difference in learner performance at each level between the HL learners and the FAL learners. This points once again to the significant challenge that the majority of learners have to deal with as a result of having to complete their schooling in a language other than their mother tongue.



**Chart 4: Percentage of learners passing Mathematics with 50% or more by Grade**

This chart and the following one vividly illustrate the sorry state of Mathematics teaching in our schools. How else can one explain the steady decline in learner

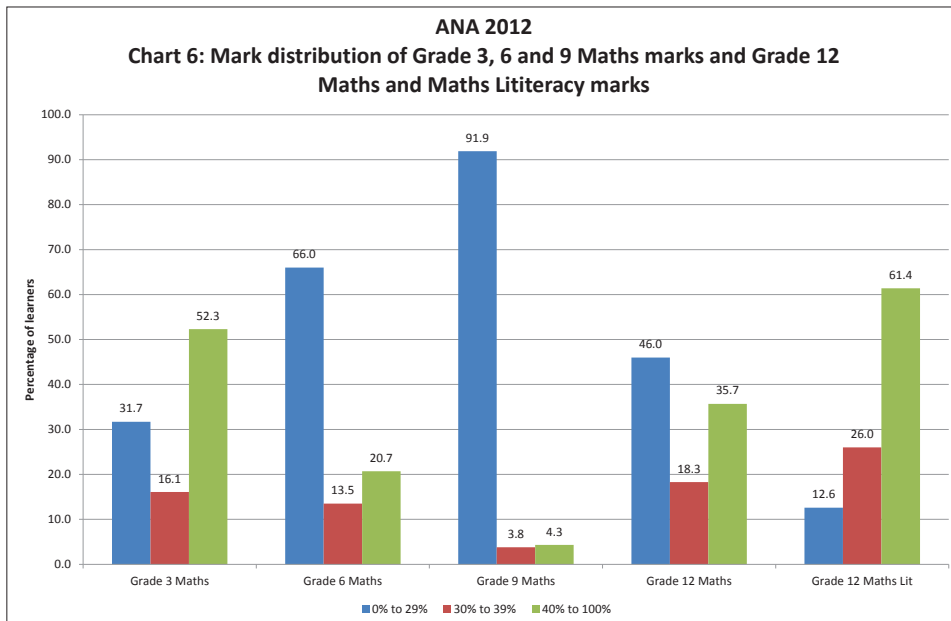
performance from a high of 77,4% in Grade 1 to a figure of just 2,3% in Grade 9? There seems to be no explanation other than that those responsible for teaching Mathematics are either unwilling or unable to teach even the basic rudiments of the subject during the first nine years of schooling.



**Chart 5: Distribution of Mathematics marks in Grades 3, 6 and 9**

This chart illustrates how the Mathematics marks of the learners are distributed in each of Grades 3, 6 and 9 and reinforces the evidence from Chart 4 that learners

perform less and less well in Mathematics as they proceed from grade to grade. We thought it would be interesting to investigate if this trend continues into Grade 12 and discovered, rather surprisingly, that this was not the case, as can be seen from Chart 6.



**Chart 6: Mark distribution of Grade 3, 6 and 9 Maths marks and Grade 12 NSC Maths and Maths Literacy marks**

For some obscure reason the DBE does not provide any significant details on the distribution of subject marks for the National Senior Certificate examinations in the Technical reports that it publishes about these examinations.

It does, however, provide this data in its reports on the ANA results. We were forced to use data that we have collated from a variety of DBE documents to produce this chart and the limited data provided by the NSC reports is the reason why learner performance has been classified into the following three broad groups:

- Learners who scored between 0% and 29%
- Learners who scored between 30% and 39%
- Learners who scored 40% and more.

*Those learners who attempted papers in their FAL, which in almost every instance is also the LoLT of the school, performed significantly less well than their 'HL' peers.*

*The results suggest that those responsible for teaching Mathematics are either unwilling or unable to teach even the basic rudiments of the subject during the first nine years of schooling.*

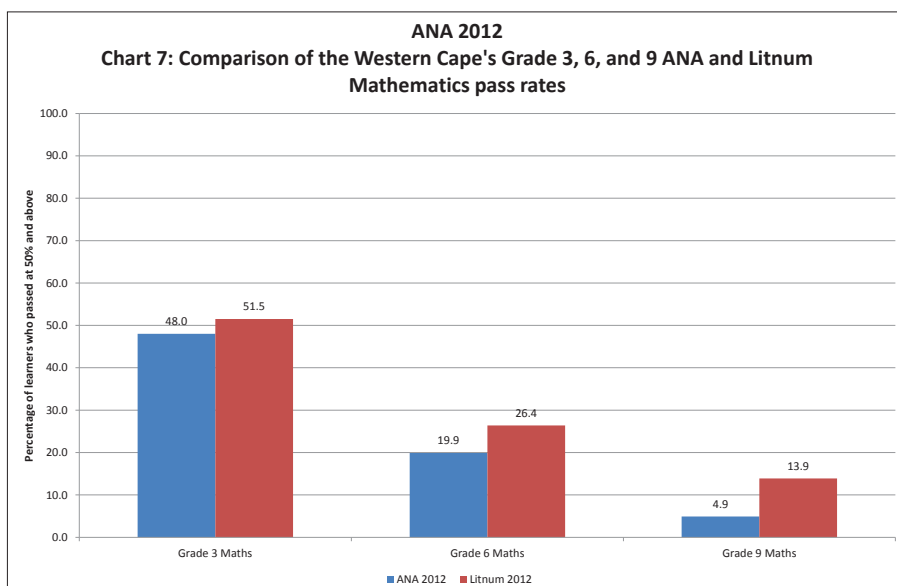
The manner in which the marks are distributed in each of the four grades and across the four grades suggests that

there is a sudden improvement in learner performance in Mathematics during the last three years of schooling and that the Mathematics teachers in these grades may be doing a heroic job in turning around the performance of learners in Mathematics. We have included the Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy results

because every full-time Grade 12 candidate will write either one or the other of these two subjects. It is possible that the difference in the Grade 9 and Grade

12 results can be explained by the high learner attrition rate that occurs in high schools between Grades 9 and 12 but that cannot fully explain this difference in performance. An alternative explanation may be that the best and most well-qualified Mathematics teachers are deployed to the senior

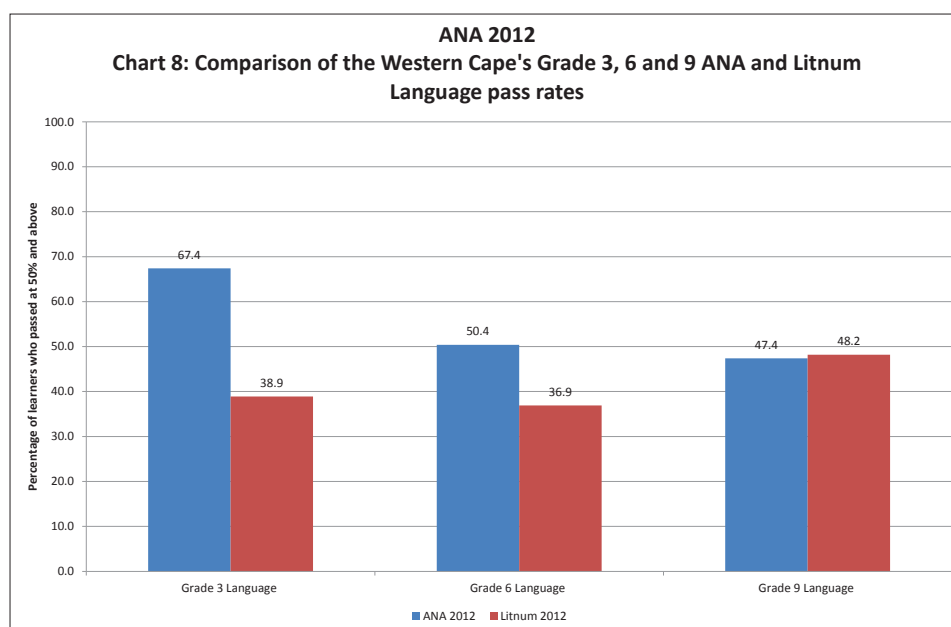
grades. If this is the case it points to an urgent need to train and deploy skilled and competent Mathematics specialists to our public primary schools.



**Chart 7: Comparison of the Western Cape's Grade 3, 6 and 9 ANA and Litnum Mathematics pass rates**

Soon after the 2012 ANA tests were written, learners from these same grades in the Western Cape wrote a second round of systemic tests in Mathematics and Language. These tests, which are set, invigilated and marked by independent agencies and which are referred to locally as the 'Litnum' tests – an abbreviation of Literacy and Numeracy – have

been used by the WCED since 2002 as a systemic monitoring tool. We have used data provided in reports published by the DBE and the WCED to determine the extent to which the two sets of assessment instruments validate one another's results. We have used a score of 50% as the pass rate for consistency's sake in both sets of tests. The pattern of performance across the three grades is fairly similar, confirming the trend of declining performance as learners move up the grades. The results also suggest that learners perform slightly better in the Litnum tests than in the ANA tests.



**Chart 8: Comparison of the Western Cape's Grade 3, 6 and 9 ANA and Litnum Language pass rates**

The results recorded in this chart show an interesting and conflicting trend with the ANA results, as they reflect a general decline in learner

performance as learners proceed to higher grades and the Litnum results suggesting that learners performance in Language improves. The grade results also suggest that in the Western Cape, at least, the language levels of learners are showing some improvement. ■



# Socio-economic factors and their influence on learner performance

The influence of socio-economic factors on learner performance has long been recognised and governments, particularly in the developed and developing world, have grappled with the issue of how best to address the negative impact that factors such as poverty, social class and culture may have on the educational opportunities available to children.

Learner performance, particularly in the key foundation subjects of literacy and numeracy, provides vital data about the quality and effectiveness of a nation's schooling system and ultimately of its socio-economic health. This is the reason why so many countries from the developed and developing world willingly participate in the international studies of learner assessment such as those conducted by Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), Southern and Eastern Africa Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality (SACMEQ) and Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The decision to include the capture of data on socio-economic variables as part of these studies has largely been driven by the needs of countries to understand how these factors impact on learner performance as they strive to ensure that more of their children have the wherewithal to become productive citizens.

In the USA, where educational testing is almost a national obsession, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is a project that is authorised by the US Congress to measure learner progress over time in key subject areas including reading, writing, Mathematics, Science and US History.

In 2003, the US's National Assessment Governing Board charged the NAEP with the task of improving the measurement and reporting on socio-economic status (SES) and its relationship to academic achievement. To this end, the NAEP convened a

panel of experts from, amongst others, the fields of economics, education statistics, human development and sociology and asked them to provide a clearer and more precise definition of SES as a construct. The ultimate purpose of the exercise was to obtain a better understanding of the various factors that influence SES and how these impact on the ability of children to succeed at school.

*While the influence of socio-economic factors on learner performance at school is an accepted fact, the challenge for schools serving low socio-economic status communities lies in developing appropriate and meaningful remedial strategies to address challenges that these children face when they enter the school system and as they proceed through it.*

After a thorough review of the relevant literature the panel recommended that SES be defined as follows:

‘SES can be defined broadly as one's access to financial, social, cultural and human capital resources. Traditionally a student's SES has included, as components, parental educational attainment, parental occupational status, and household or family income, with appropriate adjustment for household or

family composition. An expanded SES measure could include measures of additional household, neighbourhood and school resources.’

The panel goes on to describe what it considered to be the components of SES. These components are grouped around three common themes:

## Theme 1: The family

(These are considered to be the ‘Big 3’ and the most influential of the SES components.)

- Family income (home possessions are in some instances used as a proxy for family income because of a reluctance to provide details of family income by some households)
- Parental educational attainment
- Parental occupational status.

## **Theme 2: Neighbourhood/community in which student resides**

- Percentage of families below the poverty line
- Unemployed adults in a neighbourhood
- Percentage of adults with low levels of education (without a high school qualification)
- Percentage of single parent homes
- Percentage of homes where English is not spoken well
- Presence of abandoned buildings and roads and/or walkways in poor conditions
- Presence or absence of parks, recreational areas and public libraries.

## **Theme 3: School SES**

- The panel suggested that this be defined either as the aggregate of the SESs of the pupils who attend the school or by basing it on the percentage of learners who are eligible for school meals (National School Lunch Programme or NSLP).

Other factors that the panel examined included 'Psychological Process Variables', which consist of those factors that may impact on the psychological and emotional well-being of children, and subjective factors, which relate to how an individual perceives his or her socio-economic status.

Psychological process variables include such factors as a frequent change of home/place of residence, regular contact with the police, exposure to high-risk situations and the adoption of coping mechanisms that increase the likelihood of conflict in a school or classroom. The panel suggested that these factors should be viewed as consequences of the other variables rather than contributing factors in their own right.

One of the interesting aspects of the article is a summary of some of the findings from the literature that attempts to explain the link between SES and learner performance.

One explanation suggests that academic success at school is influenced by, amongst other things, personal aspirations, the influence of peers, the educational achievement of parents and their socio-economic status, the kinds of schools that a child attends, the kind of instruction and instructional material provided by the school, access to teachers and the relationship that exists between teachers and parents.

An alternative explanation focuses more on variables in the cognitive environment in which a child grows up. This model suggests that children perform better at school if they are exposed to a home environment that is more cognitively challenging and that includes daily routines, more frequent child-parent interactions and greater exposure to more complex language and literature.

Other contributing factors considered relevant in this model included environmental similarities between home and school and the degree and nature of conflict within the home. Some evidence also suggests a link between family size and structure and learner test scores.

While the influence of socio-economic factors on learner performance at school is an accepted fact, the challenge for schools serving low socio-economic status communities lies in developing appropriate and meaningful remedial strategies to address challenges that these children face when they enter the school system and as they proceed through it. The strategies that are likely to achieve the greatest success are those that target specific elements of a child's experience. Providing a caring and supportive environment is the first step in this process but it is also important that low SES children be provided with specific instruction on acceptable forms of behaviour in the school and classroom environment. These schools also need to make a special effort to provide a teaching and learning environment that is stimulating and challenging. ■



# SCA admonishes GDE and its officials for their 'unlawful' action

There are lessons to be learnt for schools and education department officials from the judgement handed down by the Supreme Court of Appeal in a saga involving the admission of a learner to Rivonia Primary School at the start of 2011.

A saga involving the legality of an attempt by the GDE's Head of Education to 'overrule' the admission policy of Rivonia Primary School and to compel the school to admit a learner from its waiting list was fairly well documented in the press over the past 12 months with final judgement on the matter being delivered on 30 November last year. The judgement, delivered on behalf of the court by Judge Azhar Cachalia, was scathing in some of its comments on the manner in which the Head of Education and his officials dealt with the case. These comments include: 'It would not be out of place to observe that I find the approach of Mr Ngobeni and the department's officials in this case most disturbing. There was not one bit of evidence to suggest that the school has ever refused admission to a child – including this child who happens to be black – on the grounds of race or has unfairly discriminated against any child on this basis.' And:

'But instead of treating this matter as an ordinary dispute relating to the application of the school's admission policy, the department opprobriously invoked the ugly spectre of race to obfuscate its unlawful conduct.'

In summary, the details of the case are as follows:

1. The period during which the school accepted applications for Grade 1 for the 2011 school year were January 2010 to 13 July 2010. The mother of the child collected her application form on 15 July and returned it on 21 July by which stage the school had already received completed application forms from 139 of the 191 applicants who had collected forms from the school and in doing so indicated their intention to apply. The Grade 1 capacity of the school for 2011, as determined by the SGB, was 120 learners.
2. On 26 October 2010 the school informed the mother that her application for admission was unsuccessful and that her child had been placed on a waiting list. On 4 November the mother queried the fact that her child had not been accepted and was informed that the Grade 1 class was full and that her child was 14th on the waiting list.
3. The child's mother refused to accept the school's decision and lodged an appeal with the MEC on 5 December 2010. The mother also apparently put pressure on departmental officials in the hope that they would force the school to admit her child. Meetings were held between the SGB, the principal and departmental officials in an effort to resolve the matter, and on 30 November 2010 agreement appeared to have been reached that the child would remain on the waiting list. Her mother appeared to accept this decision and proceeded to enrol her child at an independent school.
4. Towards the end of January of 2011 the mother's appeal was brought before the provincial MEC for education. The delay in bringing the matter to the attention of the MEC was, according to the GDE, a result of 'administrative issues'. Judge Cachalia noted that this 'anodyne explanation' for the 'extraordinary delay' was 'hardly acceptable'. The MEC refused to consider the matter based on regulations 13 and 14 of the Gauteng School Education Act, which allows an appeal to the MEC only once the HoD has considered the matter, which in this instance had not taken place. The matter was therefore referred back to the HoD.
5. At this stage in the process the HoD apparently decided to take the matter into his own hands and on 2 February 2011 he informed the principal by letter that it was his view that the school's tenth school day statistical return indicated that the school had not reached its capacity and on the basis of this data instructed the principal to admit the child 'forthwith'. The statistics referred to by the HoD showed that on the 10th school day the school had 124 Grade 1 learners on its roll, four more than the capacity that it had determined in its admission policy. The admission of several additional learners over and above the school's

designated capacity is a common practice and is a strategy used to offset the effect of applicants who accept places and then choose not to take the place but fail to inform the school of their decision. It was the HoD's contention that the school had incorrectly stated its capacity and it was on this basis that he apparently instructed the principal to accept the additional learner.

6. The mother arrived at the school five days later expecting the school to admit her child. The response of the principal was that an urgent meeting of the SGB had been called in an effort to resolve the issue and she asked the mother to leave until such time as the matter had been finalised. The mother's response was that she intended to go 'straight to the MEC's office' and on the following day returned to the school with her child and in the company of an official from the department with an instruction from the HoD to the principal that the child be admitted.

The mother, her child and the department official that accompanied them were met by a member of the school's SGB who reiterated the request that they wait for the matter to be resolved so as to avoid subjecting the child to any further humiliation. The departmental official responded by presenting the principal and SGB representative with a letter, which informed them that the admission function of the principal had been withdrawn by the HoD. A short while later a second official arrived with a letter for the principal. The letter gave notice that the school's admission function had been delegated to the official bearing the letter and that it was his decision that the child be admitted to the school. An official in the department's legal division, who was called by the SGB representative, refused to intervene in the matter when asked to do so.

At this point the two departmental officials, accompanied by the mother and child, and supported by the presence of a security guard, proceeded first to one, and then to a second Grade 1 classroom and, having spoken to both teachers, placed the child in an empty desk in the second classroom – a desk that had coincidentally been placed in the classroom earlier in the day for a

child with 'learning and attention' difficulties. The officials and the mother then left.

7. In response to the high-handed action of the HoD and officials of the GDE, the governing body and the school applied to South Gauteng High Court for 'declaratory and interdictory relief' on three issues:
  - the decision of the department to override the school's admission policy
  - the withdrawal of the principal's admission function
  - the forced admission of the child.

Declaratory relief is a legal term that is essentially a request for a legal ruling on a matter that is in dispute between two parties. In this case the dispute was between the school, the principal and the SGB on the one hand, and the HoD and his officials from the GDE, on the other.

*The judgement offers SGBs and principals a significant degree of legal protection against the kind of high-handed, bullying treatment that the SGB and principal of Rivonia Primary School were subjected to by the HoD and his officials in this matter.*

The school withdrew its application for relief in terms of the admission of the child as it felt that this was in the best interests of the child. The court granted the school the relief it requested in terms of the principal's admission function but dismissed the relief that the school requested

regarding the decision of the GDE to override the school's admission policy. It did, however, grant permission for the school, its governing body and the principal, to appeal the matter to the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA).

8. Subsequent to the court case in the High Court, the MEC promulgated amendments to regulations on the admission of learners to public schools (in Gauteng) with the amended regulations (Regulation 8) giving the HoD (rather than the SGB) the power to determine whether or not a learner should be admitted to a public school. The GDE and its officials then claimed, on the basis of this amendment, that they no longer had a case to answer.

Fortunately for the principal and SGB of Rivonia Primary School, and in our view all public schools, the SCA would have none of it, noting in the judgement that:

‘The lawfulness or otherwise of the HoD’s conduct is certainly a live issue’ and that the ‘proper meaning of the Schools Act’ is relevant to deciding whether or not the amendment to the regulations promulgated by the MEC was valid. Also of relevance to the appeal was the disciplinary sanction imposed on the principal for her refusal to comply with the HoD’s instruction. The disciplinary sanction included a final written warning and the deduction of one month’s salary!

It is the section of the judgement that deals with the ‘proper meaning of the Schools Act’ and the powers that it confers on school governing bodies that has the greatest relevance for schools.

The judgement offers SGBs and principals a significant degree of legal protection against the kind of high-handed, bullying treatment that the SGB and principal of Rivonia Primary School were subjected to by the HoD and his officials in this matter. In their legal

interpretation of the ‘proper meaning of the Schools Act’, the judges of the SCA make the following points:

- The preamble to the Act establishes the principle of democratic school governance involving learners, parents and educators working in partnership with the State.
- The governance of public schools is invested in their governing bodies whose functions, obligations and rights are prescribed.
- Governing body members are elected representatives of three important stakeholder groups: the parents, educators and non-educator staff members (in the case of primary schools), and the principal serves *ex-officio* as representative of the HoD. Importantly the judgement notes that ‘It is implicit in this that the principal is obliged to implement the policies lawfully determined by the governing body within its sphere of authority’.
- The governing body stands in a position of trust towards the school and it is expected to promote the school’s best interests and, in terms of the Act, has an obligation to raise additional funds through the active involvement of parents who, in return for the financial support, are granted meaningful say over how these funds are used. The judgement further notes that it was in response to this obligation that the governing body of the school used the funds it had raised to build extra classrooms and employ extra teachers

*The judgement confirms that the admission policy of the school is determined by the governing body and that this includes the determination of the capacity of the school.*

and in doing so reduce the learner–educator ratio of the school.

- The Act explicitly identifies the language policy, the religious observance policy and the admission policy as school governing body responsibilities and in doing so obliges the SGB to devise and implement these three policies.
- While governance matters fall under the responsibility of the school, the professional management of the school is the responsibility of the principal who falls under the authority of the HoD. The principal’s management duties, which include the implementation of educational programmes and the management of the curriculum and school staff, also include the implementation of all policies and legislative prescriptions that have been determined by the SGB. Principals therefore have the same obligation to implement SGB policies as they do to implement the policies of their provincial education department.
- The Act makes provision for situations where a school governing body may either exceed its powers or fail to adequately exercise them and gives the provincial education department an oversight role in this regard. In terms of this provision the HoD may, on reasonable grounds, withdraw certain functions of an SGB or even disband an SGB and appoint a person to perform its functions. However, the HoD may only take such action:
  - if he has informed the governing body of his intention to do so and has provided them with the reason(s) for his proposed action; and
  - if he has given the governing body a reasonable opportunity to respond to the allegations and has considered their representation. Members of the governing body may also appeal the decision of the HoD to the MEC.
- The Act places limits on the authority of the HoD to exercise his power in relation to the governance responsibilities of the SGB and the HoD may only take action if the SGB performs its functions in a way that is unreasonable, unconstitutional or unlawful. The judgement notes that ‘It was not contended that any of these provisions gave him the authority to override the principal’s decision and admit a child’.

The judgement confirms that the admission policy of the school is determined by the governing body and that this includes the determination of the capacity of the school. There are conditions attached to this including the requirement that the admission policy complies with the norms and standards as set out in section 5A (3) of the act and that the policy is reviewed annually in terms of these norms and standards. The admission policy may also not be unfairly discriminatory, may not make use of an admission test and may not refuse a learner admission because the parent is unable to pay school fees. The judgement also confirms that the governing body has a discretion to exceed the capacity of the school if the circumstances require this but that this discretion

must be exercised on rational and reasonable grounds. Worth noting is paragraph [55] of the judgement, which reads as follows: ‘I mentioned earlier that Ms Drysdal was sanctioned for failing to comply with the HoD’s unlawful instruction. Although the sanctions imposed on Ms Drysdale are not before us, I am confident that the department is sufficiently gracious to withdraw these sanctions in the light of this judgement.’

The final ruling of the SCA in this case reads as follows:

‘It is declared that the instruction given to the principal of the Rivonia Primary School to admit a learner contrary to the school’s admission policy, and the placing of the learner in the school, were unlawful.’ ■

### **Functions of school governing bodies**

The list that follows is our summary of the duties and functions assigned to school governing bodies in terms of the South African Schools Act.

In terms of the Act, a School Governing Body is expected to:

- adopt a constitution and function in terms of that constitution
- promote the best interests of the school and strive to ensure its development through the provision of quality education for all learners of the school
- develop the mission statement of the school
- adopt a code of conduct for learners at the school
- support the principal and educators and other staff in the school in the performance of their professional functions
- adhere to any actions taken by the Head of Department in terms of section 16 of the Employment of Educators Act, 1998, to address the incapacity of a principal or educator to carry out his or her duties effectively
- determine times of the school day consistent with any applicable conditions of employment of staff at the school
- administer and control the school’s property, and buildings and grounds occupied by the school
- encourage parents, learners, educators and other staff at the school to render voluntary services to the school
- recommend to the Head of Department the appointment of educators and non-educator staff at the school
- at the request of the Head of Department allow reasonable use under fair conditions determined by the Head of Department of the facilities of the school for educational programmes
- take all reasonable measures within its means to supplement the resources supplied by the state in order to improve the quality of education provided by the school to all learners at the school
- establish a school fund and administer it in accordance with directions issued by the HoD
- prepare a budget each year according to prescriptions determined by the Member of the Executive Council in a *Provincial Gazette*, which shows the estimated income and expenditure for the following year
- determine the fees charged by the school (for schools that are fee-paying schools) provided a resolution to do so has been adopted by a majority of parents attending a meeting called for this purpose in terms of Section 38 (2) of the Act
- keep records of funds received and funds spent by the school, and of its assets, liabilities and financial transactions
- draw up a financial statement each year in accordance with guidelines determined by the Member of the Executive Council and appoint a qualified person to audit the financial statement.



## Lessons that can be learnt from the judgement

### *Lessons for school governing bodies*

The SCA judgement in the case between Rivonia Primary School and the GDE contains some important lessons for SGBs on their powers and on the manner in which they conduct their business. We have listed below what we consider to be the most important of these.

#### **1. The courts will provide legal protection for governing bodies that exercise their powers in a way that is both constitutional and legal.**

The South African Schools Act (SASA) vests school governing bodies with certain powers in order to provide them with the necessary legislative authority to carry out the governance responsibilities that the Act requires of them. The most important of these are the power to determine the

- admission policy of the school
- language policy of the school
- religious observance policy of the school
- code of conduct for learners of the school.

There are, however, certain provisos associated with each of these governance responsibilities including the requirement that they are lawful and not unconstitutional. In the implementation of these policies, the governing body is also expected to act in a way that is fair, reasonable, equitable and non-discriminatory. There is also the requirement that these policies be reviewed from time to time partly to ensure that they remain lawful. Laws and the policies linked to them are regularly amended with some, such as the Norms and standards for basic infrastructure and capacity in public schools (Section 5A of SASA) and the Norms and standards for school funding (Section 35), being updated annually by notice published by the Minister in the *Government Gazette*. School governing bodies therefore need to stay abreast of these legislative changes and make sure that their policies are updated in line with the amendments and notices.

If governing bodies do all of the above they will have strong legal grounds to rebuff any attempt by officious departmental officials and connected parents from hell to undermine or overrule their decisions.

#### **2. Stand your ground.**

The SGB and principal of Rivonia Primary School need to be commended for standing their ground against a relentless onslaught for more than a year from powerful figures in the provincial education establishment. These are people who should know better and whose job it is to support schools, but who chose instead to support the unreasonable demands of one parent who for some reason felt that her child should receive preferential treatment.

#### **3. Always consider the best interests of the child.**

The decision of the school to accept the child to avoid her further humiliation must also be commended and is in sharp contrast to the unseemly behaviour of the parent and the departmental officials involved in the debacle.

### *Lessons for provincial Heads of Education and departmental officials*

#### **1. Act in a manner that is lawful, fair, reasonable, equitable and non-discriminatory.**

No parent should be permitted to use his/her sense of self-importance, his/her wealth, social standing or political connectedness to gain preferential treatment for his/her child at the expense of the children of other parents. Acting in this way is not only illegal, as was pointed out in this judgement, but it also creates a precedent that could well end up flooding your offices with other self-important people who feel that they too have a right to receive special treatment for their children.

#### **2. Take good legal advice before you act.**

One expects civil servants, particularly those who hold high office, to have a good working knowledge of the laws that govern their area of influence. While this does not mean that they need to be legal experts, one would expect a Head of Department to get advice from people with legal expertise in a matter before decisions are made to amend policies and issue regulations in an effort to appease the unreasonable demands of just one parent.

#### **3. Just because you are powerful doesn't make you right.**

Humility helps as does a willingness to listen to your schools and to hear their side of the story. The majority of this country's best public schools produce good results because their principals and SGBs do things properly and that includes acting in ways that are constitutional, legal, fair, reasonable, equitable and non-discriminatory. It is also why they have waiting lists and why parents from hell are willing to abuse the system in an effort to have their child admitted. Support and nurture these schools. This country's long-term prosperity is largely dependent on the good work that they do.

# GDE to appeal SCA judgement in Rivonia case in Constitutional Court

A few days before going to print we learned, from a statement<sup>1</sup> released jointly by the Legal Resources Centre (LRC), Equal Education (EE) and the Centre for Child Law (CCL), that they plan to approach the Constitutional Court with a request for permission to be admitted as *amici curiae* in the Gauteng Department of Education's (GDE) appeal of the ruling of the Supreme Court of Appeal (SCA) in the Rivonia case. The details of this important case, which pitted the GDE against the SGB of Rivonia Primary Schools, are fully covered on the preceding pages.

At issue is the right to determine the admission policy of a public school, including the determination of the capacity of the school. In its judgement, the SCA ruled that in terms of section 5(5) read with section 5A of the South African Schools Act, this authority resides with the school governing body and that provincial departments of education do not have the authority to override this policy.

In explaining their decision to apply for admission to the case as *amici curiae*, Equal Education and the Centre for Child Law make the following submissions:

- The MEC has responsibility to place all the children seeking public school access in a province in a school, and it is therefore both lawful and logical that the MEC should have a say in admissions policy.
- The SCA erred in its finding that the location, the availability of resources and relative affluence of a school was not 'relevant' to the case. The applicants hold that these factors are indeed relevant given the 'historical, political and economic context' of public schooling in this country. They do, however, propose that the government must act 'reasonably' and that it should be obliged to provide additional resources, including teachers and classrooms, should it insist that the school admit additional learners over and above the capacity of the school that has been determined by the school governing body.
- EE and CCL do not support policies that 'seek to destroy or diminish these more privileged schools in the name of equality' but do believe the law must support greater and fairer access to better-resourced schools.

The two organisations make it clear in their media statement that they are in full agreement with the SCA's finding that the 'high-handed manner of intervention by Gauteng education authorities in this case was completely unacceptable'. In summary, their proposals for policy changes that they hope the Constitutional Court might support include the following:

- The power of a school governing body to adopt an admissions policy that includes a determination of the capacity of the school should never be binding on the relevant HOD or MEC for education neither should it be applied rigidly and inflexibly.
- In exercising its power to place a child in a school over and above the capacity determined by the school governing body, it must act 'lawfully, reasonably and following a fair procedure'.

The Legal Resources Centre is an independent, non-profit, public interest law clinic, which uses law as an instrument of justice to provide legal services for the vulnerable.

The Centre for Child Law is an institution established by the University of Pretoria to promote child law and uphold the rights of children in South Africa.

Equal Education is a movement of learners, parents and community members that works to promote quality education for all through campaigns grounded in detailed research and policy analysis and supported, where appropriate, by litigation. ■

### Note

- 1 The statement we accessed was published in the Thursday 28 February edition of *Politicsweb*, an online news service. The statement was issued by Khumbulani Mpofo, LRC's Communications and Marketing Officer; Ann Skelton, Director of the Centre for Child Law; and Doron Isaacs, Deputy Secretary General of Equal Education.



# How can systems thinking be used as a tool to improve education?

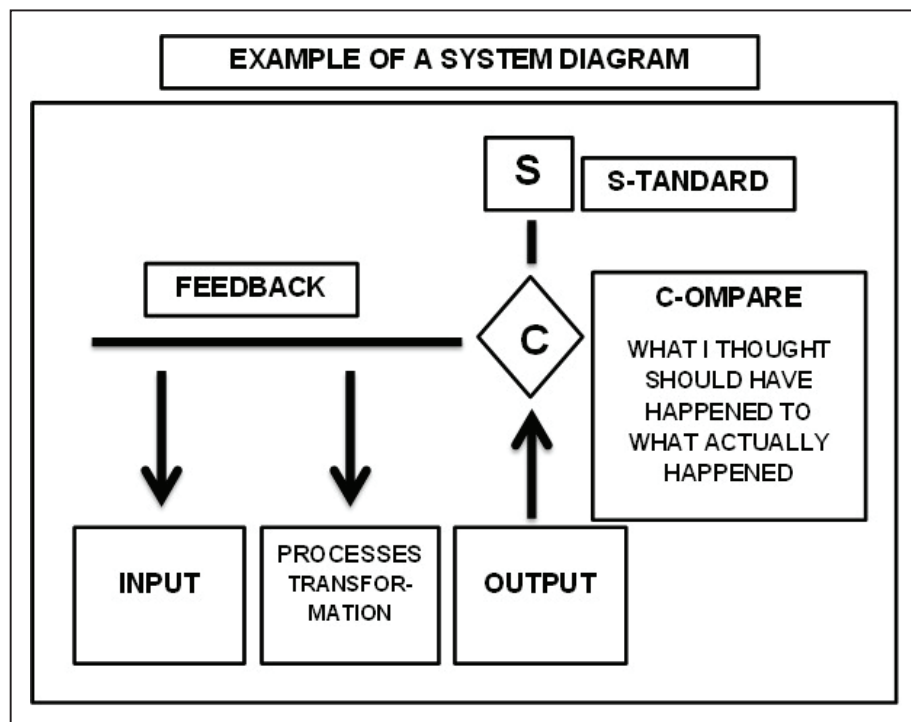
Erich Cloete

A well-functioning school governing body (SGB) plays a major role in helping to deliver quality education. Systems thinking is a useful tool that SGBs can employ to assist in the achievement of this goal.

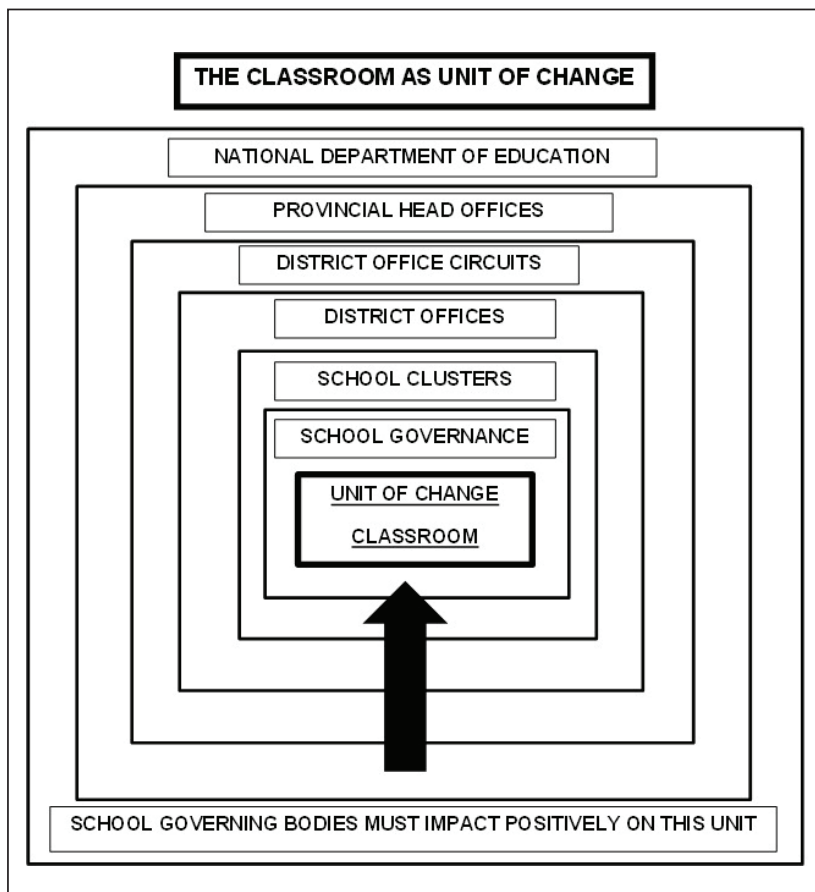
At the media launch of SGB Elections 2012, on 30 January 2012, Minister of Basic Education Angie Motshekga said that SGBs play a crucial role in the success of schools and those schools with effective and efficient SGB members are most likely to secure greater success than those with limited parental and community involvement. Talks with principals have shown that some are very frustrated with their governing body's inability and reluctance to take up their respective responsibilities and leadership roles, as allocated by legislation. This is unfortunate because it worsens the relationship between the principal and the SGB and increases the pressure on

principals, hampering the effective functioning of schools.

Everything that a SGB does, every decision they take, must impact on the classroom in a positive way. In a manner of speaking SGBs should remove the roof of the school in order to enable the sun to shine into every classroom. The classroom is the smallest unit of change in education and the SGB's role as partner of all other stakeholders is to focus and impact on this unit and change it for the better. Doing this successfully would have the result of changing the school and ultimately education in South Africa.



*The classroom is the smallest unit of change in education and the SGB's role as partner of all other stakeholders is to focus and impact on this unit and change it for the better.*



*Example of a system*

In their effort to support quality education, SGBs must accept the fact that things that made the school successful up to now are not necessarily the same things that are going to make it successful in the future. They must face and accept the leadership challenge as Peter Senge describes it: ‘Our prevailing leadership myths are still captured by the image of the captain of the cavalry leading the charge to rescue the Settlers from the attacking Indians. As long as such myths prevail, they reinforce a focus on short-term events and charismatic heroes rather than on systematic forces and creative thinking.’

It is important for SGBs to create value for their schools and leadership studies have shown a shift away from strategic and visionary thinking, although it is still important, towards creative and systems thinking as a tool to achieve this. Albert Einstein said: ‘A new type of thinking is essential if mankind is to survive and move towards higher levels.’

Systems thinking offers SGBs a powerful new perspective, a specialised language, and a set of tools that they can use to address the most stubborn problems in the schools they govern. It is a perspective that could help SGBs to see events and patterns in their schools. For example, suppose a learner is attacked by a fellow learner. This is an event. If SGBs respond to it simply by suspending the learner who attacked, then they are reacting. This means they have done nothing to prevent other learners from attacking each other. If they respond by suspending the culprit and studying where and when learners are attacking each other, they start to identify patterns. If they find that learners are attacking each other due to a lack of supervision, high levels of aggression and an inability to handle conflict and inform the parents accordingly, then they are adapting but still haven’t done anything to prevent one learner from attacking another. They now need to focus on the system, on those things that could influence the learners’ behaviour, such as lack of supervision during breaks, unattended classes, poor classroom management or inability of teachers to calm learners down effectively. If the SGB in collaboration with the School Management Team now ensures that supervision increases, teachers are in class and well-skilled in classroom management and know how to defuse conflict effectively, and arrange for anger management sessions, then they are starting to create change. Finally they will be doing something to prevent attacks from learners on fellow learners and the system would then have been improved.

If the desired outcome was reached, the system is fine. If the desired outcome or standard has not been reached it means the system is broken and it must be fixed creatively. To fix the system creatively means the problem must neither be ignored, nor solved with a quick fix (band-aid) solution. SGBs must rethink the system to create a new ideal system. Creative ideas solving the root problem should flow towards the input and process blocks, creating a constant feedback loop until the desired outcome is reached. It is always important when the outcome has not been reached to list as many elements as possible and group them into sub-themes and then find the central theme of what has not been achieved.

SGBs must look critically at all the governance systems in the school they are responsible for and determine how well they are functioning. If they want a situation to have a different outcome, they have to change the system that undermines the situation in such a way that it delivers different outputs. It is necessary to focus on the elements of the situation that will have the greatest impact on the entire situation rather than on the element of the situation that can be improved the most. The systemic breakthrough solution is very different from the symptomatic, temporary solutions that are typical of the non-systemic approach. Keep in mind that the purpose of a different outcome should be to influence the smallest unit of change, the classroom, for the better. For this to happen, all role players must work together as a team that has an existence that goes beyond that of any of the component groupings within the SGB. To deal with system thinking effectively SGBs must:

- focus on the relationships between the different components, rather than just looking at the components in isolation. It is an attempt to see the ‘forest’ as well as the ‘trees’
- recognise the importance of both positive and negative feedback
- be open minded, unstructured with no set direction
- capture a variety of ideas
- take account of different opinions and points of view.

Millions of parents send their precious children to school daily with the hope they will return home safely. We live in a world where we are searching for safety and security in very trying and challenging times. There is a lot of pressure on schools to do the right thing by taking the correct actions to establish a safe and secure environment conducive to learning and teaching. This pressure often results in schools pursuing a variety of individually positive actions, but too often it does not result in a systemic approach that leaves the learners and staff safe. There are three components SGBs can take into consideration when developing a comprehensive plan for establishing a system for a safe and secure school.

*‘Our prevailing leadership myths are still captured by the image of the captain of the cavalry leading the charge to rescue the Settlers from the attacking Indians. As long as such myths prevail, they reinforce a focus on short-term events and charismatic heroes rather than on systematic forces and creative thinking.’*

1. A community definition of safety and security. Involve stakeholders to develop a comprehensive definition of what safety and security mean in your school and community. This should include prevention, intervention and crisis response. I believe that there is no one correct definition. It must fit the context of the community in which the school is situated. For example, some SGBs and parents or communities would decide to create an environment where they do not want metal detectors in the schools. In contrast, some schools may require metal detectors for the parents and learners to feel safe.
2. The school’s district office as system. Too often schools individually decide what to do and take action, not checking or co-ordinating with other parts of the school system. For example, some district offices or provincial departments’ units construct facilities or classrooms. The SGB in collaboration with the department, where security officers are deployed, secure the facilities, and the Educational Support Unit, at district offices, provides support for learners who are a threat to fellow learners.
3. Site and central decision making and support. It is important to identify the balance between the district office and school decision making and support. For example, district offices could provide training for leaders in the school, while safety committees and the SGB would select the key committee members to attend the district training programmes.

SGBs who stimulate discussion, promote and get buy-in into the value of systems thinking will make a positive contribution to improving education at their schools. ■

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# The new regulations pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), Grades R–12

*Erich Cloete*

**On 28 December 2012 our Minister of Education published regulations pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12, *Government Gazette* no. 36041.**

The purpose of the regulations is to establish a framework that can serve as a starting point to prescribe a National Curriculum Statement, namely the National Curriculum Statement, Grades R–12, which is comprised of the following documents:<sup>1</sup>

- Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for all approved subjects (CAPS)
- National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 (NPPPR)
- National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12.

We take a brief look at the document to see what value can be unlocked to support our public and private schools offering the NCS Grades R–12 as per the transitional arrangements. This means the regulations will only come into effect for Grades 7–9 and Grade 12 in 2014. It is clear from looking at the document that there is a definite interaction between the regulations and various other legislation and policy documents. It should therefore be read in conjunction with the National Policy Pertaining to the Programme and Promotion Requirements of the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12 and the National Protocol for Assessment Grades R–12.

The document starts off with the usual definitions and then describes the various entrance requirements for Grade 10, as well as the minimum duration for the General Education and Training (GET) Phase as well as the Further Education and Training Phase (FET), respectively 10 and three years. It goes further to describe the programme requirements for Grades R–12 beginning with the requirements of the Foundation Phase (Grades R–3).

The document refers to the NPPPR, which stipulates that a Grade R learner should offer one official language at Home Language level, Mathematics and Lifeskills

while a Grade 1 learner must offer one official language at Home Language level, one official language at First Additional Language level, which should be different from the language offered on Home Language level, Mathematics and Lifeskills. It is important to note that should the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) in Grades 1–3 be different from the LoLT in Grade 4 onwards then the official language offered at First Additional Level in Grades 1–3 must be the LoLT for Grade 4. For example, if the school's LoLT in the Foundation Phase is Sesotho and English is the First Additional Language, then the LoLT for Grade 4 must be English. A learner in the Foundation Phase may also offer a third official or non-official language at a Second Additional or higher level provided that all other applicable policy requirements are met.

The regulations go further to give an overview of the programme requirements for the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4–6), Senior Phase (Grades 7–9) and the Further Education and Training Phase (Grades 10–12), stipulating the subjects a learner must and can offer. The regulations are in accordance with the NPPPR and refer quite extensively to specific paragraphs of this policy. Subsequently the regulations provide information about the promotion and progression requirements for Grades R–12. It is important to note that the promotion and progression requirements as set out in the regulations are basically aligned with the amended National Education Policy Act (Act 27 of 1996) pertaining to the National Curriculum Statement Grades R–12, which came into effect on 28 December 2012 and replaces *Government Gazette* 34600. We therefore suggest that schools download *Government Gazette* 36042 as well as the schedules referred to therein from [www.education.gov.za](http://www.education.gov.za) or [www.thutong.doe.gov.za](http://www.thutong.doe.gov.za) as these amendment documents indicate all the changes to the NPPPR and National Protocol for Assessment.

With regard to Grade R the new regulations suggest that in schools where Grade R is offered and where the LoLT is not the mother tongue, such a learner should be allowed to progress from Grade R to Grade 1 with a moderate achievement level (Level 3) in Home Language. This suggestion does not reflect in the original policy document (NPPPR) or the amendment and must be seen against the backdrop that the promotion requirements are guidelines. The regulations with regard to the guidelines whether a learner should be permitted to progress from Grade 1 to Grade 2 and Grade 2 to Grade 3 are more comprehensive than it was previously as it now states not only the level but also the percentage of a particular level the learner has to obtain. This is in accordance with the new amendments set out in schedule 1, which was published on 28 December 2012. Of great importance is the fact that while the policy previously stated that to be promoted from Grade 1 to Grade 4 a learner only needed to obtain either an Adequate Achievement (Level 4 – 50%–59%) in one official language at Home language level or a Moderate Achievement (Level 3 – 40%–49%) in the second official language at First Additional level, the new regulations and amendments indicate achievement on appropriate levels in both Home Language and First Additional Language.

The regulations also confirm current policy that a learner is only allowed to be retained once in a phase with adequate support thereafter. They make provision for a learner in the Foundation and Intermediate Phases to progress to the next grade while learners in the Senior Phase and Further Education and Training Phase may only be promoted. This change forms part of the revised definitions as indicated in the regulations. For clarification, ‘progression’ means the advancement of a learner from one grade to another in spite of the learner not having complied with all the promotion requirements, while ‘promotion’ means the movement of a learner from one grade to the next when that learner meets the minimum required level per subject as well as complying with the promotion requirements set out in the NPPPR. Although it seems that the regulations only allow for promotion in the Senior and Further Education and Training Phases (FET) respectively it seems that provision has been made for the learner who has been retained in the

*The regulations also confirm current policy that a learner is only allowed to be retained once in a phase with adequate support thereafter.*

first two phases and who is likely to be retained in the third phase to also progress to the next grade if an appropriate level of competence has been reached.

The regulations provide further clarity about school-based assessment indicating the School-Based Assessment (SBA) component as well as the end-of-year examination percentage. Remember that the SBA for Life Orientation in Grades 10, 11 and 12 comprises 100% of the total mark. The regulations refer repeatedly to various sections of the Protocol and we suggest that you read them again to gain a proper understanding. Only remember that the regulations offer information on certain aspects of the Senior Phase (Grade 7–9) such as the end-of-year examinations that are not yet applicable in 2013.

The regulations provide valuable, although not necessarily new, information on topics such as the management of School Assessment Records and Learner Profiles, Irregularities during the End-of-Year Examination, Recording and Reporting of Learner Performance, Recognition of Subjects not listed in the NCS, Status of Subjects offered by other Assessment Bodies, Changing of Subjects in Grades 10, 11 and 12, Concessions, and the National Certificate with Endorsement for Learners who Experience Barriers to Learning and Time Allocation.

The regulations are another comprehensive, detailed document that contain a lot of information. Its purpose seems, as stated, to create a structured framework for NCS Grades R–12 from which the other policies stem. However, the overall feeling is that these regulations should have been published at the end of 2011 before the NCS was implemented. Nevertheless, we recommend that schools obtain a copy, study it and make it their own as part of their professional knowledge. ■

#### References

- 1 The documents can be downloaded from the DBE website. Go to <http://www.education.gov.za/DocumentsLibrary/Legislation/GovernmentNotices/tabid/188/Default.aspx>



# Long hours and hard work pay off at Barnard Molokoane Secondary School

Principal Nephtally Maine is a man with a mission and a firm belief that success is a product of long hours of hard work. He had invited Editor Alan Clarke to visit him at his school and to conduct a workshop for the members of his School Management Team.

As we drove along the gravelled, potholed streets of the township of Tamahole, on the outskirts of Parys in the Free State, I quizzed Principal Maine about his school and about the relatively good results that his Grade 12s had achieved in the 2012 NSC examinations. I use the word 'relative' with care because although the results of the school may not compare favourably with the best of the former model C schools, they are outstanding relative to other schools operating in similar contexts.

From our conversation I discovered that Mr Maine has taught at Barnard Molokoane Secondary School since 1994, that he was appointed as a deputy-principal of the school in 2000 and as principal in April 2011. The school is a comprehensive school offering a range of technical subjects in addition to the usual group of 'academic' subjects that are offered by most secondary schools.

The academic performance of the school's Grade 12s in the NSC examinations has also varied widely with a pass rate reaching a low of 70% in the early years of his tenure at the school but had shown steady improvement over the past few years with the 2012 results being the best on record.

But good results at schools like Barnard Molokoane don't come easy and I was astonished to discover that

*Good results at schools like Barnard Molokoane don't come easy and I was astonished to discover that the school's Grade 12s put in 12 to 14 hours of work on each school day.*

the school's Grade 12s put in 12 to 14 hours of work on each school day. Their school day starts with a one-hour study session from 06:00 to 07:00. They then have a short 15-minute break before the start of the normal academic day at 07:15. When the formal academic day ends at 14:15 they have another 15 minutes of respite before the start of a second study session from 14:30 to 16:30, which is followed by group discussion in subject groups from 16:30 to 18:00. At this point, for reasons of safety, the girls are released and can go home but there is no such luck for the boys who return to class for a final study session from 18:30 to 20:15.



*Principal Nephtally Maine leads by example and puts in the same 14-hour day that he demands of his Grade 12s.*





*It's 16:30 and these Grade 12 learners, who have been at school since 06:00, are about to break for a 90-minute discussion session on the work that have been revising since 14:30. After the discussion session the girls will be able to go home but the boys must remain at school for a further 2 hours of supervised study. The girls are released early out of concerns for their safety.*



*It is not only the Grade 12s who put in a long school day at this hard-working school. This Grade 10 Computer Application Technology class was still in full swing when we visited it at 16:00.*

In my naivety, I assumed that at least some of this time would have been allocated to supervised homework but Mr Maine made it quite clear that the learners were expected to do their homework when they got home and that the 2¾ hours of study and the 1 hour of discussion were used for that purpose and not for homework.

Mr Maine assured me, when I enquired about the response of parents to this extraordinarily long school day that they fully supported it, in part at least because it kept their children off the street and therefore away from some of the social ills that are sadly an integral part of township life blighted as they are by a lack of appropriate recreational facilities.

Tellingly, it is not just the parents of Barnard Molokoane Grade 12s that support the study periods as there are approximately 40 Grade 12 learners from the township who attend other schools, including

some from the only former model C high school in the town, who join the afternoon study sessions each day at the insistence of their parents.

*Barnard Molokoane Secondary School is a beacon of hope and shows what can be done when there is a real commitment to achieving success.*

Leading by example is another of Principal Maine's positive traits. He doesn't expect his teachers to do anything that he wouldn't do, and is at his school each day from 06:00 assisting with the supervision and ensuring that the study periods start on time.

He also makes regular patrols of the classrooms during the later afternoon and evening sessions to make sure that the time is devoted to study. The classes that I observed as I walked around with him during the late afternoon were all silent and studious with a stern supervising teacher at the front of each class. I was also surprised to discover a Grade 10 Computer Application Technology class in full swing at 16:00, which helped confirm to me that this was a principal and school that took their school work very seriously indeed.



*The ongoing professional development of the school's teachers makes a meaningful contribution to their success. When this picture was taken, subject teams were involved in a detailed curriculum and assessment planning process as part of their professional development and to ensure that every member of the subject team had a good understanding of what they would be expected to teach and assess each week of the year.*



*Tamahole township, on the outskirts of Parys in the Free State is home to the majority of the learners who attend school at Barnard Molokoane Secondary School.*



### Barnard Molokoane NSC Results<sup>1</sup>

The school is a no-fee quintile 1 school.

#### Pass rate 2010–2012

2010			2010			2010		
Number of candidates	Number who passed	Pass percentage	Number of candidates	Number who passed	Pass percentage	Number of candidates	Number who passed	Pass percentage
104	79	76%	132	116	87,9%	106	96	90,6%

#### Pass level 2012

Pass level	Number of candidates	Percentage of total
Bachelors	42	39,6
Diploma	43	40,6
Higher Certificate	11	10,4
Fail	10	9,4

#### Subject pass rates 2012

Subjects																			
Accounting		Business Studies		Economics		English (FAL)		Geography		History		Life Sciences		Maths Literacy		Mathematics		Physical Sciences	
No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%	No.	Pass at 30%
18	94,4	18	100	18	100	107	100	53	96,2	29	100	42	97,6	56	98,2	51	82,4	60	63,3

#### Reference

<sup>1</sup> Source: DBE School Subject Report on the 2012 Senior Certificate Examinations

Let no one tell you that it is all doom and gloom in this country's township and rural schools because that is certainly not true in the case of Barnard Molokoane Secondary School in Tamahole near Parys. This school is a beacon of hope and shows what can be done when there is a real commitment to achieving success.

Although Barnard Molokoane may be an extreme example of this commitment it is certainly not the only school of its kind where hard-working and committed principals, teachers and learners are reaping the rewards of their diligence and it is incumbent upon us all to support and encourage their efforts and to invite other schools to follow their good example. ■

## News

# Western Cape principals issued with Onyx tablet computers

**B**y the end of 2012 all principals of public schools in the Western Cape had been issued with powerful Onyx Calypso 9.7 tablet computers by their provincial education department. In the media release announcing the delivery of the tablet PCs, MEC Donald Grant observed, 'These tablets – which will be delivered later in the year – will improve the way in which we communicate with and provide support to our principals. This Government values the work that our principals do to improve education outcomes in the province and it is our hope that the provision of these tablets will help them work smarter.'

We visited some of the schools soon after the announcement had been made and at each school enquired whether the tablet PC had been delivered and, if so, how the principal intended using it. Of

the six schools that we visited at that time, only one principal had started using the tablet and at most of the other schools the tablets were still in their boxes or securely stowed in the school strongroom. Given the time of year this was perfectly understandable. All the principals were frenetically dealing with ANA and Litnum tests and the NSC examinations, as well as their own internal examinations and the normal year-end load of marks, schedules and planning for 2013. It was unsurprising, therefore, that they had put off the process of learning how to use this new technology. However, it will be interesting to observe the extent to which principals make use of this new technology and the opportunities that it provides. As with most new technologies, the uptake is likely to be uneven with the more adventurous and tech-savvy leading the charge and the more conservative and tech-averse doing all they can to avoid using it.



*Manono Makaphela, principal of Luhlaza High School, tests his new tablet PC. Onyx tablet PCs were provided to all public school principals in the Western Cape at the end of 2012 by the Western Cape Education Department.*

In order to explore at first hand the potential of this technology from a school management and leadership perspective, we approached Tarsus technologies, who are the distributor of the Onyx tablets that the WCED purchased for their schools, in the hope that they would provide us with a model of similar specs to those that were given to the principals. This they agreed to do and we will be working with them and with principals to explore ways of using the tablet and in developing applications that will help principals to use the devices to work smarter rather than harder. ■

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For more information go to <http://onyxtablets.co.za/tablets-2/calypso/>

# Build your school's future on leadership lessons from its past

In an article published in the December 2012 edition of the *Harvard Business Review*,<sup>1</sup> authors Seaman and Smith suggest that, in challenging times, lessons from an organisation's history can be used to galvanise action around a compelling vision of future success.

The authors of the article, who both have a background in the study of history, examined the strategies that were used by the CEOs and leadership teams of a number of large and successful corporations, including many internationally recognised brands such as Kraft, IBM, UPS and McKinsey, to deal with significant challenges that in some cases threatened the very existence of these large corporations. What they discovered from their research was that, in many instances, CEOs and leadership teams drew lessons from the organisation's traditions, values, achievements and failures when faced with the need for radical change to deal with a looming crisis or threat to their very survival.

Although the challenges these organisations faced were all different, they had some common elements, including the possible loss of identity, clashes of organisational culture following mergers and acquisitions, and the need to adapt to radical changes in the external environment by reinventing themselves as something different, while retaining those critical values that had sustained the organisation in the past.

Many of these challenges are similar to those faced over the past two decades by this country's schools and education systems and there are lessons that can be learnt from the way in which these organisations dealt with their challenges; each organisation emerging from the process stronger, better equipped and more focussed on achieving the core purpose that it had defined for itself.

These lessons may be particularly helpful for those organisations and individuals who have set their sights on restoring to their former glory some of our great historic black schools, schools which, during the apartheid years, were beacons of hope for their communities, but which in many instances have now become places of decay and disillusionment.

Each of the organisations mentioned in the HBR article was confronted by challenges that threatened both the way that it did business and the core values that in the past had underpinned its success. The CEOs who led these businesses had to respond to two kinds of problem:

1. The changes needed to be made to assure both the long-term survival of the business and the prominence and respect of its 'brand'.
2. The process of selling the proposed changes to the employees needed to be done in such a way that it retained their loyalty and secured their future commitment to the organisation's vision and values.

As part of their strategy to tackle these two challenges, the CEOs of the companies that formed part of the study spent time reviewing their company's roots and history. Most of this research was devoted to gathering data about the company's fundamentals and in searching for explanations for decisions and choices that were made in developing its particular business model. The process of gathering this information also provided

*Although organisation culture and ethos may vary widely from organisation to organisation, the presence of a unique and distinct organisational culture is a common characteristic of all successful organisations.*



them with useful insights into the events and processes that produced the unique ethos and organisational culture that became the hallmark of their organisation. Although organisation culture and ethos may vary widely from organisation to organisation, the presence of a unique and distinct organisational culture is a common characteristic of all successful organisations.

What these CEOs soon realised was that their unique organisational history contained a rich source of material that could be used to link the organisation's past successes to the story that they needed to tell as they plotted the path out of its current troubles and on to a future of renewal and success. Making the proper link between the past and the future is an essential part of the process of change management. Employers, shareholders and the wider community are far more likely to accept and support change, particularly if it is in response to some dramatic challenge, if they understand that the organisation has successfully coped with similar challenges in the past and that the company of the future will continue to espouse the values and traditions that set it apart as an admired and distinctive brand.

The authors of the article include a list of 'Seven tips for getting history on your side'. These are:

1. Gather material from the corporate archives (if one exists) and/or other repositories of significant historical material about the corporation. The key they suggest is to gather 'raw' data including original documents, photographs and other historical artefacts and to use this information to gain a better understanding of the organisation's roots and of the vision and values of those who founded it.

*Making the proper link between the past and the future is an essential part of the process of change management.*

2. Increase the richness of this archival material by including anecdotal material derived from interviews and informal discussions with past senior executives and long-time employees. The stories and personal perspectives of these individuals about factors that may have shaped critical events or influenced decisions will help to create a more rounded, human and nuanced record of the organisation's past.
3. Review what is known and understood about the organisation's history and values, and use this to separate fact from fiction, and to understand the factors that influenced current perceptions about the organisation and how it arrived at its present situation.
4. Make these historical perspectives accessible to all stakeholders prior to engaging them in a discussion about their meaning(s) and relevance.
5. Review those projects and initiatives from the organisation's past that were of most significance, including those that were not successful, as there are lessons to be learnt from both success and failure.
6. Prior to embarking on major new projects or important decisions, examine and evaluate the proposals involved and their ramifications from an historical perspective.
7. Include aspects of the organisation's history and more particularly its major achievements and innovations, in briefings of leadership teams and employers and in discussions with shareholders and customers.

The message at the heart of this list is that there are lessons to be learned from history and that a thorough scrutiny through the lens of history will help ensure the likely success of new endeavours. ■

#### Reference

- 1 Seaman, JT Jr & Smith, GD. 2012. 'Your Company's History as a Leadership Tool'. *Harvard Business Review*, December.



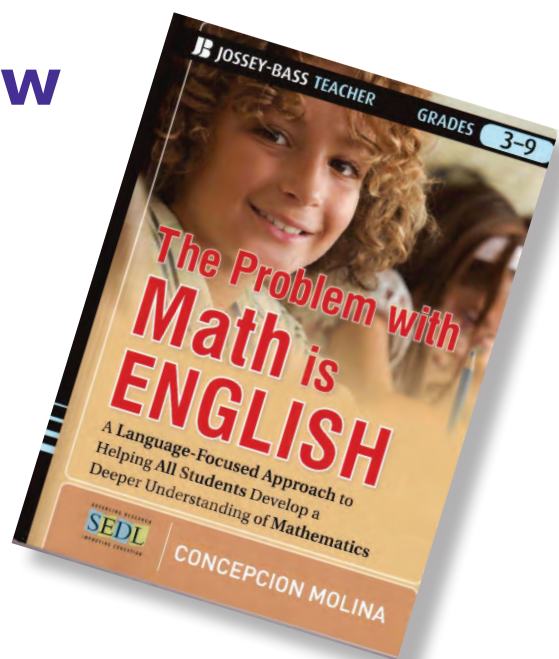
## Book review

*The Problem with Math is English: A Language-Focused Approach to Helping All Students Develop a Deeper Understanding of Mathematics*

By Concepcion Molina

Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, 2012

ISBN: 978-1-1180-9570-6



I ordered this book from the United States after seeing it advertised in *SEDL Monthly*, a monthly e-bulletin, to which I subscribe.<sup>1</sup> SEDL is a non-profit education research, development and dissemination organisation based in Austin, Texas with a focus on improving teaching and learning. It has been in operation for nearly 50 years. It was the title of the book that attracted my attention as it resonated with the work that I have been doing for the past few years in underperforming township schools where teachers and their students struggle with the challenges of teaching through the medium of a language that is not their mother tongue.

Dr Concepcion Molina, the author of the book, grew up in a Spanish-speaking family and had very little knowledge of English when he first went to school in a small town in southern Texas where the medium of instruction was English. He did well at school and was the first member of his family to attend college. Following this was a four-year spell in the United States Air Force where he worked as a specialist in accounting. From there he went on to obtain a Bachelor of Science degree and a teaching diploma after which he did a stint as a high school teacher, during which time he earned a Master of Science degree. In 1998 he joined the staff at SEDL as a programme specialist with the brief of designing mathematics professional development training programmes for a five-state consortium for the purpose of improving mathematics and science teaching. Dr Molina therefore brings personal experience and expertise at three levels when

writing about the teaching of mathematics – he has personal experience of having had to learn mathematics through a language that was not his mother tongue, and he has wide experience both in teaching mathematics and in the professional development of mathematics teachers.

Much of the focus of the book, as the title suggests, is on the troubled relationship between language and the symbolism of mathematics and mathematical instruction and how the use of mathematically inappropriate language during instruction can lead to confused thinking and misconceptions in the minds of learners. In his foreword the author describes the central theme of the book as that when mathematics teachers have a ‘conceptual understanding of mathematics’ they will have the ability to do the following:

- identify and understand the nuances and true meanings of mathematical language, symbolism and visual representation
- view mathematical concepts from different perspectives
- make connections among key concepts which will enhance and leverage the learning of a new topic with the deep understanding of another
- provide instruction focussed on building conceptual understanding of mathematics rather than merely memorising rules and following procedures.

The following list gives some examples of the kinds of problems that he identifies, particularly in relation to the 'careless' use of language in the mathematics classroom:

- the bigger half
- carry the 1
- borrow a 10
- cancel the 2s
- reduce a fraction
- 2 goes into 8

While most of these statements are commonly used in the classroom, none of them provides a conceptually correct explanation of the mathematical process that is being followed.

In Chapter 4 of the book with the chapter heading 'So what does conceptual understanding look like?' he emphasises the importance of providing learners with 'simple yet deep' definitions of fundamental mathematical concepts and stresses the need to articulate definitions that will remain valid when students are faced with more advanced mathematics processes as they proceed through school and on to college. Some examples of these definitions are listed below:

- Defining a graph: 'In mathematics a graph is a picture of a relationship (or relationships)'
- Defining a logarithm: 'A logarithm is an exponent'
- Defining exponent: 'The number of times that a base is used as a factor'
- Defining a slope: 'Slope is the rate of change'

In the process of explaining why these definitions meet his criteria of 'simple yet deep' he describes how teachers may confuse their students in their efforts to explain some of the concepts involved by using terminology that is inaccurate and which may result in misconceptions when learners encounter more complex mathematical processes.

The chapter that I found most interesting was chapter 5 in which he provides a simple and logical explanation of mathematical roots of the order of mathematical operations. In South Africa the acronym BODMAS (brackets, of, division, multiplication, addition, subtraction) is commonly used to help children to remember the order of operations, while in the USA the acronym used is PEMDAS (parentheses, exponents, multiplication, division, addition, subtraction), but of course these acronyms do not provide an explanation for why calculations should be processed in this order. In his explanation Dr Molina provides a fascinating example of how a proper understanding of mathematical process can help children to understand the reason why mathematical operations are processed

### *The Problem with Math is English* chapter headings

1. The problem with math is English (and a few other things)
2. Why a language focus in mathematics?
3. Language and symbolism in traditional instruction
4. So what does conceptual understanding look like?
5. The order of operations: A convention or a symptom of what ails us?
6. Using multiplication as a critical knowledge base
7. Fractions: The 'F-word' in Mathematics
8. Operations with fractions
9. Unlocking the power of symbolism and visual representation
10. Language-focused conceptual instruction
11. Mathematics: It's all about relationships
12. The perfect non-storm: Understanding the problem and changing the system

in this order while at the same time using the relationship between the various processes to build on their conceptual understanding of each process.

This is a fascinating book and this short overview of some of its content does not do it justice. It would serve as a valuable resource for mathematics teachers and for those who are involved in providing professional support to mathematics teachers who may be struggling with the subject as a result of their own weak understanding of the subject or of how it should be taught. As we have pointed out in an article elsewhere in this issue, the quality of mathematics teaching is a huge challenge in this country. While this book does not provide all of the answers it does identify some of the challenges that are specific to those teachers and learners who are forced to study mathematics through a language that is not their mother tongue; more importantly, it provides concrete practical suggestions on how to tackle these inadequacies and for that reason should be read by everyone who has an interest in promoting better classroom practice. ■

The easiest way to order the book is via Amazon ([http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1118095707/ref=as\\_li\\_qf\\_sp\\_asin\\_il\\_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=s06c34-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1118095707](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/1118095707/ref=as_li_qf_sp_asin_il_tl?ie=UTF8&tag=s06c34-20&linkCode=as2&camp=1789&creative=9325&creativeASIN=1118095707))

#### **Note**

- 1 Visit <http://www.sedl.org/bulletins/> for further information.

## Shake the world: Millennium Development Goal bracelets



### The goals and the colour of the representative bracelet

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger – yellow
2. Achieve universal primary education – lime green
3. Promote gender equality and empower women – orange
4. Reduce child mortality – turquoise
5. Improve maternal health – pink
6. Combat HIV/Aids, malaria and other diseases – red
7. Ensure environmental sustainability – green
8. Develop a global partnership for development – blue

In last year's final edition we ran an article about the Millennium Declaration adopted by the United Nations member states in 2007 and on the progress that had been made by this country in its drive to achieve these goals.

There has been a fairly extensive media campaign around the achievement of these goals using the catchphrase 'Shake the world', which has promoted the wearing of different coloured Millennium Development Goal bracelets as a way of showing your support for one or more of these goals. The bead bracelets are produced by a not-for-profit organisation in rural KwaZulu-Natal and can be purchased online through the website [www.shaketheworld.org](http://www.shaketheworld.org). They are sold in sets of four or eight. A complete set of eight costs €17.95 (about R240).

'Shake the world' is an international organisation established specifically to raise awareness about the MDGs and to promote, to a worldwide audience, examples of activities that individuals and groups can do to help contribute to the realisation of the MDGs. It is based in Holland, which explains why the prices of the bracelets are quoted in Euros.



We would like to encourage our readers to support both the Millennium Development Goals and the rural development agency that produces the bracelets by purchasing and wearing them, or by giving them away as gifts. ■



# AMESA 19th Annual National Congress

The Association of Mathematics Education of South Africa (AMESA) will hold its 19th Annual National Congress from 24 to 28 June 2013 at the Faculty of Education, University of the Western Cape, in Bellville.

The theme of the congress ‘Mathematics vs. the Curriculum: What’s the Score?’ is sure to encourage lively debate as delegates grapple with the competing views of Mathematics as an academic discipline and field of research and the Mathematics that is taught in schools.

### The programme includes:

Pre-congress workshops on 23 June on the following topics:

- Patterns, algebra and functions for Foundation Phase (Nicky Roberts)
- Patterns all around us for Intermediate Phase (Agatha Lebethe, Gabeba Agherdien, Heather Collins)
- Playing with geometry in the Senior Phase (Yusuf Johnson)
- Geogebra for teaching and learning high school mathematics (Cerenus Pheiffer).

Plenary addresses by the following invited speakers:

- Zalman Usiskin (University of Chicago, USA)
- Hamsa Venkat (University of the Witwatersrand)
- Peter Dankelmann (University of Johannesburg)
- Phadiela Cooper (Centre of Science and Technology)
- Zain Davis (University of Cape Town).

Panel discussions on important issues in Mathematics:

- Mathematics vs. the Curriculum: What’s the score? (Chair: Cyril Julie)
- Mathematics teaching and learning in the Western Cape (Chair: Shaheeda Jaffer)
- History of AMESA – Twenty years (Chair: Nico Govender)

Parallel sessions presented by participants include AMESA interest group discussion sessions on:

- Curriculum phase committees
- Mathematics Olympiad
- Mathematical problem solving
- Writing and reviewing for AMESA
- Mathematics teacher education.

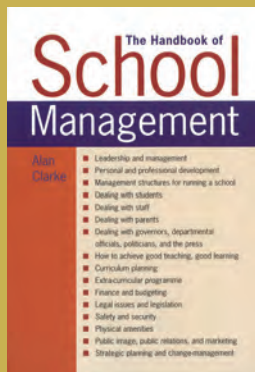
For more about the Congress visit the congress website at <http://www.amesa.org.za/AMESA2013/index.htm> or call Congress Secretary Kim Styer at 021 959 2229 or email [congress2013@amesa.org.za](mailto:congress2013@amesa.org.za) ■

### Editor’s note

SM&L is happy to provide space in its editions, when this is available, to voluntary associations such as AMESA, which support and promote the professional development of teachers and school leaders. For further information, contact General Editor Alan Clarke at [editor@ednews.co.za](mailto:editor@ednews.co.za) or call 021 683 2899.



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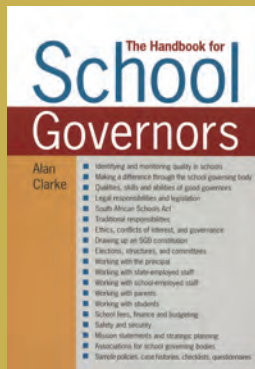
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ISSN 2222-0321

**JUTA**  
AND COMPANY LTD

Volume 7 Number 1 First published 2013  
Juta and Company Ltd  
PO Box 14373, Lansdowne, 7779,  
Cape Town, South Africa  
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