Challenges of literacy development

In April this year the National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) released its first report, this despite the fact that the legislation that provides the legal framework within which it must operate has yet to be promulgated and passed into law. Although the NEEDU is considered to be a kind of super-inspectorate by some in the education sector, this is not its purpose; rather its purpose, in the words of this first report, is to 'provide the Minister of Education with an authoritative, analytical and accurate account of the state of schools in South Africa and, in particular, on the status of teaching and learning'. The first report does just that but with a particular focus on the state of literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase. Having made a fairly thorough study of the report, we are convinced that this was a wise decision and that its findings reveal the extent to which systemic weaknesses in this critical phase of education create limiting factors that persist throughout the remaining years of a child's schooling. Our decision to devote a considerable part of this edition to the NEEDU report is because of the significance of the findings and the many insights that it provides into the multiple challenges of the Foundation Phase. We hope you will find it useful.

Also in this edition are two articles by regular columnist Erich Cloete, one of which provides some useful advice on the importance of literacy development in the preschool years and particularly on the kinds of strategies that support the emergent literacy of children in these early years. It is the kind of advice that needs to be heeded by those in authority if we are to address some the many challenges that the NEEDU report has identified.

During the course of the second term we made a return visit to Claremont High School, which was founded in 2011, initially as a kind of satellite school to Westerford, and which we have featured in previous editions of this magazine. With the appointment of its own principal at the start of 2013, the school is now its own institution and is working frantically to ensure that its first batch of Grade 12s are properly prepared for the National Senior Certificate examinations at the end of this year. You can read about what we discovered on our visit to the school on page 16.

Other articles that we hope you will find useful are Erich Cloete's second article, which covers the importance of encouraging leadership development at every level within the school community, and an article that examines the issue of leadership competency and suggest ways in which leadership competency can be evaluated.

We hope you will enjoy the read. ■

In this issue:

SM&L

NEEDU publishes it first report on the state of education

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) published its first report on the state of public schooling in April. The report presents a systemic evaluation of the state of Literacy Teaching and Learning in the Foundation Phase, which was the focus of the unit's investigation during 2012.

Dr Nick Taylor, CEO of the National Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU)

In the introductory paragraphs to this systemic evaluation report published by the NEEDU, the authors provide some useful background information about the establishment of NEEDU and about its current priorities. These perspectives are important because Dr Nick Taylor, NEEDU's current CEO, is the third person to head the organisation since the process of establishing it was set in motion by Minister Angie Motshekga soon after her appointment as Minister of Basic Education following the general election in 2009. The need for an evaluation unit that operated independently of the Department of Basic Education or at least of those elements of the DBE that are responsible for the administration of schools, was identified by a Ministerial Committee established by Minister Motshekga's predecessor,

Naledi Pandor. The recommendation of that committee was that the NEEDU should provide the Minister of Education with an 'authoritative, analytical and accurate account of the state of schools in South Africa and, in particular, on the status of teaching and learning'.

During the course of 2012, following the appointment of Dr Taylor, the NEEDU began the process of formulating the approach that it would need to adopt and the operational procedures that it would need to follow in terms of the legislative framework within which it is expected to function. Unfortunately, this legislation is still in draft form, which means that the unit is currently operating in a legislative vacuum. Despite these uncertainties, Dr Taylor and his team made the decision to begin

the process of gathering the empirical evidence that they would need to meet the NEEDU mandate. They were faced with a number of choices in this regard, including the key issues of coverage and focus. The draft legislation makes it clear that the Unit's key tasks include the identification of factors that 'inhibit' and 'enhance' learner performance, and to make proposals that will 'remedy' shortcomings in educational practice and 'eliminate' barriers to the delivery of quality education.

The response of the Unit was to focus their research efforts in 2012 on an in-depth investigation into literacy teaching and learning in the Foundation Phase. This decision was based on several considerations including the fact that the new Curriculum Policy and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) were to be implemented in the Foundation Phase in 2012, together with the universally recognised importance of ensuring that all learners develop a solid grounding in the basics of literacy during these first three years of schooling.

The authors of the report make some important statements and cogent arguments in articulating the decision of the NEEDU to further narrow the focus of their investigation very specifically on the teaching and learning process as it is transacted in the classroom. In doing so they make it clear that the 18 professional curriculum evaluators who were responsible for gathering the data used in the report focussed the attention specifically on classroom practice and that the issues of finance (auditing), infrastructure, text-book track-ing (i.e. the delivery process) and teacher appraisal were not considered or assessed although they are recognised as important elements in the ability of schools to create conditions that are conducive to the provision of quality teaching and learning.

One of the other important decisions that the research team needed to make was the identification of the criteria they would use in selecting the schools for this study. In the end they decided to select schools located in areas that recent population censuses had shown to be areas of high population growth. The rapid population growth in these areas is seemingly largely driven by population movements from rural areas to the urban fringes of the major metropolitan areas, the larger provincial towns and to a certain extent to some smaller towns in the more rural parts of the country.

In reviewing the issue of accountability in schools, the authors provide some interesting perspectives on the relationship between accountability, as it is set out in policy, and how this differs from the lines of accountability that do or do not exist in practice, both internally within schools, and externally between schools and their districts. What they found is well illustrated by the following quote from an official at one of the district offices that they visited:

'We come up with beautiful strategies and the schools are also supposed to come up with turnaround plans for their schools and implement those. But teachers do not use these when they teach.'

The report provides a useful summary of the key elements of good instructional leadership, based on a paper by Parker and Day.[1] The five key elements identified are:
* communicating a clear mission and a set of objectives for the school
* creating an instructional climate
* managing the curriculum and instruction
* monitoring the learning programme
* identifying areas in which teachers require professional support.

The authors go on to propose that internal accountability within the school is largely determined by the extent to which there are shared values and a common view of expectations and standards, particularly in relation to the teaching and assessment processes. Schools with high levels of accountability were found to be schools:
* where there is a well-developed approach to curriculum and pedagogy
* where there are routine grade-level and content-focussed discussions on instructional practice
* where there is regular structured discussion of learner performance.

'We come up with beautiful strategies and the schools are also supposed to come up with turnaround plans for their schools and implement those. But teachers do not use these when they teach.'

Internal accountability within the school is largely determined by the extent to which there are shared values and a common view of expectations and standards, particularly in relation to the teaching and assessment processes.

They also point out that bureaucratic accountability – accountability that is driven by issues of policy compliance – is likely to be far less effective than accountability that is driven by a culture of professionalism at school level.

The model that the research team devised and used to assess curriculum delivery at each level in the schooling system is summarised in the table below and on the opposite page, which is a direct transcript of Table 1 of the report. We have included it because it provides a good overview of how the Unit approached their work.

In order to make sure that the different members of the assessment team gathered data in a consistent and reliable manner, special instruments were designed for each segment and level of the school system that they sampled. Data was gathered using these instruments based on discussions held with individuals from the DBE National Office, from all nine provincial offices, from 15 district offices and from 133 schools. Two districts were selected from each province and in each case one of the districts was selected for its relatively poor performance and the other for its relatively good performance in comparison to the other districts within the province. All of the districts selected where chosen because the schools that they serviced were situated in urban areas or the peri-urban fringe.

Indicators of curriculum delivery investigated at four levels of the school system			
Level	**Element**	**Indicators**	**Method**
National	Curriculum	Distribution of CAPS documents Training	Interviews at school, district, provincial and national levels.
	Assessment	Design, distribution and use of ANA tests	Interviews at school, district, provincial and national levels. Document analysis
	Resources	Design, distribution and use of workbooks	Interviews at school, district, provincial and national levels. Document analysis
Provincial	Instructional leadership	Goals, staffing and delegation of functions	Observation Document analysis Interviews
		Curriculum planning	
		Monitoring	
		Assessment	
		Procurement and distribution of books and other cognitive resources	
		Professional development	
District	Instructional leadership	Goals, staffing and delegation of functions	Observation Document analysis Interviews
		Curriculum planning	
		Monitoring	
		Assessment	
		Procurement and distribution of books and other cognitive resources	
		Professional development	

Indicators of curriculum delivery investigated at four levels of the school system (continued)			
Level	**Element**	**Indicators**	**Method**
School	School culture	History, demographics, location, infrastructure, resources	Observation SMT interviews
	Language	LOLT, FAL, HL of learners and teachers	SMT Teacher interviews
	Instructional leadership	Goals, staffing and delegation of functions	SMT, Teacher interviews Examination of teacher and school records Observation
		Time management	
		Curriculum planning	
		Monitoring	
		Assessment	
		Procurement and distribution of books and other cognitive resources	
		Professional development	
	Reading	Reading fluency and comprehension	Classroom observation Learner assessment
	Writing	Quality	Examination of learner books
		Quality	
		DBE workbooks	
	Homework	Frequency, assistance	SMT Teacher interviews
	District support	Frequency of contact Activities	SMT Teacher interviews

Each of the provinces was visited over a two-week period. In the first week members of the research team designated as the 'head office team' spent one day in the provincial head office, and this was followed by another day in each of the selected districts. In the following week two evaluators spent two days in each of the eight to ten schools from these districts that had been identified for inclusion in the research sample. The only exception to this approach to data collection occurred in the Northern Cape where a decision was taken to visit 18 schools.

In order to ensure that the reporting process provided a balanced view of each of the schools, the schools were provided with an initial draft of the evaluators' report and invited to comment on the processes involved and on the findings. This consultative process was included to minimise the likelihood of errors and misunderstandings about the processes involved and of the meaningfulness of the data that was collected and reported on. A similar process was used in the preparation of the district and provincial reports and in each case the officials concerned were given the opportunity to comment on and respond to the findings of the initial draft reports as these related to their contribution to the overall effectiveness of the teaching and learning of language in the Foundation Phase.

Perhaps the most critical element of the work of the NEEDU is that of diagnosis – the extent to

which they can identify the factors that inhibit performance and that can help explain why learners in South African schools perform so poorly relative to other countries in southern and eastern Africa despite the relatively high levels of per-learner funding that the state provides. In their attempts to diagnose the cause of the poor performance of learners and schools the research team poses two simple alternatives:

- Teacher can't: meaning that teachers do not have the knowledge and skills that they need to teach what they are required to teach, or
- Teachers won't: meaning teachers have the necessary knowledge and skills but for some reason are unwilling to perform the work that is required of them.

The authors also consider a third alternative that they describe as resource utilisation: do teachers have access to a sufficient minimum level of resources and are they able to use these in an appropriate meaningful way?

In summary, they looked to find answers to these three questions: Is our schooling system in the Foundation phase performing so dismally in teaching literacy because:

- teachers can't teach what they are expected to teach (knowledge and skill)?
- teachers won't teach what they are expected to teach (time and discipline)?
- teachers don't have the sufficient basic resources to teach what they are expected to teach (texts)?

The conclusions that the research team has drawn from the data they gathered in an attempt to answer these three critical questions is as disturbing as it is insightful. Our summary of these findings is provided on page 8. ∎

References
1   Parker, S. & Day, V. 1997. Promoting inclusion through instructional leadership: the roles of the secondary school principal. *NASSP Bulletin* 81: 83–89

Draft NEEDU Bill
The text that follows is a verbatim transcript of the two sections of the Draft NEEDU Bill that we consider to be most relevant to schools. The version of the Draft that we used is the version that was used when the Draft Bill was considered by an Education Subcommittee set up for this purpose by the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC).[2] The Education Sub-committee met on two occasions for this purpose in March and April 2012.

Governing principles
5. (1) No person or organ of State may interfere with the functioning of the NEEDU in terms of this Act.

(2) The NEEDU must –
a.   be impartial and must exercise its powers and perform its functions in the public interest;
b.   not report on the performance of an individual educator;
c.   consider the influence of historical and social factors on the conditions under which school leadership, teaching and learning are practised, and must recommend ways in which the limitations caused by these factors and conditions can be eliminated;
d.   recognise the disproportionate and unequal nature of the system of education in terms of infrastructure, resources and capacity, and must identify methods and strategies for achieving equality and equity.

(3) The NEEDU is accountable to the Minister for the performance of its functions in terms of this Act.

Functions
6. (1) The functions of the NEEDU are to –
a.   identify, on a system-wide basis –
     (i) the factors that inhibit school improvement; and
     (ii) the factors that advance school improvement, including evidence of good practice;
b.   analyse and identify approaches and strategies necessary for achieving equality in the provision of quality education, with due regard to the human and financial resources and other relevant institutional and governance structures that will be needed to achieve such equality;
c.   evaluate the manner in which the national department and the provincial departments monitor and evaluate schools;

d. evaluate the support provided to schools, school governing bodies, professional managements and educators by the national department and the provincial departments;

e. evaluate the state of South African schools – in particular, the quality of school leadership, teaching and learning;

f. make proposals in regard to –
(i) remedying shortcomings in educational practice;
(ii) eliminating barriers to quality education;
(iii) ways in which the education system as a whole can emulate examples of good practice;
(iv) developing the knowledge and professional capacity of educators; and
(v) improving the support provided to school governing bodies, professional managements and educators by the national department and the provincial departments;

g. publish reports on the state of the education system;

h. undertake any task consistent with this Act at the request of the Minister; and
(i) do anything consistent with this Act which is necessary or expedient for the performance of its functions.

(2) In the performance of its functions, the NEEDU has the authority to visit a school, after notice has been given to the Head of Department and the school, for the purpose of observing or assessing –
a. classroom teaching;
b. learner knowledge;
c. professional management;
d. the capacity, efficiency and effectiveness of a school governing body;
e. the efficiency and effectiveness of support provided to schools, educators, professional managements and school governing bodies by the national department or a provincial department; or
f. anything related to its functions that is consistent with this Act.

(3) The NEEDU also has the authority to visit an office of a provincial department or of the national department, after reasonable notice has been given, for the purpose of assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of support provided to schools and educators.

(4) The NEEDU's reports contemplated in subsection (1)(g) must contain at least the following:

a. empirical findings;
b. recommended actions for the improvement of school education; and
c. accountability measures for ensuring that the responsible parties deal with identified problems.

(5) In order to perform its functions, the NEEDU must –
a. develop an appropriate theoretical foundation for its work in regard to the improvement of school education;
b. determine an appropriate methodology or combination of methodologies for carrying out its duties;
c. consider the historical, social and material contexts in which school education is offered, so as to recommend ways in which the detrimental effects of these contexts can be overcome;
(i) conduct or commission such research as is necessary for fulfilling its obligations in terms of this Act; and
d. liaise with bodies having similar functions in the provinces and in other countries.

(6) To ensure that its work is of the highest possible standard and above reproach, the NEEDU must employ strategies including, but not limited to –
a. basing its findings and proposals on the best available empirical evidence and, where required, statistical data or analysis; and
b. conducting its work in an open and transparent manner.

Interestingly one of the NEDLAC Education Committee's recommendations was that the entire text of section (5) be deleted.

Findings of the first NEEDU report: teachers can't or teachers won't

We have given a fairly full summary of the background and approach adopted by the NEEDU research team in the previous article. The research that formed the basis for this first formal report to the Minister of Education by the newly established National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU), examined the quality of literacy teaching in the Foundation Phase in a purposefully selected sample of primary schools from two districts from each of the nine provinces.

In determining the specifics of their investigation, the Unit articulated a question that they hoped the data that they collected would help to answer. In its simplest form the question is: Is the reason the literacy levels of learners in the Foundation Phase is generally so poor because their teachers can't teach what they are supposed to teach or because they won't teach what they are supposed to teach?

The evidence that teachers won't teach

The research team decided to gather data on teacher absence, late-coming, and their presence in their classrooms during timetabled lesson time as the measure of the extent to which teachers at the schools surveyed won't teach. Although the evidence they gathered in respect of the proper use of teaching time varied widely from district to district and school to school, their analysis of the data does show that the proper and full use of the prescribed teaching time is a significant problem and that in some schools as many as 24 days of teaching a year is lost as a consequence of teachers not meeting their professional obligations not only in terms of their being present at their schools during the full school day but also in being present in their classrooms and in making full use of the teaching time as prescribed in the CAPS documents.

The research team identified four ways in which this 'manifestation of indiscipline in schools' resulted in the loss of teaching time:
- the frequent absence of teachers and learners
- the tardiness of teachers and learners in terms of their arrival at school in the morning
- teachers and learners not being in class at the times stipulated on the timetable

Analysis of the data shows that the proper and full use of the prescribed teaching time is a significant problem and that in some schools as many as 24 days of teaching a year is lost as a consequence of teachers not meeting their professional obligations.

- the participation of teachers in non-scheduled activities during the school day. Examples of these activities included training workshops, union meetings and memorial services.

Although the authors recognise that it was difficult to get accurate and representative data of the extent of the loss of teaching time in the two days that the members of the research team spent at the school, it was possible to get a reasonable sense of the extent of the problem at each of the schools that were visited. Data on teacher and learner absenteeism was gained by looking at attendance registers, and punctuality was assessed by direct observation of teachers and learners both at the start of the day and at the end of breaks as they moved to their classrooms. Teachers and school leaders at each school were also interviewed about the extent of the problem. These interviews were also used to gather data on the extent to which extramural activities disrupted the school day.

Given that the interviewees probably presented a more favourable view of the extent to the problem than was the reality, the authors suggest a margin of error of about 10%. Based on their analysis of the data collected, they estimate that loss of teaching time is a major problem in 30% of schools and that learner late-coming is the most significant contributor to this loss of teaching time.

The evidence that teachers can't teach

In order to answer this question the research team used evidence from data that they collected from classroom observation, from their examination of curriculum-related documents that they viewed during their visits to schools, examples of these include

learner workbooks and the curriculum planning documents that the teachers used, as well as data from a variety of research findings on teacher competency in this country. Additional data was drawn from their interviews with district officials at different levels in the system. The common theme that emerged from this data was that teacher competence is a major problem and that the majority of teachers and many district officials lack the competence they need to be effective teachers at two levels:

- their subject content knowledge is inadequate, meaning that they are unsure of the subject matter that they are meant to teach
- their pedagogical content knowledge is inadequate, meaning that they do know how best to teach the subject and lack the ability to select and adapt their teaching strategies in a way that meets the specific needs of the children that they teach.

Amongst the evidence that is included in the report is data from the SACMEQ III study, which is yet to be released and assesses the extent of teacher subject knowledge by testing a representative national sample of Grade 6 teachers in 2007. The language tests consisted of comprehension exercises on 11 text items, which ranged in difficulty from those that tested simple vocabulary and syntax to more difficult texts that included dense technical descriptions and complex discursive passages. The results showed that while teachers did relatively well in terms of their ability to retrieve information from the text their ability to make inferences, to interpret and to evaluate information provided in the text was generally weak.

The findings from the SACMEQ III mathematics tests were also weak. The authors of the report make it clear that they consider the poor levels of teacher competence to be the 'fundamental problem in the schools system'. They also point out that teachers and district officials whose subject content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge is weak are unlikely to be able to adequately interpret curriculum documents. An implication of this is that they are likely to confuse the examples of teaching strategies that these documents provide with learning outcomes. ∎

NEEDU report: The recommendations

Based on their findings, the report makes 14 recommendations, some of which include subsections, to the Minister. Our brief summary of these recommendations is provided below.

1 Achieving institutional functionality (Recommendation 1)

1.1 Principals must exert strong leadership to ensure that the prescribed times for teaching and learning are adhered to and that teaching time is fully utilised for its prescribed purpose. Issues of teacher and learner absence and late-coming need to be firmly dealt with. District officials must monitor and support principals in this regard and hold them accountable for the proper management of teaching time in their schools.
1.2 The DBE should amend the regulations pertaining to the use of sick leave by educators to prevent or limit the abuse of sick leave.

2 Instructional leadership (Recommendation 2)

Principals must delegate some management responsibility to senior members of staff and members of the School Management Team (SMT); the tasks and duties associated with these management responsibilities must be clearly defined. The SMT must meet regularly to monitor progress against explicit learning goals. Areas of management responsibility should include:

- the design and maintenance of appropriate language policy
- curriculum planning
- the development and application of school norms for monitoring and improving reading and writing
- the procurement and management of Learning and Teaching Support Materials
- the moderation of assessment
- the analysis of test results
- teacher professional development.

3 Language (Recommendation 3)

3.1 The DBE should commission the writing of graded sets of reading materials for use in the Foundation Phase for the nine official languages. The question of language standardisation should be an important consideration in the writing of these books.

3.2 Each education district should appoint specialist language-trained subject advisors for each of the main languages spoken in the district. The primary task of these language specialists should be to support schools and their School Governing Boards (SGBs) by providing leadership, advice and training to teachers and parents. They should, in addition, assist SGBs by providing advice on the appropriate choice of languages for the school's LoLT and FAL while respecting the language choices of parents.

3.3 Improving the proficiency of learners and teachers in both LoLT and FAL should be treated as a priority by schools and, where vacancies exist, principals and SGBs should do their best to fill these with teachers who are first language speakers of the school's LoLT and/or the FAL(s) of the school.

3.4 While the planned introduction of an African language other than or in addition to Afrikaans is seen as a positive policy, the implementation of this policy needs to take cognisance of the current shortage of African language teachers.

4 Reading

4.1 The DBE should establish a set of national norms for reading proficiency. These norms should establish appropriate fluency and comprehension levels for each grade. These norms should be developed during the course of 2013 for implementation in 2014. The report provided the following table as a starting point for discussion on these reading-level norms. **(Recommendation 4)**

Training in the use of these norms should commence in 2014 with funding from the Skills Levy.

Grade	Level of learner	Reading a story: number of words per minute	
		By the end of Term 2	By the end of Term 4
1	Top	N/A	100
	Middle	N/A	50
	Bottom	N/A	15
2	Top	125	140
	Middle	70	90
	Bottom	20	30
3	Top	145	160
	Middle	95	100
	Bottom	35	50

4.2 Members of the SMT should monitor learner reading systematically against these norms. This should be done by:
- assessing the reading performance of every leaner at least annually
- tracking the progress of weaker readers at least quarterly
- assessing learners by requiring them to read a story from an unfamiliar book, and to count the number of words they read per minute
- testing leaner comprehension of what they have read. Comprehension tests should be included as part of every test. **(Recommendation 5)**

4.3 The efficacy of the WCED's LNI programme and the GDE's GPLMS programme should be 'rigorously' evaluated to assess their impact at both a quantitative and qualitative level in order to understand which elements of these programmes are most effective and why. The evaluation of these programmes should be commissioned by the DBE because their findings would be of national interest. **(Recommendation 6)**

5 Writing

5.1 National norms for writing in LoLT are suggested in the CAPS documents. During the course of 2013 these should be adapted for both the LoLT and the FAL and should define both the quantity and the quality of independent writing that learners are expected to produce. This recommendation includes the following table as an example of the kind of writing norms that are recommended. (**Recommendation 7**)

Suggested norms for writing in LOLT: Grade 1 to 3By end of Term 4				
Grade	**By the end of Term 2**		**By the end of Term 4**	
	CAPS requirements	Suggested number	CAPS requirements	Suggested number
Grade 1	Writing sentences	At least five exercises of sentence writing by the end of the first semester (Terms 1 and 2)	Paragraph – three sentences	At least one exercise per week throughout the second semester (Terms 3 and 4)
Grade 2	Paragraph of four to six sentences	At least one exercise per week in the first semester	Story of one to two paragraphs (ten sentences)	At least one exercise per week for the second semester
Grade 3	Story of two paragraphs (ten sentences)	At least one exercise per week	Story of two paragraphs (12 or more sentences)	At least one exercise per week for the second semester

Suggested norms for Mathematics writing by topic: Grades 1 to 3				
Topic	**End of Term**	**Grade 1**	**Grade 2**	**Grade 3**
Addition and subtraction	2	Add to 10 Subtract from 10	Answers up to 50	Answers up to 400
	4	Add to 20 Subtract from 20	Answers up to 99	Answers up to 999
Multiplication	2	Up to 10	1 to 10, by 2 and 5	1 to 10 by 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 to 50
	4	Up to 20	1 to 10 by 2, 3, 4, 5	1 to 10 by 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 to 100
Division	2	N/A	Up to 30, may include remainders	Divide numbers up to 50 by 2, 3, 4, 5, 10
	4	N/A	Up to 50, may include remainders	Divide numbers up to 99 by 2, 3, 4, 5,
Problem solving	2	Answers up to 10	Answers up to 50	Answers up to 400
	4	Answers up to 20	Answers up to 99	Answers up to 999
Fractions	2	N/A	Halves, quarters, thirds and fifths	Sixths and eighths
	4	Answers up to 20	Answers up to 99	Answers up to 999

5.2 School leaders should monitor learner writing throughout the school, evaluating learner performance against these norms. This should be done by checking learner books each quarter. This monitoring should include an examination of both the quantity and the quality of writing (in the case of languages) and of calculation (in the case of mathematics).

In languages and content subjects learners should write on at least four days each week and these exercises should require learners to write sentences, paragraphs and extended paragraphs. The writing topics set should include topics that require learners to describe events, to express their feelings and to analyse current events.

In the case of Mathematics learners should also write/calculate at least four times each week and attempt at least one 'word problem' each week. **(Recommendation 8)**

6 Books
6.1 The DBE workbook programme should be continued. The quality and appropriateness of the workbooks should be evaluated against the curriculum and should be amended where this is required. Teacher's guides should be developed and learners should work systematically through the workbooks during the course of the year. **(Recommendation 9)**

6.2 More reading materials need to be provided for the Foundation Phase and provinces need to increase their budget allocation to schools for the purchase of these materials. Lists of recommended, appropriate, preferred readers need to be published by district offices and the provincial education departments. Children should be reading at least one book per week in the Foundation Phase and a concerted effort should be made by principals and district officials to ensure that classes have at least 30 to 40 different readers available as part of graded sets. The management of these resources should be a priority of the SMT. **(Recommendation 10)**

7 Assessment
7.1 District and provincial officials should help schools to use item analysis of the ANA results to inform their understanding of learner performance. SMT members must benchmark internal tests and examinations against ANA test items to ensure that the school's internal standards are on a par with those of the ANA test items. **(Recommendation 11A)**

7.2 The credibility and meaningfulness of the ANA results need to be established. Achieving this will require improvement in the manner in which the programme is administered, and in the manner in which the data is collated and analysed. **(Recommendation 11B)**

8 Professional development
The DBE should commission a study to investigate and identify models of teacher in-service training (INSET) and to use the findings to provide suitable training for teachers and school leaders. This training should focus on improving teacher competence in teaching those topic areas that they find difficult, particularly in teaching reading and number concepts. Attention should also be given to training school leaders to develop their skills in managing and monitoring teaching and learning and in supporting the professional development of their teachers. **(Recommendation 12)**

9 Professionalising the Civil Service
9.1 The competencies necessary for heads of department (school level) and subject advisors to function effectively need to be determined by the DBE during the course of 2013 with support from experts in the tertiary sector. The competencies identified should include good subject knowledge and proven teaching expertise, understanding the principles of assessment and the ability to apply basic psychometric techniques in the analysis of assessment data. These guidelines should be used to 'rigorously assess all prospective HODs as part of the assessment process'. This assessment will help to provide a baseline assessment for further promotion to positions such as school principals, circuit managers and subject advisors. The selection of principals should also be based on the competencies required for this position as principals make 'an enormous difference to school performance'. **(Recommendation 13)**

9.2 The norms used in the appointment of principals need to be revised with assistance from experts in the tertiary sector. These norms should include a thorough understanding of effective instructional leadership practice together with a good track record in the implementation of these practices at school level. Other criteria should include evidence of having been an effective HOD or deputy-principal, HR management competence, including conflict resolution, competence in the capture and use of data, an understanding of the financial requirements of the Public Finance Management Act and the legislative framework within which schools operate. **(Recommendation 14)** ▪

Literacy – the missing ingredient

Erich Cloete

The NEEDU National Report 2012: Summary April 2013, focussed on school performance as the ingredient to fix our literacy problems. The report shows a strong focus on the quality of teaching and learning and the effectiveness of the instructional leadership in our schools. What other factors also play a part in the development of literacy?

NEEDU chose to use a narrow lens in its scrutiny of literacy teaching and learning in grades 1–3, rather than investigating a range of factors that shape literacy achievement. Although the main recommendation, which indicates that the DBE must act to improve teachers' knowledge and skills, is a true and sensible one, it remains only part of the answer. There are a lot of other contributing ingredients we need to throw into the bowl if we would like to bake a tasty cake.

Delays in cognitive and overall development before schooling can often have long-lasting and costly consequences. The most effective and cost-efficient time to intervene is in the early years of life, especially between birth and six years.

International studies that have been done on successful language and literacy learning emphasise the following two ingredients as necessary to bake the cake: high-quality language and literacy experiences in pre-school as well as a home-learning environment conducive to learning. Learners' progress in literacy is determined not only by how well they are taught at school, but also by their levels of language and literacy when they enter school. International research shows that if learners begin school with poor language and literacy skills, it is difficult for them to catch up or close the gap, even with skilled teaching. This is something that is mostly ignored by departmental officials and maybe this is why the cake isn't so tasty. Some ingredients are missing. Officials are under pressure to achieve performance. Research has shown that literacy levels can be improved, on average, by only 15% per year. That is with direct and purposeful intervention.

Annual studies by the Centre of Evaluation and Assessment (CEA) of the University of Pretoria show that the greater the exposure of learners to poverty, the weaker their basic entry-level skills with regard to early reading. Delays in cognitive and overall development before schooling can often have long-lasting and costly consequences. The most effective and cost-efficient time to intervene is in the early years of life, especially between birth and six years. Learners should have a childhood that is free of factors that impede their physical and cognitive development. This is why the National Development Plan (NDP)[1] envisages that by 2030 all learners should start their learning at early development centres and why it foresees universal access for up to two years of early childhood development.

In addressing South Africa's persistently low literacy rates, policy-makers have tended to focus on school quality issues, such as management and leadership, quality of teaching and coverage of curriculum. But it seems that this intervention has had a limited impact. Compelling evidence shows that to give learners a better chance of learning to read and write successfully, the right foundations must be laid before schooling begins. It also shows the impact of poverty, malnutrition, disease, stress and under stimulation on cognitive development. To take this evidence into consideration will require a new approach that

challenges the following assumptions that we currently hold about literacy acquisition:

- Literacy development starts at school.
- The context is the class.
- The messenger is the teacher.
- The resources consist only of those available to a teacher in an academic context.

Studies undertaken by the CEA have shown that vocabulary, at an early age, is linked not only to learners' ability to read at an early age, but also to their mathematic skills as it enables them to express their thinking, for example when sorting, classifying, matching or ordering.

Emotional and social difficulties that may have a negative impact on how well children learn are often related to home factors such as poor parenting skills and parent-child relationships and are more likely to occur among learners from poorer backgrounds. For example, studies have shown that maternal depression has a direct effect on the growth of expressive vocabulary in learners aged between one and three years. A study in the Western Cape, in 2001, which examined the impact of foetal alcohol syndrome (FAS) on the development of learners, found that the FAS group was markedly deficient in language skills in comparison to the control group. In addition, loss of hearing, which often goes unrecognised and untreated, and the influence of HIV infection also have an impact on language acquisition.

Parents and caregivers have a crucial role to play in supporting language development. Homes should be places where parents and caregivers read to children, tell stories, sing songs, talk about letters and sounds and take children to libraries.

It is therefore of paramount importance to see language development from birth to six years not in isolation, but in the context of addressing broader developmental needs, including healthcare, nutrition and psychosocial wellbeing. Interventions at this early age will be effective in improving learners' chances of success in learning to read later on.

An innovative initiative aimed at encouraging parents to read to their very young children is the Reach Out and Read programme (ROAR) in the United States. Read more about it at www.reachoutandread.org. In this programme, which is an example of an integrated approach, creative partnerships have been established with doctors, clinics and hospitals because people realised that these places can become open-access learning and resource spaces in communities. Each time a child aged between six months and five years visits the doctor, parents receive an age-appropriate book to take home and read to the child. Parents are also giving information about how to read to children, and waiting room volunteers model reading aloud. Children of parents who participated in this programme had higher scores on vocabulary tests.

Many parents, especially those from disadvantage and poor communities, feel that their own educational background does not qualify them to support their child and the majority of homes in these communities also lack appropriate literacy resources. Our society is also characterised by many single-parent families, with mothers working long hours and also being tasked with the sole responsibility of raising children. Early childhood centres in these communities will become increasingly important spaces for early reading development. A recent report, *Narrowing the Literacy Gap*, published by Wordworks[2], which looks into this very important matter, shows that teacher training delivered in the Early Childhood and Development (ECD) sector is constrained by the unit standards determined by the South African Qualification Authority (SAQA). It seems that the development of language and emergent literacy is a small component of the learning programmes prescribed by the unit standards. The concern is that the current learner standards may limit the extent to which early literacy and language development are prioritised in teacher training programmes.

The missing ingredient

The abovementioned report suggests that the missing ingredient in our strategy to improve literacy levels in our schools is the lack of focus on the phase between birth and six years of age. It is therefore necessary that literacy strategies are extended to the heart of the preschool phase. Until this is done, later interventions to support reading and writing skills will have limited success for learners who miss out on crucial language development in their formative years.

A great deal can be done to support and improve language and literacy development in these years. The

report issued by Wordworks indicates that parents and caregivers have a crucial role to play in supporting language development. Homes should be places where parents and caregivers read to children, tell stories, sing songs, talk about letters and sounds and take children to libraries. The report further makes the following recommendations to improve literacy skills between birth and six years:

To support parents:
1. Present classes and workshops to parents and caregivers aimed at encouraging and empowering them to support early language development in the home.
2. Have awareness-raising campaigns that include posters and information leaflets to help parents understand their role.
3. Inform teachers and community, social and health workers about the importance of parental involvement in early language learning.
4. Increase efforts to make culturally relevant storybooks in all South African languages more widely available to parents and caregivers through community libraries.

To support communities:
5. Programmes used by family outreach initiatives should be strengthened with more specific guidance, ideas and resources for language and literacy development in the early years.
6. Space should be created through literacy resource centres, libraries, community centres, places of worship and non-profit organisations to encourage a love for books and create places where reading is supported and resourced.

To support preschools:
7. Ensure that all newly qualified ECD practitioners and Grade R teachers are conversant with the best practice around supporting language and literacy development and that they have been trained in the methods and approaches that have been shown to be most effective.
8. In-service training should be widely available for preschool teachers, along with on-site mentoring and support. Training should have a strong focus on improving language and literacy competencies.
9. Distribute high-quality resources and materials in support of literacy and language development.
10. Provide early intervention initiatives where needed for learners who are learning English as an additional language.
11. All applicable role players should work together closely. As new evidence emerges on what works and new methodologies make a measurable and positive impact, systems should be in place to ensure that the best practices and learning can be disseminated as quickly as possible across the ECD sector.

South Africa finds itself in a difficult situation as we have multiple languages. Language issues usually set in when children are five or six years old, as parents struggle to get learners to a level of proficiency in another language, such as English, which may be the language of learning and teaching (LoLT) at the primary school at which they wish to enrol their child. As this is a huge challenge, parents often abandon the home language in favour of English. International research, however, supports a model of bilingualism that provides ongoing support for the mother tongue as learners become competent in a second language.

It is essential that learners enter Grade 1 with a strong language foundation. This is supported by studies in the United States that found strong correlations between vocabulary scores at age five and reading comprehension levels in grades three, four and six. Policy changes in South Africa are essential to narrow the literacy gap, but small significant advances in home learning environments and quality preschool provision will reap huge rewards and make a profound difference in our learners' language and literacy levels. ■

References
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Claremont High – 30 months on

As the teachers and learners of Claremont High School's first matric class prepare themselves for their maiden NSC examinations we revisit the school to find out just how they are doing.


Claremont High principal Murray Gibbon looks relaxed as he sits in his sun-filled office. He was appointed principal of the school from the start of the year, having worked as deputy-principal of the school under the leadership of Westerford principal Rob le Roux since the school's inception in 2011.

We have run three features on Claremont High since its innovative launch in January 2011 as a satellite campus of Westerford High School with Westerford principal Rob le Roux serving as the head of both schools. At that time the school had an enrolment of approximately 150 learners with three class groups in Grades 8 and 1 in Grade 10. As the school was established as a specialist Mathematics and Physical Sciences school, all learners in grades 10 to 12 are expected to include both Mathematics and Physical Sciences in their subject choice.

The school has continued with its model of approximately 100 learners spread across three classes in each grade and its enrolment has now grown to approximately 350, with 100 learners in each of Grades 8, 9 and 10 and one class each in Grades 11 and 12. These latter two classes are the same groups of learners who were admitted to Grade 10 in 2011 and 2012 respectively. There has, however, been a small decline in numbers in each of these two grades as a result of natural attrition and the number of learners in the Grade 11 and 12 classes is now 23 and 25 respectively. Based on this model the school expects to have a 2015 enrolment of approximately 500 learners. Achieving these numbers is unlikely to be a problem as the demand for places for Grade 8 in 2014 has been astonishing, this despite the school's location, it being new, having no academic or other track record, and having minimal sports facilities. When applications for Grade 8 for the 2014 school year closed at the end of Term 1, the school had received nearly 1 000 applications for the 100 available places, a ratio that exceeded that of Westerford by some margin.

As one would expect from a school of this size and with its Mathematics and Physical Sciences focus, the Claremont subject choice is fairly limited. English is the Language of Learning and Teaching (LoLT) of the school and all learners have English Home Language as one of their subjects. However, the school offers both Afrikaans and isiXhosa as First Additional
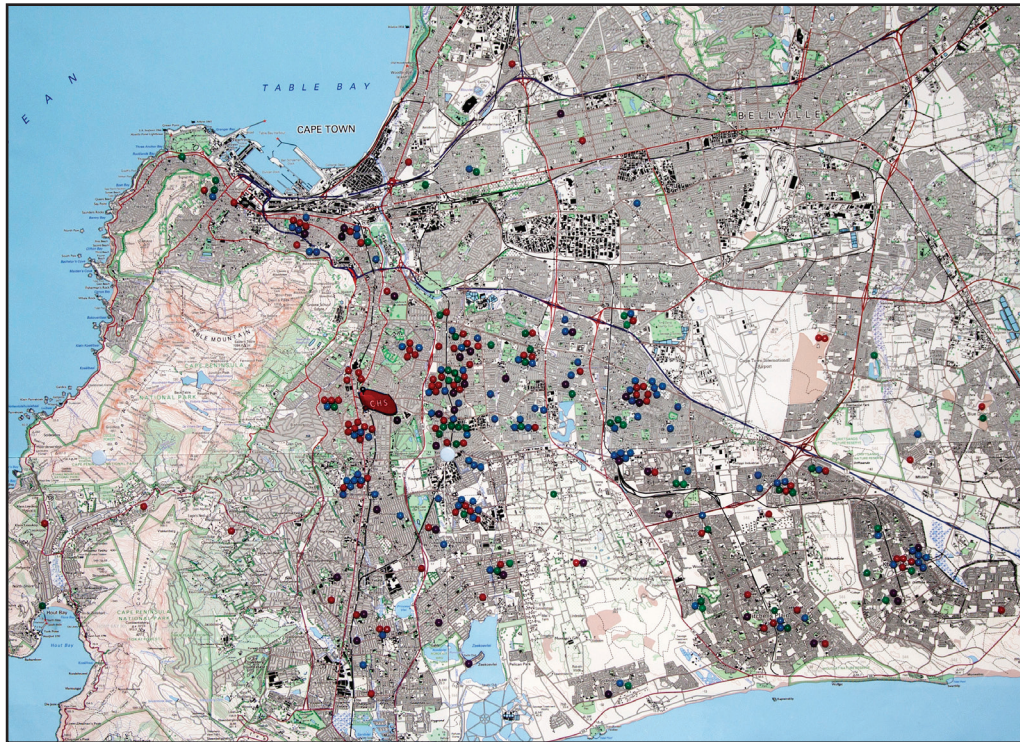
A large map of the Peninsula in the school's reception area uses coloured pins to depict the areas from which the current learner population is drawn. This photograph, depicting a portion of that map, illustrates just how widely distributed across the Peninsula their families are, and how far many of the learners must travel to get to school each day.

Language with an Afrikaans (FAL)/isiXhosa (FAL) split of approximately 80/20, making for three Afrikaans (FAL) groups and one isiXhosa (FAL) group. With Mathematics, Physical Sciences and Life Orientation being compulsory, the learners are left to choose two of Accounting, Life Sciences and Geography to complete their National Senior Certificate offering. This does limit the opportunities for learners who may have an interest in the Humanities and the Arts but this to be expected for a school that was established by the WCED as a Mathematics and Physical Sciences focus school.

The school continues to maintain its strong links to Westerford, although the umbilical cord was finally broken at the start of this year when Murray Gibbon, who has been the de facto on-site head of the school from its inception, was appointed as the school's first principal. The strong link to Westerford is not only a consequence of the manner in which the school was established. Murray Gibbon is both a past pupil of Westerford and the son of Dr John Gibbon who was the principal of Westerford for 17 years. He also taught at Westerford before taking up his initial position as deputy-principal of Claremont under Westerford Head, Rob le Roux. Newly appointed

Claremont High is still very much work in progress but it has made remarkable strides in its short 30 months of existence and seems to be getting a lot of things right.

deputy-principal Mandy Moyce also taught at Westerford for a number of years, where she was head of Accounting, and Tasneem Kagee-Solomon and Andrea Coetzer, two of the HODs at Claremont, also taught for many years at Westerford. These four individuals, together with Garth Shaw, form the school's School Management Team.

The school is yet to elect a governing body from its parent body. The governing body is constituted from a combination of Westerford parents who have volunteered to serve on the Claremont SGB, along with some Claremont parents who have been co-opted to the body. A properly constituted SGB will be introduced when the next round of SGB elections take place in 2015.

Like all schools, and particularly new schools, the school has faced and continues to grapple with a range of challenges. Principal Murray Gibbon is refreshingly open about these and has identified the struggle to build a sense of community from a parent body that is widely dispersed across the Cape Peninsula as one of the greatest of these. A map of the peninsula on which he has used coloured pins to plot the location of the homes of the school's learners show just how

Grade 11 learners Mfingo Tini, Trisha Bhaga, Zintle Kwetani and Yadhir Maharaj enjoy lunch in one of the school's two small courtyards.

widely dispersed the school community is and this creates a number of complications for both the school and the parents. These are also not wealthy parents – the school is categorised as a quintile 4 school – so most of the learners and many of the parents rely on public transport to get to and from school. Under these circumstances parent-teacher meetings scheduled for the evenings can become both a logistical and a safety problem for some families. Opportunities for parent-volunteers to support the school by offering their services for such things as tuck-shop duty or in providing tea and cake for guests at cultural or sporting events are therefore also limited.

In an effort to offset the limitations that the dispersed parent community places on the school, Gibbon and his staff are working hard to create a strong sense of community within the learner population. Learner support and pastoral care is provided through the use of small tutor groups, with each group comprising learners from across all grades and classes. Every teacher, with the exception of the five members of the SMT, is assigned one tutor group and learners remain part of this tutor group for their entire school career. The Grade 12 members of each tutor group

are expected to assume leadership responsibilities within their assigned tutor group. Tutor groups meet on a weekly basis and the teacher responsible for each group is required to keep a caring and watchful eye on such things as learner absence and tardiness, their grooming and their adherence to the school's dress code, as well as to their overall academic performance. Strong bonds and kinship are encouraged within the group by promoting healthy competition between groups in sporting and cultural activities, and in the academic sphere. The school also has a system of class teachers and grade heads but the responsibilities of these two groups are largely limited to the academic sphere, including the collation of marks and the checking and signing of reports.

Links to Westerford in the academic sphere have been carefully nurtured. Subject meetings are co-ordinated across the two schools, with Westerford's subject heads managing and monitoring the quality of teaching and learning within their subjects across both schools. Curriculum planning and syllabus coverage is common across both schools as is the setting and marking of all formal assessment tasks and examinations. Murray Gibbon does not necessarily

see this as a permanent arrangement but considers it to be an essential part of the process of creating a school that values academic rigour, demanding standards and a strong performance-based work ethic. The benefits of this partnership are clearly revealed by the achievement of the Claremont learners in these shared tests and examinations, where they generally perform on a par with Westerford learners. Proof that this is indeed the case will come at the end of the year when the school's first group of Grade 12 learners sit their NSC examinations. The goal that the school has set for this group is a 100% Bachelors level pass, with all learners passing both Mathematics and Physical Sciences. Should they achieve this goal, much of the credit will need to go the partnership that has grown between Murray Gibbon and his young team, and the staff of Westerford. Some of the credit must also go to WCED DG Penny Vinjevold whose brainchild it was and who had the courage to turn her innovative idea to action.

The school continues to maintain its strong links to Westerford, although the umbilical cord was finally broken at the start of this year when Murray Gibbon, who has been the de facto on-site head of the school from its inception, was appointed as the school's first principal.

It has not all been plain sailing, however. The school has faced many of the challenges that are common to most urban high schools. Over the past 30 months several of the learners have faced disciplinary hearings for incidents of serious misconduct and one has been expelled for the possession of drugs. There have also been staffing issues, particularly around the allocation of additional posts at the start of the school year. This is a problem faced by many new and growing schools that are subject to what appear to be perverse delays in the allocation of posts by bureaucrats who refuse to process the application for additional posts by these schools for the start of the new school year because they are based on projected numbers and not on actual enrolment. The additional posts that these schools require from the first day of the new school year are only allocated on the basis of the number of learners on the first school day or in some cases on the tenth school day. As a result, schools can only start the process of advertising, finding and appointing the additional

Evidence of the good work ethic that is becoming embedded in the psyche of the learners of the school is well illustrated by these Grade 9 learners who had their noses in their books despite the fact that it was break time. From left to right: Meenal Bhaga, Lamees Faroon, Nishaat Laher, Yusrah Davids, Aneeqah Abrahams, Zahrah Davids.

Members of the SMT getting to grips with the challenges of the week in the principal's office. From left to right: Garth Shaw (HoD), Andrea Coetzer (HoD), Kerrin Lewey (counsellor), Murray Gibbon (principal), Mandy Moyce (deputy-principal), Tasneem Kagee-Solomon (HoD).

teachers that they need once the term has started. For some schools this may involve three or more teaching posts. The consequences of this delay are always problematic, disrupting the first few weeks of schooling at the start of the year as schools struggle to find temporary teachers to fill posts until such time as permanent appointments can be made. One would expect these departmental bureaucrats or their superiors responsible for the establishment of new schools to understand that a new school designed to take three additional classes each year until it reached its capacity would automatically be granted the teaching posts for which it qualified on the basis of its projected growth. Regrettably this does not happen with negative consequences for newly established schools.

Because Claremont High has very little sports facilities of its own, principal Gibbon has had to be innovative in his efforts to provide access to suitable playing fields for the school's learners. He was able to persuade two neighbouring independent schools (Herschel Girls' School and Western Province Preparatory School) to allow Claremont learners to make use of some of their sports facilities during the course of the school day. The arrangement was necessitated by the fact that

Like all schools, and particularly new schools, the school has faced and continues to grapple with a range of challenges, one of the greatest of which is the struggle to build a sense of community from a parent body that is widely dispersed across the Cape Peninsula.

although the two independent schools have excellent facilities, they are fully utilised by their own learners in the afternoons and evenings. This arrangement works reasonably well because, from its inception, Claremont adopted an integrated school day as its operational model with all learners and teachers working a school day that starts at 08:00 and ends at 16:15 with the school's cultural, sporting and academic support programmes integrated into this longer school day. This arrangement, although not ideal, makes it possible for the Claremont learners to use the independent schools' sports facilities for at least one hour every day in the mornings. There may be some relief in the longer term as there are plans afoot to review the use of several other educational facilities that abut the Claremont site. Gibbon is hoping that these changes will include the provision of more open space for his learners and the possibility of developing at least one area that can be used as a playing surface for a range of sporting codes.

Although the school has a Representative Council of Learners (RCL) the decision was made not to establish a Grade 12 prefect body at this stage of the school's history. Part of the reason for this decision

The lack of an expansive play area with a soft surface is probably the biggest disadvantage of the school site. These learners are forced to use the hard surface of the parking area at the front of the school for their ball games because no other suitable areas are available on site.

was based on the relatively small size of the Grade 12 class (25 learners) and the potentially negative consequences of making some of this small group prefects and others not. Instead, all Grade 12 learners are allocated leadership responsibilities, working in small committees, each of which is expected to exercise leadership in an area of the school life.

Claremont High is still very much work in progress but it has made remarkable strides in its short 30 months of existence and seems to be getting a lot of things right. Its first big test will be the coming 2013 NSC examinations but the progress that it has made and the close relationship that it has maintained with Westerford suggests that these should be good. We will continue to track its progress but remain curious as to why this approach to the establishment of a new school has not been tried when new schools are started both in the Western Cape and elsewhere in the country. It seems to be such a sensible approach and it is a model that has been used with success in other parts of the world but then sensible is not a word that is often associated with the way our public schooling system goes about its business. ∎

The library is a busy place during breaks.

Principals' competencies – is this what it takes to succeed?

The National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL)[1] is an institution established by the Department of Education in England originally with the express purpose of developing the leadership and management capacity of principals and aspiring principals.

Over the past few years the NCTL has been involved in the process of developing a programme to fast-track the training of prospective principals and as part of that process has developed a 'Tomorrow's Heads Competency Framework'[2] that describes the cluster of competencies it considers to be essential prerequisites for future success as practising principals. The competencies that the task team has identified after extensive research including stakeholder interviews have been grouped into four categories and six key learning themes.

Competency Framework categories

Although they have identified four categories of competency, one, which they describe as 'Moral purpose' is seen as representing a fundamental set of core values that must of necessity underpin every aspect of a principal's work. The other three categories are 'Thinking', 'Being' and 'Leading'. These three categories of competency are each further refined into several subsets. All-in-all 14 competencies are defined using a complex matrix of questions and statements. So, for example, the competency labelled 'Analytical thinking', which is a subset of 'Thinking' is described thus: 'This requires analysing complex data and understanding of the connections that exist between issues through breaking down problems into their component parts. This competency also involves organising parts of a problem in a systematic way, prioritising issues moving forward, as well as establishing causal relationships between issues that

may or may not be obviously related.'

There is also a 'Key question' associated with each competency, which in the case of 'Analytical thinking' is 'Does this person possess the ability to prioritise activities, establish causal relationships and understand the implications of events or issues?' There is in addition an explanation of 'Why it matters' and examples of 'Limiting behaviours, which are used as indicators of a potential weakness in the ability of the individual to exercise a particular competency.

The following table represents our attempt to produce a simpler but conceptually similar competency framework. We have organised the competencies in a format that we hope you will find helpful, not only as a tool for reflection but also as a means of raising awareness about the kinds of competencies that every leader should be able to demonstrate in at least some measure as they go about their business of leading and managing people. It can also be used to assess the potential of future leaders, which was the original purpose of the document from which it was derived. Try testing it on your staff to see if it helps you to identify potential future heads of department, deputy-principals and principals. We have tested it as a form of baseline assessment of a number of principals that we are working with using the following four-point rating scale and then using these scores to provide a graphical representation of the current competency status of each individual.

Competency performance descriptor	Score
Competency largely undeveloped or applied at a relatively basic level	1
Demonstrates the ability to apply this competency effectively in seeking solutions to everyday problems	2
Demonstrates the ability to apply this competency effectively in seeking solutions to complex, multifaceted problems	3
Demonstrates the ability to apply this competency at an exceptional level to highly complex, multifaceted problems	4

Primary competency	Secondary competency	Reflective question	Competency descriptors	Rating
Moral purpose		What drives this person?	• Principled with established set of personal values • Contributes as a leader • Committed to making a positive difference in the lives of children and families • An unwavering belief in the value of schooling and the opportunities that it provides • Always acts in the best interests of the child • Is driven by the need to make a difference	
Thinking	Analytical thinking	Has this person the ability to unpack complex problems and devise creative solutions to their component parts in a systematic and ordered way?	• An ability to analyse and identify relationship within complex sets of data • An ability to solve complex problems by disaggregating them into their component parts • An ability to prioritise problems in terms of their relative importance and to seek/devise appropriate solutions in a systematic way	
	Conceptual thinking	Can this person identify the core, underlying drivers of a complex series of events?	• The ability to see patterns in apparently unrelated data • The ability to simplify complex issues • The ability to distinguish between issues that are fundamental and those that are frivolous	
	Curiosity and eagerness to learn	Is this person willing to challenge established practice, including his or her own established practice?	• Curiosity and a willingness to explore, to acquire new knowledge and to develop new skills • A willingness to make the most of new opportunities and to learn from their experience of them • A willingness to test new ideas and alternative approaches to old problems • A willingness to explore new ideas both inside and outside of education	
Being	Self-awareness	Is this person aware of his/her personal strengths and weaknesses? Does he/she use this knowledge to create better and more open relationships?	• The ability to reflect on one's own behaviour and its impact on others • An understanding of one's own strengths and weaknesses • The ability to manage one's own emotions and an understanding of the factors that may trigger particular emotional responses and how to mitigate these • A willingness to acknowledge personal weaknesses and to seek assistance where this may be needed	
	Resilience and emotional maturity	Does this person remain calm under pressure and does he/she remain positive following instances of setback or failure?	• The ability to deal with challenge and adversity on a personal level • The ability to remain calm and to control one's emotions in times of heightened tension and/or stress • The ability to manage uncertainty and contradiction • The ability to remain positive and to look to the future following a setback	

Primary competency	Secondary competency	Reflective question	Competency descriptors	Rating
Being	Integrity	Is this person's behaviour consistent with the value system they espouse and is there coherence between their value system and that of the school?	• Acting at all times in an open and honest way when dealing with others • A willingness to defend one's values and the values of others when these are challenged • Making choices on the basis of the best interests of children and their education • A willingness to acknowledge the beliefs and values of others and to accommodate these provided this does not compromise one's personal integrity	
	Personal drive	Does this person demonstrate a willingness to challenge current levels of performance and a commitment to the establishment of new standards of excellence?	• Is energetic, self-motivated and willing to take on new challenges • Constantly seeks to improve his/her own performance and to establish new personal and institutional standards	
Leading	Holding to account	When delegating responsibilities and tasks, does this person provide clear expectations of performance and are there consequences for those who fail to meet these expectations?	• Goals and objectives are clearly articulated • Expectations and standards of performance are clearly defined • Sets high standards and challenges individuals to meet or exceed the standards set • Under-performance is investigated, solutions are sought and remedial action demanded • There is a willingness to make unpopular decisions and take action where this is in the best interests of the pupils	
	Developing others	Does this person demonstrate a willingness to help others to grow their own competencies?	• Develops others in a way that ensures that they experience real growth • Looks for opportunities to develop others • Uses a range of strategies to develop others including supporting, guiding, delegating and mentoring • The extent and benefit of his/her support and guidance is acknowledged	
	Inspiring others	Does this person provide direction, encourage unity of purpose, enthusiasm and a desire for action when leading others?	• Rallies others around a common vision and shared goals • Encourages unity of purpose and a commitment to action	
	Impact and influence	Can this person communicate his/her message in a way that is both convincing and appropriate to every stakeholder group?	• Is persuasive when sharing and selling his/her vision of a better future to stakeholders • Takes care to consider and acknowledge the perspectives of others and to respond to them positively • Has the ability to tailor his/her message to suit an audience without distorting its veracity	

Primary competency	Secondary competency	Reflective question	Competency descriptors	Rating
Leading	Relating to others	Does this person take the time to listen to others and demonstrate a willingness to understand the particular perspectives and needs of others?	• Demonstrates empathy and understanding when dealing with others • Is a good listener • Demonstrates an ability to hold frank discussions with learners, colleagues, parents and members of the community without alienating individuals or groups	
	Collaboration	Is this person willing to share his/her knowledge, experience and expertise with others and to work co-operatively with them to achieve common goals?	• Demonstrates a willingness to share and to work with others both within the school and in the broader community • Works to create a culture of co-operation and sharing within the school community and between members and groups within the school community with representatives of similar groups from the wider community • Is an active participant in school- and community-linked professional and social groups that contribute to the public good	
	Curiosity and eagerness to learn	Is this person willing to challenge established practice, including his or her own established practice?	• Demonstrates a willingness to share and to work with others both within the school and in the broader community • Works to create a culture of co-operation and sharing within the school community and between members and groups within the school community with representatives of similar groups from the wider community • Is an active participant in school- and community-linked professional and social groups that contribute to the public good	

Chart 1 illustrates how the competencies of four prospective school leaders could be represented graphically to illustrate their relative strengths and weaknesses in each of the major categories of competency. These strengths and weaknesses may well help in the decision-making process when the suitability of candidates for a particular post is being considered.

Chart 1: Competency measures: How they stack up
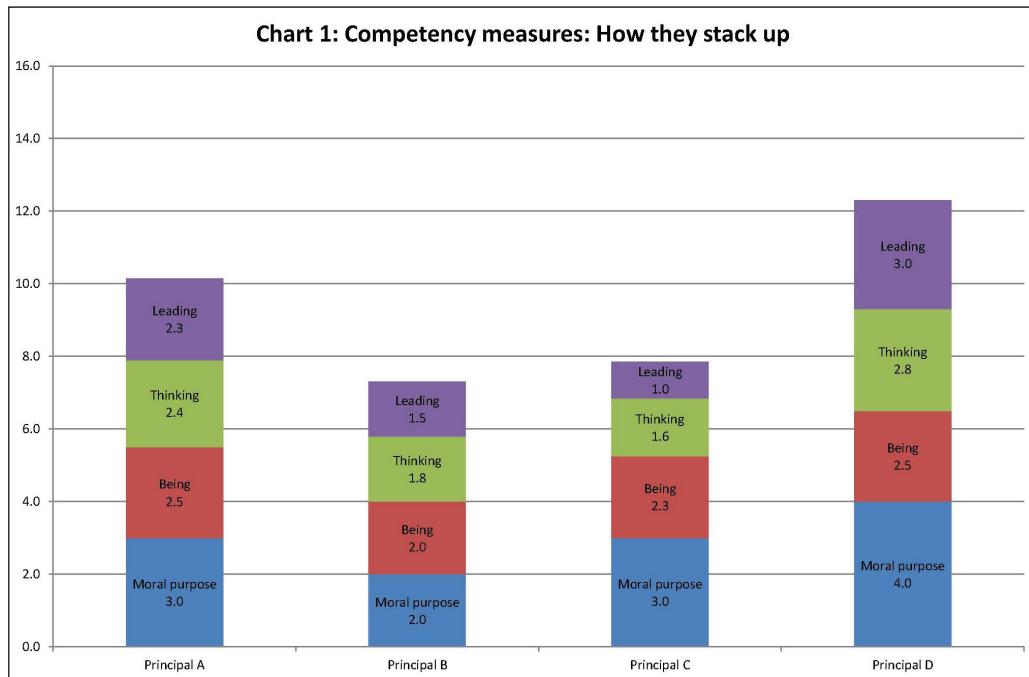
Chart 2 provides a view of the relative strengths and weaknesses of each of these prospective leaders in each of the subsets of the competency 'Thinking'. Besides the potential use of this competency framework in the identification and selection of future leaders, it can also be used to help prospective and current leaders to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses and to use this information to identify the competencies that they need to develop if they are to succeed as heads of schools. ∎

Chart 2: Comparative scores: Thinking competency
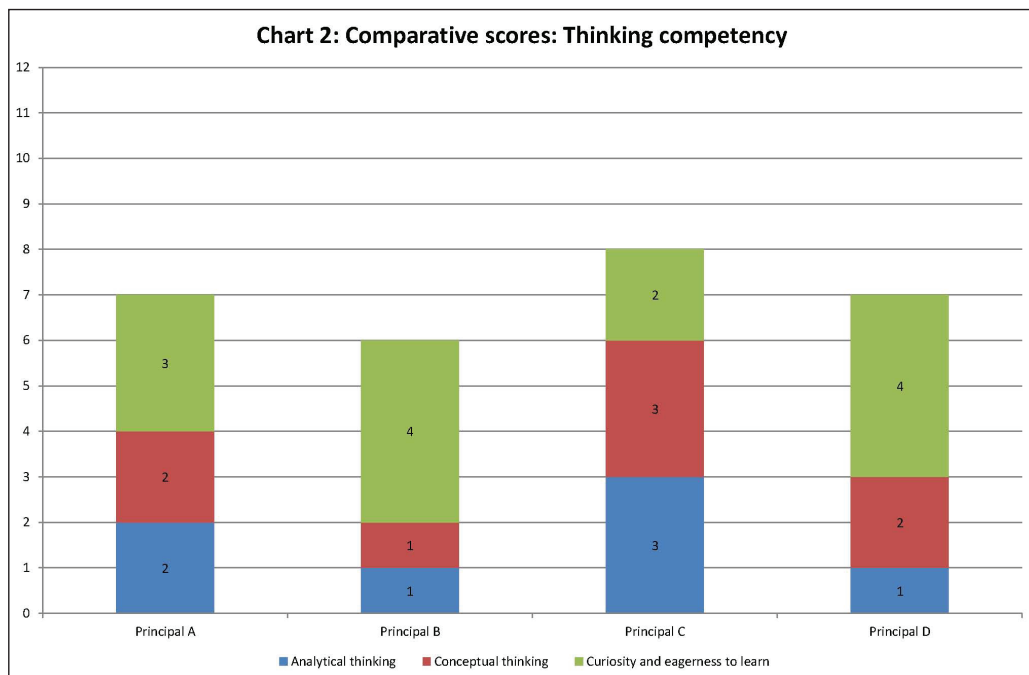
School closures

We came across an article recently in the online magazine *Edweek Update* that reported on protests against school closures in the City of Chicago in the USA and which reminded me of the series of protests and subsequent court action that followed the decision by the Western Cape MEC for Education, Donald Grant, to close 17 schools at the end of 2012.

Any decision to close a school is of course an emotive issue, not only for the teachers and support staff employed at the school but also for the learners who attend the school and for their parents. It should therefore come as no surprise to the authorities who take the decision to close a school, irrespective of its location, whether it be in Chicago or Cape Town, that protest action of one form or another follows. What is surprising, however, at least in our view, is that there has been so little protest action in the past when schools have been closed, not only in the Western Cape but across the country.

In an attempt to understand the extent of the problem we examined the summarised statistical data on the state of schooling provided the publication 'School Realities', which is published annually by the DBE. The most recent of these publications is '2012 School Realities', which was released by the DBE in September 2012 and is available on the DBE website. The data used in the School Realities series is derived from DBE's Education Management Information System (EMIS) and is based on the statistical returns that all schools are expected to complete on the tenth school day of each year.

The '2012 School Realities' document provides data on learner, educator and school numbers for each of years 2010, 2011 and 2012 for each province. The data shows that there were a total of 24 255 'ordinary' public schools in the country in 2012 and 1 571 independent schools. 'Ordinary' schools refers to both public and independent schools but excludes 'special needs' schools, which are schools that are established specifically to deal with learners with special needs who cannot be accommodated in 'ordinary' schools. If we go back to the '2006 School Realities' document, which is the earliest one that we have captured in our document library, the number of ordinary public schools is given as 25 194, which means there has been an absolute loss of 939 public schools to the system since 2006. This number, however, is not a true reflection of what has really happened on the ground because in most provinces new schools are being built all the time either to replace those that may have been closed or to accommodate demographic changes in the distribution of the population at both a provincial level and a national level.

These demographic changes are well illustrated in the chart on the following page. Two things are clearly illustrated in this chart. The first is that there was very little change in the number of learners enrolled in public schools between 2006 and 2012 (although the figure of 38 602 learner may seem to be significant, it represents just 0,3% of the 11 962 276 learners who were enrolled in schools in 2006). The second item worth noting is the extent to which learner numbers in each of the provinces has changed in the five-year period between 2006 and 2012 with dramatic drops in learner numbers in the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and North West and equally dramatic increases in the number of learners enrolled in schools in Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga, the Northern Cape and the Western Cape.
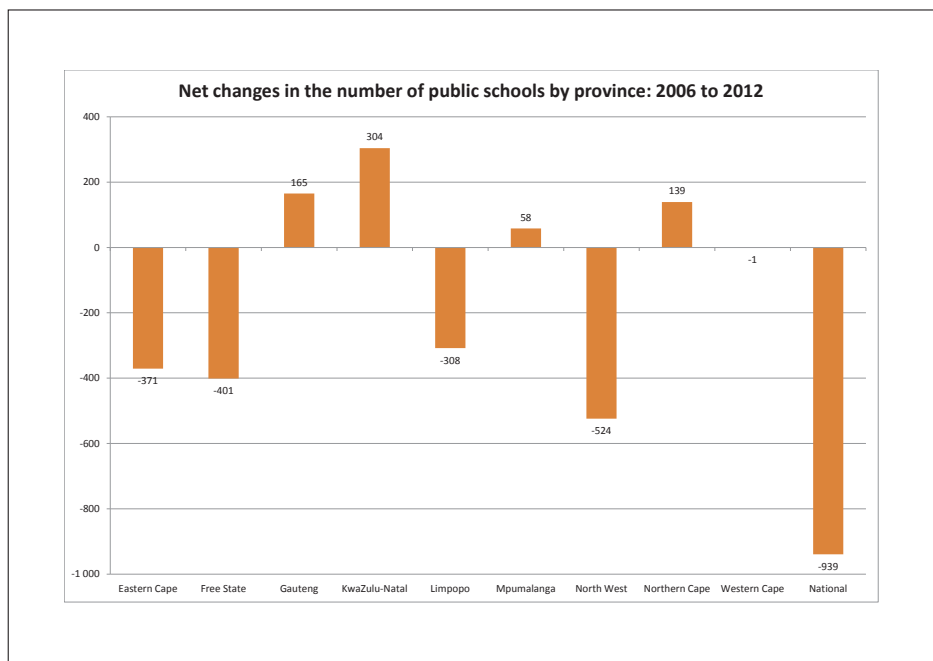
Some of the differences can be explained by changes made to provincial boundaries during the course of 2006, but mostly they represent population movements away from the more rural provinces to the major metropolitan areas of Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal and the Western Cape. The changes may also represent the conscious decision by many parents from the Eastern Cape and Limpopo to move their children to schools in other provinces because of their concerns about the poor quality of schooling provided by the public schools in their province.

Change in the number of learners enrolled in ordinary public schools 2006 to 2012

Province	Value
Eastern Cape	-249 207
Free State	-24 090
Gauteng	241 621
KwaZulu-Natal	150 642
Limpopo	-237 266
Mpumalanga	105 028
North West	-133 977
Northern Cape	66 054
Western Cape	42 593
National	-38 602
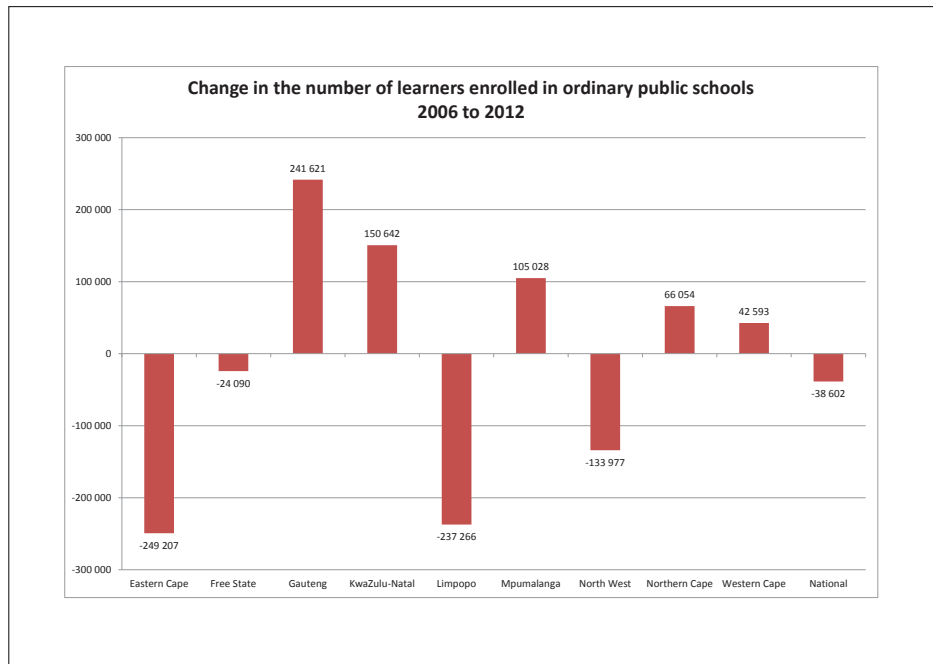
One other interesting factor that we noticed when examining the data, was the increase in the number of independent schools from 1 098 in 2006 to 1 571 in 2012, which represents an increase of 43,1%. Although this is a very significant increase, independent schools remain a very small group, equivalent to just 6,5% of the number of state schools in 2012 with a learner population that is equivalent to 4,2% of the learners enrolled in public schools.

On 31 July 2013, in its ruling on the case of the 17 schools indentified for closure by Minister Donald Grant, the High Court set aside the Minister's decision to close the 17 schools and ordered his department to pay the legal costs of the schools and their governing bodies. Two of the three judges (Judge Andre le Grange and Judge Nape Dolamo) ruled that the reasons given for closures were too brief and that the public consultation process had been inadequate (an 'artificial formality'). In a minority decision Judge Lee Bozalek said he would have set aside the Minister's decision only for Beauvallon Senior Secondary School, and that the other schools had failed to make a case. The Minister's argument that the section of the South African Schools Act dealing with school closures was unconstitutional was dismissed by all three judges. ∎

Net changes in the number of public schools by province: 2006 to 2012

Province	Value
Eastern Cape	-371
Free State	-401
Gauteng	165
KwaZulu-Natal	304
Limpopo	-308
Mpumalanga	58
North West	-524
Northern Cape	139
Western Cape	-1
National	-939

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1   *Edweek Update* 32 (33) of 30 May 2013. Education Week is a free e-newsletter published as a service by Editorial Projects in Education. For more information go to http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2013/05/30/33chicago.h32.html?tkn=SONFDirdB9fsUKVJQsuPNToFVzwyvcrFU4LK&cmp=ENL-EU-NEWS1

Leadership

Leaders everywhere

Erich Cloete

Could we create better schools if we train and empower people at all levels to lead?

We live in a world and are part of an education system where never before has leadership been so necessary but where so often leaders seem to fall short. Consequently, many people believe that the leadership base in our schools should be increased. However, we first need to identify specific leadership skills and then establish if these skills, when demonstrated, would benefit and improve the standards of our schools. Secondly, we need to establish whether the current leadership structures in the school, the pyramidal structures where we demand too much of too few and not enough of everyone else, really allow leadership to be developed.

Schools need to embrace the idea that every single staff member has the power to show leadership and therefore strengthen the capacities of employees at every level to lead in everything they do.

For teams to develop at every level, they need leaders at every level. Adaptable schools will need to syndicate the work of leadership more broadly. There is so much to be done at all levels that it is unreasonable to expect a small group at the top to be aware of all possible threats. The dilemma might be that there are not enough extraordinary leaders to go around, as many staff members at school do not label themselves as leaders. One of the reasons for this may be that people shy away from what is expected of a leader today. Robin Sharma asserts that each of us is born into genius; sadly most of us die amid mediocrity. Schools need to embrace the idea that every single staff member has the power to show leadership and therefore strengthen the capacities of

employees at every level to lead in everything they do. Staff must understand that leadership is not governed by having the formal authority to lead; rather by a desire to be involved and the commitment to make a positive difference.

What would we expect from a member of a school's staff with regard to leadership?

We would expect somebody to be confident yet humble. We would expect them to be strong in themselves but open-minded. We would expect them to have great foresight, to be practical, to be courageous and wise, to show initiative and enthusiasm and to be truly excellent in their current role.

It is not so easy to find staff members with all of these characteristics, those with the innovative instincts of a Steve Jobs or the emotional intelligence of Desmond Tutu. Yet we are building schools or are trying to improve our schools to a level of performance where we need this calibre of person.

The pace of change in our modern world is so quick and performance is so crucial that if schools would like to benchmark someone else, we suggest that they rethink, because this is not what leaders do. Staff members must be part of the team, and could even be called team members instead of employees. The main thing, however, is that they must be aware of their own role of how to create value in the office, on the premises, in the classroom or wherever their area of responsibility is. But for this to happen there must be a balance between power and authority which currently tend to be reserved for people at the top of the hierarchy. Ultimately it is necessary for the structures and the decision-making process to catch up with this new reality.

If we encourage leadership on every level and we would like it to work we must be careful to compensate people largely in accordance with their position in the hierarchy. The focus must be on value creation in schools rather than people managing up the formal ladder only in order to get that promotion. So maybe we need to explore different ways to give recognition to the champions who create value in our schools, every day, wherever they are. We therefore need to catch up with this new economic reality, but it will take time as the old formal hierarchy is one of the most enduring social structures of humankind. It can seem quite daunting to change but it could happen in small steps where we start to find ways to enlarge the leadership base in our schools.

What small incremental steps can we take to give more staff leadership opportunities?

- Break big units into smaller units and create more opportunities for staff to be leaders.
- Create ways to let people feel they have a stake in the school.
- Open up conversations about strategy and direction, the flow of communication through the school, value systems in the school and those of staff members.
- Create peer feedback systems to identify who is really acting like a leader and who is not.
- Create expertise in the classroom and in all other aspects of the school.
- Teach people what it means to exercise leadership when you do not have formal authority.
- Teach people about innovation and creativity, on how to move out of their comfort zone.
- Teach people about mastery, to be the best at what they do, to be a master of their craft, which is education.

For this changing concept of leadership to work, people cannot simply be given more power to take charge. We must equip them, give them information, make them accountable to their peers, shorten the feedback cycles and believe in them. I believe this could create better schools but we will need to redesign the management system, management structure and most other processes, to embed the leadership principles into our schools. ∎

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1. Sharma, Robin. 2010. *The leader who had no title*. New York: Free Press
2. Leaders everywhere, a conversation with Gary Hamel, May 2013. Interview conducted by McKinsey Publishing's Simon London. Available at http://www.mckinsey.com/insights/organization/leaders_everywhere_a_conversation_with_gary_hamel

Book review
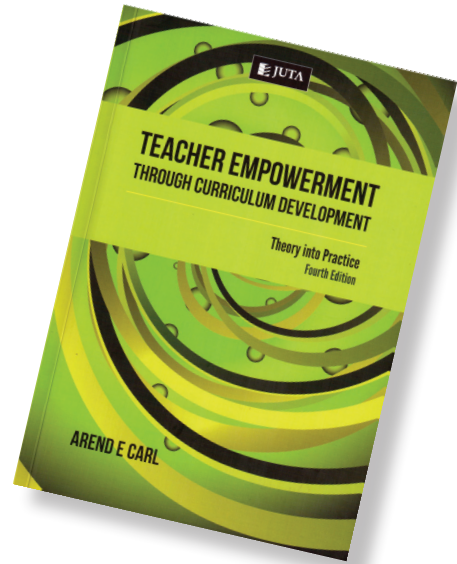
Teacher Empowerment Through Curriculum Development:
Theory into Practice (Fourth Edition)
Author: Arend E Carl
Published by Juta and Company, Claremont, 2012
246 pages
ISBN: 978-0-70218-912-8

Professor Arend Carl, the author of this book, is a specialist in the field of Curriculum Studies and this is the fourth edition of his book, which was first published in 1995. This fourth edition was published in 2012 and although mention is made of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), the book was written prior to their introduction in schools.

The way in which the book is structured suggests that it was written as a text for teachers in training and for those who may be interested in the field of curriculum studies at a post-graduate level as each chapter begins with a list of learning objectives for the chapter and ends with a set of activities and questions based on the chapter. However, this does not mean that it is not a useful book for schools, as besides the academic discussion around issues such as 'The necessity of relevant curriculum development for a developing South Africa', it includes a number of sections and useful templates that have direct application at school level.

Some of the more useful material from a school and classroom perspective is found in the latter part of the book. Chapter 4, which deals with effective curriculum design, includes a discussion on the selection of content and provides a useful list of criteria for the selection of content that phase and subject teams could use when reviewing or planning their teaching programme at the end of the academic year. Included in the list are criteria that are often overlooked. Examples of these include:
- The content must be relevant.
- The content must be stimulating and motivating.
- The content must take learners' existing knowledge into account (in our view a factor that is seldom considered when learners move from primary school to high school).
- The content must offer opportunities for self-discovery.
- The content must have a balance in regard to the extent and depth of study.

This chapter also includes explanation and useful discussion on the whole issue of evaluation and assessment.

Chapter 7 of the book deals with the evaluation of a curriculum and provides examples of several curriculum evaluation checklists that have been developed by curriculum specialists over the years. These checklists cover not only the curriculum content but also such elements as the development and design phases of the curriculum as well as the processes involved in its dissemination. One has to wonder how the various curricula changes that our schools have been subject to over the past two decades would score on these checklists.

Perhaps the most useful chapter for schools and practising teachers is Chapter 8, which deals with the 'operationalisation' of the curriculum. It's an awful word but the chapter does provide some specific, practical examples of subject curriculum planning at a school level. These examples can serve as templates for the subject curriculum planning process at school level.

Teacher Empowerment Through Curriculum Development should be essential reading for all individuals who may be involved in curriculum development at a macro-level in this country and we would also like to suggest that it be required reading for all curriculum advisors as it is important that they have a thorough grasp of the full process as well as of the theory that underpins it. The book would also be a useful but not essential addition to the professional library of schools. ∎

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