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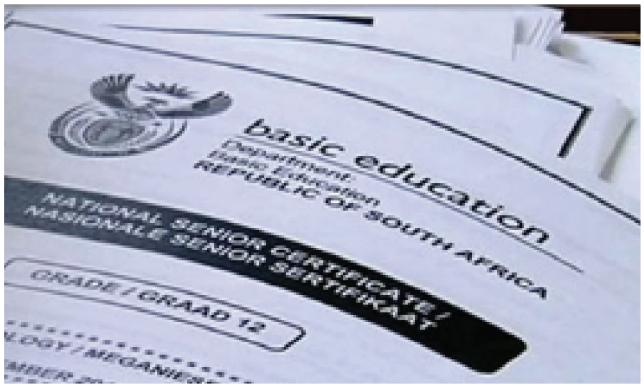
The SHRINKAGE of the Class of 2013



The release of the 2013 NSC results by the Minister of Basic Education on 7 January this year witnessed the usual hullaballoo, or should that be ballyhoo, with the media having a field day as it worked to milk stories and controversy from as wide a spectrum of expert and public opinion as they could muster. The fact that 2014 is to be an election year ensured that politicians scrambled to air their views, interpreting the data that the Minister and the DBE provided in ways that would allow them to score political points over their rivals. Everyone seemed to have an opinion, with most of the debate focusing on the issue of standards and the quality of the NSC examinations, on changes in the rankings of the nine provinces in terms of their overall pass rates because of political implications and on the relative merits of Mathematics and Mathematical Literacy. Some of the more expert commentators expressed concerns about throughput rates and of the proportion of learners who achieved "quality" passes. For the purposes of this article we decided to examine the issue of learner retention for the class of 2013 and its implications for the country. All our data is drawn from official sources with most coming from DBE's 2013 NSC Technical Reports and the "School Realities" documents, which the DBE publishes annually and which provides a useful summary of statistical data drawn from the tenth school day annual return that all schools are required to complete on the tenth school day of each year.

The bulk of the candidates who wrote the 2013 NSC exams would have started school in Grade 1 in 2002 and in that year the number of Grade 1 children enrolled in schools was 1 286 591. By the time this group had reached Grade 10 the number had shrunk to 1 094 189, a net loss of 192 402 learners, which represents approximately 15% of those who were in Grade 1 in 2002. The biggest decline in numbers, however, occured during the following three years with approximately 50% – more than half-a-million children–exiting the system. This is a tragedy for those children and represents a massive loss to the economy of the country as instead of becoming skilled, contributing members of society those who exit remain largely unskilled and unemployable depending on social grants and/or crime for their survival.

It would be easy to place the blame for this phenomenon on the DBE's focus on school NSC pass rates and the enormous pressure that the drive for improved pass rates, as opposed to the absolute number of passes, places on schools and their principals. Although partially valid, there are other more deep-rooted reasons for the massive decline in the number of learners enrolled in schools during their final three years of schooling, some of which will be difficult to eradicate in the short term. Probably the most significant of these are the issues of teacher competence, and the standards of teaching and of assessment in the first ten years of schooling.

Until the ANA tests were introduced in 2011 there were no systemic measures of the quality of teaching and learning in public schools anywhere in the country except in the Western Cape where systemic testing of literacy and numeracy of learners in Grades 3 and 6 was introduced in 2002. The introduction of the ANA tests of Languages and Mathematics revealed for the first time the extent of the underperformance of learners in the majority of our schools and by implication the inadequacy of their teachers. Unfortunately, the powers that be chose to ignore the early warning signs of this reality that were revealed through our then participation in some of the international benchmarking tests such as the 1995, 1999, and 2002 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), which assesses learner performance in Mathematics and Science, and the PIRLS study, which assess literacy/language levels. When we discovered that our learners performed poorly in these tests we decided to withdraw our participation in them and instead joined the SAQMEQ consortium that does similar work for participating countries from southern and East Africa. What

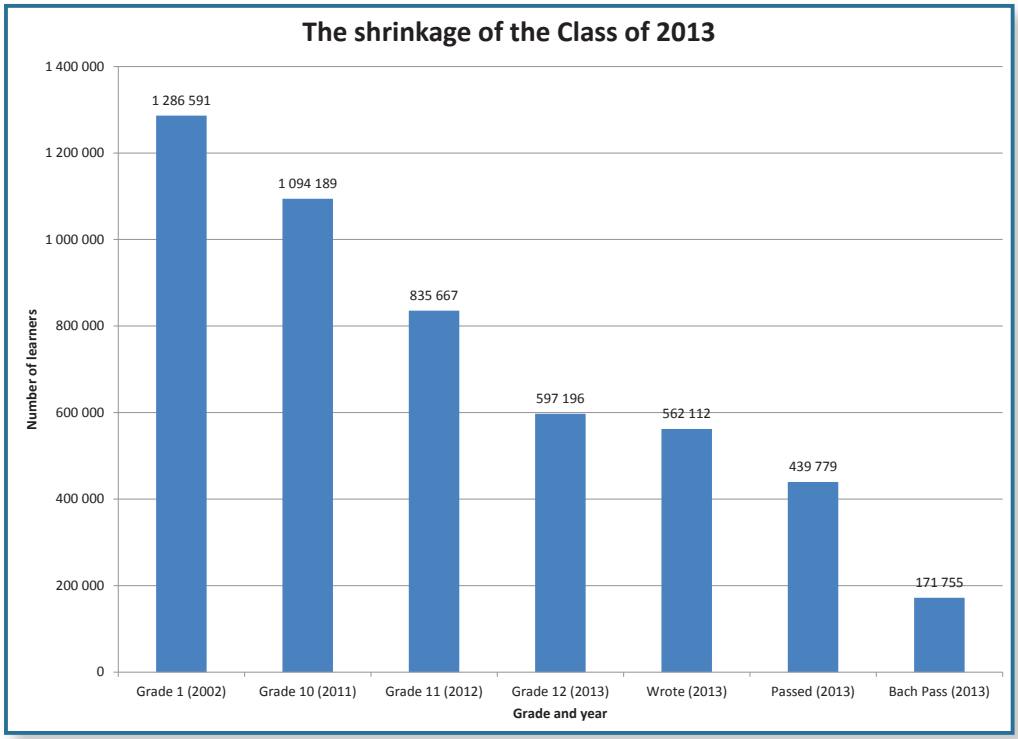
we learned from our participation in the SACMEQ studies of 2000 (SACMEQ II) and 2007 (SACMEQ III) is that our learners performed less well in these tests even than those of some of our less well-developed and more impoverished neighbours.

While the general public has laid most of the blame for this state of affairs at the door of principals and teachers who are perceived to be lazy and incompetent, and their unions which are perceived to oppose any attempts by the state to deal with the problem, evidence began to emerge from research that suggested that many teachers were under-qualified and inadequately trained for the subjects that they were expected to teach. Once one acknowledges that this may indeed be the case many of the other related issues fall into place. Teachers who do not understand the subject content that they are expected to teach are likely to be demotivated; particularly if the curriculum keeps changing as has been the case over the past 20 years. Changing approaches to subject pedagogy will have had the same affect – the outcomes-based model of Curriculum 2005 stressed the importance of group work, of learners discovering their own problem-solving strategies, and of teachers creating their own curriculum materials. Its advocates were dismissive of rote learning and of drill and of many of the traditional classroom practices in which the teachers had been trained. The newly introduce CAPS documents, however, have adopted pedagogical models that are diametrically opposed to those of Curriculum 2005 so no one should be surprised that many teachers, particularly those who are under-qualified and who teach in largely dysfunctional schools serving marginalised communities, have simply given up.

Changing the current status quo will be a challenge but it is not impossible. It will require, however, political will and sufficient resources. Under-qualified and poorly performing teachers will need to be identified and provided with intensive training both in subject content and pedagogy. One-day workshops during the school term and over weekends will not suffice. Training will need to take place during the school holidays in sessions of two to three weeks, conducted by trainers who have both the qualifications and the pedagogical expertise to ensure that teachers return to their classes equipped with the knowledge and skill that they need to teach the subject to a high standard and sufficiently confident to put what they have learned into practice.

Until this happens, principals of under-performing schools are on their own and those who want to make a difference need to develop their own internal strategies to deal with the problem. The first step in the process is the need for teachers to acknowledge their weaknesses and to identify those sections of the curriculum that they are unsure of. This is probably the most difficult step in the process because no one likes to admit to weaknesses. One way of facilitating this process is to use learner performance in the ANA tests and NSC examinations to identify the sections in which learners performed poorly. Once this has been done it becomes possible to invite experienced teachers with expertise in the teaching of the specific topics that have been identified to provide professional guidance to your staff. Another useful resource is the internet, which offers multiple sites that provide guidance and teaching resources for virtually any topic you can imagine.

So make a start – it is the only way to ensure that things get better and that more children exit the system better qualified and with the skills that they need to become productive, contributing citizens.



This chart shows how the number of learners who began their schooling in 2001 declined as they moved through the school system with just 171 755 of the 1 286 591 who started their schooling in 2001 achieving a Bachelor-level pass in the 2013 NSC examinations. Most of the learners who dropped out of the system did so during their last three years of schooling.

2013 NSC Examinations:
Which province performed best?

The release of the NSC results on 7 January produced a bit of a political storm when it emerged that Gauteng and the Western Cape, provinces that normally occupy the first two positions in the overall pass-rate rankings, had been overtaken by provinces that usually perform less well. There were accusations and counter accusations and in the Western Cape, calls for the resignation of the MEC for Education by his political rivals.

Although we believe this kind of debate to be rather futile, it is the kind of thing that one has come to expect when the results are released, and which was made worse this year because it is an election year. We have no intention of making a call on the relative performances of the nine provinces; we have produced the following five charts, which present various categories of learner performance by province, for your interest and information and to allow you to decide which provinces are doing best for their learners and for the country.

CHART 1:

Number of candidates writing and passing the examination by province

The chart shows clearly how the big three provinces, in terms of learner numbers, dominated the overall numbers game with KwaZulu-Natal leading by some margin, both in the total number of candidates that wrote the examination and in those that passed.

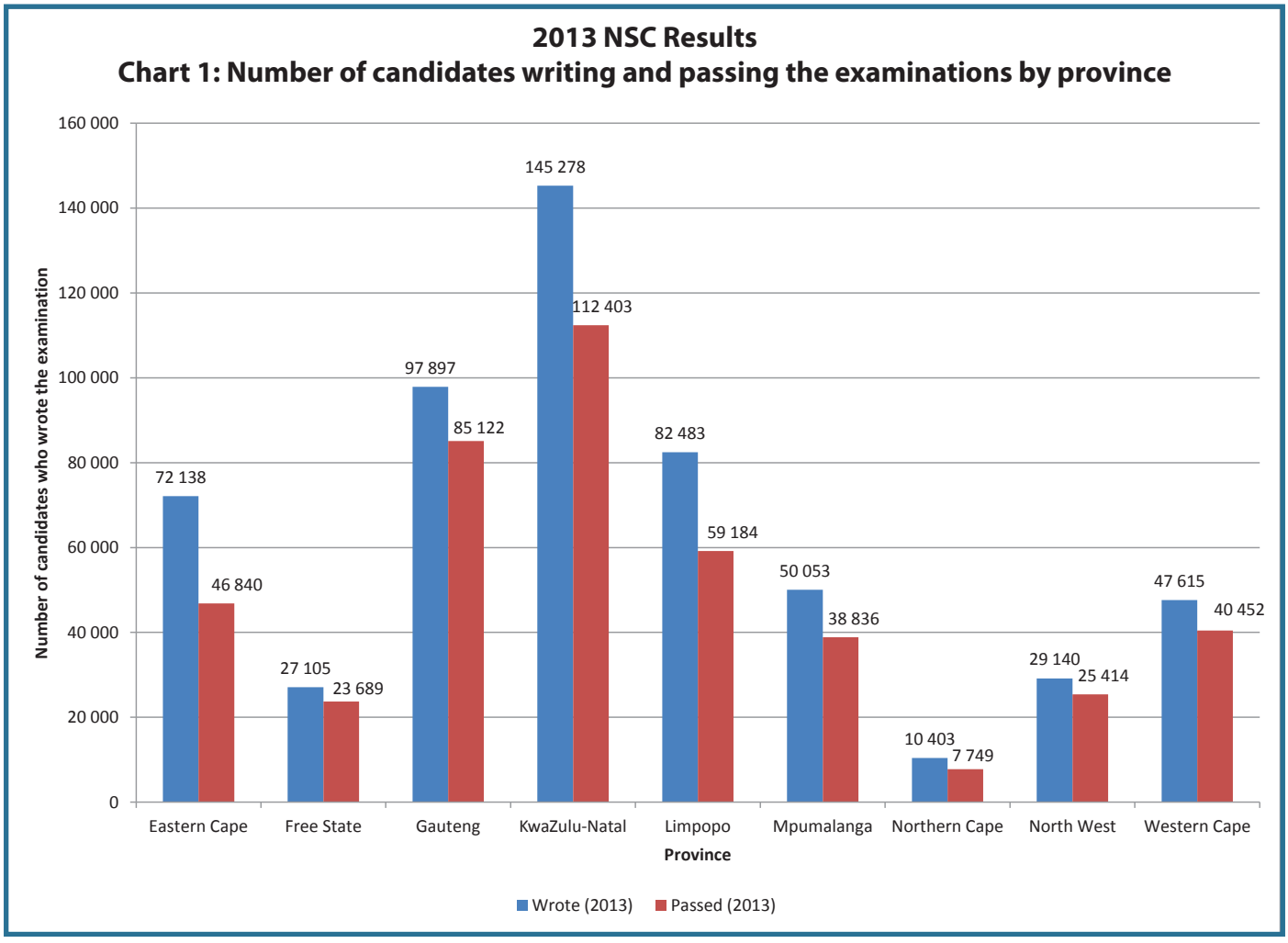


CHART 2:

Number of candidates writing and achieving a Bachelor-level pass by province

When it comes to the number of Bachelor-level passes, the differences in the number of candidates passing at this level in each of the provinces is not as significant as are the differences in the total number of candidates who wrote the examination. While KwaZulu-Natal and Gauteng still produce significantly more Bachelor-level passes than the other provinces, third spot is taken by the Western Cape, which lies sixth in terms of the overall number of candidates that wrote the 2013 NSC examinations.

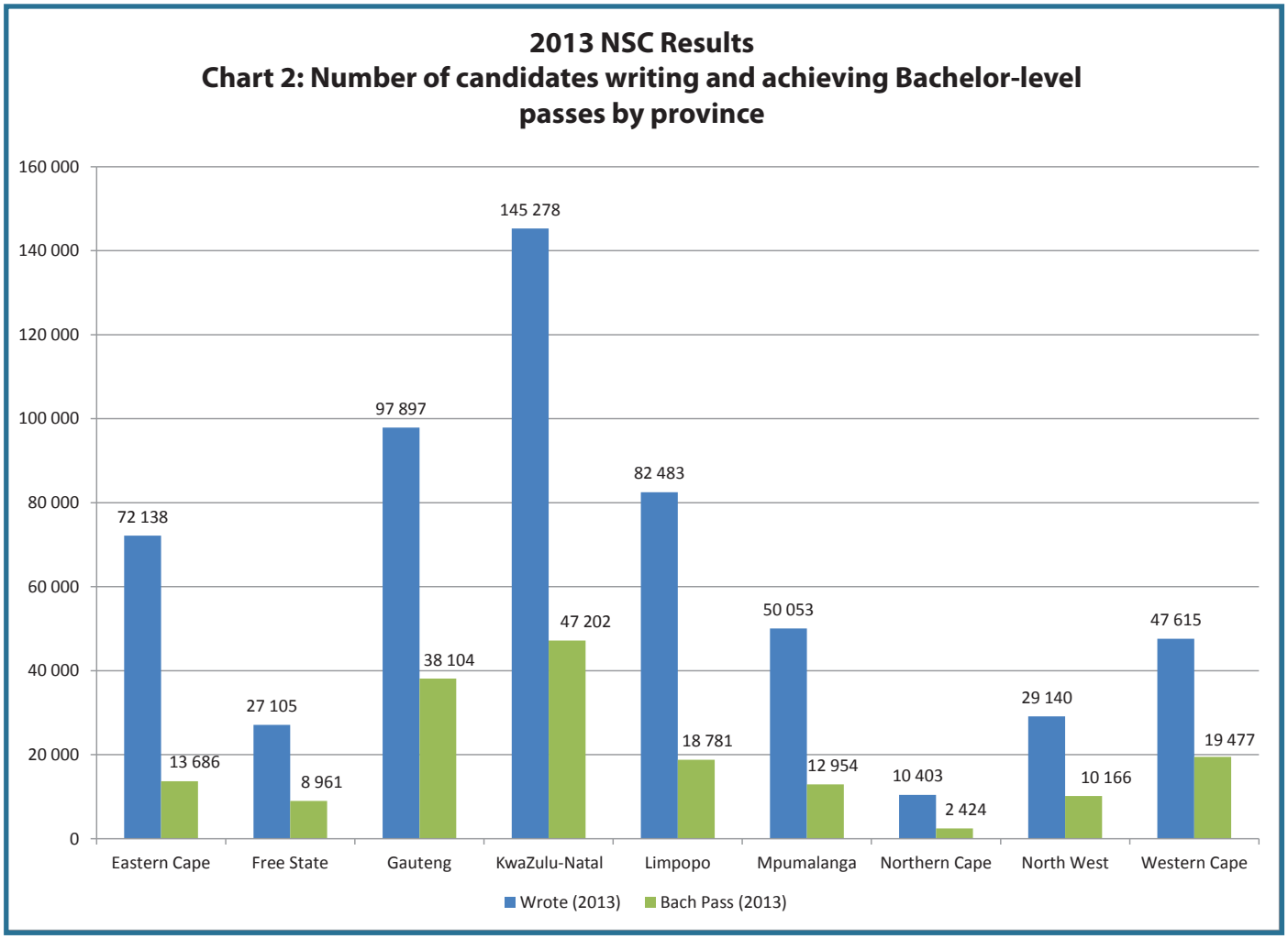


CHART 3:

Bachelor-level passes as percentage of those who wrote the exam in 2013 and as percentage of those who were enrolled in Grade 10 in 2011

This chart is an attempt to evaluate the quality and through-put of the nine provincial education departments by converting the number of candidates who wrote and passed with a Bachelor-level pass to a percentage. The blue bars represent the number of candidates who achieved a Bachelor-level pass as a percentage of those who wrote the examination in 2013 while the maroon bar represents the number of candidates who achieved a Bachelor-level pass as a percentage of learners who were enrolled in Grade 10 in the province in 2011. The picture that emerges from this chart is very different from Charts 1 and 2, with the Western Cape and Gauteng emerging as the provinces that produce the highest proportion of better-quality passes. A greater proportion of the Grade 10 class of 2011 from these two provinces is also entered as candidates for the 2013 NSC examinations than the other provinces and a greater proportion also achieve Bachelor-level passes.

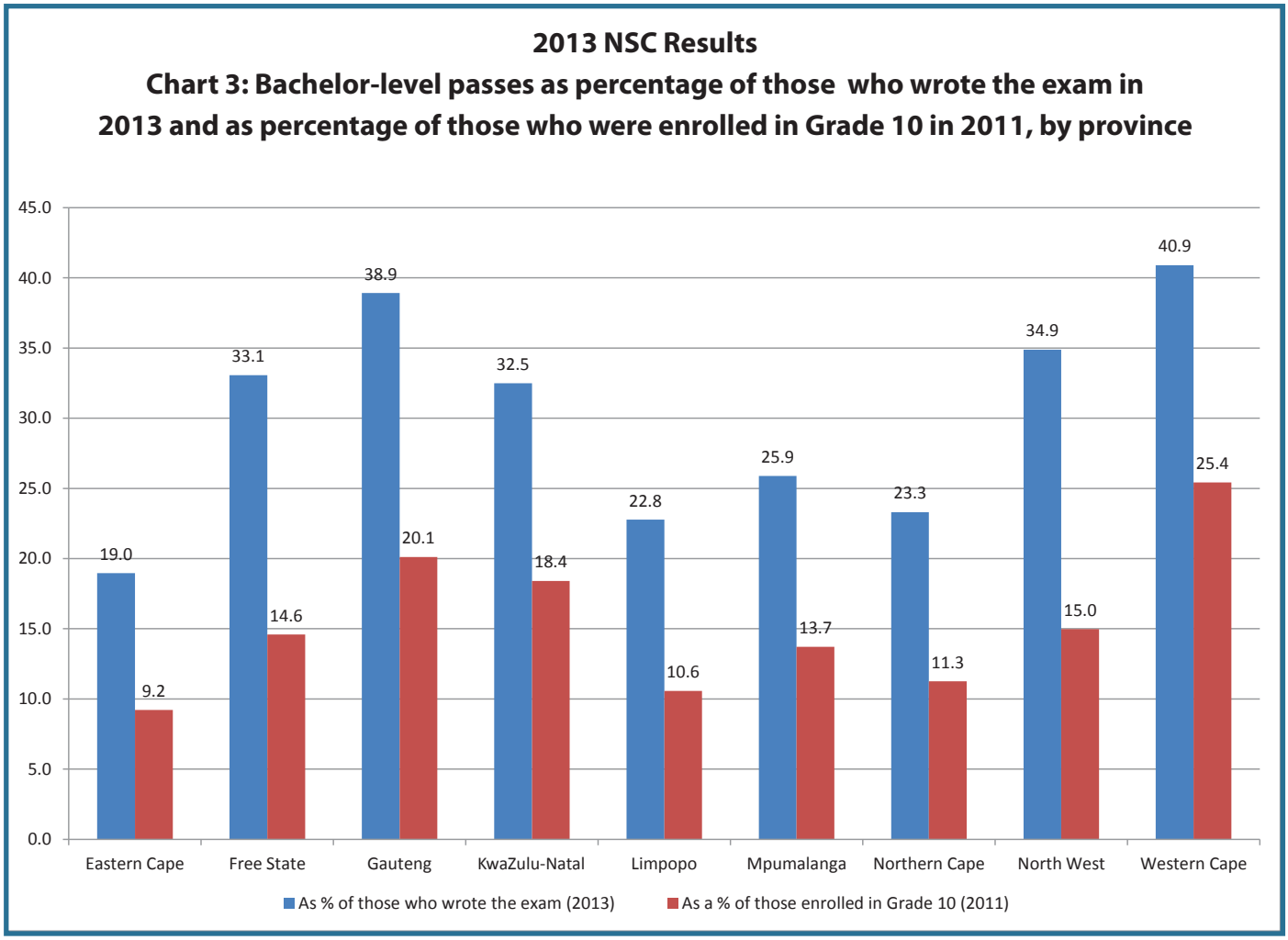
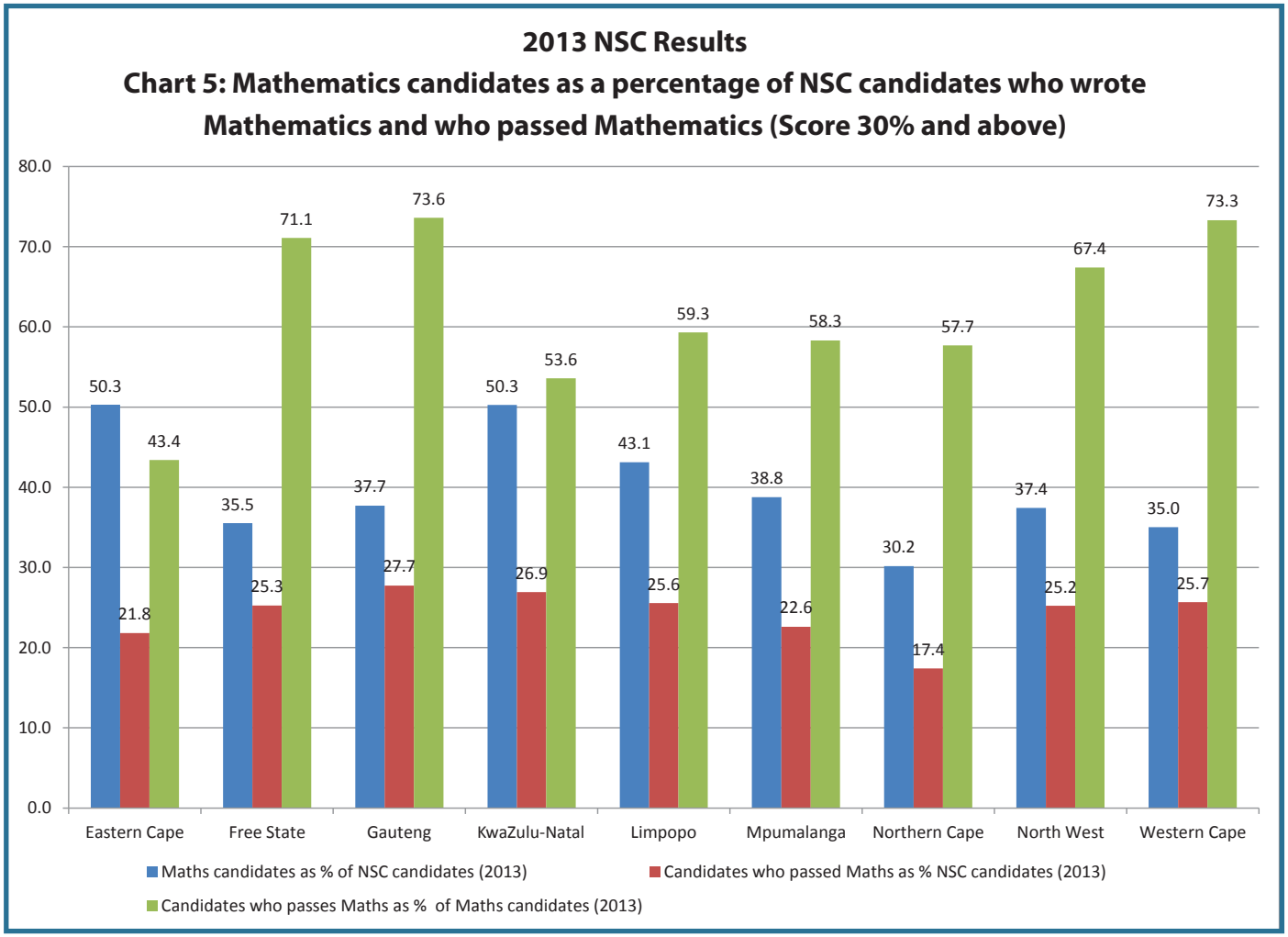


CHART 5:

Mathematics candidates as a percentage of NSC candidates who wrote Mathematics and who passed Mathematics

In this chart we have tried to unpack, in a fairly blunt way, some quality indicators of Mathematics performance for each of the provinces. The first (blue) bar for each province represents the proportion of candidates from that province who wrote Mathematics as opposed to Mathematical Literacy. Just two of the provinces (Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal) entered more Mathematics candidates for the examination than Mathematical Literacy candidates. The proportion of candidates who actually passed the Mathematics examination calculated as a percentage of total number of candidates who wrote the examination (i.e. including the number of those who wrote Mathematical Literacy) is relatively similar from province to province suggesting that entering more candidates for Mathematics has little influence on the overall pass rate. The picture is rather different when we compare the pass rates for Mathematics calculated as a percentage of those who wrote Mathematics. The best-performing provinces by this measure are Gauteng, Western Cape and Free State, in that order, which suggests that these provinces are better at assisting candidates in making the correct choice of subject (Mathematics vs. Mathematical Literacy) when they enter Grade 10.



TEN LEADERSHIP LESSONS from the Principals Academy Trust

THE PRINCIPALS ACADEMY

1. *It all starts with the head*

If you are going to succeed as the leader of your school you need to be quite clear in your own mind about why you have made this career choice. School leadership is a tough job and should not be undertaken by anyone who is not fully committed to ensuring the children placed in their care are given an education that realises their full potential, or as one principal put it "to become the best that they can become".

As a principal you are going to have to take the lead, which includes giving direction, setting goals and establishing standards of performance and behaviour. Your staff, students, parents and the community at large will be more interested in what you do than what you say and will follow your lead and mimic your behaviour. If you can't or won't walk the talk, neither will they.

2. *Know what you want*

Before you can start telling others what to do you need to have a clear idea in your own mind about what you would like to achieve for your school. In developing this personal vision for your school you need to be realistic about what may be possible given the geographic location of the school and the particular socio-economic context in which the school must operate. Don't, however, allow the geographic location of the school, the state of its physical infrastructure, or its socio-economic setting limit your dream of what is possible, and in particular what is possible in terms of learner attainment. There are plenty of examples both in South Africa and from across the world of schools achieving extraordinary results with few resources and in circumstances of dire poverty. In almost every instance these schools have had leaders who were both visionary and passionate about their work and in their belief that every child can succeed.

3. *Share your vision*

Successful schools are built on teamwork and your success as a leader largely depends on your ability to share your dream of what your school can become. Talk about your hopes and dreams for the school and encourage your staff, students and parents to contribute their own ideas about what can be achieved and in the part that they can play in making these a reality. Don't let the toxic Mary's on your staff dampen your belief in what is possible. All schools have them. Listen politely to what they have to say but don't waste your time or energy on them or engage them in their petty games. Work with those who share your dreams as they are the ones that matter and who will help you to make the seemingly impossible possible.

4. *Give people real jobs*

The best way to get your team working with you is to share leadership by giving individuals, particularly members of your leadership team, real responsibility for the tasks that you assign to them. When assigning a task or portfolio of responsibilities be clear about your expectations, about goals and about how and when you expect them to report on progress. Once you have assigned the task, encourage them to take ownership by allowing them the space and time to develop their own way of managing the project. They will make mistakes, we all do, but they will grow as leaders and managers in the process.

Encourage them to find their own solutions to the obstacles that they encounter while all the time supporting them as they work to make a success of the duties and responsibilities that you have assigned to them. This process helps to grow the leadership and management skills of your leadership teams and helps grow their stake in what will become your common vision for the school.

5. *Be sure of your priorities*

It is easy in the hustle and bustle of the school week and the competing demand for your time to become involved in any number of side issues, which although urgent do little to move the school towards the goals that you have set. To avoid the trap that these kinds of distractions may set for you, take a little time out each day to identify two or three primary tasks that are linked directly to the achievement of your goals and then set aside time in the day to work on these primary tasks. Be very disciplined with yourself in this regard and don't put off doing the things that matter just because

they are not urgent. Prioritising urgent matters ahead of important matters is a common failing, particularly for inexperienced principals, and one of the main reasons why many schools fail to achieve their goals.

6. Planning matters

Lack of proper detailed planning is a common feature of most underperforming schools. There are usually three dimensions to this failure:

- Planning documents, where they exist, lack detail and usually cover one term or less.
- Planning is not the product of a consultative process and as result key events, processes and deadlines are omitted or allocated at conflicting times.
- Dates and deadlines set out in planning documents are not adhered to, leading to confusion and conflict.

Proper planning requires input from all role-players and should prioritise those processes and activities directed at helping the school to achieve its goals. By the start of each school year every school should have:

- A detailed year plan that lists the dates and deadlines for all important events in the school year.
- A school timetable that sets out the teaching programme for the year together with the teaching allocation of every teacher
- A list of the duties and responsibilities assigned to every member of staff (both educator and support staff)
- A weekly/cyclical schedule of meetings for all key management and monitoring teams (School Management Team, Subject teams, Phase teams, Pastoral care/Tutor groups, SGB subcommittees etc.)

7. Praise where praise is due

Be generous with your thanks when individuals have completed an assigned tasks or duty to an acceptable standard. A public acknowledgement of good work is important but has less impact on the individual than a private and more personal thank you in your office. Personal thank-you notes written in your own hand also go a long way to helping you gain goodwill credits from staff members, parents and members of the community. Be careful, however, about making too much of a fuss about individuals or groups for the completion of tasks that are part and parcel of their normal duties. Rather save your praise and special acknowledgments for exceptional effort or contributions in tasks that help move the school towards the achievement of its goals. Use these opportunities to reiterate the importance of these goals and how they will assist the school in achieving its mission.

8. Walk the talk

Your staff and students are far more likely to follow your example if you take the lead by demonstrating through your own actions the standards of behaviour and work ethic that you demand of them than by what you say when you address them in staff meetings and assemblies. So, for example, if improved learner discipline is a priority you have identified for your school then you as the principal need to set the standard that you demand of them, modelling for staff the way you expect from them to act when dealing with learners whose behaviour is not as it should be. Seeing you in action will have far more impact than any amount of exhortation and finger wagging in staff meetings and assemblies.

9. Get out of the office

Successful principals understand the importance of experiencing first hand the mood and changing levels of activity of the school day and appreciate that this is only possible if they get out of their offices and into the classrooms, corridors and staffroom, and onto the play areas and sports fields where pupils gather. Make one or two school walkabouts part of your daily routine, choosing times when things are happening – the start and end of the school day and the beginning or ending of breaks are good times to assess the level of health and well-being of your school. Make sure that you include a visit to the learners' toilets and ablution facilities as part of your tour, inspecting them for cleanliness and general hygiene. Go out of your way to chat to staff and pupils as you do your rounds, encouraging those who are doing well to continue with their good work, while scolding those who are late, or rowdy. You will be surprised how much you can learn from these kinds of walkabouts and the extent to which your presence and positive comments are appreciated by staff and students.

10. Data is your friend

Your school can be a rich source of data that, if properly exploited, can provide you with valuable information about learner performance and the various factors that influence the progress of individual learners and of class and subject groups. If correctly captured and analysed school data can be used to keep you abreast of patterns of attendance of teachers and learners and of how this may influence learner performance; of the relationship between learner performance in internally set and marked assessment tasks and assessments tasks that are externally set such as the Annual National Assessment tests and the National Senior Certificate examinations. It is also possible to develop instruments that allow you to monitor classroom practice, the amount of homework that is set and marked, and the extent and manner in which textbooks are used. Make data your friend as it can be a powerful resource in your drive to improve the quality of teaching and learning in your school.

TECHNOLOGY in Education - what vision for the *future*?

The Software & Information Industry Association (SIIA)[1], based in the USA, is the principal trade association for the software and digital content industry in that country and therefore clearly has a vested interest in promoting the use of technology in schools and the association has an Education division devoted to this purpose. In its effort to promote the use of technology in schools, its website offers a range of technology-based resources that are freely available as downloads from its website.

One of the items available on the SIIA website that may be useful to those who are interested in how the use of technology in schools is likely to unfold in the future is their publication "Vision K – 20: A vision for K – 20 education" that sets out their view on how they believe technology can enhance teaching and learning and promote innovative thinking. Their vision for K – 20 education is one that "utilizes modern technologies to create a world-class teaching and learning environment that prepares all students as global citizens capable of leading the world in innovation".

The vision document lists seven areas in which they believe the use of digital technology and content can enhance the educational process. These are listed below with a brief description of each.

- ***Digital technology can help meet the personalised needs of students***

  The authors of the document suggest that digital technology makes it possible to customise the teaching, learning and assessment processes to the needs of individual students. Digital technology makes it possible to tailor course work content to the personal interests and ability of individual learners, while simulations and animation can be used to help learners to build their understanding of complex concepts or to hone their skills.

- ***Digital technology can improve accountability and inform instruction***

  Computer-based assessment makes it possible for teachers and schools to manage large amounts of data and to use this data to track the performance and progress of individual learners and of groups. Teachers can use this data to identify the strengths and weaknesses of individual learners and to guide their instructional decisions. Learners who perform well can be provided with additional, more challenging content to enrich their experience and grow their skills, while those who struggle can be offered alternative content and activities to help them to master the basics.

- ***Digital technology helps to deepen learning and motivate students***

  The extensive range and variety of resources that are available on the internet and that can be delivered digitally to almost any communication device make it possible for students to make virtual visits to places that would normally be inaccessible to them, whether these be distant exotic locations or situations or places that would be impossible for them to visit such as outer space or the inside of a beehive or blast furnace. Game-based multimedia simulations make it possible for students to test their physical and intellectual skills in a variety of contexts and in doing so to gain valuable experience, experience which will stand them in good stead with they are faced with similar situations in real life.

- ***Digital technology facilitates communication, connectivity and collaboration***

  The current generation of school-going children is sometimes referred to as "Generation-M" because of the way in which they have embraced multi-media and always connected technologies and their enthusiastic use of collaborative spaces for social interaction. This generation already has these skills and digital technology makes it possible for teachers and parents to exploit the educative opportunities provided by 24/7 connectivity and a willingness to socialise and share using multiple platforms.

- ***Digital technology can be used to manage the education "enterprise" effectively and economically***

  Digital technology and the power of computing to improve efficiency is well understood and exploited in industry but its value has yet to be fully recognised in education. Digital tools make it possible to improve management efficiency and to increase levels of performance and accountability if properly used. Savings from improved administrative efficiency can be used to increase resource allocation to the core functions of teaching and learning.

- ***Digital technology enables students to learn from any place at any time***

  The availability of online learning does away with the need, at least in theory, for teaching and learning to be constrained by place and time. Virtual schools are already a reality in some parts of the world and the general acceptance on them as a viable alternative to brick and mortar schools is likely to grow. There are many disadvantages to virtual schools, however, and schools of the future are more likely to be hybrids of these two alternatives rather than exclusively one or the other.

- ***Digital technology nurtures creativity and self-expression***

  One of the most important consequences of the digital revolution is the extent to which it has given ordinary individuals a voice. An example of this was the "Arab spring" where thousands of individuals from across groups of nations with oppressive regimes, were able to voice opinions, share ideas, and plot strategies which ultimately brought their governments down. Having a voice and the access to spaces where your voice can be heard has also unlocked the creative potential of millions of individuals because digital space allows you to express your ideas in a multitude of formats in public spaces and to get feedback from an almost unlimited audience. This has enormous potential for young people who can use it to share their interests with others and test their creativity and talent as part of this process. The challenge for schools is to exploit this in a way that shields young people from those that would exploit their vulnerability and undermine their enthusiasm for new ideas and the learning process.

References

1 For more information go to www.siia.net.

In the December edition of T.H.E Journal[1], a monthly digital journal that promotes the use of technology in classrooms, a group of experts were invited to make predictions about likely changes in the school-based use of technology in 2014. Listed below, with our commentary and elaboration, are their predictions for the ten technologies that they were asked to comment on:

1. *Bring Your Own Device (BYOD)*

Bring Your Own Device approach to the use of technology in the teaching and learning process is a growing trend in schools in the USA and one in which there is growing interest in this country. This model is also popular with education districts in the USA because the cost of the devices, whether Smartphones, tablets or laptops, is borne by parents of learners and not by the districts themselves. Where in the past the use of technology as part of the teaching process would normally have taken place in computer laboratories with wired desktop computers or with students using laptops in classrooms with wireless connectivity, the BYOD model makes it possible for learners to access the teaching resources wirelessly using any device capable of accessing the teaching and learning resources that the teacher might provide. Another advantage is that the use of these devices is not restricted to the classroom or even to the school site. Teachers can post the content of the lesson together with any associated resources that they think their learners might find helpful from any location that has wireless connectivity. Their learners have, in theory at least, the same kind of freedom in terms of location and it is entirely feasible for the teacher to conduct a lesson from a coffee shop in a shopping mall with his or her learners working from a variety of locations from home to pool halls. Needless to say this model has its critics, with the criticism largely focussed on the fact that poorer students and the less well-resourced schools will have fewer and more limited opportunities to use the technology because of the costs involved.

It is worth noting that one of panellists from the "expert panel" made the point that most schools were already BYOD centres even if they have not yet officially adopted the technology. This is because learners and teachers are bringing these kinds of connectivity devices (Smartphones, tablets, laptops etc.) to schools in any event. His point is well made – if the devices are there this should be exploited as a way of improving learner engagement. Another of the panellists suggested that the move from laptops to tablets is likely to accelerate the move to the BYOD model because they are cheaper and more portable than laptops and that costs are likely to come down in real terms as these kinds of devices become more popular. Likewise new technology and improved bandwidth will make it possible to provide learners with a wider array of resources, including video on demand.

2. *Social Media as a Teaching and Learning Tool*

This was another innovation that the panellist viewed as a growing trend as educational platforms are developed that mimic the kinds of activities that attract children to social media such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube. Social media are essentially websites that interact with you as you interact with them. The number and variety of these websites is increasing all the time. Other examples of social media platforms include Del.icio.us, which allows you to save, organise and discover interesting links on the web, including those bookmarked by other people (social bookmarking), Instagram (photo-sharing) and Tumblr (social blogging)[2]. For more on social media go to http://webtrends.about.com/

Properly used, these kinds of platforms allow teachers to provide learners with a learning experience that is more closely aligned to the way in which they access information in their daily lives. It may be helpful to think of these platforms (websites) as a form of individualised interactive white board that can be used to stimulate and capture the interest of learners and encourage them to delve more deeply into the topic or better understand the concept that you are trying to teach them. Your interactions with individual students can be posted in ways that allow them to be viewed and shared by the rest of the class or restricted to just the two of you.

The use of social media as a teaching tool has great potential but is also likely to be demanding and time consuming if done properly. The use of social media also raises some ethical questions as it makes it possible for teachers and their learners to be in contact 24/7 for all 365 days of the school year. This may well raise expectations from diligent learners and demanding parents. There is also the potential for exploitation and abuse both of learners and of teachers and there is a need to tread wearily when entering this domain.

3. Digital badges

Digital badges have their roots in interactive computer games that rewarded you with a token or badge for achieving a specific score or for completing a game within a given time interval. The use of rewards of this kind have also been introduced into some of the online learning platforms, with students being rewarded with badges as they improve their scores and demonstrate their competency in the tests that form part of these programmes. The use of digital badges in more main-stream education has gained increasing traction in the USA and other parts of the world where attempts are being made to formalise and standardise the digital badgeing system to the point where the achievement of certain badges will count as credit towards degree courses.

The members of the expert panel from T.H.E. magazine were not convinced that digital badges will become main stream although they agreed that the introduction of a badge-based credit system has potential. The inclusion of digital badges as markers or credits as part of teacher professional development programmes was seen as one area in which they could be used. The other was in ongoing assessment of learners, where rewarding learners with badges for achieving particular standards of performance could be a motivating factor – an electronic equivalent of the bronze, silver and gold stars that were and perhaps still are used to reward good work in primary school classrooms or the lapel badges for achievement and/or participation in co-curricular activities that are a popular form of reward in many high schools.

4. Open Educational Resources (OER)

Open Educational Resources are those web-based resources that are free. A good example of an OER is the Khan Academy[3], which we featured in the last edition of SM&L, as is the World Wide Web (www) itself. The only problem with OER is that although there is no shortage of quantity there is also no guarantee of quality, which is what distinguishes the commercial programmes that you must purchase or subscribe to from OER programmes. Interestingly the panel noted that OER programmes were not popular with or promoted by education districts in the USA prior to 2008 financial crises, but that there had been increasing interest in them by education districts post the crises. The panellists as a group were cautious about the future use of OER because of their concerns about the availability of appropriate, high-quality, curriculum-related resources.

5. Desktop Computers

The panellists held the view that desktop computers/ computer laboratories as teaching resources were on the verge of becoming extinct. They did, however, concede that desktop computers would continue to have a place as administrative tools in offices and libraries.

6. iPads

The panellists predicted that iPads would grow in popularity and that this would be driven by the anticipated introduction of an improved, more education-friendly operating system and an increase in the quantity and quality of education-specific applications and educational resources. Interestingly the panellists made no reference to similar tablet-type devices using other operating systems such as Android. This may have been an omission on their part as when making their case for the growth in the popularity of iPads they did so by promoting their lightness and flexibility relative to laptops rather than to similar devices produced by other manufacturers.

7. E-Portfolios

E-portfolios are an electronic version of the dreaded portfolios of work that learners were required to produce for assessment during the dark days of Curriculum 2000 and OBE. The idea is that students post samples of their work in electronic format in folders on the school's intranet, which their teachers can then access and assess. The panellists were sceptical about the value and future of e-portfolios.

8. Learning Management Systems

Learning management systems are software programmes that allow teachers to create online teaching resources including course content and learning objectives and which provide tools that make it possible for teachers to track learner activity and use of the resources in order to assess learner performance. Also included should be communication tools that allow teachers to interact with individual learners and specified groups, together with spaces for discussion and the sharing of knowledge.

Examples of Learning Management Systems include[4] "Moodle" (OER), "Edmodo" and "Blackboard".

Learning management systems clearly offer schools and teachers huge opportunities as they move to the increased use of online learning. Sourcing, creating and developing the materials needed for these kinds of online learning programmes require skill and a significant amount of time. For many schools the skills and time of their teachers should perhaps be better spent on improving teaching in the non-digital classroom environment that is the norm in this country.

Interestingly the panellists were also lukewarm about the opportunities that these programmes provide with one suggesting that most have now become "monolithic enterprise systems that try to meet the request that every salesperson hears", so take heed before embarking on this journey.

9. *Learning Analytics*

Learning analytics[5] is essentially the process of using data to improve learning with a particular emphasis on using the data to personalise the learning experience of individual learners. Data analysis of this kind is widely used in the retail sector with huge amounts of data being gathered analysed in an effort to not only improve the shopping experience of customers but also to identify the needs of individual customers. Online retailers are leaders in this field because they can track exactly what you have viewed and purchased from your visits to their site. Those who shop online regularly will know it is not long before these online stores begin sending you messages recommending purchases to you – every time you click they learn a little more about your habits and preferences!

Learning analytics attempts to apply the same sort of processes to teaching and learning by gathering detailed data on individual learners and then using this to help identify their strengths and weaknesses, their preferred learning style and their interests, so that the teaching and learning process can be adapted to meet their specific needs.

To be effective, learning analytics requires the collection of significant amounts of detailed personal data on learner performance and patterns of behaviour and this raises concerns about issues of privacy and confidentiality, and of how this data will be used and secured. The increased use of online learning and learning management systems is likely to result in greater and more effective use of learning analytics, although the ethical issues will remain.

The expert panel all believed that interest in, and the use of learning analytics is set to grow, and that it could well become the next big thing in education.

10. *Game-Based Learning*

The increasing sophistication and popularity of computer games has sparked significant interest in their potential use in education, particularly by the new generations of teachers and school leaders, many of whom have grown up with gaming. The panellists, however, were lukewarm about the likely adoption of game-based learning in the near future partly because of the limited amount of research on the effectiveness of its use in classrooms and partly because of current public perceptions in the USA that there is a need to return to "the basics".

References

1 The Journal is a USA-based digital journal which looks to provide teachers, principals and district-level officials with content that will help them to improve learning through the use of technology. Subscription is free.
For more information go to
http://thejournal.com/pages/about-the-journal.aspx

2 For more on social media and web trends go to:
http://webtrends.about.com/

3 For more on the Khan Academy go to:
www.khanacademy.org/

4 For more information go to:
https://moodle.org/; https://www.edmodo.com; http://uki.blackboard.com/sites/international/globalmaster/Markets/Schools.html

5 For more on learning analytics go to:
http://www.opencolleges.edu.au/informed/learning-analytics-infographic/

The path to SUCCESS

In her book *Nine Things Successful People Do Differently*[1], Author Heidi Grant Halvorson[2], a social psychologist and Associate Director of Columbia Business School's Motivation Science Centre, identifies nine behaviours that she believes both contribute to their success and distinguish them from people who are less successful. Although the list below and the explanations we have used to describe these are largely based on her book, we have drawn on our own experience of working with school leaders to illustrate and provide examples of how the application of these could be applied in practice.

1. Get specific

The need to "Get specific", refers to the need to be clear and specific when setting goals. Halvorson contends that we are far more likely to achieve goals when we are precise about what it is we are hoping to achieve. Everyday examples would include "lose 1 kg a month for the next 6 months" rather than "go on diet" or "lose weight". We tend to achieve goals with measurable targets because the target or goal is clear. For school leaders specific measurable goals could include the obvious school performance-related goals like "improve the school's Mathematics pass rate in the 2014 NSC examinations by 5%", but could also include goals related to your administrative efficiency. Examples of these could include "respond to all incoming emails within 24 hours" and "respond to all departmental requests within two days of receiving them". Examples related to the quality of teaching and learning could include "observe at least two lessons each week starting with visits to lessons of teachers with the least teaching experience" or "check the exercise books of at least ten learners each week".

Setting clear goals with specific measurable targets is, however, only part of the process. Halvorson suggests that there are other kinds of activities that should form part of the goal-setting process. These she calls mental contrasting and they involve the process firstly of imagining how you will feel when you achieve the goal that you have set. Use your imagination to create as rich and detailed a picture of how you will feel as possible. Then repeat the process but this time by imagining the obstacles that you will have to overcome to achieve your goal. Mental contrasting helps to create a willingness to act – "if I want to achieve my goal, I am going to need to tackle problem X". Research into the effectiveness of mental contrasting suggests that those who use it are more successful at achieving their goals because it has a motivating and energising effect on them.

2. Seize the moment to act on your goals

"Seize the moment ..." is about setting aside the time you need to do the things that need to be done if you are to achieve your goals. This is a vital part of the process and one that is probably the point at which most people come unstuck. Principals, in particular, with multiple and competing demands for their time, find it difficult to set aside the time that they need to do what is required to achieve their goals. One of the big differences between successful individuals and those who are less successful is in their ability to manage interruptions and distractions. Planning and self-discipline are key. When you do your planning for the week ahead, make sure that you set aside time in your schedule to work on those tasks that will help you to achieve the goals that you have set. If you have a personal assistant or secretary she can assist you by holding calls and by being firm with individuals who may try to interrupt you at these times. However, no matter how hard you try, there will always be occasions when your best intentions get disrupted by events that are outside of your control. Halvorson's suggestion for dealing with these kinds of events is to use what she calls "if-then" planning. "If-then" planning is about having a plan B. In practice it involves making a decision about when you will do or complete the task that you have scheduled should some sort of disruption prevent you from competing it – "if I cannot complete this task as scheduled between 14:30 and 15:30 on Monday, I will complete it on Tuesday morning between 10:30 and 11:30. Evidence from research shows that this kind of tactic improves the likelihood that individuals will achieve their goals by up to threefold.

3. Know exactly how far you have left to go

Setting and achieving goals is a bit like setting out on a road trip. You need a destination – your goal(s); you need a route map – your planner; and you need some form of a trip-meter to measure your progress. People who are successful in achieving their goals not only develop careful plans that set out the strategies and processes that they will follow in their drive to achieve them, but also draw up timelines that they can use to measure progress against benchmarked points of reference. These are used to track and monitor progress.

4. Be a realistic optimist

There are two important contrasting elements to being a realistic optimist and your success with a project often depends on your ability to manage the relationship between the reality of the challenges that you will need to overcome to achieve your goals and the self-belief that is needed tackle these problems, which may at the time seem overwhelming. Too much realism may bring fear of failure while too much optimism may leave you mentally and emotionally unprepared for the unexpected challenges that may arise.

Part of the reason why realistic optimists are successful is because they hold the view that success does not come easily, that it will required hard work on their part and that they are likely to suffer setbacks along the way. Being realistic means not only that they expect problems to arise but that they try and pre-empt them in their planning and are therefore better prepared when they have to deal with them.

5. Focus on getting better, rather than being good

People who want to be good tend to focus on doing things that demonstrate to them and to others that they are good at what they do while people who focus on getting better work to grow and improve their skill set. Because those with a "getting better" focus are constantly looking to improve, they are more likely to accept challenges that require them to deal with circumstances and tasks that are unfamiliar to them. They make mistakes but accept that making mistakes is part of learning.

Those who are more interested in being good, however, tend to avoid tackling challenges and tasks that are outside of their experience partly because of their fear of failure. Their unwillingness to grow their competence in new areas makes them vulnerable when forces of circumstance or new innovations change the landscape in which they operate.

One other difference between people who want to do better rather than to be good is that those who want to be good tend to measure their level of performance in relation to others. This can be a problem because inevitably you will find someone, if not immediately, then in the future who is better than you. By contrast, however, those whose focus is on getting better measure their current performance relative to their past performance and take heart from the progress that they have made.

6. Have grit

Halvorson defines grit as "a willingness to commit to long-term goals and to persist in the face of difficulty". Psychologists who work in the field of human behaviour note that people tend to subscribe to one of two theories about ability – there are those who think that ability and talent is innate and largely fixed, while others hold the view that ability can and do change with practice and effort.

Recent research into the nature of ability has shown that ability is malleable and that it can be improved by effort and deliberate practice. High performance is a result of intense practice of specific skills over thousands of hours. This is an important lesson for anyone who wants to do well – hard work reaps its rewards. Teachers need to practise their teaching skills, principals need to practise their leadership skills and learners need to practise their learning skills. Basic drill matters – drill in counting, in multiplication, tables, in reading, in writing and in spelling, and more practice means better results!

7. Build your willpower muscle

Willpower, like talent, is something that can be cultivated. To improve your willpower your need to give it some exercise. Use it to stop snacking between meals or to take more regular exercise or to get up or go to bed earlier. As school leaders practise saying no to requests that will necessitate the disruption of the academic programme and interruptions that distract you from your primary tasks as school leader.

It is not always easy to say no but the more you say no and mean it in relation to particular kinds of activities the less likely you are to get repeat requests. There are some schools where disruptions to teaching time are unthinkable and as a result very few requests are made for changes to the school's routine. In other schools, however, request for changes to lesson times are almost always accommodated and as a result requests for these changes are a daily occurrence. Exercise your willpower in a way that helps everyone to understand your priorities and your expectations of them.

8. Don't tempt fate

Willpower works but not all of the time. Circumstances may arise when exercising your willpower becomes a difficult option and it is better when faced with these kinds of situations to do your best to avoid them. This is not about running away from the inevitable but rather about being circumspect. So, for example a smoker who has recently kicked the habit would be advised to avoid social situations where he will be in the company of other smokers rather than relying on his willpower to overcome the inevitable temptation that may arise.

9. Focus on what you will do, not what you won't do

When trying to change a bad habit plan activities you can use as substitutes for the habit you are trying to break and then focus on these rather than on the habit itself. If, for example, you tend to spend a lot of time fiddling with the fonts and styling features of a letter after you have completed it, arrange instead to delegate this task to your PA or secretary with the request that she return the final completed hard copy to you for signature. Having made this arrangement, stick to it and instead of focussing on the style and visual appeal of the letter, focus on the quality and clarity of the language you have used. Once completed forward it to her in unformatted draft form and leave the rest to her.

References

1 **Heidi Grant Halvorson**, *Nine Things Successful People Do Differently*, Harvard Business Review Press, Boston, Massachusetts, 2011. The book is available as an e-book download.

2 **Heidi Grant Halvorson** is a social psychologist and Associate Director of Columbia Business School's Motivation Science Centre. She is author of two books: *"Succeed: How We Can Reach Our Goals"* and *"Nine Things Successful People Do Differently"* and blogs on motivation and leadership for Harvard Business Review, Huffington Post, Forbes, Fast Company, and Psychology Today. You can follow her on ***Twitter @ hghalvorson*** or at ***www.heidgranthalvorson.com.***