RESEARCHING THE NEED:
SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

REPORT PREPARED FOR BRIDGE, SOUTH AFRICA AND ARK, UK

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Part 2 was written by Pat Sullivan
Appendix A was written by Ntombozuko Duku
This Report is intended as the basis for a discussion on school leadership and quality education in South Africa in August 2010. Its purpose is to provide a launching point for debate, rather than to provide recommendations for specific interventions.

The Report does not purport to provide comprehensive coverage of leadership programmes currently operating in South Africa. Rather, by providing comments on a sample of programmes, its intention is to open discussion on what works and why or why not. The intention is to generate an “insight-based” discussion on the part of those involved in exploring how leadership might be improved to support quality education in South Africa.
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List of Acronyms

ANA  Annual National Assessment
ABET  Adult Basic Education and Training
ACE  Advanced Certificate in Education
CDE  Centre for Development Enterprise
CEM  Council of Education Ministers
CHE  Council on Higher Education
CIE  Catholic Institute of Education
CML  Core Management Criteria
DoE  Department of Education
DSG  Development Support Group
EDO  Education District Office
ECD  Early Childhood Development
EE  Equal Education
EFA  Education For All
ELRC  Education Labour Relations Council
EMDG  Education Management and Governance
FET  Further Education and Training
GBF  Governing Body Foundation
GDE  Gauteng Department of Education
GDP  Gross domestic Product
HEDCOM  Heads of Education Departments Committee
HEI  Higher Education Institute
HGSE  Harvard Graduate School of Education
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IQMS</td>
<td>Integrated Quality Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JES</td>
<td>Joint Education Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JET</td>
<td>Joint Education Trust</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KRA</td>
<td>Key Result Area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KZN</td>
<td>KwaZulu Natal</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LASE</td>
<td>Learner Attainment Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LOLT</td>
<td>Language of Learning and Teaching</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MEC</td>
<td>Member of the Executive Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGSLG</td>
<td>Mathew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MIP</td>
<td>Matric Intervention Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MLA</td>
<td>Monitoring Learner Assessment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSTP</td>
<td>Management of Schools Training Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NCS</td>
<td>National Curriculum Statement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEEDU</td>
<td>National Education Evaluation and Development Unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NEPA</td>
<td>National Education Policy Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NMI</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Senior Certificate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OBE</td>
<td>Outcomes Based Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Co-operations and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSD</td>
<td>Occupation Specific Dispensation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAM</td>
<td>Personnel Administration Measures</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEDs</td>
<td>Provincial Education Departments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMDS</td>
<td>Performance Management and Development Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------</td>
<td>-----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PoE</td>
<td>Portfolio of Evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QLTC</td>
<td>Quality of Learning and Teaching Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACE</td>
<td>South African Council of Educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACMEQ</td>
<td>Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAIDE</td>
<td>South African Institute for Distance Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAQA</td>
<td>South African Qualifications Authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SASA</td>
<td>South African Schools Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SDT</td>
<td>School Development Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>Senior Education Specialist</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGB</td>
<td>School Governing Body</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIP</td>
<td>School Improvement Plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SL</td>
<td>School Leadership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>School Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Treatment Action Campaign</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMSS</td>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOPS</td>
<td>Teacher Opportunity Programs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UCT</td>
<td>University of Cape Town</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UJ</td>
<td>University of Johannesburg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
We accept that South Africa's learning outcomes continue to be unsatisfactory. All local and international assessments are agreed that far too many of our learners, especially African learners, do not perform at the required level. We have identified the underlying factors and we are determined to work systematically to resolve them. (Minister of Basic Education, 2010)

Despite significant advances, the primary measure of quality in education, i.e. learner achievement, has continued to lag behind. There are a number of reasons for the continued underperformance of the South African schooling system. These include poor management of schools by principals, inadequate teaching, lack of content knowledge among teachers, a lack of support to schools by district and provincial offices, a heavy administrative burden on teachers, limited time on task and weak acquisition of foundational skills by learners. (Deputy Minister of Basic Education, 2010)

1. **PROVISION OF EDUCATION**

1.1 **Governance and funding**

In the years since 1994, the South African education system has undergone significant changes in terms of governance and provision of education.

In terms of overall governance, the racially-based 19 education departments of apartheid were restructured into a non-racial, provincially-based system, with nine provincial departments and one national department (and since 2009, two).

The legislative mandates of education nationally are set out at the end of Part 1 of this
Authority is divided between the national and provincial departments as follows: the national department is responsible for setting norms and standards for the system as a whole, while provincial departments have responsibility for implementation. (Schools therefore fall under provincial authorities.)

In line with this mandate, the national department has developed policy frameworks for the system as a whole. This includes norms and standards for governance and funding in the South African Schools Act (SASA); curriculum and assessment policies (introducing OBE in 1996, reviewing this in 2000 and 2009, and currently phasing in changes away from OBE to a subject-based curriculum with learning materials); the South African Qualifications Authority; quality assurance bodies such as UMALUSI, and so on.

Responsibility for implementing the policy frameworks relating to schooling lies with provinces. Problems of implementation are well-documented. Suffice it to say at this point that the ways in which authority is divided between national and provincial levels has not been without difficulties.

Overall, government funding of education is in the region of 5% of GDP. The levels of funding and resource capacity within the system have not been sufficient to redress the backlog of infrastructural inequalities left by apartheid.

As a redistributive measure, the National Funding Norms allows for differential budgetary spending and the redirection of a small part of the budget (about 5%) from richer to poor schools. A quintile system ranks schools from poorest to least poor. Funding for schools is supplemented by fees, initially for all. Since 2007, there has been provision for poor schools to be “no fee” schools, and this has extended into quintiles 1 and 2. Though government subsidies accompany this, the overall resources for poor schools are very limited.

As matters stand, the national department grants a budgetary allocation to education in a block grant together with other social services (in an Equitable Shares funding formula). With monies allocated in this way, provinces do not always spend their allocation as intended by the national department. Thus the amounts spent per learner differ from province to province, in spite of national norms. (See Christie, 2008: 139)

Provinces are responsible for the district structures that are intended to support schools
and to be a conduit between schools and provincial departments. District capacity varies greatly within and between provinces.

After the 2009 elections, the national department was split into two: Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education. The Department of Basic Education has the mandate to raise the quality of education and improve the outcomes of schooling in provincial departments.

There are indications in 2010 that the national department of Basic Education is seeking to extend its authority over the system as a whole, particularly in terms of its Action Plan 2025. A close reading of Minister Motshekga’s Budget Vote Speech (21 April 2010) together with the Government Gazette on Action Plan to 2014: Schooling 2025 (August 2010) indicates that the national department is developing strategies to drive a quality development agenda across the provinces. It is too soon to judge this initiative. (The Action Plan will be discussed in Part 3 of this Report.)

Another point to note in relation to governance in the system is that authority is split at school level between governing bodies (SGBs) and principals (or School Management Teams). As jurisdic bodies, SGBs have considerable powers in relation to the school’s mission and overall operations (though not its management) – including admissions policies, language policies, recommendations for staffing and fees. SGBs are variable in capacity and functioning, working well in some cases but not in others.

### 1.2 Enrolments

In the 16 years since the end of apartheid, the education system in South Africa has undergone profound changes, the discussion of which lies beyond this Report (see OECD Report, EFA Country Report, 2009, Christie, 2008).

One of the indicators of change is the expansion of the schooling system. In overall terms, statistics suggest that the majority of children of school-going age attend school (though there are limits to what these overall statistics are able to show about actual attendance patterns and quality of learning experience).

The information that follows is based on the Department of Education (2010) *Education Statistics in South Africa, 2008*. 
Table 1: Number of learners, educators and schools in ordinary public schools, by province, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Educators</th>
<th>Schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>2 037 777</td>
<td>64 371</td>
<td>5 686</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>656 074</td>
<td>22 696</td>
<td>1 614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>1 716 196</td>
<td>53 017</td>
<td>1 989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>2 725 855</td>
<td>83 760</td>
<td>5 783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>1 735 806</td>
<td>55 647</td>
<td>4 023</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>1 034 719</td>
<td>32 784</td>
<td>1 873</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>263 086</td>
<td>8 835</td>
<td>602</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>765 762</td>
<td>25 736</td>
<td>1 730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>937 887</td>
<td>31 214</td>
<td>1 451</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2008 SNAP Survey (conducted on the 10th school day).

In 2008, the national average student to teacher ratio was 30.5:1, ranging from 28.7:1 in the Free State to 31.9:1 in KwaZulu-Natal.

The national average student to school ratio was 473:1, ranging from 357:1 in the Eastern Cape to 788:1 in Gauteng. In three provinces (Gauteng, Mpumalanga and the Western Cape), the ratio was higher than the national average.

The national average teacher to school ratio was 15.5:1, ranging from 11.4:1 in the Eastern Cape to 26.7:1 in Gauteng.

The Gross Enrolment Rate in primary schools was 98%, an overall figure which suggests near complete participation in primary schools. The Gross Enrolment Rate in secondary schools was 85%. Within this, there were differences between Eastern Cape and Limpopo and Mpumalanga at one end of the scale, and Western Cape, Gauteng and Northern Cape at the other.

The Gender Parity Index suggests similar access between boys and girls with some provincial variation. (As with all of the figures, statistics alone do not provide an adequate picture, particularly in relation to actual attendance, patterns of attendance, or learning experiences and outcomes.)
Repitition rates within the system are decreasing, but are still problematic.

Although official figures suggest that approximately three quarters of students in Grades 1-3 were taught in their home language, the Wits School of Education Report (2009) found enormous variation from school to school in Foundation Phase in Gauteng – including a number of multilingual classrooms where the language of teaching and learning is not the home language of either the teacher or the students.

Looking at the distribution of “no fee” schools across provinces provides an illustration of poverty distribution (“no fee” schools are the poorest 40% of schools).

### Table 2: “No fee” schools by Province, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Number of schools</th>
<th>Number of “no fee” schools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>1,158,053</td>
<td>3,725</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>502,674</td>
<td>1,202</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng Province</td>
<td>391,378</td>
<td>443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kwazulu Natal</td>
<td>1,139,592</td>
<td>3,174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>1,106,681</td>
<td>2,836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>420,395</td>
<td>952</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>143,160</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>296,468</td>
<td>895</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>136,109</td>
<td>407</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15,294,510</strong></td>
<td><strong>14,029</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: DoE, 2008.*

Though access to education has expanded, quality has lagged behind. This has been recognised by the post-2009 government, which has made quality improvement in education one of its priorities (as will be discussed later).

### 1.3 Infrastructure and provisioning

The huge disparities in infrastructure and provision that characterised apartheid schooling are an obstacle to providing education of equal quality. Though addressing
infrastructural backlogs receives continuing attention, and improvements are evident, information from the Department of Education (2009) suggests that there are still 5000 schools with no water supply, more than 4000 schools without proper electricity, 11000 schools with pit latrines (and a further 1000 with no toilets at all). Nearly 80% of schools do not have libraries or computer centres, and 85% do not have laboratories.¹

Provincial disparities are marked. In terms of libraries, for example, the distribution is 59% for Gauteng, 57% for Western Cape, 10% for Limpopo, and 7% for Eastern Cape.

1.4 Performance results

South Africa’s poor performance on international and national tests is a strong indicator of problems with quality in the system. There are a number of analyses which illustrate the poor performance of the majority of students (for a good overview, see Fleisch, 2008).

The brief comments that follow are extracted from Christie (2008). (Fuller analyses are to be found in Fleisch, 2008; Gilmour & Soudien, 2009; Howie, 2001; Reddy, 2006; Schollar, 2004; Taylor & Prinsloo, 2005.)

> In the 2003 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), testing maths and science proficiency at Grade 8 level, South Africa came last of the 50 participating countries. Top performers were Singapore, South Korea, Hong Kong and Taiwan. Moreover, in the TIMMS test, the best South African performances were only equal to average Singaporean performances. In the 1999 TIMSS test, South Africa came last of 39 countries. Less than 0.5% of South Africa’s students reached the top 10% international benchmark. (Howie, 2001)

> On tests administered by the Southern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) in 2005, South Africa scored ninth out of 14 countries in the region. Top performers were Seychelles, Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. South Africa’s results were worse than those of Swaziland, Botswana and Mozambique, but better than Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia and Malawi. Yet many of the countries that performed better than South Africa spent less on their education systems.

¹ Tables from the Department of Education, 2009.
A different set of figures appears in Schooling 2050 (2010), which states that ‘We still have 1700 schools without water and 700 schools with no toilets… since 1996 the number of schools without water has gone down from 9 000 to 1 700 and the number of schools without electricity has gone down from 15 000 to 2 800.’ It is not clear why the figures differ.
In the UNESCO Monitoring Learner Assessment (MLA) tests for Grade 4 in 1999, South Africa’s numeracy score was 30%, a lower score than Mauritius, Senegal and Malawi (Reddy, 2005).

The National Education Policy Act also provides for South Africa to undertake “systemic evaluations” on a regular basis at key points (Grades 3, 6 and 9). The Grade 3 Systemic Evaluation (2001) found low achievements across all provinces in literacy and numeracy (Kanjee, 2007). The Grade 6 Systemic Evaluation (2004) also pointed to low levels of performance across Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT), maths and science. It found a big difference in performance between urban and rural students, and between those whose LOLT was the same as their home language, and those for whom the LOLT was different.

A major problem is that on closer analysis, overall test results fall clearly into two groups. The best results are achieved by historically privileged schools, and there is a big gap between these and historically disadvantaged schools. This suggests that while South Africa has improved access to schooling, it has not provided access to quality schooling for the majority of the population. It suggests that “quality schooling” is provided for a minority of the population – and even here, the quality of achievements does not measure well against international benchmarks. (Christie, 2008: 146)

In his 2010 State of the Nation address, President Jacob Zuma announced that all students at Grades 3, 6 and 9 would be required to write independently moderated tests in literacy and numeracy, as part of the drive to improve quality through the system. These Annual National Assessments (ANA) would provide information to both parents and departments about student performance. The President’s stated goal was that pass rates on these tests would improve from the current average of 35%-40% to at least 60% by 2014. He also announced the goal of improving university entrance scores in the National Senior Certificate exams.

National Senior Certificate

Results on the NSC are poor and declining, an indication that the system overall is performing poorly.
Table 3: Overall National Senior Certificate Pass Rates

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Pass Rate (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>70.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>68.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>66.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>65.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>62.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>60.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pass rates vary by province, as is shown in the following two tables.

Table 4: Comparing pass rates of the National Senior Certificate examination, by province, 2007 and 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>Pass Rates (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>70.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>74.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KwaZulu-Natal</td>
<td>63.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>58.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>70.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>67.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>80.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: 2008 IECS database, March 2009. (Note: Results for 2007 based on the old curriculum.)
Table 5: National Senior Certificate examination pass rates of schools within different percentage groupings, by province, 2008

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Province</th>
<th>No. of schools</th>
<th>Frequency Distribution of Pass Rates</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Free State</td>
<td>316</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gauteng</td>
<td>716</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KZN</td>
<td>1 655</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limpopo</td>
<td>1 396</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mpumalanga</td>
<td>518</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Cape</td>
<td>130</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North West</td>
<td>372</td>
<td>0.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Western Cape</td>
<td>406</td>
<td>0.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Pass rates also differ by quintile (a measure of relative wealth/poverty) and by former department, as illustrated by the following two tables from the Schools that Work Report.

In Table 6, median results are particularly striking in showing differences between quintiles. Table 7 below shows clear differences between former departments, with former white and Indian schools performing above others.

Table 6: Breakdown of NSC pass rates by quintile, 2006*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quintile</th>
<th>Mean (%)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 (poorest)</td>
<td>56.57028</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>1376</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>58.49853</td>
<td>58.8</td>
<td>1155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>61.82628</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>1503</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>69.72297</td>
<td>71.65</td>
<td>836</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>87.68318</td>
<td>95.95</td>
<td>862</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>64.93418</td>
<td>65.1</td>
<td>*5732</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Public schools only. Information about quintiles was not available for all public schools.
Table 7: Mean Pass Rates of Public Schools by Former Department, 2006*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Former Department</th>
<th>Pass Rate (mean)</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>94.46398</td>
<td>98.7</td>
<td>633</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>87.136</td>
<td>90.1</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>74.62681</td>
<td>77.05</td>
<td>276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DET (African)</td>
<td>64.85915</td>
<td>65.8</td>
<td>1153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>64.26281</td>
<td>65.6</td>
<td>285</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New</td>
<td>60.13969</td>
<td>59.45</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-governing Homelands</td>
<td>58.09584</td>
<td>57.4</td>
<td>2114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transkei, Ciskei, Bophuthatswana, Venda</td>
<td>55.83525</td>
<td>55.95</td>
<td>800</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>65.02744</td>
<td>65.2</td>
<td>*5857</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Excludes Independent schools

2. **CHALLENGES**

The South African schooling system faces a number of challenges that have proven hard to shift in the 15 years since the end of apartheid. Among these are:

- There are **profound inequalities throughout the system, which has not shed its apartheid legacies.**

Inequalities related to students’ socioeconomic background, race, and locality (including rurality) were structured into the apartheid system, and remain predictors of students’ educational experiences and outcomes to this day.

Viewed generally, schools perform largely in accordance with their apartheid roots, with the best performing schools being former white and Indian, and the poorest performing being rural and township black schools.

As well as structural inequalities, South Africa contends with widespread and profound **poverty.** Gilmour and Soudien (2009) argue that the complex continuing
effects of historical poverty and racism are not fully understood in relation to schooling in South Africa. They have enduring effects on students’ experiences of schooling (influenced profoundly by their life circumstances), and on their measured performance on literacy and numeracy test scores.

Inequalities – and the effects of poverty – are evident in all aspects of schooling: in physical infrastructure, in the provision of laboratories and libraries, in classroom conditions, and so on. And they are also evident in the levels of functionality of schools, the quality of teaching and learning in classrooms, and the results achieved.

A significant feature of the system is that the majority of schools are in poor communities, are not well-provisioned, and are attended by black students. The Schools that Work Report (2008) argues that the landscape of schooling in South Africa is often misperceived, in that this image of what a “normal” school is (including the “normal” work of principals) does not hold a dominant or valued place in the minds of policy makers and the general public. Instead, the image of former white schools provides the “hegemonic norm” to which the system aspires – although they are in fact a comparatively small and relatively privileged minority of schools.

Nonetheless, the Schools that Work report shows that it is possible to achieve success in mainstream schools – albeit “success against the odds”.

- The system as a whole is underperforming, and it is underperforming in comparison with like countries that spend less on education.

The major indicator of underperformance is to be found on international and national test scores. Broadly speaking, performances have been bimodal, with the best performances being by white students at formerly white schools – but even the best performing parts of the system are no more than average in comparison with the world’s top performers. More important is the extent of the underperformance.

In 2005, Servaas van der Berg estimated the scale of the problem as follows:

Educational quality in historically black schools – which constitute 80% of enrolment and are thus central to educational progress – has not improved significantly since political transition.

Subsequent analyses of test scores in the Western Cape (the best performing
province) by Gilmour and Soudien (2009) suggests that performances are not improving, and may even be deteriorating, for all but a minority of students.

Performance on test scores is clearly a product of teaching and learning in classrooms. There are a number of studies of classroom practice in South Africa that give textured accounts of what happens inside classrooms that produce poor outcomes (see Heather Jacklin, 2004; Ursula Hoadley, 2005; Sarah Howie and her colleagues [Zimmerman, Botha, Howie & Long], 2008; Lorraine Marneweck, 2002; Cheryl Reeves, 2005; Eric Schollar, 2008; Taylor, 2006; Wits School of Education, 2009). In summary, these studies show classrooms where:

- students learn mainly by rote, and sometimes have no teachers present;
- teachers do not know the subject matter or how to teach it;
- content coverage is inadequate;
- pacing of learning is too slow;
- students do not do enough reading, writing and calculating;
- there are high rates of absenteeism;
- teachers spend too much on administrative aspects of the curriculum;
- teachers are not given sufficient guidance by curriculum outlines on what to teach and how;
- learning is impeded by lack of materials, equipment and facilities (including laboratories and libraries); and
- in many cases, language may be a barrier to learning.

School organisation is also variable and follows historical patterns of functionality. For example, Muavia Gallie (2006) argues that, in relation to a school functionality index he developed,

- 20% of schools could be classified as high functioning (with 5% being excellent);
- 50% were low functioning; and
- 30% were dysfunctional.

Gallie’s research shows that in dysfunctional schools there is no shared agreement on basic principles such as the starting and finishing times of the school day; when documents need to be submitted; procedures to be followed when a teacher is absent, and so on. To this list could be added curriculum leadership, such as allocation of teachers to classes and subjects, monitoring and reporting of coverage
and progress, teacher professional development, and so on.

Gallie and others argue that *in the face of this differential in functionality, it makes little sense to have uniform expectations about what constitutes quality and improvement.*

- The **education policy terrain** is complex.

As mentioned earlier, **authority** is split between the national Department, which is responsible for setting norms and standards for the system as a whole, and the provinces, which are responsible for implementation. Capacity is very uneven within and across the system. Education bureaucracies and districts do not always operate efficiently to support the work of schools. Accountability measures are weak.

The national Department has developed umbrella framework policies across most areas of the system. These have been nicknamed “Rolls Royce” policies, representing “best practice” in the field, but in many cases outstripping the capacity of the system. Policies are **unevenly implemented**, and in many cases do not match conditions in schools and classrooms. They tend to be “one size fits all” policies that match the capabilities of the best functioning schools rather than the average schools. Policies that highlight the differential capacity between schools include: curriculum policies (including policies for inclusion and language policies); policies for provision for school governing bodies (SGBs) (where schools have very different capacities and political contexts); and the national trial policy for a single ACE in School Leadership (a point discussed later).

At the school level, the South African Schools Act (SASA) sets out the constitution, legal rights and responsibilities of school governing bodies (SGBs). Considerable powers are vested in SGBs, alongside school principals, for running schools. The relationship between **governance and management** is often challenging to negotiate at school level. In addition, there has been contestation over control of schools, where SGBs have taken the government to court over issues such as staff appointments, admissions and language policies, and so on.

**Labour relations** have been unstable, and in many cases hostile (for a range of reasons). Systems for quality and performance management (such as IQMS) have been complex and contentious.

A framework of legislation regulates the conditions of work of principals and teachers. These include (together with their amendments): the Labour Relations
Act, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act, and the Education Labour Relations Act. In 1993, the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) was established with the aim of maintaining labour peace through processes of dispute prevention and dispute resolution. The ELRC negotiated agreements on duties and responsibilities of teachers and principals, hours of work, remuneration scales, and related matters. A continual sticking point has been agreements around appraisal and accountability, with militant teachers refusing to allow principals and education departments the right to visit classrooms.

In 2010, a National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) was established to provide clearer and stronger accountability measures alongside developmental support.

**Appointment of staff**

All schools have governing bodies (SGB) with delegated powers. Relationships between governance and management are not always clear at school level, adding an extra complexity to the task of the principal. SGBs have delegated powers to draw up lists of potential candidates for positions at the school; provincial Heads of Departments are responsible for final selection and appointment from the lists.

**Terms and conditions of employment of principals**

The terms and conditions of employment of principals and other staff are set out in the Personnel Administration Measures (PAM) in terms of the Employment of Educators Act 1998 and accompanying regulations. An excerpt from this document applying to principals follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(d) THE AIM OF THE JOB:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(i) To ensure that the school is managed satisfactorily and in compliance with applicable legislation, regulations and personnel administration measures as prescribed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ii) To ensure that the education of the learners is promoted in a proper manner and in accordance with approved policies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(e) CORE DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE JOB:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The duties and responsibilities of the job are individual and varied, depending on the approaches and needs of the particular school, and include, but are not limited to, the following:</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(i) GENERAL/ADMINISTRATIVE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• To be responsible for the professional management of a public school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• To give proper instructions and guidelines for timetabling admission and placement of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
learners.

- To have various kinds of school accounts and records properly kept and to make the best use of funds for benefit of the learners in consultation with the appropriate structures.
- To ensure a School Journal containing a record of important events connected with the school is kept.
- To make regular inspections of the school to ensure that the school premises and equipment are being used properly and that good discipline is being maintained.
- To be responsible for the hostel and all related activities including the staff and learners, if one is attached to the school.
- To ensure that Departmental circulars and other information received which affect members of the staff is brought to their notice as soon as possible and are stored in an accessible manner.
- To handle all correspondence received at the school.

(ii) PERSONNEL

- Provide professional leadership within the school.
- To guide, supervise and offer professional advice on the work and performance of all staff in the school and, where necessary, to discuss and write or countersign reports on teaching, support, non-teaching and other staff.
- To ensure that workloads are equitably distributed among the staff.
- To be responsible for the development of staff training programmes, school-based, school-focused and externally directed, and to assist educators, particularly new and inexperienced educators, in developing and achieving educational objectives in accordance with the needs of the school.
- To participate in agreed school/educator appraisal processes in order to regularly review their professional practice with the aim of improving teaching, learning and management.
- To ensure that all evaluation/forms of assessment conducted in the school are properly and efficiently organised.

(iii) TEACHING

- To engage in class teaching as per the workload of the relevant post level and the needs of the school.
- To be a class teacher if required.
- To assess and to record the attainment of learners taught.

(iv) EXTRA- & CO-CURRICULAR

- To serve on recruitment, promotion, advisory and other committees as required.
- To play an active role in promoting extra and co-curricular activities in the school and to plan major school functions and to encourage learners’ voluntary participation in sports, educational and cultural activities organised by community bodies.

(v) INTERACTION WITH STAKE-HOLDERS

- To serve on the governing body of the school and render all necessary assistance to the governing body in the performance of their functions in terms of the SA Schools Act, 1996.
• To participate in community activities in connection with educational matters and community building.

(vi) COMMUNICATION:
• To co-operate with members of the school staff and the school governing body in maintaining an efficient and smooth running school.
• To liaise with the Circuit/Regional Office, Supplies Section, Personnel Section, Finance Section, etc. concerning administration, staffing, accounting, purchase of equipment, research and updating of statistics in respect of educators and learners.
• To liaise with relevant structures regarding school curricula and curriculum development.
• To meet parents concerning learners’ progress and conduct.
• To co-operate with the school governing body with regard to all aspects as specified in the SA Schools Act, 1996.
• To liaise with other relevant Government Departments, eg. Department of Health & Welfare, Public Works, etc., as required.
• To co-operate with universities, colleges and other agencies in relation to learners’ records and performance as well as INSET and management development programmes.
• To participate in departmental and professional committees, seminars and courses in order to contribute to and/or update professional views/standards.
• To maintain contacts with sports, social, cultural and community organisations.

**Performance management**

Performance management has become an important dimension of the labour relations framework. This has been a contentious issue in education, both because of the breakdown of apartheid systems, and because of continuing inequalities between schools in the post-apartheid period. Through a series of labour relations agreements, various complex systems of accountability were set up, involving peer- and school-based reviews, but not classroom inspections. These included agreements on Development Appraisal (1998), Whole School Evaluation (2001), and Performance Management (2003). These overlapping, if not confusing, separate systems were brought together in 2003 into the Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS), which requires a complex system of paperwork and a time-consuming monitoring system to work properly. Suffice it to say that these systems have a mixed record of implementation and success.

In 2008, after a devastating public service strike which included teachers, the Occupation Specific Dispensation (OSD) was negotiated through the ELRC. The OSD establishes a Performance Management and Development System (PMDS) for public servants working in education. It sets out the performance requirements of different
levels of appointment within the education system, and their links to qualification and remuneration. Principals (and teachers) are required to draw up annual personal development plans setting objectives and targets. For principals, there are six Key Result Areas (KRAs) and fifteen Core Management Criteria (CMCs), of which they must select five, each with performance standards and indicators.

The six KRAs which are compulsory for principals are

1. Leading and managing the learning school
2. Shaping the direction and development of the school
3. Assuring quality and securing accountability
4. Developing and empowering self and others
5. Managing the school as an organisation
6. Working with and for the community

In their individual performance plans, principals are required to break down KRAs into measurable outputs, duties/responsibilities and activities, and to give each a percentage weighting in terms of importance for their own job.

The fifteen CMCs are:

1. Job knowledge
2. Technical skills
3. Acceptance of responsibility
4. Quality of work
5. Reliability
6. Initiative
7. Communication
8. Interpersonal relationships
9. Flexibility
10. Team work
11. Planning and execution
12. Leadership
13. Delegation and empowerment
14. Management of financial resources
15. Management of human resources
Each CMC has performance standards and indicators, and principals must choose five for their annual performance plans. Performance plans are appraised by district officials.

What this description illustrates is that the performance management system is designed to have a strong impact on how the work of the principal is defined and judged.

In addition, principals and school management teams are responsible for drawing up School Improvement Plans (SIPs) as part of the requirements for Whole School Evaluation.

Arguably, leadership development programmes in South Africa need to take into account the regulatory frameworks that principals engage with, such as the agreed standards for leadership, as well the performance management and SIP requirements.

### 3. WHAT ARE THE INTERVENTION NEEDS IN SOUTH AFRICAN EDUCATION?

The following statement by Minister Motshekga (2010) gives insight into the extent to which the schooling system is not functioning and the level of fundamental direction it requires:

Good schools do the basics right. The school starts and ends on time every school day. Teachers and learners arrive on time. Teachers are well prepared for all their lessons, are in class and teach every day. Teachers consult parents when learners are absent and parents support the teachers and their children. Learners work hard, do their homework and respect their teachers. The entire school focuses on learning and does everything in its power to support learners to do better. A good school also has a good principal. The good principal has a vision for his/her school and gets others to buy into that vision. He or she leads by example and encourages learners to always strive to do better.

In the face of the numerous challenges outlined in this section, a case could be made for
interventions in most aspects of the system, including:

- providing leadership training for school principals;
- providing training and support for school governing bodies;
- building capacity of districts to support schools;
- revising policies to better suit the conditions of schools (as is currently being done with the curriculum, and could be done in other areas as well);
- developing measures to support teacher quality (including pre service and in service teacher education);
- providing support for Heads of Departments as subject leaders in schools;
- extending and improving Early Childhood Education (as an important foundation for later learning);
- providing learning materials for schools (as the Department is currently proposing);
- improving facilities and service delivery at school level (such as Equal Education’s campaign for libraries);
- implementing targeted programs to improve Mathematics and Science (such as the Dinaledi programme);
- implementing reading support programmes (such as providing books for schools and parents);
- supporting children through addressing their life circumstances (such as basic support grants for children in poverty; school feeding schemes; support for children suffering neglect, abuse and violence; support for orphans and vulnerable children, and so on); and
- working with rural communities to build forums for local voice in educational decisions (as is being done by the Nelson Mandela Institute for Rural Education).

*Given the extent of need in the system, choosing a strategy for intervention depends partly on judgement about how to improve the system and what the most effective levers for change might be. (The brief of this Report is to focus on leadership.)*
4. **THE COMPLEXITIES OF CHANGING HOW SCHOOLS PERFORM**

As a basis for decisions on interventions for change, it is useful to take into account the research findings on implementation of change in schooling systems.

Experience shows that bringing about changes in schooling is notoriously complex. Between a national department of education and its smallest unit of operation (the classroom) are many layers and many actors. Schooling systems have a number of different, interacting “fields of interest”. These cut across each other in ways that are not always co-ordinated or predictable.

Experience shows that policies and interventions for change are seldom implemented as intended, and apparent “levers for change” are likely to bring unanticipated consequences. Education systems are hard to change, and change takes time.

Elmore (2007) argues that problems of school quality and performance tend to be systemic. Constellations of social, organisational cultural and technical factors reinforce each other to maintain the equilibrium of the system – which may be at a low level of performance. Such systemic problems, he argues, are not amenable to piecemeal solutions.

Ultimately, the quality of a schooling system is delivered in the **smallest unit** – in the learning experiences and outcomes of students in classrooms. What students and teachers bring with them to classrooms materially and culturally makes a difference to the learning and teaching interaction. Quality depends upon what teachers know and do, and the schooling contexts they operate in. This is the **core of educational practice** and it is the hardest part of the system to change. It is easier to change governance, funding, and other visible aspects of schooling systems than it is to change the core of classroom practice. Yet it is here that quality is delivered.

A backward mapping approach gives a sense of what changing students’ learning outcomes might entail. The logic is as follows:

- Quality of learning experiences and outcomes for **students** may be viewed as the primary purpose of schooling.
• It is achieved in the smallest unit of the system, through the interactions of teachers and students with materials in classrooms.

• The quality of classroom interactions is heavily dependent on teachers who have competence and commitment. It requires an appropriate curriculum, good teaching practices, and a system of assessment that is aligned with the curriculum. Generally speaking, adequately provisioned classrooms, libraries, laboratories etc. provide support for good classroom practice.

• Moving backwards from classrooms to the schools they are part of, there is ample evidence that successful teaching and learning is influenced by the functionality of schools. The organisational capacity of schools and the quality of school leadership make a difference. In the South African context, the relationship between school management and governance is also a consideration.

• Moving backwards in one direction, the functionality of schools is supported (or not) by districts and departments at provincial and national level. In South Africa, districts vary greatly in their capacity and the levels of support they provide. Provincial departments vary in their competence, as do the different branches of the national department. Bureaucracies may easily become inward-looking and self-maintaining.

• Education bureaucracies operate with macro-systemic logics (eg of planning, resourcing etc.) that are (appropriately) quite different from the micro-logics of teaching and learning in classrooms. These different logics of practice cannot simply be collapsed since both are necessary for their purposes. However, it is essential that there are ways of communicating across them.

• Moving backwards from the school in another direction, is the importance of parents and community. Parent and community capacity and the support they offer (or do not offer) make a big difference to what happens in schools.

In fact, the socioeconomic context of schools has a major effect on school outcomes. It has been found to be the major predictor of achievement, and the major determinant of students’ life chances.
The context of the school, and its composition, are major influences on the quality of learning and teaching it provides.

This may be presented diagrammatically as follows – provided the “layers” are viewed as overlapping fields of practice not simple concentric circles.

The Eastern Cape researcher for this Project (Ntombozuko Duku) summed up findings from interviews as follows (see Appendix A for more detail):

- Sustainable quality is achieved through a systematic approach through development and transformation not only at school level but also in the surrounding school environment as well.

- There seems to be a relationship between quality education in schools and the quality of leadership at the Education District Office level.
• There is a link between school performance and the quality of leadership at school level and at the district.

• The promotion of quality education should always place leadership and management at the centre.

• Quality education is a collective initiative inclusive of all the school stakeholders.

• Lack of resources seems to be a hindering factor to district officials’ monitoring and support of schools.

• The lack of visionary leadership seems to have a crippling effect on both the mid level and “novice” managers at the district level. For example there is no collective planning by the different sections at the district and provincial levels and that leads to lack of co-ordination.

• At school, district and provincial level, there seems to be no skills development plan and when the plan exists it is not implemented. As a result, from the school level up to the provincial, new staff members are not inducted into their position.

• There is a need to re-conceptualise performance management in education. Its link to salary progression has adverse effects on quality education.... Schools tend to rate themselves highly in order for them to get a salary increment. Moreover the situation is fuelled by the dilemma that district personnel are unable to monitor schools and verify data. As a result, officials are unable to identify school that need “immediate” intervention. The grade 12 results seem to be the only indicator of poor performance and intervention programmes are planned in response to them.

• The quality of intervention strategies seems to have a narrow view of how to improve the quality of education. For example the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP) focused on learner support for exams and paid no attention to other key issues to quality education like resources, teacher development, parental involvement and quality of leadership at the school level.... Moreover the moment a school’s results improved the school’s participation in the MIP was terminated and that meant no monitoring from the DoE to ensure continuity and sustainable growth.
- Intervention strategies, transformation and translation of knowledge into power (for example in the National ACE School Leadership): The DoE invested on this intervention strategy, however without concretely-planned after-graduation support and monitoring strategies and also a plan for the purposes of cascading the gains from it to other principals and schools, there is a possibility that the ACE School Leadership will just be another intervention with less impact on the quality of education and leadership.

- There is a need to revisit the process of appointing school principals as this seems to impact on quality education. Issues to problematise are who gets appointed and why? (Longevity in the service; participation in teacher union politics; a traceable professional life characterised by dedication and professional growth; son or daughter of the soil; and so on.)

- The role of politics: Districts that are dysfunctional and have low learner performance have been found to be highly politicised. There seems therefore to be a need to involve teacher unions in the dialogue of “Quality education”.

These points provide one local perspective on the complexities of implementing a change agenda in schooling through the different layers of the system.

Also to be considered are the perspectives of students themselves. Very little has been written on this, suggesting that their views have not been extensively canvassed in relation to the change agenda.
5. “DRIVERS” OF SCHOOL QUALITY

In looking at the issue of school quality and how it may be achieved, there are different perspectives that give insights.

5.1 At the macro-level of countries


Among other discussions, the Report provides a case study-based analysis of determinants of quality, based on lessons from four countries that have achieved EFA goals, and seven countries that are strongly committed to achieving them (but have not yet reached them).

Case study countries that perform well on EFA have three common characteristics:

- A teaching profession held in high esteem, with high expectations of quality and well-developed pre-service and in-service training;
- Continuity of policy over time; and
- A high level of public commitment to education, emanating from a strong political vision.

Case study countries that have ambitions for achieving EFA but have not yet reached targets appear to show the following:

- Concerns with quality appear to follow after efforts to expand access. More progress is evident in indicators of gender and resource provision than in indicators of cognitive outcomes.
- Governments appear to play less of a leading role in providing a long-term vision for education.
- The supply of well-supported and motivated teachers seems less well established.

Given these differences, the EFA Report concludes that there is unlikely to be a single general theory of successful educational change. Political and economic context are crucial influences on what may be achieved.
5.2 At the micro-level of schools

As mentioned earlier, socio-economic factors have the most significant influence on school performance. That aside, there is a considerable body of research that has examined what features of schools have the greatest effect on student learning outcomes. (World Bank studies show that this is somewhat different between industrialised and developing countries, with schools having larger effects in the latter.)

John Hattie (a New Zealand academic) provides a synthesis of different in-school effects in the following pie-chart:

![Pie Chart](image)

Hattie comments as follows:

We have poured more money into school buildings, school structures, we hear so much about reduced class sizes and new examinations and curricula, we ask parents to help manage schools and thus ignore their major responsibility to help co-educate, and we
highlight student problems as if students are the problem whereas it is the role of schools to reduce these problems. Interventions at the structural, home, policy, or school level is like searching for your wallet which you lost in the bushes, under the lamppost because that is where there is light. The answer lies elsewhere – it lies in the person who gently closes the classroom door and performs the teaching act – the person who puts into place the end effects of so many policies, who interprets these policies, and who is alone with students during their 15,000 hours of schooling.

I therefore suggest that we should focus on the greatest source of variance that can make the difference – the teacher.

However, it is important to bear in mind that this research looks at what has effects once socioeconomic background is taken into account. As Hattie clarified later in response to critics, his work focuses on what happens in schools:

... critical dimensions about class, poverty... are not included.. not because they are unimportant, indeed they may be more important than many of the influences discussed [here]. It is just that I have not included these topics in my orbit.

Research on school effectiveness confirms the importance of teachers – yet teacher development alone does not necessarily result in improved student learning outcomes. Schools as organisations, and the contexts in which they operate, also need to be considered.

6. **LEADERSHIP AS A “DRIVER” OF QUALITY?**

6.1 **Caveats**

In exploring the notion of leadership, and how it might be used as a “driver” of quality, it is important to note a set of caveats:

- **Leadership is hard to define**

  “Leadership” as a term does not have an agreed definition or clear meaning. It is a contested concept among scholars and practitioners. *Leadership interventions are informed by different underlying interpretations of what leadership means and how it might be built.*

  The term generally has a positive connotation, and often stands for “success”. But it
is important to remember that leadership can be ineffective and misguided (and it is possible to “lead people astray”).

- **Leadership, management and principalship are not interchangeable concepts**

  **Leadership** is about exercising influence and setting directions. It does not depend on institutional location, and it can be exercised from any level in an organisation. It can be exercised by more than one person in an organisation – sometimes referred to as “density of leadership”.

  *Leadership development does not necessarily need to focus on those in formal positions or “at the top” (such as principals and School Management Teams (SMTs)). It could focus on different levels in the school, and on different tasks.*

  **Management** is concerned with the structures and processes by which an organisation meets its goals. It is not the same as leadership.

  *In the context of schools, a lot of what is termed “leadership” should more accurately be seen as “management”.*

  **Principalship** is about positional power. Principals need not necessarily have skills in leadership or management – though of course it is desirable that they do.

  Conceptual clarity is important if appropriate interventions are to be designed.

  *It could be said that skills of leadership and management need to be built at a number of different levels in schools to promote successful operations.*

- **The influence of the principal on student learning outcomes is not direct**

  All studies of school effectiveness assign a key role to leadership. At the same time, leading researchers (such as Hallinger and Heck, 1996) are clear that the effects that principals have are **mediated** rather than direct. In other words, it is hard to show that **leadership** effects student learning outcomes. Instead, leadership effects are to be found in the overall school climate, its organisation, support for teachers and so on. (And arguably, some of these effects are about management, as well as leadership.)
Another way of looking at this is to recognise that leadership requires *working with others to achieve results*.

- **Instructional, transformational and distributed leadership**

What form should school leadership take? Different answers have taken the front position as different times, and with different theorists and practitioners:

- In the 1980s, *instructional leadership* was an important focus
- In the 1990s, *transformational leadership* became a fashionable concept
- In the 2000s, *distributed leadership* has come to the fore as important

These different approaches lead to different emphases in leadership development programmes.

Surveying the impact of different leadership approaches on student outcomes, Viviane Robinson (2007) found that the *effects of instructional leadership are consistently and notably larger than the effects of transformational leadership* (though the latter has become more fashionable – certainly in South Africa).

Robinson identified five leadership dimensions that have moderate to large effects on outcomes:

- establishing goals and expectations;
- strategic resourcing;
- planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum;
- promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and
- ensuring an orderly and supportive environment.

This led her to conclude that:

The more leaders focus their professional relationships, their work and their learning on the core business of teaching and learning, the greater their influence on student outcomes. It is suggested that leadership theory, research and practice needs to be more closely linked to research on effective teaching, so that there is greater focus on what leaders need to know and do to support teachers in using the pedagogical practices that raise achievement and reduce disparity. (Emphasis added)

While this finding may seem self-evident, a scan of the literature on school
leadership and leadership development reveals that it is not always emphasised.

The concept of *distributed leadership* is well set out in the following extracts from an article by the US academic, James Spillane:

> Our distributed framework involves two core aspects: principal plus and practice... The “principal plus” aspect acknowledges that multiple individuals are involved in leading and managing schools. The “practice” aspect prioritises the practice of leading and managing and frames this practice as emerging from interactions among school leaders and followers, mediated by the situation in which the work occurs. In our view, practice is more about interaction than action. Putting practice center stage allows us to focus where the “rubber” of school leadership and management meets the “road” of instructional improvement.

> While allowing for the occasional hero or heroine in school leadership, our distributed frame presses us to reach beyond the principal to pay attention to other designated leaders. The work of leading and managing involves a cast of others in addition to the principal, such as assistant principals, curriculum specialists, mentor teachers, and department chairs.

> *Our distributed perspective is not a blueprint for leading and managing. Rather, it’s a framework for researchers and practitioners to use in diagnosing the practice of leading and managing and designing for its improvement.* (emphasis added)

**The significance of context for leadership**

Though there is a move internationally towards adopting Standards for School Leadership (including in South Africa), there is also greater recognition of contextual and other factors that influence leadership effectiveness and school organisational capacity.

In South Africa, the historical legacies of inequality mean that different schools face different leadership challenges. Assuming that a single leadership approach could apply to schools in very different circumstances makes little sense.

> *Targeted interventions are likely to be more effective in meeting the needs of different schools, rather than “one size fits all” approaches.*
To sum up

This list of caveats suggests is that interventions that use the label “leadership” need to be closely considered in terms of their assumptions about leadership and their intended outcomes.

6.2 Leadership in “whole school” context

Recent research from the Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago, Organising Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago (2010) provides important insights in leadership and school change. These are evidence-informed insights, based on comprehensive longitudinal research in schools and communities.

First, the study identifies five “essential supports” that make a measurable difference to students’ learning outcomes. A sustained weakness in even one of these supports undermined all other attempts to improve student learning. They define these supports as follows:

What are the Five Essential Supports?

School leadership: This support refers to whether principals are strategic, focused on instruction, and inclusive of others in their leadership work. Elementary schools with strong school leadership were seven times more likely to improve in math and nearly four times more likely to improve in reading than schools weak on this measure.

Parent-community ties: This support refers to whether schools are a welcoming place for parents and whether there are strong connections between the school and local institutions. Elementary schools with strong parental involvement were ten times more likely to improve in math and four times more likely to improve in reading than schools weak on this measure.

Professional capacity: This support refers to the quality of the faculty and staff recruited to the school, their base beliefs and values about change, the quality of ongoing professional development, and the capacity of staff to work together. Elementary schools where teachers were highly committed to the school and inclined to embrace innovation were five times more likely to improve in reading and four times more likely to improve in math than schools weak on this measure.

Student-centered learning climate: This support refers to whether schools have a safe, welcoming, stimulating and nurturing environment focused on learning for all students.
Elementary schools with strong safety and order were two times more likely to improve in reading than schools weak on this measure.

**Instructional guidance**: This support refers to the organisation of the curriculum, the nature of the academic demand or challenges it poses, and the tools teachers have to advance learning (such as instructional materials). Elementary schools with strong curriculum alignment were four times more likely to improve in math and reading than schools weak on this measure.

Researchers also found that weakness in one area can amplify the negative effects of another weakness, while strength in one can amplify the positive effects of another. For instance, 33 percent of schools with weak teacher educational backgrounds and 30 percent of schools with weak professional communities stagnated. But 47 percent of schools with weaknesses on both measures stagnated.

To summarise, school organisation drives improvement, and individual initiatives are unlikely to work in isolation. This has strong implications for states and districts focused on any number of reforms that have gained increasing political currency—for example, improving teacher quality, turning around low performing schools, or mandating a single curriculum.

It is worth noting that these research findings accord with smaller scale studies carried out in South African schools that have achieved success in difficult conditions:

A study by Christie, Potterton and others (1998) identified the key features of resilient schools as:

- A sense of responsibility and agency;
- Leadership;
- Centrality of teaching and learning;
- Safety and organisation;
- Authority and discipline; and
- Culture of concern.

(Three anticipated sources of resilience that were not strongly present were: governance and community relationships; parental involvement; and relationships with education departments.)

A study by Malcolm and colleagues (2000) of schools succeeding in mathematics and
science identified the following features of classroom success:

- Competent use of traditional methods;
- A firm belief that disadvantage can be overcome;
- Recognising the school as a vital modern institution in a depressed and deprived environment;
- Subject knowledge of teachers is the key to teaching and learning;
- Promoting hard work and discipline are important;
- Motivation on the part of the principal, head of department, teachers and learners plays a positive role; and
- Positive ethos is critical – even more than physical resources.

There is a second significant finding of the Chicago research that is pertinent in the South African context. The research argues that it is important to recognise that there are “truly disadvantaged schools” in neighbourhoods of extreme poverty and racial segregation. These schools face a “more formidable task of improvement” than may have been acknowledged to date – though it is indeed possible to work for change. In their words:

... in communities where there are few viable institutions, where crime, drug abuse and gang activity are prevalent, and where palpable human needs walk through the school doors virtually every day, robust efforts are necessary to ensure schools are organised for improvement. The hopeful news is that even truly disadvantaged schools can be organised for improvement. (2010)

In more detail:

The authors found the communities of truly disadvantaged schools had the highest crime rates and the highest percentages of children who were abused or neglected. Residents of these communities were the most likely to live in public housing and the least likely to attend church regularly or believe they could affect positive change in their community. Truly disadvantaged schools were seven times more likely than better off, racially-integrated schools to stagnate in math and twice as likely to stagnate in reading.

Clearly, the social context of schools matters. Indeed, the authors found that community factors accounted for most of the difference in stagnation rates among schools. For instance, schools in communities with weak religious participation were twice as likely to stagnate as schools in communities with strong religious participation. Schools in communities where people did not believe they had the ability to make a positive
change were twice as likely to stagnate as schools in communities where people believed they could. This pattern held true for social indicator after social indicator.

Still, despite tremendous obstacles, a handful of “truly disadvantaged” schools did improve. Over the seven-year period, 15 percent of “truly disadvantaged schools” showed significant academic improvement. While low, these improvement rates didn’t differ significantly from those of schools in predominantly minority communities, which had much lower rates of crime and child abuse and higher median family incomes.

The small group of truly disadvantaged schools that “beat the odds” and improved suggests that community context matters, but only so far as it affects the likelihood of developing certain organisational structures that the authors found were vital for improvement. Whether in advantaged or disadvantaged communities, very well organised schools improved and very poorly organised schools stagnated, the authors found.

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Applying these findings to the South African context (without transposing them uncritically across contexts), it could be said that there are important differentials in school context and organisation. These need to be taken into account when interventions are planned. A single approach to school and classroom improvement is not likely to meet the needs of different contexts.

7. CONCLUSION TO PART 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF CONTEXT
To conclude this section of the Report, experience of the Nelson Mandela Institute for Rural Development offers valuable perspectives:

The NMI believes that educational change and quality education can be attained through building relationships between the State, the civil society (local schools, parents, and community), the national, province, unions and higher education. Sustainable change can be attained between the partnerships and consultative processes.

NMI do have initiatives on improving the quality of education in rural- based African schools. However they believe that even those initiatives have fundamental impact, the impact will remain temporary and is always under
threat from a range of factors from the school and its community.

In the words of Brian Ramadiro, Deputy Director:

Whatever gains that we accumulate in a particular school will always be temporary. When we engage with schools, we need to work from top to bottom otherwise whatever we do will be temporary. What we do is to learn from these schools and share what we have and develop interventions. Involvement of the parents, learners and teachers is important in the process.

*At the same time, it needs to be borne in mind that there is a sector of schools in South Africa that function well (not unrelated to historical context). It would be a mistake to assume that all schools face the same needs and challenges in providing quality education for their students.*

**Business and schooling reform in South Africa**

*Business Day, 2 June 2010*

Ann Bernstein & Margie Keeton

Many in the private sector are asking how to make a real difference in education. What can we learn from international experience?

South African business has long identified schooling as an issue of concern and consequently a focus of significant corporate social investment. However little of this commitment and expenditure has produced much traction. In a struggling system, small, individual projects are not effective tools for impacting the overall quality of schooling or promoting meaningful improvement at scale. Responding to repeated official requests for assistance for *ad hoc* needs can only provide “band aids” and never long-term solutions.

South Africa’s public schooling system is extraordinarily complex. More than 12 million learners are enrolled at 30 000 schools in over seventy districts and nine provinces. Nearly 400,000 educators work in the system. There are huge differences within and between provinces, districts and schools. South Africa’s socio-economic inequality is reflected in the diversity of backgrounds and academic performance of learners.

CDE [the Centre for Development Enterprise] organised a workshop with US experts to see what we could learn from the American experience of business and schooling reform. Extremely useful insights and ideas for thinking about these issues in South Africa emerged:

*A drop in the ocean:* Spending on education by private sources in the US is less than half of one
percent of all spending in public schools.

Don’t spend when you can help the state spend instead: Many items supplied by companies to schools (computers, classrooms), could be purchased with public money, but are not. Why? Identifying the obstacles and facilitating their removal (by supplying less tangible technical expertise, and assisting in setting up more appropriate systems, or helping improve the business skills of school principals) can be more effective than covering the shortfall in one year in a few specific cases.

Stop feel good projects: Harvard business professor Rosabeth Moss Kanter argues that despite some 200,000 business partnerships with public schools fundamental aspects of public education have barely changed in decades. Performance is still weak; most projects function as “Band Aids”. There is too much temptation to tinker; to sponsor exciting schemes with charismatic champions. If business is serious about improving the efficiency of the educational system as a whole, then coordinated support for proven ideas should be taken much more seriously. Companies and foundations should work together to maximise the impact of their efforts.

Think big and bold: A complicated national educational system will not respond to small isolated influences. Engagement needs to happen at all levels of the system in a coherent, co-ordinated, patient way. Companies need to focus less on experimental projects and new ideas and more on taking proven ideas to more sites, and using their examples as models when advocating policy change.

Make a little go a long way: Businesses can make an impact beyond the infusion of money by sharing skills and expertise in well selected initiatives. Management and leadership skills are valuable to school principals. Advocacy channels can be used to promote a reform message. Good independent data is crucial for identifying areas for improvement, measuring progress and assigning accountability for success or failure. Policy makers do their jobs better when everyone has quality data. Better teaching will follow interventions that improve teacher recruitment, ongoing development and accountability. Be willing to take the risks that public funding would avoid on specific well-crafted innovations that if successful could be scaled up.

Build experts and expertise: Private donors often prefer supporting specific initiatives in particular schools. This can sometimes be useful but it can often be better to invest in the work of appropriate organisations with an educational focus, including research oriented advocacy organisations. These ongoing organisations persuade policy-makers to undertake reform, track changes as they play out, and assess outcomes. They can be a credible voice in the media and the larger public; and provide the continuity and systemic expertise that is required for effective intervention in education. The US Chamber of Commerce, Institute for a Competitive Workforce (ICW) is a leading example.

Don’t pay more, say more: Work done by Ernst and Young, the Committee for Economic Development and the ICW all stress – advocacy by business leaders makes a large impact. CEOs have media access, and their public statements and support for reform-oriented organisations and specialist commissions can powerfully influence policy change. This contribution can significantly exceed the value of a project grant. Companies should include schooling and human capital reform issues in their most senior public affairs activities.
LEGISLATIVE MANDATE

Since 1994, a number of policies have been implemented and legislation promulgated to create a framework for transformation in education and training. A summary of key policies and legislation follows:

1. The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa (1996) which requires education to be transformed and democratised in accordance with the values of human dignity, equality, human rights and freedom, non-racism and non-sexism. It guarantees access to basic education for all, with the provision that everyone has the right to basic education, including adult basic education. The fundamental policy framework of the Ministry of Education is stated in the Ministry’s first White Paper: Education and Training in a Democratic South Africa: First Steps to Develop a New System February (1995). This document adopted as its point of departure the 1994 education policy framework of the African National Congress. After extensive consultation, negotiations and revision, it was approved by Cabinet and has served as a fundamental reference for subsequent policy and legislative development.

2. The National Education Policy Act (NEPA) (1996) was designed to inscribe in law the policies, as well as the legislative and monitoring responsibilities, of the Minister of Education and to formalise the relations between national and provincial authorities. It laid the foundation for the establishment of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM), as well as the Heads of Education Departments Committee (HEDCOM), as intergovernmental forums to collaborate in developing a new education system. As such, it provides for the formulation of national policies in general and further education and training for, inter alia, curriculum, assessment and language policy, as well as quality assurance. NEPA embodies the principle of co-operative governance, elaborated upon in Schedule Three of the Constitution.

3. The South African Schools Act (SASA) (1996) promotes access, quality and democratic governance in the schooling system. It ensures that all learners have right of access to quality education without discrimination, and makes schooling compulsory for children aged 7 to 14. It provides for two types of schools – independent schools and public schools. The provision in the Act for democratic school governance through school governing bodies, is now in place in public schools country-wide. The school funding norms, outlined in SASA, prioritise redress and target poverty with regard to the allocation of funds for the public schooling system. SASA has been amended by Education Laws Amendment Act 24 of 2005 so as to authorise the declaration of schools in poverty stricken areas as “no fee schools”.

4. The Further Education and Training Act (1998), Education White Paper 4 on Further Education and Training (1998), and the National Strategy for Further Education and Training (1999-2001). The latter provides the basis for the development of a nationally co-ordinated further education and training system, comprising the senior secondary component of schooling and Further Education and Training (FET) colleges. It requires the FET institutions, established in terms of the new legislation, to develop institutional plans, while making provision for programme-based funding and a national curriculum for learning and teaching.

formed the basis for the transformation of the higher education sector, with implementation being informed by the National Plan for Higher Education (2001).

6. A whole spectrum of legislation, including the Employment of Educators Act (1998), to regulate the professional, moral and ethical responsibilities of educators, as well as the competency requirements for teachers. The historically divided teaching force is now governed by one Act of Parliament and one professional council – the South African Council of Educators (SACE).

7. The Adult Basic Education and Training Act (ABET) (2000) provides for the establishment of public and private adult learning centres, funding for ABET, the governance of public centres, as well as quality assurance mechanisms for this sector.

8. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA) Act (1995) provides for the establishment of the National Qualifications Framework (NQF), which forms the scaffolding for a national learning system that integrates education and training at all levels. The joint launch of the Human Resources Development Strategy by the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education on 23 April 2001 reinforces the resolve to establish an integrated education, training and development strategy that will harness the potential of our adult learners.

9. The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) (Grades R-12) embodies the vision for general education to move away from a racist, apartheid, rote model of learning and teaching, to a liberating, and nation-building and learner-centred outcomes-based initiative. In line with training strategies, the reformulation is intended to allow greater mobility between different levels and between institutional sites, as well as to promote the integration of knowledge and skills through learning pathways. Its assessment, qualifications, competency and skills-based framework encourage the development of curriculum models that are aligned to the NQF in theory and practice.

10. The Education White Paper on Early Childhood Development (2000) provides for the expansion and full participation of 5-year-olds in pre-school reception grade education by 2010 as well as for an improvement in the quality of programmes, curricula and teacher development for 0 to 4-year-olds, and 6 to 9-year-olds.

11. The Education White Paper 6 on Inclusive Education, 2001, explains the intention of the Department of Education to implement inclusive education at all levels in the system by 2020. Such an inclusive system will allow for the inclusion of vulnerable learners and reduce the barriers to learning by means of targeted support structures and mechanisms. This, in turn, will improve the participation and retention levels of learners in the education system, particularly with regard to those learners who are prone to dropping out.

12. The General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance Act, Act 58 of 2001, provides for the establishment of Umalusi, which is charged with the provision of quality assurance in general and further education and training, the issuing of certificates at the various exit points, control over norms and standards of curricula and assessment, as well conducting the actual assessment.

13. The National Financial Aid Scheme Act, Act 56 of 1999, provides for the granting of loans and bursaries to eligible students at public higher education institutions, as well as the administration of such loans and bursaries.

14. The Further Education and Training Colleges Act, 2006 (Act 16 of 2006) provides for the regulation of further education and training, the establishment of governance and funding of public further education and training colleges, in Further Education and Training, the registration of private further education and training colleges, and the promotion of quality in further education and training.

Source: Extract from the Department of Education’s Annual Report, 2006/07
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Part 2: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND QUALITY OF EDUCATION

Interviews by Pat Sullivan

With: Dr Nick Taylor (ex CEO, Research Specialist, JET Education Services), Mark Potterton (CEO, Catholic Institute of Education), Dr Martin Prew (CEO, Centre for Education Policy Development), Linda Vilakazi-Tselane (CEO, BRIDGE), Dr Lloyd Conley (Senior Lecturer, University of Johannesburg), Michelle Adler (Operations Manager, Equal Education), and Roger Millson (CEO, Governing Bodies Foundation).

1. Introduction

The central questions in this report are: How does good educational leadership improve the quality of education in South Africa? How can this improvement be measured? These questions are difficult to answer because training courses for school leaders, and research in the field to date, have not been designed to show this link.

This report will briefly examine various projects which have provided education and training for school principals and members of the Senior Management Teams. The report is structured as follows:

1: Previous training for principals
2: Department of Education ACE: School Leadership (and two evaluations)
3: Wits University Leadership Programme
4: Catholic Institute of Education (CIE)
5: The Education Leadership Institute (UJ)
6: GDE District Development Programme
7: Performance Solutions Africa - a KZN Initiative

The report closes with issues raised by educationists during interviews (Nick Taylor, and spokespersons for the Equal Education NGO and the Governing Body Foundation).

By looking at the previous and current state of school leadership training in South Africa, this report considers the assumption that leadership does make a difference because in well-run schools, where the principal and senior staff are present and working well, the schools seem to achieve at many levels: learners are happy, results are good, the
ambience of the school is welcoming, and parents are supportive. But this visible link raises a few questions:

- Were these good principals and senior staff in well-run schools trained to be good leaders and good managers, or did they learn on the job?
- Did these principals have the competencies when they started teaching? Did the context of the schools create opportunities for them to demonstrate their knowledge and skills?
- Do Governing School Bodies and/or other school structures have an impact on how well principals operate?

There has been very little evaluation in South Africa to correlate success in leadership courses with success in schools; we therefore have to rely on anecdotal evidence in many cases. Most principals respond positively when asked if they enjoyed and learnt from the leadership courses which they attended; yet there is limited reliable evidence to relate their new knowledge and skills to change in their schools. This is because training courses are generally not followed-up by school-based evaluations.

Traditionally, courses on leadership subjects are often found as electives or modules in Advanced Certificates of Education, or B.Ed., or Masters degrees. Traditionally, also, universities measure individual success in these courses by exams or portfolios. In a few cases, though (see later comment about University of Cape Town), there has been an attempt to see if change has occurred in the schools and/or change in leadership patterns if the principal has participated in a leadership course. This correlation is problematic to demonstrate. Education employers expect that if a principal has earned a certificate at university, s/he will have gained the skills and capacity to change school practice for the better. Generally speaking, university lecturers do not have time, or money, to visit schools on an individual basis, and this is especially true in courses where the number of participants in the course is greater than 20. And, when they do visit schools, lecturers’ assessment of what they can observe is usually not made in terms of an assessment grid but is made in terms of the lecturers “feel”, based on experience.

With this in mind, I started by looking at how principals’ training has come of age in the last 16 years by listing the policy directives that have emerged from the Department of Education, and then juxtaposing the range of leadership courses and training programmes against these. Simultaneously I examined the range of courses which have been offered, and what is expected of those who have attend the courses. Who have the courses been aimed at? What were the courses trying to do? Finally, I have looked
for evidence to see if the courses have been successful in skilling individuals, and if so, how this has impacted on the quality of education delivered in schools.

2. Previous training for principals

Phillip van der Westhuizen and Hermann van Vuuren (2007)\(^2\) give some interesting insights as to how we have arrived, after 16 years, at the range of training programmes currently offered to schools leaders. They point out that at the time of the first democratic elections, the government did not prioritise the professionalisation of school principals, and instead focused on governance in schools. Between 1994 and 1996, issues of governance and management started to become an issue for educational policy makers and administrators. As van der Westhuizen and van Vuuren state:

In the First White Paper on Education (1994) education management was likewise not referred to, although generic guidelines were indeed offered for school management. In the Hunter Report (1995) it was proposed, amongst other things, that a capacity-building programme should be developed for school governance (p. 435).

Before 1994 there was no formal qualification for principals. Most principals opted to study a university Masters degree. However, there was a growing recognition that skills training, with a focus on changing school practice, was needed. Two major NGOs were active in the early 1990s, namely TOPS (Teacher Opportunity Programmes) and MSTP (Management of Schools Training Programme); both these programmes offered skills training for school management.

The MSTP programme was offered in partnership with Wits University’s Faculties of Management and Education as a Further Diploma in Education. This was the first non-exam Certificate course in the country. It had elements of mentorship (School Change Facilitators worked with schools directly); networking (principals could only enrol if another senior staff member also participated, and the school had to be part of a geographically-accessible cluster of enrolled schools); leadership (an acknowledgement

that leadership as not just an individual activity but a distributed activity involving others [see later work of Alma Harris and a paper by Nick Taylor]); and a focus on changing practice, with assignments concerned about organisation change. The programme was adopted in the later 1990s by the universities of KwaZulu Natal, Cape Town and Peninsular Technikon.

However, the MSTP programme was not sustained: the cost of running a practice-based programme with an academic institution proved too great because the universities had fixed overheads and fee structures that were seemingly unchangeable; as a result, the practice-based aspect of the Diploma, which was the most costly part, was dropped by Wits and they returned to exam-based assessment. To contain costs, the University of KZN “bought out” the KZN-based staff and materials from MSTP and continued to run the programme, but it too found the costs of visiting schools too prohibitive, especially when numbers increased. As was the case with Wits, this aspect was also dropped.

UCT continued the skills-based programme, working in a different partnership with MSTP, but once again the cost of the partnership was too high. In all cases, the role of a School Change Facilitator or Mentor was deemed unnecessary, being too difficult to monitor but most of all too expensive. It is interesting to note that this aspect has been reintroduced in the DoE ACE course which is being conducted at present, and subsidised by DoE, at all universities. The policy directives, although acknowledging that there was a need for skills training, did not embrace, or challenge the universities to take on, what was seen as “not academic work”.

There were many assumptions about school leadership that underpinned the model offered by Wits and MSTP. These were:

- Leaders need **knowledge around key subject areas** in order to improve their practice. Some of the key subject areas were education policy, financial management, managing people, governance, and making change, *inter alia*. (All subject areas were primarily focused on improving management practice, not necessarily leadership skills.)
- Leaders need **practical skills** in order to manage their schools, such as planning, classroom management, giving and receiving feedback, time management, budgeting, writing policies, running meetings, delegating, *inter alia*. (There was no direct connection between the skills component and the academic part of the course.)
- Because principals were seen as stooges of the previous regime, and autocratic in practice, they were required to acquire an endorsement from their schools to attend the course. In addition, the principal could not enrol on his or her own, but was required to **attend with one member of the SMT, as a buddy**. In this
way, there was transparency of learning. (This aspect was difficult to maintain as enrolment of courses is an individual activity, yet learning as a collective and shared leadership – known as “distributive leadership” – was what was needed in the schools.)

It is interesting to note that some of these assumptions still underpin the courses that are being presented today. (These are referred to later in this report.)

Official sanction for principal training was not evident in policy documents during the mid to late 1990s, even though a DoE Task Team was established to look at the role of education management development in the country as a whole and to make recommendations. The report, produced in 1996, was a major milestone on the road to policy development, as van der Westhuizen and van Vuuren say:

This report was not only a turning point, but also a starting point, for the training and development of education leaders in South Africa. The highlights of the report were the specification of the needs and priorities of Education Management Development. This report established the primary focus of education management as being the promotion of effective teaching and learning. Reference was also made to the self-managing schools and emphasis was placed on schools as learning organisations (p. 436).

A proposal from the report was that a National Institute for Educational Management should be established. However, this proposal was shelved as it was seen as not entirely cost-effective, and with the absence of a policy framework in education management, support for the National Institute waned. Also, with the change in the Minister of Education in 1998, other priorities took precedence, most notably a swing to establishing Outcomes-Based Education and improving classroom practice.

National ACE (School Management and Leadership)

In 1997, The Education White Paper 3 introduced a single qualifications framework for higher education in South Africa. The purpose was to articulate and standardise qualifications across the country. The appropriate Standards Generating Body registered the Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE): School Management and
Leadership as a professional qualification for school principals with the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA). As Van der Westhuizen and Van Vuuren comment:

This qualification was subsequently developed as a National Professional Qualification for Principalship with the National Qualification Framework (p. 436).

The ACE is a very different qualification from the diplomas that were offered in the early 1990s and before. The unit standards that are cited require the issuing university to show that “students” can apply the knowledge they have learnt in a practical way. The response to this by universities has generally been to ask “students” to create portfolios of evidence. The cost of visiting schools to verify that the evidence is accurate still remains too high, and so portfolios have been marked by university lecturers on faith, with telephonic confirmation about deliverables in some cases.

Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance (MGSLG) (started in 2003) developed an ACE (c 2004) in partnership with the University of Johannesburg (UJ). The MGSLG ACE programme also included a skills component. It was intended that principals’ portfolios would be verified by District Officials; however, because District Officials’ work schedules were so heavy, such verification became unsustainable. Because MGSLG was supported by funds from the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), its work was strongly supported. The major challenge remained: how to set the standards against which the portfolios would be assessed?

During 2003 and 2004, draft policies around Education Management and Leadership Development were produced by the DoE; these aimed to provide a conceptual map for building capacity in leadership and management. This map was intended to co-ordinate all the activities and training of universities, NGOs and the nine provincial Departments, and to align all courses to this conceptual map. It was the beginning of pulling together a common set of objectives and activities for which school principals could be held accountable:

The vision for the professionalisation of principalship in South Africa emerged from a reliance on the potential effectiveness of decentralised, site-based management by the achievement of transformation in the education system. The national education management and leadership development programme is intended to be a truly national initiative because it is designed, shaped and owned by all role players and stakeholders (p. 437).
The South African Standards for School Leadership (DoE, 2007) emerged from the draft policy documents and set a common vision for what leadership of schools means and what principals are responsible for in their schools. The standards are written in the format prescribed by the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), and provide intended outcomes and criteria for assessment. This is an important milestone. With standards set, there is at least a common language around which to debate principalship; it also has been the starting point for the development of the South African National Qualification for Principalship.

The DoE convened meetings with all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and set up a National Management and Leadership Committee with a specific mandate, namely:

- To design a truly national qualification, which meets the criteria of the SAQA-approved ACE for principalship;
- To act as a reference group during study programme implementation;
- To set up and facilitate the course review progress; and
- To submit the ACE programme to HEDCOM for approval.

The qualification that emerged was:

- Generic;
- To be offered by all HEIs;
- A balance between theory and practice;
- To be assessed on site and in the HEI;
- To be offered to aspiring principals and not practising principals;
- To be funded by the DoE; and
- To include a mentoring component.

SAIDE was contracted to manage the writing of modules and the pilot was launched in 2008. Professor Tony Bush was commissioned to evaluate the ACE, and Pauline Matlhaela and Associates were also commissioned to look at selected aspects of the programme. These findings are referred to later in this report.

In 2010, the DoE ACE: School Leadership is seen as the qualification only for those who aspire to principalship. Existing principals have to look to other courses for training.
3. **DoE ACE: School Leadership**

I spoke to Dr Martin Prew, previously the Director for Education Management Development and Governance (EMDG) Directorate in the DoE. He reports that one of his main aims during the six years he was with DoE was to establish a standardised ACE: School Leadership and Management which would be delivered by all HEIs. This approach would create a uniform approach for school principal leadership training, so that teachers would be able to apply for jobs anywhere in the country, and their approach to leading the school would be aligned. It took many months to get the HEIs to agree to this programme, which was finalised in 2009.

In developing the ACE, Dr Prew made some assumptions:

- That an accredited qualification is the only way to train principals to lead and manage schools;
- That HEIs were the correct institutions to deliver the programme, even through there is a large practical, site-based component that HEIs are traditionally not able to service;
- That the payment from DoE – about R11,000 per student – was sufficient to cover all associated costs including visits to schools;
- That transformational leadership is the core principle underpinning the ACE; and
- That inspirational leadership would engender change and make a difference in the quality of education offered.

The above assumptions are clearly evident in the introductory paperwork\(^3\) that was prepared for the writers of educational materials by the South African Institute of Distance Education (SAIDE) in 2008. The assumptions were later adapted and included in the foreword of each module:

> The key focus of the ACE (School Leadership) programme is to facilitate real transformation in schools that is grounded in recognition of the challenges of particular contexts and the values underpinning the South African Constitution. Principals and would-be principals must understand that it is not acceptable simply to pay lip service to the ideas presented in the programme, to develop polices that are not implemented in practice or to adopt a minimal compliance stance. Instead, a deliberate attempt is made to encourage critical reflection on current practices, planning for improvement, action-based on informed

\(^3\) Personal notes given to the author.
understandings, and monitoring and evaluation that is critical and responsive. The assessment tasks set for students in this programme must yield evidence that the school has changed for the better in ways that reflect a commitment to and practice of transformational leadership. In this process, critical issues such as gender equality, HIV/AIDS, and improved and improving learner performance must be squarely addressed.

Originally the course material was to be written for both principals and would-be principals but this was later changed to exclude practising principals. The underpinning themes that were to guide the writing of the material are obvious from the above extract as transformational leadership and critical reflection, which in turn impact on action and delivery.

The first theme is “transformational leadership”, which can be defined as a type of leadership style that leads to positive changes in those who follow. Transformational leaders are generally energetic, enthusiastic and passionate. Not only are these leaders concerned and involved in the process; they are also focused on helping every member of the group to succeed as well. Another term favoured by South African courses is “creative inspirational leaders”, who are champions of learning in schools. However, given the very diverse needs of schools in South Africa, there is also a need for “instructional leadership” which relates very directly to the management of classrooms. These differences are not simply definitional; they suggest different priorities, and could influence the design of activities.

The second theme of critical reflection, also known as reflective practice, is central to the way the course is constructed and run. This dimension is developed through the requirement that journals that have to be kept, in which aspiring principals record what is happening in their schools, problems which occur, and how they are solved. In addition, the exercises which are built into the material are experiential by nature, requiring either individual or group reflection on a given scenario. Reflective practice is talked about as the ways in which students on the course interact when they engage in small group work, defined by different HEIs as either “mentoring”, “facilitating”, or conducting “cohort sessions”.

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4 [http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/a/transformational.htm](http://psychology.about.com/od/leadership/a/transformational.htm) downloaded on the 23 July 2010
Structure of ACE: School Leadership and Management

The structure of the ACE has some very distinct elements, namely:

- Six modules of content that cover key aspects of how to lead and manage a school;
- Mentoring of students through visits to schools, and group sessions in the universities. There are more group sessions than one-on-one mentoring sessions;
- Networking through group work, meetings, or small group assignments; and
- Assignments that require principals to enact positive change in their schools.

This structural outline is common in all courses that are presently being run by universities across the country. Surveys have shown that all HEIs are comfortable with the ACE structure, except for the mentoring aspect which does not fit easily within the confines of a traditionally-run university.

Problems of mentoring

The mentoring element is the most challenging for HEIs. As discussed earlier, this problem was already evident in the experience of MSTP when working with Wits University. It continues to challenge HEIs in their attempts to support principals and schools. There is generally not enough time, or personnel, to provide the required support. A notable success, however, was the ACE programme of Cape Town University which overcame this hurdle by entering into a partnership with a private company to provide and manage the mentors. Giving the universities extra money to establish and run a mentoring programme has helped to some extent, but it does not fully cover all the costs associated with:

- Group facilitation as part of, or separate from, the formal teaching sessions at the university;
- Visits to candidates’ schools to provide on-site support.
Networking has been interpreted differently by the pilot universities. MGSLG held cohort meetings on Saturdays; the University of Cape Town had cluster meetings; and other universities had meetings after lectures with groups.

The assignments were about changing practice in the schools. Many of the assignments involved working with the SMT and parents. The change practice envisaged generally reflected new behaviours, and new attitudes within a framework of different management systems.

Nowhere in the instructions to the universities was there a definite description of who should mentor and how mentors should be selected. Neither was there any clear definition of how practice-based assignments should be assessed. This was and still is a major weakness of the course and has been highlighted by the evaluation team that was employed to look at how the pilot course was rolling out. (See Executive Summary of Bush et al report.)

*Principles of ACE*

The implementation guidelines given to each participating university, also included in the introduction to each module, list a set of principles that guided the development of the ACE and how it should be delivered. These principles are inherent in the structure of the course, and the way that the course was written:

- Directed and self-directed learning in teams and clusters;
- Site-based learning (dependent on the content);
- Variety of learning strategies, i.e. lectures, practice and research portfolios, amongst others;
- Parallel use throughout of individual and group contexts of learning;
- Collaborative learning through interactive group activities, e.g. simulations, debates;
- Problem-focused deliberations and debate in group contexts;
- Critical reflection on group processes and group effectiveness;
- Critical reflection and reporting on personal growth and insights developed; and
- Research and experimentation.

The structure of the course is many-layered, and makes many demands in practice that are too numerous to meet.


Evaluations of DoE ACE

Two major evaluations of the DoE ACE programme have taken place recently.

a. Evaluation by Bush et al. (2009)⁶

Initially, Professor Tony Bush and colleagues evaluated the DoE ACE in five universities as well as the ACE that was offered by MGSLG. The latter has similar structural elements in terms of practice, reflection, and materials aligned to unit standards.

The conclusion of the Bush et al. evaluation indicates clearly that there is a need for accredited training, for both principals and aspiring principals. It is suggested that principals should undertake an Advanced Diploma in Education, while aspiring principals should undertake the ACE: School Leadership and Management.

Concerns raised by Bush et al.

In recommending these qualifications, Bush and his team are aware of the many challenges that have to be addressed before this could happen smoothly and to scale. Some of the concerns raised are as follows:

1. Most of the HEIs added material or covered only part of the materials sent by the DoE. The consequence of this is that there is not a standardised approach across the HEIs in delivery of theory and support materials.

2. The mentoring programme should use good, ex–principals involved in the process. The training of mentors should be intensive and structured around what “real” mentoring means. It is not sufficient for mentors to “visit” and “guide” or tell principals how to run their schools. More visits to schools are needed.

3. Networking between principals needs to be developed further so that they do not just compare notes about assignments. This means that the role of real reflective practice needs to be developed further.

4. The role of assessment should be primarily that of practice-based assignments and not on the traditional university-style written tasks. Regular feedback to students is also required.

5. The ability of the HEIs to take in large cohorts of aspiring principals has yet to be tested. There is an under-supply of university teachers who have the ability to teach on an ACE or Advanced Diploma in Education, and so reaching the required training numbers will be difficult in the immediate future.

Answers to research questions

The Bush et al. evaluation was able to provide only preliminary answers to the following two important research questions:

a. Does the ACE programme enhance the leadership learning of principals and aspiring principals?

The evidence from the research is that most candidates significantly increased their knowledge about school leadership, including relevant theory and South African educational policy. Leadership learning can also be facilitated by mentoring and networks. However, mentoring and networking processes have had mixed results (p. 203).

b. Does the ACE programme lead to improved educational leadership and management practice in schools?

The heavy assessment requirements of the ACE course actually diverted some candidates from their work and created weaker management practice. However, the impact study did provide some evidence of improved practice in terms of enhanced teamwork, classroom observation, and better relationships with stakeholders. However, these changes have not yet led to better student outcomes in all schools; in
fact, matric results and test scores in the short-term declined, not improved. More time for implementation of learning is required to provide an answer to this question (p. 203).

If it is accepted that the purpose of leadership in schools is to improve learner performance, then the ACE course cannot claim to be the answer, at least not yet.

b. Evaluation by Pauline Matlhaela and Associates

A further evaluation team led by Pauline Matlhaela and Associates was also not able to draw conclusions about the impact of the ACE-School Leadership course on leadership of the schools. However, they were able to make some important suggestions as to how to improve the ACE course.

The evaluators called for standardisation of ACE courses: “overarching recommendation that the DoE [should] take a decision upon the extent to which HEIs are allowed to deviate from the qualification as now registered” (p. 7); for assessments: “set fewer, more significant, more integrated assessment tasks to generate evidence of professional applied competence” (p. 8); “elevate the role of the portfolio of the PoE [portfolio of practice evidence], so that all participants understand that without verified evidence of competence in the workplace they will not be awarded the ACE-SL certificate” (p. 8).

The importance of meeting outside of the HEIs at designated times was emphasised. This meant that the HEI has to build up networking and group meetings. At present there is more time spent in classroom interaction than other activities. If this level of interaction is improved then collaborative learning will be in place. This was seen by Matlhaela and Associates as the key aspect that would make a difference. It was an untested suggestion, but seems to support what was seen on the ground by the researchers. However, there were certain necessary conditions that needed to be developed through structured debate or skills development activities that were necessary for this to happen, as developed by Lambert:

- Shared purpose
- Good communication
- Adopting a constructivist approach to learning
- Ability to facilitate group processes

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• Ability to mediate conflict
• An understanding of how change and transition affect people

To test this out, the HEIs would have to refocus their courses to be more site-based and to engage the principals in activities away from formal learning situations and text-bound delivery. This in fact is what the leadership course at Wits University aimed to do and to some extent it has succeeded. This is discussed next.

4. Wits University Leadership Programme

The Wits leadership course, which started in 2008, focuses on improving the practice of school principals and SMT members through:

• Saturday networking sessions where school leaders were exposed to input from experts in the field, all speaking on what is needed to change in schools to improve learners’ performance;
• Syndicate discussions under the guidance of Wits syndicate leaders, chosen because of their experience as school principals, or as lecturers, or as education facilitators;
• Completion of one page assignments on key topic areas;
• Receiving and using new and relevant resources, such as books and articles given out regularly by the university.
• Offering of short skills-workshops on key topics such as the collecting of data to inform school practice; and
• Emphasising that everything that is done in a school should focus on improving the performance of learners, especially in key areas such as maths and science.

Linda Vilakazi-Tselane was the coordinator of the programme for the first two years and was the champion of an important, innovative programme within the university.

The emphasis throughout the 14-month-long programme was on the exclusive offering of professional support to school leaders as there was a realisation that formal university programmes were too long and that immediate, short-term interventions were now needed. The programme was sponsored by GDE which was trying different methods to improve learners’ performance in schools and saw the Wits programme as making a helpful contribution.

Some of the principles that guided the way the Wits Programme worked with the schools leaders were:
• Respect for school leaders was essential. The approach was “you are a professional, with a brain, and can think” and we will treat you as such. This was in direct contrast to the patronising and authoritarian attitude that some District Officials approach and deal with school principals.

• Activism was encouraged. Principals were to work as a collective and challenge the lack of support and action, when it happened, from the District Office.

• The collection of individual schools leaders was seen as having the power to make a difference in their schools and networking between principals was encouraged.

Both the 2008 and 2009 intakes were excited by the programme. In the first year, there were more principals than SMT members on the programme. Wits had worked alongside GDE in deciding who should be part of this first cohort. In the second year, the GDE took control of the selection process and many more SMT members were sent to the programme. However, without the principal being present, the expected impact on schools would be less evident. The authority for leading the school is truly vested in the principal and s/he must be part of the process if improvement in schools is envisaged.

Vilakazi-Tselane identified some gaps in the programme as it unfolded:

• The role of the syndicate leaders was not clearly defined, up front, so individuals were allowed to develop the way they worked with principals as they saw fit. Some facilitators visited schools regularly and became one-on-one mentors. Others were not able to do so because they themselves were principals with demanding work commitments. Others were working in different areas and could not spare the time.

• The time allocated for discussions was not sufficient to allow for in-depth reflection and problem solving within the groups.

• Written work, even though a small amount was required, was not forthcoming from all participants and syndicate leaders had to use scarce time chasing up non-submission.

• The measurement of school change was done through submitted presentations, which could not be verified.

• The skills interventions (3 hours on a Saturday afternoon) were not regular or sufficient enough to effect school change.

Participants really enjoyed the course and attendance in the first year was high at all sessions. A central theme that kept emerging was how motivated individuals felt after

<sup>9</sup> Notes from interview with Linda Vilakazi-Tselane, 6 July 2010.
hearing key speakers and talking to colleagues about the challenges required to change the modus operandi of their own schools.

The author had personal experience of this course as a syndicate leader and noticed over the period of 14 months that participants stopped blaming each other for faults in their schools and started taking responsibility for their own actions and the quality of education. Where the principal was not involved or was not a willing participant in group activities, there was little change in behaviour.

The common factors between this programme and the DoE course, which seem to have a bearing on whether principals have become better leaders or not, are:

1. How well reflective practice is taught and encouraged;
2. The role of a strong facilitator or mentor in motivating and encouraging principals to change; and
3. Transformational leadership is the style that is encouraged and developed.

Vilakazi-Tselane commented that she wonders if the programme will continue in its present format, as there is a move afoot to issue certificates reflecting attendance and to bring the programme more in line with what is offered at the university.

5. Catholic Institute of Education (CIE)

A meeting with Mark Potterton, Director of CIE, confirmed further the importance of mentoring/coaching, reflective practice and practice-based assignments in the development of leadership skills in school principals. After many years of helping principals, mainly from Catholic schools, to improve their practice and based on three years of continuous research, the CIE has revamped their programmes to imitate Business School models for leadership development. Information provided in documents from the CIE state:

The CIE is moving towards the Executive Model of education developed in business schools such as Harvard. The model has three dimensions:

- Intellectual stimulation (this will be done through the seminars offered);
- Experiential learning (participants must be given assignments to put into practice in their own schools, as well as become involved in school exchanges); and
Reflective dialogue (participants will work together reflecting on the practical implementation of their knowledge).\textsuperscript{10}

Between the Wits University leadership programme and aspects of the DoE ACE and the CIE, there is a shared viewpoint around the importance of reflective practice, dialoguing and the need for some input through modules or seminars. However, there is still no long-term evaluation that says that these aspects improve the leadership skills of principals and that they improve classroom practice.

One aspect of the CIE course is that this course stresses role modelling. Potterton emphasises that their work with schools has shown that it is important to give principals an idea of what a good school looks like. Visits to schools will be built into this new leadership course, followed by dialogue about what was seen, heard and discussed. There will also be opportunities for principals to see how businesses/organisations run and visits to banks, prisons and other organisations such as mining houses are to become part of the programme as well. In addition, the CIE has appointed Regional Managers to act as coaches to the programme principals (possibly one coach to 18 – 20 schools) and these coaches will visit schools twice a term to support practical assignments aimed at bringing about change. They will monitor and review reflective journaling and also facilitate three plenary meetings a year, for three years, when all schools from a region will come together to receive input and to discuss challenges.

Central to the business school model is the importance of case studies and CIE will focus its group learning sessions around meaningful and relevant case studies. The CIE call this new approach to leadership development the \textit{Action Learning Approach}.

The traditional role of caring and ongoing support of learners and educators that is associated with the CIE’s work is not lost in this new approach. The ongoing concern that leaders of schools should be ethical and have good values is still embedded as is explained in the quote below:

\begin{quote}
The \textit{Action Learning Approach} deals with ... many of the challenges facing educational leaders where values and ethics are contested. Some of these challenges constitute “ethical dilemmas” ... (such as) deciding to support decisions promoting the good of the group or the rights of the individual ... a concern for either “care” or “rules” ... Care encompasses compassion. Looking at
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{10} From notes given to writer by Mark Potterton.
the individual circumstances and making a decision that puts care and concern for the person above rules and policies. ¹¹

The CIE has researched leadership issues over a period of three years and has come to the conclusion that formal university courses are not the answer to improving leadership of schools, as participants don’t read and don’t engage with texts. It is only through supported practical assignments that the CIE has seen change in many of the schools it has worked with.

6. The Education Leadership Institute (UJ)

The University of Johannesburg (UJ) has entered into a partnership with Harvard University to provide leadership training to a selected District (Johannesburg Central) in Gauteng. Dr Lloyd Conley was interviewed in connection with this programme. Dr Conley is a senior lecturer in Educational Management and Leadership at UJ and has experience in delivering the ACE: School Leadership with MGSLG. He believes that the new partnership and programme are more appropriate for the present leadership needs of the schools. The website for UJ gives the following summary about the new initiative:

The Harvard Graduate School of Education (HGSE) and the Department of Education Management at the University of Johannesburg (UJ) have developed an innovative educational leadership initiative to raise the professional standards for South African school leaders, national and provincial education officials, and other education stakeholders. Faculty teams from UJ and HGSE envision a three-year initiative to strengthen school and district leadership to support and improve the core functions of teaching and learning in schools. Designed to complement and enhance the current ACE program of UJ, the model provides a continuum of learning and leadership development opportunities for school and district leaders.

Objectives

During the three years, the HGSE/UJ collaboration will focus on building school leadership capacity to improve the quality of schooling in South Africa by:

1. Designing and implementing leadership training programs and short courses for leaders at the school, district and provincial levels;

¹¹ From notes given to writer by Mark Potterton.
2. Developing a Principal Network aimed at providing ongoing support and training for school leaders through online programmes and other professional development activities;
3. Establishing an Education Leadership Institute that will be a learning centre and supporting institution for the ongoing professional development of school leaders and South African DoE officials. This Institute, through its national focus on school leadership, will play an important role in the country’s collective efforts to improve education outcomes for students;
4. Identifying a research agenda on educational leadership, to be pursued over the course of the three years and beyond. The research projects and teaching cases developed through the course of the collaboration will become part of a national repository of scholarship and practice-based resources on effective educational leadership, to be housed at the Education Leadership Institute at UJ. These materials will become assets for all educators in the country, and will be designed to contribute to national-level policy discussions.\textsuperscript{12}

The intervention is a “Whole District Process” which Dr Conley described as “vertical”, in that the District Officials will be first trained, then Circuit Officials and finally school Principals and Heads of Department (HoDs). As stated before, the Johannesburg Central District has been identified for the pilot programme where 40 Officials will be trained as well as over 200 schools. Some activities have started. In October 2009, a Principals’ Network was established and since then four “conversations” have been held on current topics affecting schools – one was lead by Graeme Bloch based on his book \textit{The Toxic Mix}; another was a discussion on the DoE’s vision for 2025.

Harvard’s experience of working with Districts has been in the Boston area in America and their success with changing school practice through networking and coaching informs the way that the Education Leadership Institute will be set up. Notwithstanding the fact that international practice may not be appropriate for local conditions, because of the level and capacity of our teachers and our lack of resources, there are similarities to the Wits Leadership programme, the CIE’s new venture and the DoE ACE in that:

\begin{itemize}
\item Dialoguing or reflective practice is a central theme and activity;
\item Seminar inputs, called conversations are conducted, which give new content and ideas to schools; and
\item Coaching of school principals is provided.
\end{itemize}

\textsuperscript{12} \url{http://www.uj.ac.za/EN/FACULTIES/EDU/COMMUNITYENGAGEMENT/LEADERSHIPINITIATIVE/Pages/home.aspx} downloaded on the 26th July 2010
The coaching aspect is a very important part of the programme as Harvard has a well-defined and detailed training programme for coaches. All training of coaches will be conducted by Harvard personnel with support from UJ lecturers. The intervention is planned over three years which offers an opportunity to sustain the programme and incorporate a variety of learning opportunities. Dr Conley said that the eighteen-month-long ACE: School Leadership did not create sustained change in schools but he felt this programme would.

Coaches will be chosen from the ranks of former principals and business people who have an education background.

The Education Leadership Institute will open in Soweto and focus on schools in that area.
7. **GDE District Development Programme**

Gauteng Education Department is considering adopting a school support model which will require a total restructuring of the Districts and the Circuits, plus a clustering of schools geographically. The model has been trialled in the Western and Eastern Cape and is the brain-child of the Delta Foundation\(^{13}\). The rationale behind the model is that the Districts and Circuits need to be the support arms of the school and to date this has not happened. To make it happen, a restructuring of Circuits to create Circuit Support Teams is mooted. Each Circuit Support Team will offer a range of support services from curriculum implementation, to human resource management, to school safety. Careful selection of individuals to be part of these teams will happen.

The characteristics of this District Development Programme are:

- Schools will be clustered geographically into a community of practice of 10-15 schools (called virtual clusters);
- Circuits Support Teams will oversee these virtual clusters;
- End-to-end interventions will be provided by Circuits;
- Better capacitated and streamlined Districts will be trained and introduced to oversee the Circuits;
- Learning Area Facilitators will be up-skilled in their areas of content expertise;
- Coaching support and meaningful development of educators will be provided within the clusters;
- The capacity for education support and education operations within each District will be streamlined; and
- Management and administrative capacity of school management will be strengthened.

This approach reflects an important conceptual framework in the development of leadership capacity in schools:

- It assumes that schools will improve if there is consistent support from the Districts and Circuits.
- It believes that geographical clustering of schools will help networking between schools and sharing of ideas.
- It sees coaching as important to strengthen the resolve, motivation and ability to problem solve of principals and SMT members.

\(^{13}\) Contact person is Dr Andres Forbes, anforbes@mweb.co.za
• It sees Circuit Support Teams, with handpicked individuals, as the central structure able to leverage change and improve practice in schools.

It does assume however that the present District and Circuit Officials are the right people to become change agents. Were they chosen for their jobs with that in mind?

Previous District Development models such as the USAID supported District Development Support Programme failed to develop Change Agents. Reasons given for this include:

• The lack of motivation of badly placed officials to maintain support for schools.
• The District’s conflicting planning strategy was also a problem as there were always conflicting demands on Officials. Thus workshop training was difficult to schedule.

GDE may not adopt this District/Circuit model in its entirety but there are serious discussions presently underway.

8. Performance Solutions Africa - a KZN Initiative

The Performance Solutions Africa programme, run by Geoff Schreiner, has been in existence since 1996 as a private public partnership with several government departments. In 2005, Performance Solutions Africa held discussions with senior managers of several KZN departments to introduce a training programme on management to government officials so as to share best practice in business. This discussion led to a management programme being put in place for school principals and so the Principal Management Development Programme (PMDP) was launched.

The Programme is based on the premise that a good school has a good principal and that a good principal would have strong leadership and management skills.

The PMDP is a management course and consists of six one-day modules that are offered, one per month. The topics covered are:

• Planning
• Governance
• Curriculum Management
• Procurement
• Management of money/asset management
• People Management

After each module has been delivered, a coach visits the school and through a one-on-one session tries to help the principal achieve the objectives and tasks that are associated with the module. In this way, the Programme is very straightforward and not complex in design. The tasks set are achievable and not time-consuming.

Overall, there are 24 outputs that have to be delivered by each school, and the coach signs these off as acceptable or not.

The course is not aligned to the NQF Qualification but has been based on the perceived needs of the school as articulated by the District Office.

The supporters of the Programme would like to see it offered as a precursor to the ACE: School Leadership. At present there are 600 schools on the Programme. A major problem encountered is finding enough coaches to work with the schools, and going to scale will very much depend on this. The Programme has the full support of the KZN Department of Education.

9. Interviews

9.1 Dr Nick Taylor

Dr Taylor was the previous CEO of the Joint Education Trust, renamed JET Education Services (JES). He has recently retired from that position and is now working as a Senior Research Fellow for JES. Dr Taylor is a well-published author on education matters. He has extensively researched problems associated with the teaching of maths and science in South African schools. In doing so, he also has looked at the importance of school leadership in helping to improve learners’ performance.

When interviewed, Taylor commented on societal change and what he perceives as “patronage” in the system. He stated that leadership of schools was not able to change and address the issues of classroom practice by applying good instructional leadership techniques because the system from the top down works largely on patronage and not excellence. The system controls delivery mechanisms to schools and if these are not based on providing quality education then improving the system is impossible.
If this is the case then the adoption of a system-wide change programme as envisaged by GDE will be impossible to sustain. Taylor has used the theory of pedagogic relationships as described by Basil Bernstein\textsuperscript{14} to underpin his explanations as to why South African schooling is failing. Bernstein states there are three sets of rules that govern pedagogic practice, namely:

- Regulative (hierarchical rules);
- Instructional (discursive) rules; and
- Recontextualising rules.

The regulative discourse is the precondition for instruction and is the dominant one of the three, above. Rules and regulations are the first things that are created in pedagogic practice. In this regard, school leadership provides the regulative order in the school, which lies within a framework of culture, ethos and order. In middle class, more affluent, schools, the experience of social relations in the community and at home will influence how the rules and regulatory conditions for learning in the school are put in place. Parents will expect the school to mirror the rules and conditions that reflect their way of life and expectations for the future. Middle class homes offer their children more opportunities to analyse and explore meaning. Parents will want to see the classroom pedagogy build on and expand these.

Poorer families have different expectations of what a classroom should and can offer their children. Their social relations are based mainly on narrative discourse and in many homes uncontested discipline. Poorer families expect schools to discipline their children as they would at home and many parents cannot understand why schools no longer do so. Because of their own limited schooling experience, parents from poorer communities do not challenge the pedagogy of the classroom but they do challenge the rules and regulations that are initiated by the schools’ leadership, especially if they see that few are in place.

In this regard, Taylor\textsuperscript{15} argues that school leadership and management create the conditions under which teachers can work effectively: in other words, a school environment conducive to teaching and learning is a prerequisite for good school performance.


... this entails fostering among teachers within a school a shared set of values and understandings about such matters as what they expect of students academically, what constitutes good instructional practices, who is responsible for student learning, and how individual students and teachers account for their work and learning. This is Bernstein’s regulatory discourse (p.10).

Research undertaken by the Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Education Quality (SACMEQ) show that teacher absenteeism is a concern in several countries and has an impact on learner performance. Based on his own research, Taylor reports that time management is also an issue with classes starting late and learners failing to return to classes on time after breaks. He argues that teachers’ high levels of absenteeism and teachers’ lack of good time-management practices have a big effect on learners’ performance. Most importantly, they demotivate learners who begin to adopt the sloppy habits they see in the classroom in their after-school lives. Reports of undisciplined youth roaming streets come from parents and community leaders alike. Learners get socialised to place a low value on time, which leads to poor work habits and low life expectations.

Who is responsible for improving time management and reducing absenteeism in a school? Taylor argues:

> When asked about the problem of absenteeism and late coming among teachers, most principals tend to shrug and write off the practice to the unreliability of public transport, a lack of teacher commitment or union militancy. The failure on the part of these principals to exert a tight time-management regime in their schools is symptomatic of a general failure to take responsibility and to exercise control over their own work environment. It would seem that South African teachers, managers and officials have not transcended the dependency culture fostered by successive authoritarian regimes over the past three centuries (p. 11).\(^\text{16}\)

In conclusion, it would appear that if the leadership of a school concentrates on improving time management and deals with absenteeism in a constructive way, then two important structures/conditions for improved pedagogic discourse will be in place. Taylor argues that programmes and courses aimed at school leaders should take cognisance of this.

\(^{16}\) Ibid (p.11).
9.2 Civil Society interviews

a. Michelle Adler: Equal Education

A telephone conversation was held with Michelle Adler, Operations Manager of Equal Education, a Cape Town-based non-government organisation that works in poor areas of the Cape with youth and parents, which can be broadly defined as a civil society movement.

The Mission Statement of Equal Education is:

Equal Education (EE) movement of learners, parents, teachers and community members working for quality and equality in South African education, through analysis and activism.

Michelle Adler emphasised that most of their present work is, firstly, with youth and secondly, with parents. Their Cape Town offices are based in Khayelitsha and Kraaifontein, and youth from local schools are supported through advocacy campaigns or direct training/teaching. Parents are encouraged to get involved at all levels. The emphasis is on empowering community stakeholders to get involved in education so as to make a difference.

EE models itself on the activism approach of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC) and has taken the lessons learned from TAC to guide its work. Zachie Achmat of TAC sits on the EE Board, and a couple of ex-TAC staff members are now employed by EE.

The EE website17 states:

Equal Education is a research driven, community and membership-based organisation. EE advocates for quality and equality in the South African education system and engages in evidence-based activism for improving all of the nation’s schools. We promote the right to equality and education, with the firm belief that these will enable the poor and marginalised to an equal opportunity in life.

... We are building an understanding of the educational system, whilst drawing attention to problems faced by schools and their communities. Equipped with

17 http://www.equaleducation.org.za/about/people/board downloaded on 26 July 2010
this knowledge, EE offers a new way for people to participate in the democratic system and bring change to education and society.

Parents, teachers, religious leaders and community members are increasingly active in EE. The most active members are called “Equalisers”. They are high school students in grades 8 to 12. Equalisers have a leading role in the activities of the organisation. They work with EE to improve schools in their communities, and they set an example to their peers through their dedication to their own education. They participate in meetings in educational and planning meetings on a weekly basis.

Recent activities of EE include a peaceful march of students in the Cape to highlight their demand for school libraries. There was a 24 hour fast planned for 30 July 2010, to draw attention to the lack of books / resources in the schools and to pressure the government to deliver on their mandate to provide quality education. As was the case in 1976, learners are beginning to mobilise themselves to demand that they be given better educational opportunities and resources. Unlike 1976, the government is a democratically elected one that purports to represent the people, with a mandate to create equality in education.

What does this mean for school leadership? The fact that there is a growing activism movement should be a worry for principals and educators alike as it means that what is presently offered in schools is not viewed with enthusiasm by learners. Leadership courses need to acknowledge this growing trend and build into the programme school-based activities that deal with issues that emanate from civil society.

Adler commented on the increasing role that parents are now playing in EE. She said that initially parents were wary and fearful of getting involved but gradually have started to find out about what their children should be learning in schools and how to support them. Parents are also being encouraged by EE to use their voice through the SGB structure to lobby for better resources into and better teaching in schools.

Dealing with community activism could become a focus for a unit/module in any new leadership programme that is offered to school principals. There is a growing unease about the quality of education in our schools and more peaceful marches and demands could become a norm unless addressed by the authorities.

A final comment from Adler highlights the sad state of affairs in our schools and why activism is needed to lobby for educational change. It concerns a programme offered through EE by UCT students who are paid a stipend to teach repeat matric learners. She implied that these learners would have a better chance of tertiary education as they are able to repeat the matric exam with good tutoring and hopefully achieve good marks if they apply themselves. Those learners who just passed matric would be “in a better
place if they had failed” as the quality of their matric pass will not open doors, to tertiary education or to jobs – and they cannot sit again to improve their marks.

The aim of school leadership must be to tackle head-on the issues of poor teaching and poor exam results.

b. Roger Millson: Governing Body Foundation

Roger Millson, Executive Officer of the Governing Body Foundation (GBF), had very clear views about the GBF and where it was going. As the founding Executive Officer, he has seen the organisation grow from servicing a group of 36 schools in 2001 to 730 schools in 2010, with the aim of growing the Foundation to serve 1000 schools by 2011. The idea for the Gauteng-based GBF came after the Grove School governance issue in 2000 when Helen Zille, then a parent at the school, took the government to court and won. The government wanted to limit the powers of the schools on how they could appoint staff. The success of the case gave impetus to the growth of the GBF which formed so that the collective voice of parents could be heard by government.

According to Millson, the GBF is not a confrontational organisation but one that likes to work with government where possible. It sees its roles as lobbying, advocacy, building support and litigation/legal advice.

The GBF is one of several governing body organisations. These organisations, seven in total, represent the needs of different parent bodies, such as those who speak Afrikaans, those with schools where the majority of parents are black, those who have children in ELSEN schools, and those from previous Model C schools. GBF represents schools from all economic quintiles but the majority of schools are in quintiles 4 and 5.

Training governing bodies on their roles and responsibilities, finance, principles of governance, the law and administration are some of the functions taken on by the GBF. Millson observed that a majority of parents elected to governing bodies are “out of their depth” when it comes to understanding what legal recourse they have when the government issues circulars that they believe should be challenged. This is when the GBF comes in to play.

An example was cited by Millson around admission in 2010. Circular 21 issued in June 2010 by GDE says all schools are obliged to take in more children next year, because of an anticipated increase in migration to Gauteng from other provinces and other countries. This is necessary because of a shortage of high schools in certain areas.
Schools will be required to increase their numbers to meet what will this increase in demand, regardless of resources and class size. Millson and the GBF believe this is illegal as it goes against individual school policies and will create impossible teaching conditions. He said the schools will fight this on behalf of its member schools and the GBF is heading towards litigation.

When asked about how principals see their roles with governing bodies, Millson responded that some principals understand that they are ex officio members on the SGB, while others will “take over” and try and run everything. The tensions between principals and chairpersons of SGBs are well known, and Millson believes he can help mediate when necessary.

In the beginning of 2010, in order to prepare for a television programme, Millson sent a questionnaire to 150 quintile 4 and 5 schools to find out the challenges they were having. The results from the questionnaires are shown below:

1. **Financial Pressure, Maintenance Needs and Inadequate/Dated Resources**
   These factors, combined into one category, create by far the most serious issue. Quintile 4 and 5 schools without exception point to the struggle they are experiencing in balancing their budgets largely because of the school fee exemption issue which has been further exacerbated by the economic recession of recent times. It is clear that the extent of school fee exemptions increased significantly from 2008 to 2009, perhaps doubling overall.

2. **Admissions**
   Admissions, and associated problems, e.g. overcrowding, bullying tactics, immigrants and refugees, etc., constitute the second most serious concern, and this is not confined to Gauteng despite the reports we often hear of migration into that Province from surrounding Provinces and from other Countries. It is however particularly serious in Gauteng where there is a shortage of some 132 schools.

3. **Frequent criticisms of the Department**
   There were many criticisms of the Department of Education, especially but not only at District level, mainly inefficiency and incompetence. Many very strong feelings were voiced.

   **NB. Combining (2) and (3), dealing with the Department, creates a problem for our member schools almost as great as Financial Pressure.**
4. **Discipline**
   Our suspicion has been confirmed that discipline is deteriorating steadily. We suspect that this may be an even more serious issue in Quintiles 1 to 3 schools. We have undertaken to combine with another Association to develop a paper on the subject for submission by the end of May to the National Department. The intention is to advise on the extent of the problem and to make recommendations.

5. **Section 38A of SASA**
   The future of additional remuneration? Many of our member schools are worried about this. It is a high priority issue for the GBF.

6. **Parental apathy / Lack of support**
   Again, possibly a greater issue in the lower quintiles, but by no means exclusively so. Several of our members referred to “abdication” by parents of their responsibilities.

The need for the SBF and other similar organisations is growing as schools become disenchanted with the way that local government departments work with schools. Lobbying for action is one way that civil society can be heard and as was seen with Equal Education is a platform for change.

While the issues raised by GBF are not directly aimed at leadership within schools – on the contrary, they are aimed more broadly at the Department and other social and financial problems – these issues indicate the context in which leaders of schools have to operate. Leaders need to be highly aware of the important role which SGBs play, and essentially work with SGBs, and not against them.
Interviews conducted by Ntombozuko Duku (Eastern Cape)

The following are the role players who contributed in the discussion: Senior Education Specialist (SES) for IQMS, Deputy Director, Nelson Mandela Institute for Rural Schooling; The Eastern Cape Education Leadership Institute; School Managers; Education Development Officer.

From the interviews one can conclude that:

- Sustainable quality is achieved through a systematic approach through development and transformation not only at school level but also in the surrounding school environment as well,

- There seemed to be a relationship between quality education in schools and the quality of leadership at the Education District Office level.

- There is a link between school performance and the quality of leadership at school level and at the district.

- The promotion of quality education should always place leadership and management at the centre.

- Quality education is a collective initiative inclusive of all the school stakeholders.

- Lack of resources seems to be a hindering factor to district officials’ monitoring and support of schools.

- The lack of visionary leadership seems to have a crippling effect on both the mid level and “novice” managers at the district level. For example there is no collective planning by the different section at the district and provincial levels and that leads to lack of co-ordination of how the different section can view education as a shared responsibility and not work in silos.

- At school, district and provincial level, there seems to be no skills development plan and when the plan exists it is not implemented. As a result from the school level up to the provincial new staff members are not inducted into their positions. Most of the new staff members draw on previous experience and own research on how to effectively perform their duties. This scenario raises the question of systematic approach to mentoring and induction if we are to improve the quality of education.

- There is a need to re-conceptualise performance management in education. Its link to salary progression has adverse effects on quality education. For example,
the emphasis on salary progression when the IQMS was introduced has compromised its key objective of improving the quality of education. Data from schools on performance seem to have no relation with learner performance. Schools tend to rate themselves high in order for them to get salary increment. Moreover the situation is fuelled by the dilemma that district personnel are unable to monitor schools and verify data. As a result officials are unable to identify school that need “immediate” intervention. The grade 12 results seem to be the only indicator of poor performance and intervention programmes are planned in response to them. For example the Matric Intervention Programme (MIP).

- The quality of intervention strategies seems to have a narrow view of how to improve the quality of education. For example the MIP focused on learner support for exams and paid no attention to other key issues to quality education like resources, teacher development, parental involvement and quality of leadership at the school level. Moreover MIP was implemented as “product oriented” rather than “process and transformation oriented” MIP was more concerned with the product, i.e. matric results. If a school improves the results no endeavours were made to follow up on the process the school followed in improving the results and use the school as a case study. Moreover the moment a school’s results improved the school’s participation in the MIP was terminated and that meant no monitoring from the DoE to ensure continuity and sustainable growth.

- Intervention strategies, transformation and translation of knowledge into power: For example in the National ACE School Leadership: The DoE invested on this intervention strategy, however without a concretely planned after graduation support and monitoring strategies and also a plan for the purposes of cascading the gains from it to other principals and schools, there is a possibility that the ACE School Leadership will just be another intervention with less impact on the quality of education and leadership.

- There is a need to revisit the process of appointing school principals as this seems to impact on quality education: Issues to problematise: who gets appointed? (Longevity in the service, participation in teacher union politics; a traceable professional life characterised by dedication, and professional growth; son or daughter of the soil; and so on.)

- The role of politics: Districts that are dysfunctional and have low learner performance have been found to be highly politicised. There seems therefore to be a need to involve teacher unions in the dialogue of “Quality education".
See Appendix A for a summary of interviews.
Part 3: NEW DIRECTIONS IN QUALITY EDUCATION?

As mentioned in Part 1, the education department was restructured in 2009 to form two departments. The Department of Basic Education has the mandate to raise the quality of education and improve the outcomes of schooling (delivered by provincial departments).

The Strategic Plan of the Department of Basic Education (2010-2013) outlines the following eight key strategic objectives (which include leadership and management):

1. Improved curriculum implementation
2. An integrated strategy on the assessment of learners
3. A new integrated plan for teacher development
4. Workbooks for Grades R to 9 learners
5. Enhanced education management development capacity within the system
6. The “Schooling 2025” action plan
7. Better reporting on the state of basic education
8. Promotion of the e-Education strategy through web-based access to education information

Draft Action Plan to 2014: Towards Schooling 2025

In August 2010, the Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshegka, gazetted for public comment an Action Plan with 27 national goals for improving quality in South African schools (Gazette 33434, 2010).

At this point, it is too soon to comment on the Action Plan. Suffice it to say for this Report that the scope of the plan is vast, and that it includes among its goals the improvement of school management processes and school functionality.

The following is a summary of 27 goals in the Action Plan:
The goals of the Action Plan

The Action Plan has 27 goals. Goals 1 to 13 deal with outputs we want to achieve in relation to learning and enrolments.

1 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 3 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and numeracy competencies for Grade 3.
2 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 6 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 6.
3 - Increase the number of learners in Grade 9 who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum language and mathematics competencies for Grade 9.
4 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme at a university.
5 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass mathematics.
6 - Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass physical science.
7 - Improve the average performance in languages of Grade 6 learners.
8 - Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 6 learners.
9 - Improve the average performance in mathematics of Grade 8 learners.
10 - Ensure that all children remain effectively enrolled in school up to the year in which they turn 15.
11 - Improve the access of children to quality early childhood development (ECD) below Grade 1.
12 - Improve the grade promotion of learners through the Grades 1 to 9 phases of school.
13 - Improve the access of youth to Further Education and Training beyond Grade 9.

Goals 14 to 27 deal with the things we must do to achieve our 13 output goals.

14 - Attract in each year a new group of young, motivated and appropriately trained teachers into the teaching profession.
15 - Ensure that the availability and utilisation of teachers is such that excessively large classes are avoided.
16 - Improve the professionalism, teaching skills, subject knowledge and computer literacy of teachers throughout their entire careers.
17 - Strive for a teacher workforce that is healthy and enjoys a sense of job satisfaction.
18 - Ensure that learners cover all the topics and skills areas that they should cover within their current school year.
19 - Ensure that every learner has access to the minimum set of textbooks and workbooks required according to national policy.
20 - Increase access amongst learners to a wide range of media, including computers, which enrich their education.
21 - Ensure that the basic annual management processes occur across all schools in the country in a way that contributes towards a functional school environment.

22 - Improve parent and community participation in the governance of schools, partly by improving access to important information via the e-Education strategy.

23 - Ensure that all schools are funded at least at the minimum per learner levels determined nationally and that funds are utilised transparently and effectively.

24 - Ensure that the physical infrastructure and environment of every school inspires learners to want to come to school and learn, and teachers to teach.

25 - Use the school as a location to promote access amongst children to the full range of public health and poverty reduction interventions.

26 - Increase the number of schools which effectively implement the inclusive education policy and have access to centers which offer specialist services.

27 - Improve the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools, partly through better use of e-Education.

Each of these 27 goals is set out in more detail, with an indication of what the government perceives the problem to be, what it is doing to address this, and what the indicators of success might be.

Goals 21 and 27 have particular relevance to leadership (the focus of this Report), and are presented below in more detail.

Goal 21 - Ensure that the basic annual management processes occur across all schools in the country in a way that contributes towards a functional school environment.

What is the problem? A school where learners learn and there is a sense of harmony is often a school with an outstanding school principal. The schooling system has many such principals. However, there are also many principals who need support and training in order to do their jobs properly. For good management and leadership, some basic building blocks must be in place. The school needs a budget, a school development plan, properly completed learner and staff attendance rosters, schedules of learner assessment scores, annual financial statements and an annual report. These things on their own are not enough, but if they are not in place it becomes much more difficult to create a functional school environment. We know that these basic building blocks do not exist in all schools.

What is government doing? Training and support is offered fairly regularly to most school principals. For example, over 90% of principals say they receive support in financial
management and most say this occurs on average once a year. The problem is that only 40% of principals who receive this support rate it as being good.

Government will improve training and support to principals, and ensure that everyone who needs it receives it. There will be a special effort to ensure that all schools have the “building blocks” mentioned above, and that these documents not only exist, but are put together in a way that contributes to a better run school. As more schools gain access to computers and the internet, more of the administration of schools will become computerised.

What should you be doing? School management is another area where schools and the private sector could work more closely together. If you are in the private sector, consider whether your company could organise joint management and leadership workshops for school principals in your area.

How will we know when things are getting better? There will be a more logical way than in the past for districts to rate the management and basic functionality of schools. Districts will provide some of the information we need to see if we are reaching this goal. But the national department will also monitor schools directly to check that improvements are happening.

And:

This goal deals with support by district offices.
Goal 27 - Improve the frequency and quality of the monitoring and support services provided by district offices to schools, partly through better use of e-Education.

What is the problem? For many of the goals mentioned in this Action Plan, the districts carry a lot of responsibility. For example, they are expected to produce the district-wide ANA report, monitor whether schools teach everything they should within the year, and so on. The problem is that many district offices do not have enough staff or find that the existing staff do not have all the skills they need. This means they are not able to provide the quantity and the quality of support to schools that is needed, nor are they able to do all the monitoring they should.

What is government doing? Recent statistics indicate that over 90% of schools are visited by district officials at least once in a year, and that 35% of schools are visited four or more times. All schools should be visited at least twice every year and certain schools, especially those needing more support, should be visited more frequently. The national department, together with the provincial departments, will put together a clearer list of support that schools can expect from districts, and information that schools need to provide districts
with. This will make it easier for schools and districts to focus on what is really important. When verification ANA occurs every second year, selected schools will be asked to evaluate the support they get from districts so that it becomes clearer what support services need to be improved. Through e-Education the sharing of information between schools and the district office will become easier.

What should you be doing? As a parent on the SGB you should be aware of what the district office requires of the school and what support the district can give the school.

How will we know when things are getting better? The number of visits per year by district officials to schools and the rating that school principals give of the services of the district will be important measures of how well we are doing.

Other statements on school leadership and management

- In her Budget Vote Speech of 2010, Minister Motshekga announced that the government intended to target 8000 principals and deputy principals to undertake the ACE in School Leadership and Management between 2010/11 and 2014/15. In addition, “all school leaders from underperforming secondary schools and their feeder primary schools” would complete stand-alone ACE modules. She also announced the intention to strengthen accountability lines between principals and the department, and the importance of maintaining accountability lines within schools to the principal and SGB.

- The section on “School Governance and Management” in the Department’s (2010) Strategic Plan, 2010-2013 comments as follows:

  Much evidence suggests that proper learning requires functional schools, or schools that provide an enabling environment for teachers. Even the best teachers will find it difficult to do a good job if the school does not have a timetable, colleagues arrive late, and there are no regular meetings with parents. At the heart of a functional school lies a good school principal. Policy on what a functional school is, is captured within the Whole School Evaluation programme and the roles of school principals are defined within the agreements concluded in the ELRC. The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) places strong emphasis on how various stakeholders contribute towards functional schools. However, it is recognised that policy on what constitutes a functional school, and strategies on how to improve school functionality and build the capacity of school principals, require considerable fine-tuning.

  The Department will examine strategies for enhancing school management, leadership and governance capacity within its directorate serving this area.
**Key strategic objective 5: A national education management development academy**

To strengthen policy, research and development within the Department on education leadership, management and governance.

**Indicators and targets for the above**

By early 2011 a detailed proposal on enhancing education leadership, management and governance capacity within the system.

The initiatives mentioned above suggest that the terrain of education policy and implementation is currently shifting. Though it is too soon to comment, it is nonetheless worth noting the views outlined on principals, leadership and management, and school functionality.

This changing terrain suggests that spaces for leadership interventions may be opening in different ways.
Reflective comments
Pam Christie

1. **Overview on the status of education**

- The Ministry of Education has made a number of statements in the past few years acknowledging major shortcomings in the education system.

  The mandate of the recently constituted Department of Basic Education to focus on quality improvement and performance opens possibilities for change.

- There are deep inequalities in the South African education system, and the performance of the system continues – to a disturbing extent – to reflect its apartheid past. These inequalities have proven immensely difficult to shift, and an acknowledgement of the depth of the problem and its intractability is an important starting point in considering interventions to improve educational quality.

- The level of functionality across the system varies greatly, and this needs to be considered in planning interventions. For example:
  - a single, standardised intervention (such as insisting on a single leadership qualification for all school principals) does not take into account the different needs of different parts of the system, or the importance of context and historical legacy in school functionality;
  - there may well be benefit in trying to build on the functioning parts of the system – the schools that work – both to sustain these and also to expand their number, to use them as examples of good practice, for professional development etc.;
  - where schools are barely functional, the interventions needed may well lie beyond the capacity and authority of agencies other than government.
• Post-apartheid policies have tended to over-estimate the capacity of the system to deliver what it aspires towards. Given the extent of changes necessary, and the desire to achieve equity, this may be understandable. But lack of capacity has resulted in inadequate implementation of policies. Ironically, it has in some cases compounded problems of inequality and poor functioning.

• In some cases, the bureaucracy itself, and more specifically, the lack of capacity within education departments and districts, has impeded rather than enabled the delivery of quality in education.

   *An implication of this is that if an intervention depends on government agencies or districts for implementation, it may be necessary to build their capacity rather than rely upon it.*

• An accompaniment of over-ambitious reforms seems to be that the image of the average or normal school in South Africa is not aligned to what actually exists in schools. Most schools are black schools in former townships and rural area, and they are not well resourced. As the *Schools that Work Report* argues, it is important to work with these “schools in the middle” as the norm.

• Policies and interventions which assume well-resourced and well-functioning schools may, in practice, fail to target conditions in the majority of schools. There are many complex issues that schools grapple with, stemming from their contexts – and these need to be worked with in ways that engage contextual influences and differences.

• It is important that interventions in schooling take account of the complexities of school and system change, and the time this takes. Interventions need to be planned with realistic time frames and considerations of sustainability.

2. **Some points on school quality and school change**

• Ultimately, the quality of a schooling system is delivered in the smallest unit – in the learning experiences and outcomes of students in classrooms. There is a wide range of research that shows that this smallest unit is, in fact, hardest to change.

• A “backward mapping” approach, working from students’ learning outcomes to
understand what produces these, offers a useful heuristic for understanding points of blockage and leverage in the system. This is particularly useful in South Africa, where interventions are often “top down”, and where policy implementation proves to be problematic because of contextual difficulties.

- There is a plethora of research evidence that indicates that students’ home background – rather than school – has an over-riding influence on their life chances. Schools may certainly make a difference, but it needs to be borne in mind that the context of the school, and its composition, are major influences on the quality of learning and teaching it provides.

This is not to be pessimistic about the role of schools, but rather to understand their limitations and work to maximise their possibilities in providing quality learning experiences for students. It may also suggest the importance of interventions beyond the school in improving the life chances of young people.

- Research on school effectiveness confirms the importance of teachers – they have the largest in-school effect on student learning outcomes. Yet teacher development alone does not necessarily result in improved student learning. Schools as organisations, and the contexts in which they operate, also need to be considered.

- Research on schools as organisations also gives a range of pointers – confirmed by research in different contexts – as to what helps schools to work, and the organisational relationships within which leadership works. It is worth considering this research in planning interventions.

- Also to be considered are the perspectives of students themselves. Very little has been written on this, suggesting that their views have not been adequately canvassed in relation to the change agenda.

### 3. School leadership and quality

- “Leadership” as a term does not have an agreed definition or clear meaning. Leadership interventions are informed by different underlying interpretations of what leadership means and how it might be built.
Leadership, management and principalship are not interchangeable concepts, though they are sometimes treated as if they are.

In the context of schools, a lot of what is termed “leadership” should more accurately be seen as “management”.

It could be said that skills of leadership and management need to be built at a number of different levels in schools to promote successful operations.

Leadership development does not necessarily need to focus on those in formal positions or “at the top” (such as principals and SMTs). It could focus on different levels in the school, and on different tasks.

There may be good argument for an intervention on “instructional leadership” development directed towards heads of departments.

Consideration of leadership development programmes for students might be worthwhile.

It is important to recognise that the influence of the principal on student learning outcomes is not direct.

It is hard to show that leadership impacts upon, or improves, student learning outcomes. Arguably, leadership effects are to be found in the overall school organisation, support for teachers, school culture and so on. (And arguably, some of these effects are about management, as well as leadership.)

Another way of looking at this is to recognise that leadership requires working with others to achieve results.

Different approaches to leadership – such as instructional, transformational and distributed leadership – emphasise different development activities.

Surveying the impact of different leadership approaches on student outcomes, Viviane Robinson (2007) found that the effects of instructional leadership are consistently and notably larger than the effects of transformational leadership (though the latter has become more fashionable – certainly in South Africa).

This list of caveats suggests is that interventions that use the label “leadership” need to be closely considered in terms of their assumptions about leadership and their intended outcomes.
• Given that the principals’ work at school level is framed by performance management requirements, and requirements such as IQMS and SIPs, it may be useful to focus on these when designing leadership/management development programmes. (It is not clear, for example, whether the ACE: SL is related to these requirements of the principalship.)

It is also worth noting that different requirements on the school principal stem from different branches of the Department, and may not necessarily be well co-ordinated.

4. **Leadership development in South Africa?**

• Advocates of leadership programmes (including the national Department’s ACE in School Leadership) are often silent about the fact that there are schools in South Africa that have “good enough” leadership.

The fact that former white schools are generally adequately to well managed, and that former principals of these schools are regularly used as mentors in leadership programmes, needs to be acknowledged. This issue is “an elephant in the room” that should be recognised.

It seems particularly inappropriate to assume that all principals and aspiring principals should undertake an ACE as a requirement for principalship – particularly when some of these people (usually when they retire) act as mentors within leadership programmes.

It also seems inappropriate to provide a “generic” leadership programme for all principals and aspiring principals, regardless of the enormous differences in context and in school functionality.

The differing functionality of schools, and competence of principals, needs to be taken into account in designing interventions.

• Many South African programmes assume that “transformational” leadership is the appropriate form for leadership development. Why not instructional leadership, or managerial leadership, or accountable leadership? Why not a leadership programme based on the requirements of the principalship as set out in the various negotiated agreements?
• It is absolutely necessary to recognise the lack of capacity within the country to support the kinds of site-based mentoring that many leadership programmes advocate. This may well be desirable, but in practice it is not achievable. The two reviews conducted on the national ACE show that even for a pilot programme, this level of mentorship cannot be provided – there are simply not enough people to provide this. In addition, it is expensive and beyond the resources of most providers. And what is its quality? Is a survey result that shows principals’ satisfaction actually an indicator of significant or valuable learning? (Does “feel good” equate with “perform well”?)

• There also appears to be an assumption that retired school principals make good mentors. What is this assumption based upon? What training is offered to mentors? Are people who have been (successful?) principals in one part of the system necessarily able to mentor others who face very different conditions?

• Where leadership interventions require the support of departments, or of higher education institutions, it needs to be borne in mind that these may themselves require support in order to operate as desired.
  
  o While it may be the case that districts could play a supportive role in leadership development, the reality is that many districts are themselves not always functioning adequately, nor do they have the resources to support schools. This goes to the level of lack of motor vehicles to visit schools regularly – let alone capacity to provide relevant support to schools if visits take place. The quality of district support cannot be assumed.
  
  o Higher education institutions, likewise, may have a valuable role to play in leadership programmes. However, as the evaluations of the ACE illustrate, the skills and institutional practices of HEIs may not match the requirements of leadership development – particularly in terms of school visits and mentoring. This results in “outsourcing” (which may not be inappropriate, depending on the quality). It is quite clear that the quality differs from HEI to HEI – and requiring all to follow the same course outlines would not address this issue. It may be that involving fewer layers in leadership interventions would reduce complexity; or that planning take into account time and resources for changing these additional layers.

• In this regard, it is worth noting that HEIs are more equipped to provide subject-based support for teachers and heads of departments than support for school leadership. Using HEIs in an instructional leadership programme for middle
management in schools, including heads of departments, would not require the level of changes to institutional practices that programmes to support principal leadership require.

- Given that some schools and principals perform well in all parts of the system, the question arises of what role they might play in system improvement. The *Schools that Work Report*, for example, suggested supporting schools that function against the odds, and developing strategies to increase their number. There is no doubt that the principals of these schools would have a lot to contribute to debates on leadership improvement, and may themselves play a more extensive role than currently.

5. **A comment on “evidence” in the current South African context**

As a researcher, my experience is that the operations of the current South African education system are not easily portrayed in what has come to be known as “evidence-based” research. There are several reasons for this:

- While it is true that government information systems are slowly becoming more comprehensive, the task of compiling these systems has been immense. The data requirements for the different operations of the Department do not always speak to each other as a researcher might wish; data sets are not always compatible; and they are often incomplete. Building capacity within the Department is certainly receiving attention, but the task is a slow one.

The following selection of statements from the *Annual Report 2008-09* provide a glimpse of the difficulties of compiling accurate “evidence”, and the gaps that result from this:

From the Directorate of Financial Planning:

A Methodology for Costing a Basic Minimum Package for Schooling could not be developed, due to the high prices from bidders, which exceeded the available funds. This issue is being reviewed and work will commence sometime during 2009.

The Funding Norms for Inclusive Education and Special Schools were not developed, as extensive work on policy matters regarding the level of need for inclusiveness, still has to be
From the Economic Analysis Directorate:

The Education Investment Review and the finalisation of the education financing tool have not yet completed, due to a past lack of capacity within the Directorate. However, the Directorate is now on track to ensure the completion of these projects, since it now has a full staff establishment. (2010: 33)

From the Education Management Information Systems Directorate:

The development of the Education Information Standards is not proceeding at the expected pace. It was planned that by the end of the period under review, eight standards would have been ready for gazetting. However, only one is ready, namely the Data Quality Audit. The remaining seven Standards should be completed during November 2009.

The work on the finalisation of the Standards was originally outsourced to a service provider. Unfortunately the product was not satisfactory. (2010: 36)

From the Educator Performance and Management Development:

A full quota of external moderators [for IQMS] has not being appointed as yet, due to a shortage of suitable candidates. (2010: 38)

The moderators [that were appointed] reported that a significant majority of schools were trying their best to implement the IQMS processes, even though they were experiencing serious challenges and difficulties. (2010: 37)

From the Chief Directorate: Legal and Legislative Services

In respect of gaining the cooperation of PEDs, [Provincial Education Departments] one of the key challenges facing the Chief Directorate related to the monitoring function. The observation made in this regard is that some provinces were reluctantly participating in the provincial visits made by the Department. This has manifested itself in one or more of the following:

(a) Sometimes a province kept on changing the scheduled dates for the visit. This impacted negatively on the Chief Directorate’s planning and had undesirable administrative and logistical consequences.
(b) In some cases, a province agreed to the visit, only for the Chief Directorate to discover that the officials who should have provide reports, were simply not available, due to one reason or another.
(c) In some instances, a province accepted the arrangements and ensured that all officials required to participate in the meeting were available, but the required information was scanty or not available at all. (2010: 42)

The last comment certainly reflects my own past experience in working to get information from education departments.
• There are a number of good studies that present evidence relating to specific aspects of systems performance, but these studies tend to focus on particular projects, with specific interests, and are written with their commissioners in mind. They do not necessarily count as generalisable research.

• Where evidence is given in the form of figures and tables, or overall numbers, this provides little sense of the texture of the system and its operations in schools and classrooms in different parts of the country.

In this regard, the insights from “key informants” with experience of working within the system may prove more useful in understanding what works and why/why not, even if their “evidence” is weak.

• Turning more specifically to leadership programmes, it needs to be noted that these are not always documented or evaluated. The Wits Programme is a case in point. In my subjective view, it was an excellent programme, yet there is no systematic information on the programme available to researchers.
Appendix A

Interview with two Senior Education Specialists of King Williams Town in the Integrated Quality Management Systems (IQMS) section

What is IQMS?

IQMS is mainly concerned with quality in schools. It assists schools and SMTs to identify strengths and weaknesses within the school system (Developmental Appraisal)

SMTs evaluate the educators’ performance and recommend reward accordingly (Performance Appraisal)

It is concerned with the evaluation of the whole school (Whole School Evaluation).

Comment: The evidence of whether the above has taken place is done through minutes of the School Development Meetings, as well as tools used for teacher visits. Is this enough? Stories on some principals cheating the system have been cited during the interview.

How IQMS implementation is monitored

Each District employs Senior Education Specialists (SES)

These are fieldworkers whose main role is to provide monitoring and support to schools’ implementation of IQMS. In principle the SESs are supposed to visit schools everyday, but that does not always happen. When the SESs visit schools they check the SDT minutes, the school visit tools and assist teachers on issues of planning and assessment.

Profile of SES:

They must demonstrate expertise in curriculum development and implementation.

Comment from former educators whose schools had started implementing IQMS. SES 1: (former principal of a township school) reported “I was never trained or prepared for being SES but I could say I was prepared because my school had tried to implement SES”. Whilst SES 2: (former Model C primary school) reported that in her previous school as an SGB appointed educator, the SGB tasked her as curriculum head and to monitor IQMS implementation. She reported “in my previous school I helped changed teacher perceptions of IQMS”
Factors affecting the IQMS implementation

The two SES interviewed reported on the following:

Both officials were concerned about lack of management in the Districts. SES explained that “there are too many gaps in the District, including incompetent officials. People are put in positions and nobody is watching. Yet their levels of preparedness are not guaranteed. We are not nurtured by the District”

Both officials reported on the lack of District-based resources. One SES (male, a former principal in a township school) complained bitterly on the lack of transport, as a result he said “I spend more time in the office despite being a fieldworker”. He further explained that as a fieldworker he was entitled to a subsidised car. The second SES (white female, a former teacher in a Model C school) has just received permission from the District head to utilise her own transport in visiting schools for monitoring and supporting IQMS implementation. She went on “because I want to work and come from the Model C background I want things to happen, though my car is small and cannot get to some schools”.

SES 2 cannot speak the language spoken by the majority in her circuit and finds that a challenge.

Even though SES 2 has a car the high number of the schools allocated to each SES is such that she can’t do follow up visits to schools.

For the implementation of IQMS each school has to set up a:

Staff Development Team by the principal and peers

Development Support Group

Therefore the school size is sometimes a challenge for the proper implementation of IQMS. In some schools teachers are so few that teachers double as both SDT and DSG. Under such circumstances teachers cannot meet for planning purposes, as required by IQMS.

Teachers do not understand IQMS. SES 2 attributes this to when IQMS was introduced and emphasis was put on salary progression rather than promoting IQMS as a developmental tool. She went on to say in one school “the teachers refused to implement IQMS” and it was only after a workshop or two that the teachers embraced it. In this school even the Deputy Principal was initially against IQMS.
Link between IQMS and learner performance

Some school principals have scored themselves high in the IQMS score sheet and yet their learner performance levels are very low (matric results). Given the high number of schools per SES, and the lack of transport they find it difficult to promptly identify such anomalies and make follow ups.

Link between IQMS Unit and other Units within the District

There is no relationship between the IQMS Unit and other Units such as Curriculum Development Unit (Education Development Officers) within districts. The ideal situation is that after the SESs have collated data, they meet with Curriculum Development Unit and report gaps in teacher development and training. Unfortunately this is not the norm. The EDOs do not report back to SESs on their schools’ learner performance so that they can accurately identify the link between the IQMS and the learner performance.

Interview with Fort Beaufort District Official on the appointment of principals

Statistics reveal that in the beginning of 2010, 17% of the country’s schools have no principals. This contributed to performance in schools, for example in one school in Gauteng where they had not had a principal for a long time and the pass rate plummeted from 84% to 47% in two years. In the Eastern Cape 1800 schools had no principals in the beginning of 2010. This could be one of the factors contributing to the province being among the lowest performing in the country in terms of matriculation.

Interviews with provincial and district officials in the Eastern Cape showed how principals are appointed. Once a position of a principal is vacant, members of the school governing body and staff members choose someone among the staff to act in the principal position. He/she is paid an acting allowance during the period. The position is then advertised and interviews are conducted by members of the school governing body. They recommend the name of the preferred candidate to the Department of Education. The Human Resources Division will offer the post which in turn has to be endorsed by the district development. However, there are a number of challenges which pose barriers to the appointment of principals which were presented in the interviews by participants from the Eastern Cape provincial Department of Education, namely;
In many cases those that are appointed as acting principals expect to be automatically confirmed in the position when interviews are conducted. However, sometimes there are other candidates from outside the school who have better qualifications and experience and are recommended for the position. This brings a lot of conflict in the school because often members of the school community support the acting principal as they believe that he/she knows better how the school functions.

It was admitted by officials from the Department officials that they would like to appoint principals on the basis of geographic differences due to the fact that they would like schools in the rural areas which are most deprived to have well qualified and experienced principals. However, most members of the school community insist on confirming acting principals despite the fact that there might be other candidates from outside the school who have better qualifications and experiences. Often when the acting principals are not confirmed disputes arise in the schools. Hence to avoid having conflicts schools confirm candidates who are in acting positions and forfeit the opportunity to have better qualified and experienced candidates for schools in the rural areas.

In many schools members of school governing body lack the required training and experience to go through the process of appointing principals. Although most of them receive training to impart skills on their roles and responsibilities, it is either not adequate or too advanced to some of them. Hence, although they are required to conduct interviews for new principals and recommend the best candidate to the Department of Education, many of them do not know what they are supposed to do.

The SGBs are the main school agents in the appointments of principals. They are responsible for preparing the advertisements of principals in schools when the posts become vacant. The advertisement takes into consideration the curriculum needs of schools etc. However, as indicated above, in most cases they give preference to acting principals some of whom do not have the required experiences and qualifications.

Unions play a role in the appointment of principals in schools. They play an observer role in the appointment of principals by ensuring that proper procedures are followed failing which they declare disputes. Participants cited cases where positions of principals have not been filled for a long time because Unions felt that proper procedures were not followed by school governing body members when they were filling vacant posts.

**Interview with the Eastern Cape Leadership Institute - Coordinator of Operations**
Coordinator of Operations: One of the big problems is that we turn to concentrate on intervention in Grade 10-12, (those below 50% pass rate) because of the funding as well as traditionally these are the Grades that are externally examined. Our concern as the Institute is that as we intervene at these Grades damage has already been done at the lower levels. Unfortunately our decisions are influenced by the agenda of the MEC who gives funding. For instance we coordinated MIP but it tended to focus more on Grade 12.

Our focus is on teacher development and bridging the knowledge gap amongst the educators. We have been focusing also on the underperforming FET schools. Now we are about to focus on the primary schools leadership. We are also about to introduce a programme to focus on Grade 3 and 6, and Grade 9 literacy and numeracy next year. Curriculum training and management training we are going to focus on that next year. These grades are strategic because they will be externally examined and it’s going to be fairly easy to measure impact of the intervention. The fact that these grades are externally examined immediately puts a spotlight on the system.

With regards to MIP we decided to move to Learner Attainment Strategy (LASE). MIP did not have impact at all, as it focused on teaching learners during winter or summer schools and some of the teachers who taught as tutors were out of the system. The teachers from the under-performing schools were not getting the results they were hoping for. Three years ago I did a study on the schools that benefitted from MIP in 2006 and discovered that there was no significant impact. The individual schools were moving in and out of the risk levels of underperformance. In fact, the only different was that the cohort that changed was those schools whose matric pass rate was below 20%. This cohort decreased dramatically.

With LASE we are concerned with the holistic intervention, from teacher training to supplying the learners materials. It is more than a strategy on learner performance. LASE also puts emphasis on leadership and management in schools as well. I did a study on the performing and underperforming schools. Contrary to the popular understanding that resources are the main factor, the main factor that was different between these schools was the quality or absence of toilets. Schools with no proper sanitation tended to under-perform. These are the schools in poor communities. This means that if we were to tackle quality in schools we have to look at the whole system, including the environment that surrounds the schools.

The other factor was the school’s size. Those schools with learners less than 200 tended to perform very badly because of the low subsidy as well as the low number of teachers
who are then supposed to teach more than one grade because of redeployment. And the affected communities are not keen to have these schools dissolved and join other schools.

We work with the Curriculum Development in the Province and train them as trainers. We train EDOs and other District Officials to be the ones who train teachers and take ownership of the training. We have learned a lot from the Imbewu Programme (an externally funded programme), but our weakness is that we did not internalise the gains and lessons learnt from the Imbewu Programme. Once the donor funds dried it was that. With regards to the quality of leadership and management in the districts they vary. Some districts have strong leadership from the District manager. Some are dysfunctional, with the District Manger not delivering. Most of the dysfunctional district are characterised with conflict. These are mainly the deep rural districts that have been deprived in the past. Some of these are those whose agenda have been highly politicised by the Unions. With regards to LASE there has been some improvement in schools. When it was originally researched we had a choice whether we had LASE committee or committee of top managers. The government decided to have top managers in the LASE committee and the problem is that these are the officials with very demanding jobs. They are very busy for LASE. And this differs from district to district depending on the quality of leadership.

**ACE Leadership Programme**

We have also been involved with the ACE Leadership Programme and were working very closely with Rhodes and Fort Hare. We had a proposal to the Province that the District Officials act as mentors for the principals in the ACE Leadership Programme. As Leadership Institute we trained them. But what happened, particularly in East London and King Williams’ Town Districts (the Fort Hare catchment area), was that the EDOs expected to be paid and did not mentor principals. As such, we as the Institute ended up mentoring the principals.

The Grahamstown EDOs at Rhodes embraced the mentoring of principals. The difference between Rhodes and Fort Hare was that the Fort Hare lecturers were keen and very positive about ACE but had a problem with the mentoring part of the programme with the EDOs not wanting to do the mentoring. With Rhodes the EDOs were keen and carried on with the training and the Rhodes lecturers were not very keen on the programme, perhaps they were not very prepared for such a programme. In the end we had to carry on with the mentoring of the Fort Hare students. Rhodes taught
students during term time and had to take teachers out of the classroom. Fort Hare taught them over the weekends and during vacation time.

ACE is a very important component of improving quality in schools. I have spoken with some of the students who graduated from Rhodes and Fort Hare and are very positive about the ACE gains in terms of curriculum development and leadership and management. Sadly this year there is no funding for ACE and there is no second cohort. But we are going to look for funds so that the province can continue with the programme next year. In addition, we are going to propose that EDOs mentor students as mentoring is the main emphasis of the programme though very expensive. If we get the EDOs mentoring then the expenses will go down.

Lessons from the Nelson Mandela Institute for Rural Schooling and Development in the promotion of quality: Interview with Brian Ramadiro (Nelson Mandela Institute)

The NMI believes that educational change and quality education can be attained once the relationship between the State, the civil society (local schools, parents community), the national department, provincial department, unions and the higher education. Sustainable change can be attained between the partnerships and consultative processes.

NMI do have initiatives on improving the quality of education in rural-based African schools however they believe that even if those initiatives make fundamental impact, their impact will remain temporary and is always under threat from a range of factors emanating from the school and its community.

“Whatever gains that we accumulate in a particular school will always be temporary. When we engage with schools, we need to work from top to bottom otherwise whatever we do will be temporary. What we do is to learn from these schools and share what we have and develop interventions. Involvement of the parents, learners and teachers is important in the process”. (Ramadiro)

EXAMPLES OF NMI INITIATIVES TO IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION:

NMI’s approach to teacher development:

In the past teachers were trained outside their schools, and the NMI thesis is that they do not implement issues discussed in workshops because they do not believe in their applicability in the classroom context. NMI believes that unless we (NMI) do it, teachers
won’t have confidence. For example Ramadiro has been teaching in a classroom for two years in a primary school in the Transkei, and other teachers come and watch. After the lesson the teachers sit down and critique his lesson. He therefore cited that “We (teacher trainers) do not make ourselves immersed enough in schools and make ourselves vulnerable to teachers and have them critique our own professional expertise. That is one weakness of the teacher development approach. We need to work along teachers and experience failure, which is part of a normal cycle. We can start thinking with them. It is normal. In traditional training they are told what they are supposed to do, and the trainers do not even try these ideas with them.”

A SYNOPSIS OF NMI TEACHER TRAINING AND MONITORING APPROACH

120 children, teachers bring children from their schools and sit around in circle and watch us teach. (any particular training of the NMI staff? There are in-house workshops. They (2 NMI trainers) are also former teachers, including myself). We develop our staff in a continuous basis). We have to prove to the teachers that we can teach in these conditions and that learners can learn. This was very difficult

We offer support in schools and every week we meet with teachers in clusters to help them reflect on their practices. They discuss problems and best practices: what is working and what is not working and how. A teacher comes with one thing that works and one real problem. This works better than the usual training. We created these clusters to promote professional discussions.

Such a space needs to be created and nurtured as teachers do not trust themselves and don’t see each other as a resource, but wait for somebody to come and offer an opinion. They largely complain to one another and about each other. NMI helps them trust each others’ professional judgment.

LEARNER SELF-DEVELOPMENT AND THE PROMOTION OF LITERACY

In 2007 NMI started a programme known as Pemba Mfund. Pemba Mfund literally means that the learner should put the burning fires. This programme takes a form of learner camps that takes place once a quarter (4 times a year). The objective of this programme is to promote literacy and a sense of critical expression amongst the learners (Grades 7 and 8). There are 168 learners from the 21 NMI schools (8 learners per school). In these camps NMI let them read, tell short stories and put their thoughts on paper. NMI also trains these learners to go back to their schools and promote similar
virtues amongst other learners. They have also set us book clubs in their schools using the books provided by NMI.

Last year we published the learners’ stories and poems and autobiographies.

Part of the observable impact is that they are motivated to read and write. Some have reported to have “finished a book” which is an achievement to them. They are also very enthusiastic during the camps. Teachers report to us that learners have now developed a culture of reading and they show leadership qualities in their respective schools.

References


