



SACE

South African Council for Educators

*Towards Excellence in Education*

# World Teachers' Month

*A Special Tribute to Teachers*

October 2012



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**S A C E**

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**A TRIBUTE TO TEACHERS**



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# Foreword



“Education is the only way to change society towards a better life”.

Our father, Nelson Mandela, regards children as our greatest assets. He has taught us that Education is the only way to change society towards a better life. Hence teachers, generally, and in our Country in particular, have a key role to play.

Teachers strive to nurture and develop our learners holistically. In our context, teachers have to do a lot more than teach. Many teachers have to teach under difficult conditions. As large cohorts of teachers are not suitably qualified, they continue battling, against odds, to grow professionally. They are society's moral custodians. They call to order colleagues that bring the profession into disrepute. Various societal structures are sustained by teachers.

Teachers have been in the forefront of our struggle for freedom. They continue to strive for educational and societal transformation.

Teachers do so much, and are appreciated so little. Yet they soldier on as warriors for development.

On behalf of SACE (The South African Council for Educators) and all independent-thinking patriots, who refuse to be swayed by the media, we say: “Thank you very much”. We know your true worth!

*Happy World Teachers Month.*

Rej Brijraj  
(CEO: the South African Council for Educators)  
October 2012



# Creating a Legacy

## INTERMEDIATE TEACHING: MS. S. SALOOGEE



Ms S. Saloogee

Why is it that it suddenly gets cold and feels empty at the peak of a life-time of achievements? Why do we spend so much of our lives chasing goals and wealth and yet feel an inexplicable emptiness and meaninglessness when we've reached the finishing line?

Not all success results in a low and it is perhaps incorrect to suggest that a high octane life of achievements leads to veritable depression. Some people do enjoy the fruit of their toils up to the last moment, while others still find ways of placating the void through good deeds of philanthropy.

Whatever the case, the above is not a predicament that I personally have to put up with. Much of this has to do with the choice of teaching as my career, which I find increasingly fulfilling as the years go by. This is because being a teacher puts me in a unique and tremendously powerful position to be able to inspire legacies which go beyond my own personal achievements.

**"I bring reality into my class and expose young children to a wide range of worldviews and experiences."**

I am not in any way suggesting that the life of a teacher is that of deferring one's ambitions and goals to learners. If anything, I certainly consider my own life to be one of contentment in all respects, despite a harsh start.

As the eldest of four siblings, I had to shoulder enormous responsibilities at a young age. But being born in the beautiful sunny town of Rustenburg I consider as a big plus, along with the privilege of a good education, a loving family, great friends, wonderful colleagues and the precious gift of teaching beautiful children from different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds.

I have been in the teaching profession for nearly three decades, practically half of my life thus far. Yet I still find teaching as exciting as when I started out as a young person. And while the school building may remain the same, each year's learner, class and atmosphere are as different from one another as the preceding ones. Perhaps the only constant in all these passing years is my desire as an educator to help all my learners to reach their full potential.

While my main teaching subject is English, this goes beyond grammar and other rudiments of the English language. In my lessons, I strive to make sure the learners pick up more than the proper use of nouns and adjectives but that they are also prepared for the challenges of life. This is particularly critical as most of my learners come from difficult socio-economic circumstances.



## Making it relevant

My classroom is like a miniature world. I bring reality into my class and expose young children to a wide range of worldviews and experiences. In my capacity as a teacher and educator, I provide young learners with the tools to assist them along the life-long journey of learning. This means broadening the value of the classroom lesson to include life skills such as harnessing the power of reading and the English language in particular.

I try to encourage a love of reading by making the process as interesting, relevant and as engaging by covering a range of subjects, from sport, music, hobbies, discoveries, innovations and biographies. I spark and sustain the learners' curiosities and interest in reading by giving them tasks that encourage the exploration of the world of books for supplementary information.

I also make use of technology as a teaching aid by tapping into the innovative use of the internet and smart boards for classroom settings. For example, I have created a blog on the school's website called "Mrs. S SALOOJEE" that is used as a communication platform between teachers, learners and parents. School homework, rules, assessment, upcoming events, relevant articles and pictures are posted on the site.



"Charlie and the Chocolate Factory"

"[B]eing a teacher puts me in a unique and tremendously powerful position to be able to inspire legacies which go beyond my own personal achievements."

## Creative problem solving

Teaching is as much a creative process as it is about methods, and, fortunately, I am creatively inclined myself. A large part of my role as an educator is to instill creativity among learners as being creative lies at the heart of problem solving in life and engages all the learners' senses. A case in point was one of the most memorable lessons I undertook, which was around "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", the 1964 children's classic book by Roald Dahl.

This particular lesson became so all consuming for all learners and me as the teacher alike that we made a whole project of it. We set about transforming the classroom into the likeness of the factory that Charlie visited in his adventures. The lesson was as much about English literature and reading as it was about project management as the



children made life-size dolls representing the different characters in the book.

I firmly believe that children in the intermediate phase learn through play and activities. The "talk and chalk" method of teaching is therefore reduced to its barest minimum in my lessons.

## Moral guidance

Part of the void which comes in the wake of great achievements as I mentioned in the beginning of this article, is due to the lack of moral values that are so essential to putting things into perspective. It is for this reason, among many others, that I also inculcate good moral values in learners, especially through leading by example, over and above helping them acquire the necessary skills that would contribute to making their lives a success in the real world.

In this regard no subject is out of bounds. The learners are encouraged to engage honestly but with respect on issues ranging from race, gender, culture, substance abuse, religion, HIV and AIDS and bullying as these are the challenges they continually face.

If there is any legacy I would like to leave behind as an educator it would certainly be having created a love for reading among the learners who have passed through my classes. That legacy, I hope, would also include the fact that I had taught many of the lessons through the power of leading by example both in the classroom and in my personal conduct.



# A Call to Teach

## PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHING: MS. R. MOKGOTHU



Ms Mokgothu

That teaching is often referred to as the mother of all professions may at times sound trite and obvious. Still, this otherwise truthful statement tends to detract from appreciating the profession's most profound trait, which is the historic sense of teaching as a calling to service.

It is true that society owes a great deal more to the teaching profession than it acknowledges or credits. However, the growing hankering by some teachers over recognition in whatever form does huge disservice and damage to the historic mission of the teacher. The pervasive trend of self-attention within the teaching profession veers off the paths and traditions that have been set by our forbearers.

That teaching is now a career path, like any other profession, is not in itself a bad development. This, if not tainted unbridled desire for upward mobility and status, endears a sense of professionalism and the effectiveness of education.

Admittedly, both the teaching profession and its context have undergone radical changes over the years. Teaching has become increasingly complex, difficult and the environment within which teaching occurs is at times a hostile one. It is for this reason that the teaching profession needs to revisit its vocational roots.

### An honourable lineage

I grew up in Itsoseng, a small township outside Lichtenburg in the North West province. Although rural and poor, the Itsoseng I knew was an education hub that boasted of several primary, secondary and high schools, some with boarding facilities attached to them. The teachers I was exposed to exuded the spirit of the teaching profession in class and personal conduct that was underpinned by an utmost respect for the teaching traditions that were set by those who came before them. This is the honourable lineage and tradition that inspired me to heed the call to serve when I did pick up teaching.

The most basic tenet of teaching, namely imparting the knowledge and wisdom from one generation to another, has remained unchanged over the years. Only the contexts in which teaching occurs have changed over time, place and experience. Those teachers who taught under the missionary and apartheid eras had radically different experiences. Teaching in post-apartheid South Africa brings its own set of experiences that are marked by further segmentation of experiences within the post-apartheid schooling system. Apart from matters of culture, the differences are still defined by geography, history and economics, which all have a bearing on the quality of education and resources. The teaching experiences in the wealthy suburbs, with their attendant abundance of resources, are different to those in impoverished townships, informal settlements and especially in the rural areas.



Such divided persist in a country that has admittedly changed in many respects since the days of mission schools and Bantu Education. Indeed, many of South Africa's education policies continue to be a source of pride and acclaim the world over, yet a large portion of the past is still uncannily with us. Under-development, massive poverty and high unemployment are among the many stubborn legacies of the past with which the African child has to contend, even as they strive to attain an education in order to improve their prospects in life.

### A new breed of teachers

Dimakatso Primary School, where I currently teach, is situated in an informal settlement, in Soshanguve, north of Pretoria. The high levels of poverty in the area are so endemic to the extent that it is uncommon for learners to go without food several days. And coupled to this is the added burden of the impact HIV/AIDS that is indicated by a large number of child headed households, which naturally places huge barriers to learning.

**"Teaching has become increasingly complex, difficult and the environment within which teaching occurs is at times a hostile one."**

The situation at my school, and certainly those facing similar challenges elsewhere, calls for a new breed of teachers. This requires totally new insights into the role of a teacher and that of the teaching profession in general. More crucially, it requires tapping into those internal resources which were a hallmark of our forbearers as we, more than before, are called to serve the learner both in class and beyond.

Today's educator is called to be a parent, counsellor and advisor, which are duties that go beyond the formal subject content, but also providing support, encouragement and motivation to overcome the burden of poverty. My own personal resources to becoming a new breed of a teacher are rooted in my Christian faith, which influences my commitment to serve beyond the call of duty. It is also in respect that I consider teaching as a ministry and myself as a "pastoral teacher".

### Pastoral teaching

How does "pastoral teaching" find expression in the daily realities of teaching under difficult circumstances? Beyond the classroom, pastoral teaching finds expression in several projects that I am actively participating in at the school. Most rewarding of these is the school's Nutritional Programme, and is linked to the school garden. It always gives a sense of pride to learners and educators during harvest time when the garden produces all manner of vegetables, cabbages, spinach, carrots, onions, broccoli, beetroot, cauliflower and beans among many more that are critical to alleviating malnutrition among learners at school.

The school garden has won several Bontle Ke Botho sustainable greening competition. Popularly referred to as BKB, the campaign is spear-headed by the Gauteng Provincial Government to specifically encourage green and sustainable development projects in municipalities and schools in the Gauteng province. While under the Bana Pele Programme, of which I am coordinator for our School, we ensure that those learners who cannot afford school uniforms are identified and assisted with the support of the Gauteng Department of Social Development.



## Peer pals and learning

Dimakatso Primary School is part of the United Kingdom based Link Community Development (LCD) of which I am the contact person for our school. LCD facilitates partnerships among schools worldwide, links the respective school learners as pen pals or peer learning in thematic areas such as the environment, family life, arts and culture from the vantage point of participant countries.



The School's Vegetable Garden

**"The situation at my school,  
and certainly those facing  
similar challenges elsewhere,  
calls for a new breed of  
teachers."**

The school is currently partnered to Hawkedon Primary School, in Reading, in the United Kingdom. In 2008 I undertook a self-funded visit to our partner school in the UK and subsequently facilitated those of my four colleagues in June/July 2011, which they said was an eye opener and motivational. A similar visit to the United States of America is in the offing for 2012, and this time around in partnership with PS 321, which is a primary school in New York. The trip to the USA was paved by my visit to the country in 2007.

Learners at the school are encouraged to actively participate in indigenous games, such as diketo, kgati, morabaraba and dibeke that fall under the Provincial Department of Sports and Culture. The learners have won several competitions in the process of making sure that life is not only all work and no play, because lack of balance in this regard makes for a dull learning experience.

If teaching is the mother of all professions, then we are called to be jacks of all trades especially in the context of the fast changing and increasingly complex teaching environment. The challenges require of us as teacher to not only thrive to improve our capabilities and conditions as professionals, but also to more importantly revisit the basic tenet of our call, which is to serve first and foremost.



# A dream maker's job

## SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHING: MR. F. NAUDE



Mr Naude

I often find myself reflecting and looking back at my life through the eyes of a younger version of myself. In many respects it is through the eyes of a primary school learner who had many dreams. It's almost laughable to compare my current circumstances to what I envisaged all those years ago.

I always wanted to be a nature conservationist. I had dreams of walking through the bush at dawn with my backpack over my shoulders and a walking cane in my hands. Dealing with whatever problems I may face and then returning to my home long after the sun had set. Today I'm a Life Sciences teacher, who still wakes up before dawn and, ever so often, returns to my home long after the sun has set.

Would that little boy be proud of the older version of himself? I'd like to think so. I believe that, in a certain way, I am still a nature conservationist. Every day I teach future scientists the importance of this noble task. Hopefully, in this way, I inspire them to become ambassadors for nature.

### Passion for young people

It was only late in my career as a student of Zoology at the University of Johannesburg that I made the decision to become a teacher. Not because I couldn't do anything else, but because I had a passion for young people. This passion became clearer as I tutored first year students in Human Physiology. I contemplated becoming a full-time teacher even if it was only for a few years. The teaching profession always seemed like a lot of fun. After all, there aren't many jobs out there where you only work for half of the day and have four holidays a year!

After completing my Honours degree in Zoology I applied for a Life Sciences position at a secondary school in the western suburbs of Johannesburg. During my first year as part of the teaching staff at this school I only started to realise what it really meant to be a teacher. My perception of a career in teaching was so far removed from the truth. I don't think many people understand what challenges a teacher faces every day. This was also the case when I first walked into my classroom - I was all ready to change the world!

Equipped with only passion and a thorough grasp of the academic content, I ventured into the classroom eager to make a difference. I'd like to share a few of the lessons that I used in my different classes. Most of my lesson plans were designed with inclusivity in mind and strived to incorporate cognitive and kinaesthetic domains into the teaching process.



"My perception of the teaching profession was so far from the truth. I don't think many people understand what challenges a teacher faces every day."

### Making teaching come alive

For the Grade 8 Natural Science class, we often conducted little experiments which made the curriculum come alive. The experiments included germinating seeds in cotton wool; making profiles of the soil layers in cold drink bottles and the musical chairs food chain game to name just but a few.

The musical chairs food chain game is an adaptation of the familiar party game "musical chairs". In it learners individually represented an organism in the food chain. When the music starts, the learners moved in a clock wise direction around some chairs. When the music stops everyone was required to take a seat.

There would off course be one chair short. The learner who didn't get a chair was then eliminated from the food chain. If, for example, the eliminated learner was a producer in the food chain, this would imply that the primary consumers in that ecosystem would have less food and one of those species in that category would also be eliminated.

The chain reaction also had an influence on the secondary consumers too as one of their species would also be eliminated in the process that would finally have only one learner remaining. The exercise facilitated an understanding of how an ecosystem functions.

### Getting personal

At the start of the year, we typically kicked off the Grade 9 subject by baking cakes that resembled plant cells, and then moved on to practical demonstrations of the systems in the human body. The class even got as adventurous as blowing air into sheep lungs just to see how the lungs operated. Things also became extremely personal in the experiments as well, especially when learners were required to bring their own urine samples to class in order to test the pH, red and white blood cell count, specific gravity and ketone content thereof.

The Grade 10 learners were introduced the Life Sciences subject through a natural selection game. The game made use of different types of pliers and different sized small objects, which they then had to pick up with the pliers. The pliers resembled the different shapes and sizes of bird beaks. The more successful "beaks" or, in this case pliers, would generate more offspring than the less successful "beaks", which was indicative of an advantage in terms of the process of natural selection.

The Grade 10 Life Sciences classes which mostly benefitted from the above beak experiment I also went on arranged excursions to the Pretoria Zoo. We created a worksheet that the learners had to complete on biodiversity. This worksheet was presented as a game similar to "the amazing race".



The grade 11 curriculum allowed for many interesting methods of teaching to be applied. For example, we took bacterial samples from various places in the school and grew cultures in order to establish which areas in the school had more bacteria than others. An excursion to Maropeng in the Cradle of Humankind proved helpful in preparing the Grade 11 learners for the section on human evolution.

**"Make sure your hands are clean when you teach because when you teach, you touch the future."**

Apart from all these techniques, I also used interesting video clips and electronic media when teaching. I devised games and wrote songs that facilitated the learning process. This included using teaching techniques such as De Bono's hats and the jigsaw method in my teaching.

### Make sure your hands are clean

Being armed with an arsenal of different teaching methods and techniques helps keep the attention of the learners focussed on the lesson. This is however the kind of ability that does not fall from the sky; but is researched and learnt, by for example, locating one's self within communities of practice in which ideas are generated and shared between colleagues.

As what I've discussed hopefully illustrates, the role of the school as an institution should not only be seen as that of only imparting content knowledge. It should strive towards the holistic development of the learner.

When I was awarded a National Teaching Award in the category of Excellence in Secondary School Teaching by the Department of Basic Education in 2012; the recognition was a great privilege and quite humbling. But I can only attribute my success as a teacher to all the people who inspired me during my own school years. They set the example I wanted to follow and allowed me to create the motto I teach by:

"Make sure your hands are clean when you teach because when you teach, you touch the future."



# Taking a stand on quality teaching

## SECONDARY SCHOOL TEACHING: MS. P.S. NXUMALO



Ms Nxumalo

In 2003 when I was appointed Head of the Department (HoD) for languages at Ngali Secondary School, in the KwaZulu-Natal province where I currently teach, I posted the motto, Stand and Deliver, on the wall of the staff room. The motto is based on a 1988 film with the same title. The film itself is based on a true story of how an American high school maths teacher, Jaime Escalante, successfully taught a group of students who were regarded as social misfits to achieving the best grades in a "difficult" subject like maths.

The movie had made such an impression on me and inspired me to make a personal commitment to my learners, just like the main character in the documentary feature film. To me, Stand and Deliver represents commitment, focus, going beyond the call of duty and walking the extra mile. It represents putting the interest of a child first and Standing and Delivering against all odds, which is what drives me everyday to succeed in class and the school.

### Unblocking learning

Many learners find it difficult to read and understand some of the most basic subject content due to a pervasive lack of a culture of reading in general. This is a barrier that not only hinders progress in learning languages, but also accounts for the low literacy that blocks acquiring knowledge across other subject areas.

The paralysis that results from the lack of ability to grasp communication subjects was an urgent challenge and addressing it was a priority for the school as a whole. The overall success of the school hinged on the ability of learners to break the illiteracy barrier.

After securing the buy-in of the principal, I commenced the process of establishing a school library in 2006 by converting an old and unused classroom into a functioning library. Starting the library service with a collection of a mere two boxful of books was a challenge for a school with an enrolment of more than one thousand learners.

Moreover, advancing or promoting the idea of a library was an equally tough call to educators and learners alike. This required aggressive marketing to the library service's potential patrons. Perhaps by some stroke of luck, the efforts at establishing the school library coincided with the campaign that was led by the then Minister of Basic Education, Naledi Pandor.

The national campaign, Drop Everything and Read, became a perfect opportunity and platform for creating awareness around the importance of building a culture of reading in schools. The Minister's campaign was most welcome as well because it shored up support for what was generally an unfamiliar activity even for a school.



In the meantime I had established a library committee that was made up of those educators who were keenest supporters of the idea. One of the first tasks of the committee was to design t-shirts that were branded with Drop Everything and Read to be won especially on Fridays. The library committee also set out to educate learners and colleagues on the value of the library.

I recall a day when I was walking at school wearing the T-shirt in between break time when one learner read the message on the t-shirt and then proceeded to ask: "Mam, when do you want us to drop everything, now?" The frank response was indicative of the message getting through to learners at last. And in time we had learners visiting the library, but then the next challenge was procuring enough books to make the service viable.



Learners reading silently in the school library during break time

"Many learners find it difficult to read and understand some of the most basic subject content due to a pervasive lack of a culture of reading in general."

### Always on a lookout for opportunities

In 2007 I entered the library in a competition that is run by the Department of Basic Education. The school obtained first place in the same Rural School Libraries in Secondary Schools category. With the R15 000 voucher prize, we boosted our book collection. Also the competition had a marketing spin-off for the library as it increased the number of learners using the library.

Another spinoff from winning the competition was that it drew the attention of the DoE to our school library. Consequently, when the DoE launched the Accelerated School Library Development Project, aimed at improving libraries in KZN, our library was incorporated into the project among 25 others in the province.

Being part of the DoE libraries project secured us books to the value of R450 000 and ten computers with Encarta electronic encyclopaedias, all of which made for the well-deserved launch of the library. The school library was officially opened in March 2010 by the Superintendent-General of the KZN Provincial Department of Education, Dr Cassius Lubisi.

### Going beyond reading

In addition to the library's core mission of inculcating the culture of reading among learners and educators alike at the



school, it incorporates many other activities as well. The library marks special days such as World Book Day, celebrated annually on 23 April. In 2012 I introduced Pick a Book, Read a Book and Tell a Story, which is aimed at reinforcing the importance of reading.

Just like in the plot of the film *Stand and Deliver*, our learners often face many enormous challenges in their daily lives, some of which we ignore at our peril as educators and society as a whole. Through the library, we introduced a small project, called Healing Through Reading. The project is life-skills oriented and hopes to send positive messages and stories about HIV and AIDS to individual learners who are infected or affected by the disease.

**"The teaching process has also enabled me to learn a great deal about myself."**

The other activities that are linked to the subject that I teach, which is English, include initiatives such as essay-writing competitions, mock talk-shows and debates. The essay writing competition runs every year and is opened to all learners at the school. Among the prizes offered to motivate the learners are dictionaries, calculators and any tools that enhances the learners' education.

But where does all the money for the prizes come from, one may ask? The answer is simple. It comes from fundraising. A strategy that we have found to be effective in fundraising is collecting the oftentimes unwanted 5 cent pieces that are regarded as being so without value that people tend to throw them away. Learners volunteer for the collection of these "worthless" coins but that are a backbone of the library's competition awards systems. And of course, my colleagues are also very supportive in this regard.

Teaching is the most sensitive and influential profession as it is about moulding future adults and leaders. This is why we need to shape and mould learners in the best possible way. The teaching process has also enabled me to learn a great deal about myself. Being frank about myself as a teacher in terms of my strengths and weaknesses has provided me with a strong motivation to stand and deliver against all odds in supporting all learners to reach their full potential.



# Teacher, leader, and builder

## PRIMARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: MR. N. NDOU



Mr Ndou

Do places, circumstances and experiences make a person? Well, I believe they do, with the hindsight of personal experience. The places, circumstances and experiences one encounters in life can either make or break a person. But fortunately, mine built me. They had a no small influence on my choice of teaching as a career and the greater role that I have had to play in the community beyond the school gates.

Lwamondo, is in the Matatani village of the Vhembe district in the Limpopo Province of South Africa. It may be far from the nearest big town, and all that it represents in terms of access to basic services such as education and health as well as employment opportunities. Nonetheless, Matatani village is my home, my place of birth and an embodiment of my struggles and triumphs.

My first step into a classroom was at the Maphuphe Junior Primary School. It was a step that progressively took me to the next levels of schooling until 1988, when I obtained my matriculation exemption (Grade 12). Despite the good grades in Mathematics, Geography, Biology and Physical Science, I was forced to go back to class at the beginning of the 1989 school term. This time around I was not sitting behind the desk, but standing in front of the eager versions of my earlier schooling life.

Since then, the classroom has been a major feature of my life, both as an educator and as a life-long student on the verge of pursuing a PhD in the coming year. The liberty taken in proving the above biographical background, however scant, serves only to illustrate the relationship between places, circumstances, experiences and, more importantly, how these continue to shape my worldview as an educator in under-privileged rural areas.

### Breaking the distance barrier

Public transport remains a serious barrier in most rural areas of South Africa that affects everyone and all aspects of life. It presents challenges that I know very well, having spent most of my childhood and adult life in rural areas. The challenge presented by the inability to move from one point to another really hits home when it undermined my effectiveness as an educator and indeed the performance of the rural education system as a whole.

One of the challenges we faced at Tshiseluselu Primary School where I was teaching between 2004 and 2010 was the dilemma faced by the batch of learners who successfully passed the last grade offered at the school, which is Grade 4.

Apart from dropping out of the schooling system, the only other available option for secondary and high school education was enrolment in schools miles away from the learners' homes. This option had a huge transportation cost and was an even heavier burden on those learners forced to walk long distances between home and school.



The school, together with the School Governing Body (SGB), parents and community based organisations, got around this perennial challenge by taking the Mohamed's famed option, namely, bringing access to post-primary school education closer to the community.

Through this multi-pronged and community supported strategy we managed to progressively add grades five, six and seven to the school in 2005, 2006 and 2007 respectively. The construction of the three extra classes at Tshiseluselu Primary School not only broke the barrier presented by long distances to accessing post-primary education; those unemployed parents who struggled to pay school fees for their children contributed their labour to the project in exchange for fee exemptions.



Mr Ndou in his workplace

**"The places, circumstances and experiences one encounters in life can either make or break a person. But fortunately, mine built me."**

The other innovative projects I helped set in motion at this particular school include the following:

- Setting up a computer laboratory
- The building eight flushing toilets to replace the pit-latrines that both educators and learners used before
- Facilitating the donation of a water tank and land for the National School Nutrition Programme from Agridam, a nearby banana project farm. The half hectare vegetable garden that was subsequently started on the land feeds needy learners, families and some of the produce is sold to the community as part of a fundraising initiative.
- The school initiated a partnership programme with USAID from the United States of America whereby they donated a water tank, stationery and uniforms for needy learners.
- We participated in the "Beautiful School Competition" in 2004 and won a trophy and a cash prize of R1 000.
- An Adult Computer Learning Centre was established in 2008 to equip the community with computer skills. A computer diploma course was offered at a more affordable fee of R600-00 which could be paid in monthly instalments.
- The school as a micro business partnership with MTN in which we rent out space to the company to put their network mast inside the school ground for a monthly rental fee of R2 000, subject to an annual 10% increase. The agreement has been in place for the past nine years.



**"Apart from dropping out of the schooling system, the only other available option for secondary and high school education was enrolment in schools miles away from the learners' homes."**

We also made an effort to improve the quality of education at the school by conducting regular workshops on curriculum delivery for educators and the SGB. The initiative incorporated an annual excellence awards system that recognises and rewards the good performance of educators, learners, SGB members and community builders in general.

In 2009 the school also received external recognition when I was awarded first position for the Vhembe District as part of the National Teachers' Awards (NTA) that was accompanied by a cheque of R5 000 to use for developing the school. Furthermore, I was nominated to be the provincial delegate to the Presidential Mini-Imbizo with School Principals called by President Jacob Zuma on 7 August 2009 to discuss ways of improving the education system in South Africa.

In February 2010 I was fortunate to be appointed school principal at Dzindi Primary School, where I started similar initiatives to those now running at Tshiseluselu Primary School. Below are snippets of the achievements to date:

- The single room which made up the administration block of the school was partitioned into five offices in order to provide for private space for the principal, the deputy and the three heads of departments. Some of the space is used by educators for private consultations with learners, parents or among themselves.
- As at my previous school, Dzindi Primary School initiated a vegetable garden that supplies the nutritional needs of learners and other members of the community.
- The computer school started with 34 students. In 2011, 102 students graduated in the schools' second graduation ceremony. 54 students registered in the first semester in 2012 and the school is waiting for more students in the second semester.

A year after taking up the duties of school principal, I again participated in the 2011 National Teaching Awards and secured first and second positions for "Excellence in Primary School Leadership" in the district and Provincial categories respectively. These were followed by the second position at the national level of the teaching awards, which were held at the Sandton Convention Centre, Gauteng province, on 23 February 2012.

However the most humbling aspect of the recognition that I have received came from closer home and from among the very people I sought to make a difference to. This occurred when the community of Tshisaulu-Itsani village, where Dzindi Primary School is situated, conferred the Award of Community Builder, 2011 on me.



## Outside the classroom

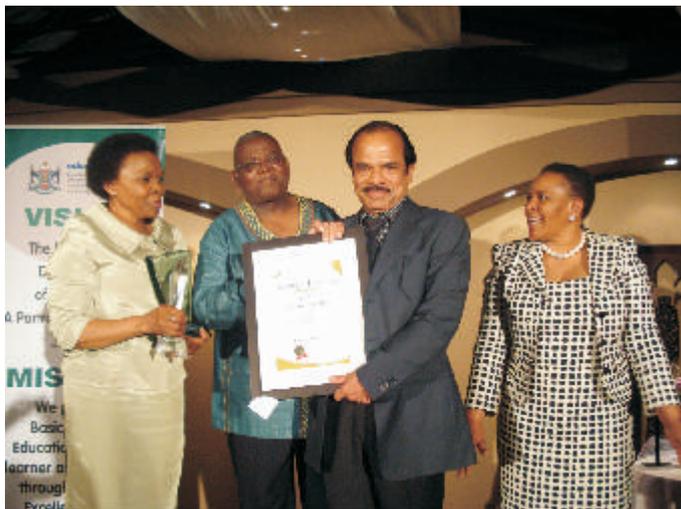
Where does the energy to initiate and actively participate in all the activities that I have described thus far come from? I think it primarily has roots in the rural background that I share with the communities where I work. It comes from my connectedness in various aspects of the life of the community, from my chairpersonship of the Matatani Civic Association to duties as an active member of the Mutandani Uniting Reformed Church. It also comes from the support I continue to provide to youth and adult job-seekers through assisting them to write their curriculum vitae and interview preparations.

Above all, I believe that without a strong vision it would not have been possible to recognise the challenges we face as rural communities as in fact being opportunities to change things through unity and teamwork. It means not accepting defeat before attempting to overturn challenges and obstacles. My experiences as a teacher, leader and community builder have thus far taught me that we would be surprised how far we could go through education, skills development and the application of good values.



# A teacher's journey

## SECONDARY SCHOOL LEADERSHIP: MR. K.S. NAIR



Mr Nair

If teaching could be likened to a journey, then my journey through the teaching profession has been long and adventurous. It is a journey which spans some thirty-five years, crisscrossing four countries, six schools and touching the lives of thousands of learners along the way across time and geography.

The years spent in the teaching profession had undoubtedly been full of personal rewards and public accolades. Over the years several awards have been conferred in recognition of my efforts by colleagues in the broader teaching community.

The more recent awards include: (1) the 3rd position in South Africa for Secondary School Leadership at the National Teaching Awards in 2011 (I was a provincial winner); (2) the 2nd prize in South Africa for the Most Improved Schools Award for Physical Science in 2004, and (3) being a provincial finalist in the Telkom Foundation Maths and Science Teacher of the Year Award in 1998.

However, as much appreciated and as affirmative as awards can be; no number of awards conferred can take the place of the pride, pleasure and joy of a job well done. Or the peaks of the destination, so to speak, as the accolade and affirmation which comes from seeing the thousands of learners who had passed through my classes reach their destinies. Many of the learners have had many a great accomplishments in life, and seeing my name being mentioned as having played a role in their success always brings a humbling sort of honour not only to me as a teacher, but the teaching fraternity as a whole.

So it has been a long journey, but a rewarding one - and one with many highlights, some of which I would like to share with you.

### Small beginnings (India, 1975)

While I was a learner in school, the idea of becoming a teacher never occurred to me. However, during my college days, I started offering private tuition to high school children in order to earn some extra pocket money. The response I received from them was very encouraging. Over a period of time, I realised that I have the ability to teach well. I succeeded in explaining complex scientific concepts in a simple manner.

By the time I completed my post graduate degree, I was confident that teaching would be my career. I strongly believe that one must choose a career only if one has the skill and passion for it.



**"Learners have an ability and instinct to know if the teacher is well prepared, knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They will assess you within the first thirty minutes of a class!"**

### Always be prepared (Kenya, 1975 - 1978)

I have taught in India, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. One thing that I can tell my colleagues without any doubt is that learners behave almost the same in all these countries. Learners have an ability and instinct to know if the teacher is well prepared, knowledgeable and enthusiastic. They will assess you within the first thirty minutes of a class! Since the 'first impression is the best impression', teachers must try to make their first lesson a memorable one. Even when I did encounter some problems in Kenya (Nyamagwa Secondary School, Kisii) because of the differences in our English accents, I was able to overcome this by writing all the relevant key words and drawing mind maps on the chalkboard as I taught a particular concept. Learners soon told me that they had no problem with my accent.

### Making learning fun (Nigeria, 1978 - 1986)

I taught Physics for eight years at Oro Grammar School in Kwara State, Nigeria. Physics was a dreaded subject, which explained why there were only seven Physical Science learners in Form 4 (final year O level class) out of a total of 120 learners when I started in 1978. After my first lesson, I was pleasantly surprised when the class monitor took me to the school tuck shop and bought me a 'Vitamalt' to show the appreciation of the entire class. They were so happy that they had a new teacher who would make Physics simple for them!

Of course, I was not going to disappoint them. My teaching method was based on the following strategies:

- Give each lesson a dramatic introduction. In this way, I was able to arouse interest in the topic
- Offer a clear explanation. It was not my policy to make the subject more demanding than it actually is. Good teaching has nothing to do with making things hard or frightening students
- Use practical demonstrations and involve learners in conducting experiments. If necessary, use improvised materials when the real apparatus is not available
- Humour helps - this was well appreciated by the learners and even the inspectors
- Use a variety of assessment techniques and give regular feedback to motivate learners to put more effort into their studies

By 1986, nearly 50% of the learners in Form 4 registered for Physics. The pass rate was 100% with many distinctions. I feel satisfied that my eight years in Nigeria were highly productive.

### Building a nation, one learner at a time (South Africa, 1989 - 2000)

I have now been in South Africa for nearly 24 years and I can safely say that this has been the most rewarding part of my career. In 1989, I began teaching Grade 12 Physical Science at J.M. Ntsime High School, Mogwase, North West. My biggest challenge was the lack of chemicals and equipment in the science laboratory. I prepared a long, comprehensive list and asked Sun City Casino and Resorts for help. And within two weeks, the Principal received a



cheque from Sun International for R5 000! It was not a small amount at that time, as it brought almost everything that the lab required.

Fifteen years since my arrival at the school, the Physical Science Matric results could best be described as 'very good'. Numerous learners received distinctions and subsequently tertiary education bursaries from mining companies, private firms and government departments.

### The privilege to lead: A Principal's story (South Africa, 2000 - present)

Apart from the backing of the school governing body, another huge advantage when I was promoted to Deputy Principal, was that I had already been performing several management functions. My advice to teachers is not to wait until you get a promotion to practice some extra responsibilities. Try out something extra every year so that when you are fortunate to get a promotion, you will be very comfortable in your new position.



Turning Astro Turf

**"My advice to teachers is not to wait until you get a promotion to practice some extra responsibilities."**

Although the results in Physical Science were ranging between 90% and 100%, the overall matric pass rate was only between 70 and 80%, which was frustrating the overall performance of the school. Under my leadership as the Deputy Principal, we set out to remedy the situation. The school management team improved the general discipline, which led to such quick-wins as punctuality by learners and teachers.

Most crucial was the radical improvement in the quality of teaching as a result of close monitoring and tight supervision. The school surprised the whole community when it dramatically improved the matric pass rate from 72% to 98% in 2001. We managed to maintain the excellent results in subsequent years. The school became a model for others in the district on what can be achieved through efficient management.



When I became the Principal of the Holy Family Combined School in 2005, the school faced challenges that the management team needed to attend to as a matter of urgency. Together with the rest of the management team, I was able to address the following challenges:

- Low level of learner discipline (examples included noise making, coming late to school, not wearing proper uniform, a lack of respect for teachers and littering)
- Non participation of the school in extra-curricular activities (examples included inter-schools' sports and music competitions)
- Lack of sports facilities

As I look back, I feel satisfied but very humbled by the progress made during the last seven years. The school has produced a 100% matric pass rate for the last six years in a row. In 2011, we obtained a 74% 'Bachelor's Pass' rate and, more significantly, several of our learners won bursaries to study at various universities.

One big advantage of this is that everyone feels like they are an important role player. As a leader, I have big dreams for my school which I share with the stakeholders to ensure their full co-operation. This is underpinned by a democratic style of leadership which takes stakeholders such as the learners, parents, SMT and SGB along and consults them on crucial decisions.

Another boost that we received was the world class football astro turf built as a FIFA 2010 World Cup Legacy Project. The school now actively takes part in music, sports and subject olympiads.

### My proudest moments

One advantage of teaching in a small, semi-rural place and staying put for 24 years is that you often see your former students and their parents. My proudest moments are when students come back to visit after graduation to tell me that I have made a difference in their lives.

I try to lead by example and maintaining high standards in all respects, be it my mode of dress, the kind of language I use, punctuality and financial management. Mahatma Gandhi once said: "You should be the change that you want to see in others". I strongly believe in this advice.



# Teaching differently

## INCLUSIVE EDUCATION AND SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHING: MR. L. DUNN



Mr Dunn in Sandton on 23 February 2012 moments before winning the National Teaching Awards 2011

Education White Paper 6 of 2001 on Inclusive and Special Needs Education says that we need to include children with special needs in all levels of education in our country. The case for the education system to be inclusive is bolstered by the Constitution of the country, which forbids any form of discrimination including on the basis of disability.

"Special needs" classes like the one I currently teach in are increasingly called upon lead the cause for inclusive and special needs education by transforming themselves into resource centres that would:

- (1) Assist educators and learners in mainstream schools, and
- (2) Include special needs learners in the education process.

### Challenging opportunity

My school, Formosa Primary in Plettenberg Bay, has been selected to be one of the first of these full-service schools as described above. This means that the school and I need to play a crucial role in this shift towards inclusive education. In fact, the selection has been exciting for educators and learners alike because of the media interest which followed the announcement of the school as a pilot.

This is both challenging and extremely exciting, but first we need to understand exactly what "Special Needs Education" and "Inclusive Education" really means. The concept "Special Needs" education is really broad. It is basically about providing interventions that will help children with learning barriers to achieve a higher level of self-sufficiency in society. It encompasses children across a broad spectrum, and in the case of my learners, they include the visually and hearing impaired, FASD (Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder), ADHD (Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder), physically challenged and also cognitively impaired learners. All of these mean that there is no one solution when addressing learning barriers in an educational situation.

### Differently tailored teaching

In March and April 2012, after winning the SA National Teaching Award in the Special Needs and Inclusive Education category, I had the opportunity to visit more than 20 Special Needs schools in Europe. The purpose of the visit was to learn how other countries provide for the needs of learners who have various barriers to learning. Belgium has one of the best special needs curricula in the world, and therefore it was good to see what strategies they use in their Special Needs schools. The particular approach that is being used in Belgium is called BUBAO (Buzondere Basiese Onderwys), which in our country is translated as ELSEN (Education for Learners with Special Educational Needs).



Apart from having to work with so many different learning barriers in my classroom, my class is also a fully diverse multi-cultural, multi-lingual and multi-religious classroom. I therefore attempt to reach the level and circumstance of each of these children.

In order to achieve this objective, it is essential to understand the level of development academically, socially and emotionally of each child as this determines the choice of the most suitable strategies and tools to aid their development. Most of my learners, regardless of their specific disability, have challenges with simple routine tasks and self-regulation. They need, like all children, to learn the "how" of doing things, without being pushed to master a task in any specific time period. My class works on an adapted Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) and includes learners on pre-Grade R, Grade R, Pre-school, Grade 1 and Grade 2 levels. Yes, multi-level teaching in one class is quite a challenge, although I honestly enjoy every moment with these children!!!

**"There is an unnecessary negative stigma attached to children who appear to be different, and this I attempt to change in my classroom, by implementing various inclusive teaching strategies on a daily basis."**

### Creating a learning environment

Society often unnecessarily stigmatises children who appear to be different. It is for this reason that we put a lot of effort in ensuring that the classroom environment is as welcoming as possible approach to learning. Firstly, we attempt this, by creating a positive learning environment by providing a colourful, fun and child-friendly classroom atmosphere. In fact, whenever we do Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) which monitors the performance of educators, the very first performance standard that we look at is the "Creating of a Positive Learning Environment" indicator.

A positive learning environment, for example, means that educators would be conscious of the fact that to those learners who have dyslexia (or those who are challenged to learn to read) it is threatening to see too much written material on the walls. In this regard, the walls of our classroom are therefore filled with more children's art and activities than written work. On the other hand for those learners with dyscalculia (or who struggle with numbers) too many number concepts on the walls are equally threatening and we therefore make use of pictograms. The concept of pictograms means making use of pictures together with phonetic concepts and words, in order to simplify the learning process, especially of Special Needs learners, through matching and association.

### Sense of belonging

We have photos of our learners on their chairs and on the walls of the classroom, which strengthens their sense of belonging. They need to feel that they belong somewhere, because very often, they are so misunderstood or excluded in society. Sections 9, 10 and 29 of our Constitution clearly state that we need to redress the educational inconsistencies of the past, by providing equal access opportunities to basic education for all, regardless of background, culture or disability. I therefore strive to include these children on all levels, in all educational activities, in order for them to feel accepted and loved.





Mr Dunn's multi-cultural classroom at Formosa Primary School.

After our morning routine activities, we do pre-reading and pre-writing activities, which include gross motor and fine motor skills. This gets done every morning, because it prepares the learners concentrate and stay focused. We never make use of any medication to help children concentrate, regardless of the syndrome or barrier, because I believe that there are better ways of stimulating the brain to concentrate without distraction. We make use of "Brain Gym" exercises, "Handle" exercises, and also "Monkey Nastix" exercises.

I often make use of music during these exercises, realising the importance of music therapy for children. I receive my training from specialists in these areas, and am fortunate to be working closely with nationally acclaimed music therapist, Sue Lubner who visits my class on a weekly basis. These exercises and skills are just a few of those which are indeed crucial for the academic development of the child, because research has proven that children firstly need to focus their body, before they can focus their brain.

### Playing lessons

We usually do group interactive sessions, which sometimes lasts for up to 30 minutes, if necessary. Parents are also given ideas on how to practice other, but similar exercises, to improve gross-motor and fine-motor skills. I encourage parents to make sure these children do simple activities like jumping or skipping at home. It is a way of encouraging parental involvement in a fun and enjoyable way.



**"The classroom is always the first impression that any child or person sees, when entering our learning environment. We therefore do everything in our ability to create an exciting, fun, and learner-friendly learning environment in our class."**

In our class, we also use lots of play therapy. I strongly agree with Piaget's developmental levels of the child, because according to Piaget, play is the first form of learning. A child's first learning experience happens through play. According to Piaget, the first developmental stage of the child is the pre-operational stage, during which every learning experience must be related to play and fantasy. I teach Maths through Art and through play. By using concrete objects like different kinds of building blocks, puzzles and toys, we ensure that the child learns, but also enjoys what he/she is doing.

I am fortunate to have a full-time Class Assistant, who works on a voluntary basis while studying Early Childhood Development, because my learners sometimes need the love and care of a woman as well. My assistant, Suraja Lourens, is creative, helps with knitting and sewing, is fully tri-lingual (speaking English, Afrikaans and isiXhosa) and therefore plays a crucial role in our diverse classroom. The presence of an assistant makes the implementing of differentiation strategies in our classroom much easier. It allows me to teach on different levels, and she would be busy with one learner, for example, the visually impaired child in our class, while I do another activity with the others.

Differentiation is crucial in any class, and that's why I work according to a "Multiple Intelligence" teaching style. This allows the learner who is either more visually stimulated, or musically stimulated, or kinetically stimulated, also to feel accommodated, within the lesson, which might be more intellectual, or visual or auditory focused. I know that this sounds like a mouth-full, but I really enjoy doing the work I do. No matter how challenging it sometimes feels, I always try to remember that I am doing this for the development of the child. It is always my aim to stimulate the learner and mould him/her towards becoming a self-sufficient and confident citizen of our country. At the end of the day, I am in the business of developing world leaders, regardless of their academic level or disability. And although it's impossible to share all my ideas on paper, I am willing to be an educational resource to any educator, school or institution interested in learning about inclusive education in our country.

### Rewarding work

Winning the National Teaching Award in 2012 has been a great honour, seeing that it now allows me to share and motivate others, the way I've been motivated. Well done to all our educators - our unsung heroes and heroines, who continue answering this noble calling, often with very little recognition. Please allow me to share one of my favourite sayings, by J.F Lamprecht: "I have a dream that my children will one day live in a world where they will not be judged by their handicap, but by the content of their character..."



# Laying a firm foundation

## EARLY LEARNING: MS. M.R. MANASOE

*"we honour educators who have managed to rise above the rest, not in the spirit of cut and thrust competition but in the course of doing their work to the best of their ability, driven by passion, dedication and vision. We speak here of men and women who dutifully go about their daily work with neither expectation for personal glory nor aggrandizement."*

RSA Deputy President, Kgalema Motlanthe, 2012

*"Through the Early Childhood Development, we have the necessary policies to redress the disparities brought about by decades of apartheid education. Early Childhood Development offers us an opportunity to give many South African children the firm base needed for better education. As we know, most of these children never had such a chance."*

Former RSA President, Thabo Mbeki, 2002



Ms Manasoe

The above excerpts from speeches made by two high profile leaders, delivered in different platforms and ten years apart, eloquently give emphasis to the importance of educators and education. Addressing the National Teaching Awards in February 2012 and delegates at the Early Childhood Gala Dinner in 2002 respectively, these eminent South Africans echoed generally acknowledged statements of fact of the education system and the role of educators in it.

More significantly, their words represented what is the highest affirmation and recognition of the importance of the teaching profession in nation building. Their standing in society uplifts the status of the teaching profession in a manner none of us as educators can do without sounding a bit pompous about what our contributions are to the nation building project on a daily basis.

## Silent pledge

Like many educators in our country, I've pledged in deeds my commitment to the betterment of society through teaching, having dedicated 30 years of service to foundation level education. The educator's is often a hard and thankless task, especially on occasions when things seemingly go wrong all around, such as low pass rates and cases of rampant ill-discipline in the schooling system. But in spite of all challenges faced by all educators in the rural areas of Limpopo, other regions of our country and elsewhere, we continue to pledge ourselves and commit to creating miracles out of the almost none-existent resource base which famously characterises our workplaces. However, for educators to reach heights of performance which far exceed their current achievements, all the conditions that make for effective teaching should be met with the support of society as a whole.



**"The holistic development of learners and support to the teaching process begins at home, and can't be outsourced to educators."**

### It begins at home

The holistic development of learners and support to the teaching process begins at home, and can't be outsourced to educators. The character and behaviour displayed in the classroom, be it pleasant or unbearable, reflects the situation on the home front.

In my long teaching experience I've found doing due diligence on the background of learners before their formal enrolment greatly aids the teaching process. I've found it extremely useful to evaluate the foundation that has been laid at home, for example, determining its strengths and weaknesses, as this has a huge bearing on the effectiveness of formal schooling.

I've over the years made it my business to investigate the socio-economic backgrounds of my learners by visiting homes, conducting special consultative meetings with parents or guardians, and using simple technologies such as SMS and emails to make it easy for me to apply suitable methodologies to address each learners needs.

### Using the best of all methods

Over time the country's education system has been subjected to a number of teaching methodologies, some of which have been phased out in part or completely. What were at one time hailed as breakthroughs in education, for example, Outcomes Based Education (OBE) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS), were scrapped after systemic pitfalls were realised during the rigours of implementation. Nevertheless, each of these methodologies had their advantages.

Despite their being phased out, I always find certain aspects of these methodologies useful in the foundation learning and teaching campaign. Overall, their inherent strategies address the endemic challenges of a country which is faced with extremely high levels of illiteracy. While OBE specifically helps put the learner at the centre of the education process, and thus inculcates the importance of individual initiative in the life-long acquisition of knowledge that starts at an early age.

I've found that tapping into the resource base which is provided by the different methodologies both current and past, one is able to identify and widen opportunities for evaluating individual learners as well as for drawing ideas for remedial interventions.

### Shunning deadly competition

The Deputy President was correct when he spoke against the negative impact of the "spirit of cut and thrust competition" both among educators and learners alike which undermines team work. Being the Head of Department in the Foundation Phase, I have to lead by example. It could hardly be professional to compete with my fellow Foundation Phase educators, who expect me to assist, guide and direct them in various ways.



At times leading people gets into one's head, making you feel like an icon. No one compelled you to keep your work up-to-date. However as much as I have overall managerial responsibility for the department, the job also warrants the execution of actual work on a daily basis, be it providing assistance to fellow educators who are struggling or ensuring that the objectives of foundation phase teaching are met.

The ability to plan and executive the plan in the form of clear and effective learning objectives is an important part of the educator's work. Yet often some educators succumb to the temptation to deviate from a set plan of action, which are the killer habits of planning and the achievement of objectives. The two are wasteful in terms of time and resources as deviation postpones activities and leads to the development of yet new plans which affect projects outcomes.

**"We continue to pledge ourselves and commit to creating miracles out of the almost none-existent resource base which famously characterises our workplaces."**

### Serving with passion

Service with passion could be described as that extra something that propels one to go beyond the call of duty. It's also that ingredient which keeps an educator motivated and striving for excellence even under the most challenging circumstances. One example is to not constantly complain about overcrowded classrooms, but finding ways to work around the challenge as well. In this sense, service with passion encourages positive outcomes and the achievement of good results.



# Are teachers born or made?

## FOUNDATION TEACHING: MS. O.M. SARDINHA



Ms Sardinha

We almost always refer to people as a natural singer, athlete or any other area of excellence. And the question whether a teacher is born or made had been a vexing feature of my academic life as a student teacher. However in my youth, when I finally faced up to my moment of truth by asking myself "what I really wanted to be when I grow up", teaching was not among the list of potential career paths. What came up among the reasons for not considering teaching were simply a lack of passion, and perhaps coloured by the impatience of youth. But strangely, I did eventually follow a career path in teaching, though without much enthusiasm, that is, until I stepped into a pre-school class for the first time, and then, I was hooked.

### Making teaching fun

It all began at Tygerberg [Teachers' Training] College, where I did a year and a half of teaching theory under incredibly tough lecturers who were bent on making teachers out of their students. Perhaps I was too much of a hard nut to crack that the teacher in me only tentatively emerged during the practical term, for which I chose a Day Care Centre, which set me up as a foundation teacher.

My practical term began with learning how to handle toddlers, and working my way up to the Grade Rs. However, it was the moment when I first stepped into a Grade R class that all the uncertainties of what I wanted to become "when I grow up" cleared up and I never looked back since that moment.

Although I was at college, my student life at the time was just merely hanging on to my studies long enough to finish my teacher's diploma. And in contrast, every single moment that I spent with my Grade R classes was as delightful as it was a learning curve.

What the children teach you first and foremost is that teaching should be fun, which means that their little misdemeanours become the stuff of learning. You soon learn that the overturned table or scattered crayons are lessons in tidiness. And that the pain and suffering inflicted while your hair is being pulled as part of a "hair salon" play session is an opportunity to teach restraint.

### Widening horizons

At the end of the memorable months of my practical term, the day care centre fortunately offered me a teaching position, which I occupied for several years until I decided to spread my wings and travel. While in Germany, I had an opportunity to work at a Waldorf Pre-School. The Waldorf method of teaching is calm and puts the interest of the child at the centre not the work of the teacher as a professional. This approach ensures that the child blossoms through self-expression.



The exposure to the Waldorf methodology not only inspired me to replicate their methods here in South Africa, it also sparked the interest in deepening and widening my academic knowledge in the education field, which was not easy at my "advanced age".

### "People rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing".

Most of my fellow learners at the University of the Free State were fresh from high school. To most of them, I must have looked like tannie as I sat behind the desk (instead of standing in front of the lecture room), trying to study for my first university degree. Nevertheless, the stares and the sniggering of youth did not scare me away from qualifying for a Degree in Education, in which I specialised in foundation phase education.

I have since returned to my preschool class, but now with the determination that is born of experience. I am also a facilitator and assessor for Early Childhood Development (ECD) Level 5 at Goldfields Further Education and Training College, but it is the energetic bundles of all shapes and sizes of my Grade Rs at Harmony Pre-Primary School that still makes my heart skip a beat with excitement. Witnessing the daily miracle of learning is a source of utmost pleasure as the once shy child is moulded into a child who is able to express himself or herself upon leaving the foundation class.



Children learning in Ms Sardinha's class

### Moms and dads play a big role

What makes for successful teaching as well is the critical role played by parents in the process. Children feel comfortable and safer when there are similarities between the classroom environment and that of the home, for example, in terms of rules and other things. This crucial success ingredient makes the interaction between teachers and parents particularly important and one that we should never give up pursuing. I have found that making an effort to see the parents of all of my children eventually yields results as they soon realise that I never gave up on them and that I really care for the welfare of their little ones.

### Using all the senses

Also the direction that Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) provides has reinvigorated my classroom



activities, over and above the continuous research for teaching ideas elsewhere. My teaching style is more relaxed and has become increasingly reliant on the fundamental pillar of learning of using "perception" as a way of widening learning opportunities for my learners.

**"I have gone back to the child's senses as a resource for enhancing my lessons"**

Perception, which encourages the use of all the senses for learning activities, has turned around my teaching methodology. I have gone back to the child's senses as a resource for enhancing my lessons. If they can feel five, see five, hear five and sometimes taste it, they will not forget it so quickly. Using all their senses makes learning fun. It certainly reaches all the learners, whether they are auditory, offertory, visually or kinetically inclined.

The importance of play cannot be over-emphasised in foundation learning because through it our children learn the basic elements that are essential for enriching the subsequent levels of their schooling careers. After all, one of the world's most successful motivational speakers and writers, Dale Carnegie, observed that "people rarely succeed unless they have fun in what they are doing".

*As for the question on whether teachers are born or made? That, I leave to you to ponder.*



# An adult learning advocate

## ABET TEACHING: MS. B. BAILEY



Ms Bailey

My first name is Bernadette, or "courageous spirit", in its Latin translation. It is a name that has often been likened to a badge of character, the call into the teaching profession, and my work in the field of Adult Basic Education (ABET) in particular. Some people have found the association even more apt after the Worcester Community Learning Centre, which I lead, netted first position of the Excellence in Adult Basic Education and Training category at the 2012 National Teaching Awards.

In most cases the spotlight and glory that comes with such accolades falls on the leader, while those moments of recognition are in fact a result of many years' work and commitment by numerous people other than the trophy holder. While the unfolding narrative largely reflects my small part in contributing to the mission of the Worcester Community Learning Centre, it is as much about that of all staff, learners and the community at large.

### A second chance

The desire to be part of the solutions to the many challenges facing communities has been a consistent part of my life, even while I taught at a local school on a full-time basis. I always retained a keen interest in issues affecting the broader community beyond the school yard, especially as they related to education as my area of expertise.

My venturing beyond the school yard and my life-long passion for adult education only began in earnest in 2002 when I joined the team of volunteers as an English and Drama teacher under Youth with a Mission (YWAM) literacy and adult basic education project. Most of my learners were foreigners, with cultural and language difficulties, and therefore needing assistance through the English language courses and speech and drama training. I was also, during this period, a volunteer for the Worcester Welfare Society, teaching street children how to read and write, as part of the skills that are so essential in life.

In 2007, I finally left conventional schooling and joined the Worcester Community Learning Centre (CLC) team on a full-time basis. This move further drove my passion of using the power of education in uplifting individual lives and those of communities. Like my colleagues at the CLC, I believed then, as ever, in the power of Adult Basic Education (ABET) in opening the doors of learning for young people and adults who have had missed opportunities, for whatever reasons or under whichever circumstances.

The younger adults who come through the doors of the centre mostly want to increase their life prospects that usually come with an education. Their much older counterparts, on the other hand, sometimes want to experience the joy of



simply being able to read and write or be able to operate an ATM machine. Dozens of such learners have gone through my English and Grade 12 classes. Many of them have made the effort on my part extremely worthwhile by their achievements as individuals and members of communities.

### Work in progress

After several years in the ABET sector, I was gradually given the responsibility of running one of CLC's satellite sites, which is located in Zweetemba, in Worcester. This was subsequently followed by my being promoted to the position of manager of the Worcester Community Learning Centre.

In addition to managing the day-to-day affairs of the Worcester CLC, the position of centre manager also covers supervisory and oversight functions in 13 ABET sites that are part of the Worcester CLC. We currently have an enrolment of 1371 learners from Levels 1 - 4 and Grade 12, excluding enrolment in a number of auxiliary courses on offer, such as computer training. All of this makes for an obvious load, but one that still does not deter me from pursuing my primary passion of teaching.



"Unlike in the pre-adult phases of learning, the interest of adult learners in education is often marked by a sense of agency, if not the urgency of making up for lost time."

I am a firm believer in the hands-on style of management, always on standby as a substitute teacher when the need arises, in addition to regularly teaching Grade 12 learners on Saturdays. Moreover, I find that my managerial duties, the passion for adult education and my natural concerns for the welfare of the community are comfortably accommodated in the range of my duties. The long teaching and leadership experience gained over many years and my ongoing active involvement in community affairs have reinforced each other.

### "Teachable Spirit"

One of the hallmarks of adult education is how it expresses the saying, "when a student is ready, a teacher will emerge". Unlike in the pre-adult phases of learning, the interest of adult learners in education is often marked by a sense of agency, if not the urgency of making up for lost time. Theirs is marked by a "teachable spirit" that even I, as an



advocate for life-long learning, find personally inspiring. It is this very spirit that I try to broadcast to a wider audience in my capacity as a volunteer presenter and trainer at the community radio station, Valley FM, and numerous advocacy platforms as a motivational speaker.

**"I always retained a keen interest in issues affecting the broader community beyond the school yard, especially as they related to education as my area of expertise."**

While the pursuance of education comes from its individual agency and the need for self-empowerment, the success thereof is ultimately gauged in its impact on the broader community. This, I believe, is the mark of successful teaching. It is a measure of a job well done, and one that also goes well beyond the classroom.

#### AMONG THE AWARDS AND ACCOLADES:

- NTA National Winner ABET Category (2012)
- Centre Manager of the Year (Cape Winelands: 2010, 2011)
- Provincial - Runner-up (2011)
- NTA District Finalist (2011)
- NTA Provincial Finalist (2011)
- Administrator of the Year (Cape Winelands: 2010)
- Site Coordinator of the Year (Cape Winelands: 2009)



The Worcester Community Learning Centre



# Teaching is a team effort

## LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD WINNER'S LEADERSHIP: MR. D.J. MTHETHWA



Mr Mthethwa

It is still true that teaching is a noble profession. I am able to confirm this after spending 37 years of my life as an educator and 21 of those years as Principal. Nothing is more noble, challenging and exciting than being in the position of shaping and moulding the lives of young people. There is no reward greater than seeing a learner grow from the uncertainties of life to grasping their full potential.

It always gives me great personal satisfaction of a job well done to meet the same learner years later functioning as a successful member of society. Almost all the hospitals in the Limpopo Province and some rural hospitals in Mpumalanga Province have products of my very own, now medical doctors and pharmacists.

Nonetheless teaching is not a personal crusade, but is a product of teamwork. The very same learner who passed through many classes, was moulded by different hands on their way to success. And it goes without saying that a successful team manager, makes for a great team. This much I learnt early on in my career, having worked well with other educators in my field of study, Mathematics.

### Identifying the needs of the team

When I was appointed Head of Department (HoD) and later school principal, the experience and lessons learnt of being a team player was of great benefit. The most important of these is the ability to identify the needs of the team against the objectives.

On a soccer field, for example, it would be fruitless for a coach to get many goal-keepers when the need of that soccer team is for centre-forward players. Similarly, it would be fruitless for a Principal to employ many vernacular language educators when the school needs Maths and Science educators. The greatest need in the case of my school was in filling up the gap in maths and science, which started a search for those educators who specialised in these subjects inside the country.

Unfortunately, the recruitment drive was unsuccessful within the borders of South Africa. The many learners who go through the Maths, Science and Commercial streams are demanded elsewhere and in career paths that are more attractive and lucrative than the noble profession of teaching. Faced with such fierce competition at home, the school had to cast its recruitment net wider, and across our borders for maths and science educators. The school now has nine teachers from Zimbabwe, five from India, two from Ghana and two from Uganda.



"Almost all the hospitals in the Limpopo Province and some rural hospitals in Mpumalanga Province have products of my very own, now medical doctors and pharmacists."

### Right fit, right task

Returning to the example of a soccer team, we all know the disasters that befall those coaches who place players in the wrong positions. After selecting the team, it is important to place them in the positions they fit best. This requires an understanding of the strengths of the educators in your school and using those strengths to their maximum potential. The team may have different sets of strengths or interests; and so when educators are placed where they are most comfortable, they work to the best of their abilities.

### Supporting the team

Like soccer, teaching is about team work. The job of a good coach, or team leader, is to support the team as a whole and not your favourite striker. So after placing my educators in the correct positions, I support them, and encourage them to keep up the good work. A motivated team of educators restores the culture of teaching and learning which in turn achieves good results, makes the school popular and attracts more learners. In the process, the educators earn respect from the community. This gives credibility to the principal's voice in places of authority so that more posts could be created and that are no retrenchments.

### Manage the classroom, you'll manage the school

In a soccer team there are players who display various skills on the field. However, only one of them can be the captain, and this is a player who displays an extra something and those qualities of leadership that help the team to score. This would then suggest that promotions to leadership positions should not only be based on answers given in a relatively brief interview.

Before you can move up the ladder of success in your career, you first need to learn how to manage your classroom. In my case, I had to produce good results in maths. However, the good result achieved as a Maths teacher was not sufficient for me to be an HoD. It was my ability to control and execute my leadership role in the classroom that qualified me to be the HoD. I then got the opportunity to work as a supervisor, leading the team of Mathematics educators in the school. There were a number of good educators, but not all of us could be managers. Later, when my leadership qualities as HoD had been displayed and when all concerned parties had been convinced of my capabilities, I became a Principal.

When an educator fails to bring order in the classroom it would be a miscalculation for the educator to expect to be a manager. It would also be unfair for that educator to be expected to be a manager. I have watched with pain in my heart, as good educators ruin their reputation by applying for managerial posts when they have not as yet demonstrated any leadership qualities. Such educators end up failing as leaders and experiencing hardships and frustrations because of misplacing themselves.



## Preparing to be a leader

To those who wish to climb the ladder of leadership, now is the time to learn about what strategies make for successful leadership. Your preparation and learning could even go as far back as those days when you were a learner yourself. Try to pick up good strategies which you thought were working well for you as a learner. My own learning opportunities were from three leaders who have had an impact on my own leadership style. The first one who contributed to some of the strategies I am applying to produce good results is Mr. P.J.C. Kuun, the then Principal of Orhovelani High School in the late 1960s and early 1970s. I was a learner then. He was a very fair and firm leader. His strategy to get us working harder was to produce monthly schedules in martial order. Don't fool yourself, life is about competition!! Monthly schedules remain the most effective form of motivating both educators and learners even to this day.

**"When an educator fails to bring order in the classroom it would be a miscalculation for the educator to expect to be a manager."**

The second leader, this time from a teaching point of view, was Mr. D.S. Mboshane. Mr Mboshane made implementing the curriculum more enjoyable for us as fellow educators at Soshangana High School. He had a wonderful gift of making each educator feel special and closer to him than the others. We would all work so hard to please him, thus producing good results.

The third one is the late Mr. D.Z.J. Mtebula, who headed Bankuna High School for a long time. I liken his passion for education and love for the younger generation to that of our former state President Nelson Mandela.

What I have learnt means that I am effectively three principals moulded into one. Learn from others. You have a lot to benefit from this practice. Think about the words of the poet Lord Tennyson: "One who knows is the one who knows that one knows not".



# Little Linton's Story

## SPECIAL NEEDS TEACHING: MS. N. WATT



Ms Watt

Once upon a time, there was a little boy called Little Linton. Some said he was "dumb", but his mom and dad said that he was just "shy". Little Linton's elder brother, Johnny, always looked at Little Linton as if he were "dumb", especially whenever Little Linton couldn't catch the ball. But Aunt Bettie always hugged Little Linton and called him "my pumpkin" and gave him nice things whenever she paid his mom a visit.

And so, Little Linton grew up "dumb" and "shy", even though no one told him he was "dumb" or "shy". Little Linton couldn't hear, only he could see and feel "dumb" and "shy", which made Little Linton sad, and want to run away from everybody.

Little Linton felt safest when he crawled into himself - like when you cover yourself with a big black blanket and curling into a ball the size of a pin-head - so nobody could call Little Linton "shy" or "dumb". That's what Little Linton mostly did, and so everyone said Little Linton was "shy" and "dumb", that he must be taken to a "shy" and "dumb" school.

Ms Watt was really nice to Little Linton. She was like Auntie Bettie. Ms Watt always wanted to make him speak and play in class. But this made Little Linton cross and sad and made the words to be more stuck in his throat.

One time, and many other times thereafter, Ms Watt took Little Linton to a Doctor in town. All Little Linton could think about on the occasion of the first visit to the Doctor's clinic was of a big needle. Little Linton was happy when the doctor didn't use injections, but always made him make noises, which was kind of funny!

**"Sometimes learners cry for help: "If I cannot learn the way you teach, can you not teach the way I can learn, please?"**

Although, the words still did not come out right, Little Linton started making friends with his classmates after doing funny noises with the doctor. What's nice also was that Ms Watt said Little Linton could run whenever he felt like running, only he should try keeping his running to the playground and not hurt other kids ... and Little Linton was happier thereafter.



Little Linton is not simply some character in a story, and neither are his circumstances as allegorised above. In fact, there are thousands upon thousands of Little Lintons out there, but the one referred to in the story is a special needs learner in my class.

Linton had been unhappily floating on the fringes of family, school and community life. No one understood him and he did not understand anyone else either. He was an extremely reserved, almost defensive 12 years old child when he entered my Grade 4 class.

That was until I discovered his real problem. He could not hear well and consequently he also had problems with speech. Neither his parents, nor his previous school could or would do anything about his problem. Linton had to suffer so long with an academic disadvantage, which also contributed to emotional neglect in his life. After he received the necessary medical assistance, Linton was almost just as confident and eager to learn in class as he was on the athletics track.

### The "veils" over learning

Little Linton's story resonates with one of my favourite quotations by an unknown person, which says: "Our children are our diamonds forever! We must shape them, polish them and treasure them forever!" The quotation exhorts the value of all children, whether "bright" or otherwise. It instructs us - as families and society - to leave no stone unturned in nurturing and polishing all children into the treasures they may become.

"Special" needs learners require specialised teaching and often the majority of them respond well when educators keep this most basic fact in mind at all times. This requires the application of differentiation in one's teaching plans, making adjustments in learning styles and the intervention programmes to ensure that they are suited to the needs of each individual learner.

Sometimes learners cry for help: "If I cannot learn the way you teach, can you not teach the way I can learn, please?" In extreme cases, such as Little Linton's, learners may have to be removed from mainstream schooling and placed in

**"It always helps the long-term academic performance of learners if their individual challenges are identified and addressed at an early stage than to leave these unattended until it is very late."**

special schools. Otherwise educators and parents as well, may do well by merely being attuned to the needs or cries of the child as an individual. Fortunately the majority of special needs children are successful both inside and outside the classroom, especially in collaboration with state departments. It always helps the long-term academic performance of learners if their individual challenges are identified and addressed at an early stage than to leave these unattended until it is very late.



Many learners continue to live with "veils" over their eyes due to various traumas in their lives. They often wait anxiously for someone to first recognise and assist them to lift off these "veils" from their little lives. However, educators can only do so much in dealing with cases such as Foetal Alcohol Syndrome, Dyslexia, Attention Deficit Disorder and many more learning challenges on a daily basis. The parents of special needs children, in particular, also need to be sensitised about the challenges and how they could contribute to their resolution at home.

### Win-Win Parenting

As a special needs teacher, I often encounter the most harrowing cases of parental neglect and incompetence, which at times leads to the heartbreaking decision to remove a child from the care of the biological parent. The good news in this regard, however, is that the programme we introduced at the school last year is beginning to bear some fruit.

Called the "Win-Win Parenting", the programme is aimed at raising the levels of awareness of the challenges that children with "special needs" face on a daily basis. We also provide advice and training on how parents can assist their children instead of wittingly, or otherwise, becoming an added burden to the already complex and difficult lives of their young ones. The Win-Win Parenting programme is being expanded this year in order to include 9 to 12 year old children and their parents.



# The march of private schooling

## PRIVATE EDUCATION: MS. J. MAKUZENI

*'What man scorns to walk by lamplight in the absence of the sun?'*

Quoted from Sanskrit literature

The South African education system is characterised by both public and private provisioning of education. The two sectors are distinctly defined in their respective features of size, quality and affordability of education, which are also at the heart of ongoing debates on the merits or otherwise of the two routes.

In the interest of frankness, I would like to begin by putting my mast upfront by declaring myself in favour of private schooling. In spite of the huge gulf that divides the debate on the issue of private versus public schooling, the fact of the matter is that the public schooling system continues to perform dismally in delivering on the constitutional mandate of the right to basic education by all South Africans.

The crisis of public schooling is well documented by rigorous studies that are continually produced by academics as well as the outbursts of horrors from the country's mainstream media. In the resultant morass, the private schooling sector increasingly finds itself with the unenviable business of having to clean up the mess.

### Filling up the gaps

The Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, has launched the Schooling 2025 Statement, which promotes the vision of a normalised education system. The document forecasts a future in which the quality of education has been optimised; the teaching profession is at the level where it discharges its duties efficiently; school principals are competent managers and parents are active stakeholders in the running of the schooling system.

**"The crisis of public schooling is well documented by rigorous studies that are continually produced by academics as well as the outbursts of horrors from the country's mainstream media."**

Although the vision of Schooling 2025 Statement is a noble and indeed is without fault, whether the public schooling system has the capacity to realise this enormous vision in its current state is something else. If anything, the private school sector shows more promise of providing leadership in the realisation of the vision that has been set out by Minister Motshekga.

In my view, the issue of private versus public schooling should not be a debate at all, but should rather be viewed as necessary for engagement and dialogue between the two streams of the country's education system. It should rather be seen as a mutually educative engagement in which either sector takes beneficial lessons from the other.

### Small world for the bigger world

Although subject to all the laws which govern education in South Africa, a distinct feature of private schools (also



"Such independence from the state has implications for the fee structure of the school, as autonomy also means financial self-reliance and hence the typically high school fees, which could be off-set through scholarships in deserving cases."

known as "independent" schools) is that their administration falls entirely outside the power of government, be it at the local, provincial or national level. This means that they independently run their own affairs, which ranges from the enrolment of learners to teacher recruitment. Furthermore, such independence from the state has implications for the fee structure of the school, as autonomy also means financial self-reliance and hence the typically high school fees, which could be off-set through scholarships in deserving cases.

The private school sector, by virtue of its independence, is able to operate within spaces that make up for innovative pedagogy than would ordinarily be the case in public sector settings. Their approach to education could be described as a series of "stepping stones" that determine high educational standards for students, beginning at the lowest grades and layered over the later phases.

This approach is premised on the imperative of creating the kind of micro world of the school that ensures that learners succeed in the world out there by not compromising on the following:

- Ensuring the availability of the best learner resources, including timely provision of learning material as well as facilities such as libraries and laboratories;
- Attracting professional and specialist educators who have greater respect for teaching excellence and the welfare of learners
- Creating an institutional culture and being rooted in a history of achievement and peer learning both locally and abroad.

### Already walking the talk

What private schools represent, as illustrated by the above, is in fact an expression of Minister Motshekga's vision of the schooling system in the year 2025. It is unfortunately a vision that thousands of public school learners have yet to experience, but one which is a daily experience for those in the private schooling system.



# Teaching all learners, and not just some

## INCLUSIVE TEACHING: MR. I. BURNS

My personal definition of Inclusion in education, which guides my classroom teaching methods, is borrowed from Australian education consultant, Dr. Loretta Giorcelli, who asserts that: "Ultimately, Inclusion is about how we make learners feel about themselves". I find this a useful and understandable definition, because its implications are clear to me.

Inclusion is not about the child with dyslexia, physical disabilities or any other potential barrier faced by learners who fall under the "special" category. It's about how we make every child feel - the overweight child or children from different cultures and income groups, or who are different in any other way. Below are practical strategies I use to implement Inclusion in a classroom environment:

### Time Timers

A great product called "Time Timers" sets time and is used to indicate how much time is left for a task, as well as to produce a sound when the set time is up. This helps children with time management, concentration and starting a task.

### Give the big picture before-hand

Providing learners with a brief outline of what they will be doing for a particular lesson, for example, telling them: "today we will be working on our 2 x sums". This, as well as having a regular routine, helps to eliminate uncertainty.

### Watching what you say

Our words can be viewed as boxes - they contain either life or death, they either destroy or build up. I try, in my class, not to make comments that break down, rather attempting to make comments that build up. No teasing is allowed by children in my class and I aim to be a role model in this regard. A comment in particular that I no longer use is: "this is easy", because the things that seem easy to one person may be incredibly difficult for another. Sounding out words and cutting out a simple shape are examples of activities that some children find difficult. I also do not have learners read their test marks out loud, as this is often humiliating and does not motivate learners to improve.

To build learners up, I seek to praise process and not product. This means that what is important is attitude, doing one's best and that even small improvements are good. The strategy is important as well for stronger academic students who may be doing very little work but still manage to achieve good results. And so, when good results are all that are praised, the academically adept learners may end up feeling less inclined to put in extra effort. This is the reason that I am personally against the "top ten" systems in schools: those who put in the most effort are hardly ever rewarded and those in the Top ten, often don't have to put in much extra effort to stay there. Therefore, for both groups, it's not worthwhile putting in extra effort.

**"Inclusion is not about the child with dyslexia, physical disabilities or any other potential barrier faced by learners who fall under the "special" category."**



Learners in my class are allowed to make mistakes and I tell them this often. I have found that I often have to ask them: "may we make mistakes?" I tell them that I often make mistakes and the class rule is that you may make mistakes, as long as you try your best.

### 4Rs behaviour system

The classroom rules governing behaviour in my class use the 4Rs system, which is adapted from the work of education strategist, Mark Wesson. The 4Rs are the following:

- The first R is to state the rule clearly, for example, "we may only walk when we go to class".
- The second R is giving the reason for the rule, which is very important to me as often when I ask learners why we have a rule they reply because they can get into trouble or the teacher says so. The reason for the rule of only walking when going to class could be that we can fall and hurt ourselves or run into other people.
- The third R is the repercussion, in the case of only walking to class, the repercussion may be that if they don't walk to the classroom, they will have to practice walking to class after school.
- The fourth R is the reassurance. It is important to reassure learners that you believe that they are capable of certain behaviours and also that they are loved and accepted regardless of their behaviour.

### Building positive relationships

Encouraging learners to express "love" in different love languages and the educator's expressed as well positively impacts of relationships in the classroom in addition to boosting self-esteem of learners. The book "The 5 love languages of children" by Gary Chapman and Dr. Ross Campbell provides useful insights on how different individuals receive and express love in 5 different ways, for example:

- Quality time
- Words of affirmation
- Touch
- Acts of service
- Gifts

### Only way forward

Inclusion is going to be difficult to implement in South Africa, but the reality is that it is our most feasible way forward, financially and in order to change our society. The recent riots and looting in London have shown, in my opinion, the effects of a lack of empathy and compassion and frustration from various unmet emotional needs, especially the need for belonging.

**"Inclusion is going to be difficult to implement in South Africa, but the reality is that it is our most feasible way forward, financially and in order to change our society."**

Exclusion has a ripple effect which destroys the sense of security in others. If we have a paradigm shift and start creating an inclusive society within our schools, then we can play a vital role in South Africa of addressing problems similar to the English riots. We can meet the many emotional and social needs of those being included and those who include others. *Who knows where the ripple effects of our actions will end?*



## Messages from Unions

Aside from the various educators who diligently work towards moulding generations of leaders and professionals to come, there are those organisations who dedicate themselves towards protecting and enhancing the interests of educators. These are the unions who Take a Stand for Teachers, and their work perfectly complements this year's theme for World Teachers' Month celebrations.

For this reason it was considered appropriate to include messages from the following unions: The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), the National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA), the South African Teachers' Union (SAOU), the National Teachers' Union (NATU) as well as the Professional Educators' Union (PEU).

The following section includes all the written contributions as were sent by these unions. As will be seen, their papers varied from practical demonstrations of actions taken in the interest of teachers, to those that went deep into the heart of teachers and the differences that they make in the lives of learners - despite sometimes unfavourable circumstances. Viewed together, these contributions illustrate how unions take a stand for teachers in South Africa.



# South African Democratic Teachers Union



## "Taking A Stand For Teachers"

Once during a training session, a teacher demanded for a certificate because he wanted to apply for another job. Teachers are attending workshops and participating in advanced professional development activities, not to improve their roles in schools, but to find another job, and those with some experience outside the profession often remain there. Figures for pre-service training also show similar patterns. Almost 9000 teachers graduate annually, and only approximately 3000 join the profession. Although many teachers stay in the profession, the exodus of teachers tells a story about what is happening in schools, and why we need to "Take a Stand for Teachers".

In a study conducted by the union on teacher well-being, teachers cited numerous factors that contributed to burnout and frustration in the profession. Poor support from the department and ever-increasing workload were cited as reasons for their frustrations. After enduring the conditions at school for a while, many teachers could not sustain their practice and opted for greener pastures. In one school teachers were assaulted and had to manage high care learners with little help and support. The district frustrated the school by ignoring their pleas for assistance. The school received special support because of the Teacher Well-being Project intervention.

Through the project, a course was developed to train teachers to cope with difficult circumstances. Teachers were taught to develop strategies to cope with problems and to deal with them constructively. Teachers were also taught a new language to articulate their frustrations and develop constructive solutions. Interestingly, through a SADTU intervention in Gauteng, teachers were calling for training in conflict management skills. Again the call for conflict management training is a symptom of conditions in the schools.

In the past, SADTU engaged a number of partners to conduct teacher professional development. In 2011, through the Teacher Union Collaboration, and thanks to the Department of Basic Education, SADTU is beginning to understand the experiences of teachers. The monitoring and evaluation reports generated from the CAPS training is starting to show a picture about teacher needs. SADTU utilized a lead teacher model for teacher's professional development with the intention of creating a teacher-lead professional development model. The lead teachers will be developed over time, and they will support SADTU regions and schools especially in the rural areas.

SADTU is also planning to work in various districts to pilot a process to enhancing the learning environment for teachers. Creating sustainable forums will be a priority. These will be supported for the duration of a year, which will allow them to become part of the teacher's routine. This will give teachers an opportunity to interact with district officials, to elevate problems and find solutions.



The learning from the pilot will provide evidence for enhancing the processes.

Teachers are professionals and need to act accordingly; however, the preparation they receive, and the demands placed on teachers to deliver a 21st century curriculum, is a serious mismatch. Understanding the demands of delivering a high quality curriculum, and the type of knowledge and skills that teachers need and currently have to effectively perform their roles, is a key to understanding teacher support. Some claim that teacher content knowledge is a problem; however, this is part of the puzzle and not the entire puzzle. As one author puts it "intentional instruction does not cause learning". Greater understanding is needed to break the code of teaching and learning.

The status of various materials produced for teacher and learner support material needs to be reviewed. Teachers have a multitude of textbooks and other teaching resources, they have the CAPS document, pace setters, and the lesson plans are in the pipeline. These are created in different sectors, and how they are utilized to establish coherent teaching practices needs to be interrogated.

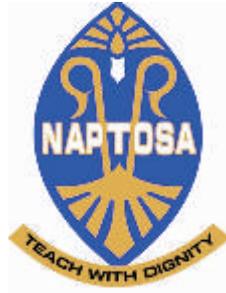
As a future agenda, SADTU, would like to understand the relationship between the innovations like inclusive education, and critical thinking and effective instructional practice. Many big assumptions drive the improvement agenda and teachers are often at the receiving end of these big assumptions. Working towards improving teachers' professional judgment by establishing reflective elements to professional development, is one way of addressing the problems in education.

"Taking a Stand for Teachers" is about empowering teachers to take charge of their roles in schools and to improve those. The translation of change and innovation into the practical realities of school life is not an easy task. Worldwide teachers struggle with this. Countries with successful education systems ensure that the teachers are developed into a highly skilled workforce. Improving quality interaction between teachers and learning is going to take a concerted effort from all and it is time we all took ownership of this. It is too easy to play the blame game and we need a different language to talk about problems in education, based on principles and values.

### "Taking a Stand for Teachers"



# National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa



## National Professional Teachers' Organisation of South Africa

NAPTOSA is the second largest Teachers' Union in the Country. NAPTOSA's membership profile is made up of teachers from various cultural and economic backgrounds and as a union it draws its members from South African teachers who put the interest of the child first. These are teachers who promote and maintain a professional approach to teaching. NAPTOSA subscribes to the following principles:

- The inalienable right of every child and student to quality education within an equitable and
- Non-discriminatory system of education;
- A high level of professionalism from all education sector employees;
- The enhancement of all aspects of the working life of education sector employees;
- Non-discrimination on the basis of colour, language, gender, religion, ethnic origin, social class, birth, political or other convictions, or disabilities or other natural or cultural characteristics;
- Independence - operating autonomously and without party political alignment;
- Respect for fundamental human rights as enshrined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa including the Bill of Rights.

NAPTOSA sees an educator as an integral member of society and recognizes that, the role of a teacher affects the development and progress of a nation. The teacher's effort in the classroom sets the basis of a nation's moral, social and economic wellbeing. NAPTOSA will always be visible and relevant in the core activities of communities where teachers are involved. NAPTOSA has the following portfolio committees: Conditions of Service, Professional Matters, Human Rights, Social and Cultural, Membership and Marketing, Publication and Communication, FET and Specialized Education. It is through these committees that NAPTOSA drives many of its activities.

## NAPTOSA'S TEACHER DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMMES

"While NAPTOSA takes its role as a trade union very seriously and takes every possible action to protect the employment conditions and socio economic welfare of its members, it takes equally seriously the professional development of its members and teachers in general. The importance of professional development is embedded in a desire to improve teaching and learning and the general education of South Africa's youth.

NAPTOSA has always understood that the quality of an education system cannot exceed the quality of its teachers and that by improving the method of instructions and instructor's skills you improve the outcomes of education. To this end our programmes in a number of provinces reaches thousands of teachers annually. These activities range from



curriculum matters to general teacher-wellness. Workshops and training courses are organized to give educators an opportunity to improve their skills. Some of these workshops include induction of newly appointed teachers. Newly appointed teachers are trained so that they can knowhow to respond to learners in situations where the dignity and authority of the teacher is undermined.

Teachers are equipped to interpret learning outcomes in a multicultural classroom. These are annual events and have become well established professional development programmes. NAPTOSA Gauteng recognises that good management is the key to improving our education system and so offers, annually, a Management Conference over two days to 250 principals and management teams. In addition to these, other programmes are offered 4 days a week, every week, during term time as well as regular weekend programmes. Through all of these programmes the Union reaches more than 5000 teachers annually, all of whom attend on a purely voluntary basis."

NAPTOSA is currently in the process of establishing a Professional Development Institute. The institute will be developed incrementally to ensure that classroom teaching and learning is considerably enhanced through the ongoing professional learning of teachers. The programmes of the Institute will be open to all teachers.

NAPTOSA has seen these initiatives empower the educators with knowledge and skills to deliver curriculum and deal with learners, and believes that when you develop the teacher you elevate the teacher; the elevation of the teacher benefits the child and in turn contributes to nation building.



### NAPTOSA MEMBERS "SHARE THE GOOD NEWS- FROM THE CHALKBOARD"

NAPTOSA initiated a project called "From the Chalkboard", where teachers were called to share the good news from their daily experiences in the classroom. We know that there are many thousands of teachers, who despite the odds, still enjoy teaching. NAPTOSA encouraged our teacher members to share these uplifting classroom experiences with other teachers. We are always looking to recapture the joy of teaching. Some of the publications were posted on NAPTOSA's website.



The following were some of the responses from teachers:

Ms.B.K from Eastern Cape wrote *"I've learned to be patient in life generally with everything that I do and with everybody that I work with, at church, in family matters and the community at large"*

Ms.M.C from Gauteng responded *"...I now have more practical knowledge about learners with severe intellectual impairments. I am always reading and researching more about learners with severe intellectual impairment in order to know how to develop and equip them"*

Ms.C.P said *"I am the one who has learned and been humbled by learners - I have learned that a smile costs nothing. Everyone should be treated with respect and dignity, and that the example that I set is like a ripple which grows and grows. Often times the things that cost nothing are the most valued by my colleagues."*

This initiative for NAPTOSA was taking a stand for teachers because teachers know that while teaching, you find yourself learning something.

## NAPTOSA'S SOCIAL AND CULTURAL ACTIVITIES

NAPTOSA members, through the social and cultural and Human Rights portfolio committees, are committed to their social responsibility and helping where they can. NAPTOSA supported the White Balloon Campaign this year by encouraging schools to participate in Child Protection Week.

The NAPTOSAKZN province encouraged its members to participate in the march because the union's core business is putting the interest of the children first. A safe child is a child that can learn and thrive.

NAPTOSA believes in supporting teachers in curricular and co-curricular activities. It is common to find NAPTOSAKZN members supporting and encouraging the Comrades' Marathon runners by providing a refreshment stand and thus showing the commitment of teachers to community and nation building events.

NAPTOSA took part in the "STAND 4 CHANGE AGAINST BULLYING 2012", where the 4th of May 2012, was declared an international day of standing up against bullying. NAPTOSA members and many schools participated in this worthy cause. At 12 noon, the entire school population stood up in silence to declare that bullying is a totally unacceptable behavioral practice and to make a commitment not to be a bully.

NAPTOSA Northwest province responded to the article in The New Age newspaper on the plight of a school that lacked resources to provide suitable educational environment. NAPTOSA collaborated with the provincial commercial radio station NW FM to help the school. NAPTOSA teachers lead by action rather than example.





Teachers are confronted on a daily basis by pupils from different home environments such as places of safety, orphanages and foster homes. These orphans are pupils in many schools and their home environment impacts their learning ability and the outcome of the curriculum requirements such as being able to complete their homework in their home environment. Because NAPTOSA supports homework as part of extended learning in the education of the child, the union identified a home for orphaned children and donated reading books, toys and stationary to assist these learners in completing their homework.

NAPTOSA has collaborated with institutions such as the Financial Services Board (FSB), to conduct Financial Education workshops for teachers with the aim of promoting sound financial management and offer individual guidance regarding the management of personal finances. NAPTOSA together with its partners has taken wellness programmes for teachers to schools. Through these collaborations teachers are educated on how to look after their health. These services are taken directly to the teacher's workplace.

### NAPTOSA'S HIV/AIDS PROJECT

Our Human Rights Committee is responsible for promoting a Human Rights culture within the union and its members; promotion of a social conscience in the union; addressing inequalities and prejudices; promote gender issues; ensure that policies concerning HIV/AIDS are actively pursued by the union. Under the Human Rights wing, NAPTOSA is currently running a project called Prevention, Care and Treatment Access (PCTA) for HIV and AIDS which is funded by Centre for Disease Control (CDC) through the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) that responds to the HIV related needs of educators and /or members.

NAPTOSA strongly believes and has proven that to combat the spread of new HIV infection, education is essential. Members and non-members of NAPTOSA are invited to attend and participate in workshops and school-based intervention where they are taught about prevention, stigma attached to HIV and AIDS, dangers of multiple concurrent partners, HIV counseling and testing, benefits of mutual monogamy, human rights and policies as well as wellness and healthy choices. This is one of the projects amongst others, which NAPTOSA has excelled in conducting.



## NAPTOSA AND THE CIVIC VOICES PROJECT

The American Federation of Teachers Educational Foundation (AFTEF) was awarded an international Civic Education Exchange grant from the US Department of Education in 2009. In South Africa AFTEF worked with NAPTOSA to roll out this project and NAPTOSA is the steward of the Civic Voices project in South Africa.

The Civic Voice is an international forum where students can voice their opinions on citizenship and it affords students the opportunity to transmit the stories of the world's great democratic struggles from one generation to the next. Students around the world are recording the stories of activists in their communities who participated in movements for human rights and democracy.

This project is currently running in five provinces. NAPTOSA sent four teachers to the USA, to share with other teachers from around the world that have been involved in the project. Through this project NAPTOSA has trained 108 teachers and 100 interviews were conducted. Teachers have reported the positive and revolutionary change this project has had on the lives of pupils in their classrooms. Learners have become critical thinkers when examining information to discern facts from opinions.

## NAPTOSA'S WOMEN DARE AND MEN MATTER

NAPTOSA has a total membership of just over 50 000, of which 65% are women and about 70% are Black located across the length and breadth of South Africa. NAPTOSA implemented deliberate leadership training for women in 2010 and to date over 400 women have had some form of leadership training. This year, in April, a conference was held in Durban for both men and women. NAPTOSA believes that for gender issues to be authentic, perspectives must embrace Venus and Mars conversations.

The conference theme was Women Dare and Men Matter. The programme was varied and covered modules such as Courageous Conversations on Leaders who dare to make emotions matter (focusing on emotional intelligence); LGBT conversation; as well as modules capacitating teachers in public speaking.



# Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie



## What Makes a Good Teacher?

*The education environment is still filled with defining moments.*

It is Saturday afternoon - a normal sort of day. There were a fair number of people in the food store. An ordinary-looking lady with a basket swinging from her arm bent forward to take a closer look at the cans on the shelf. She lifted her free hand, then hesitated, ran a finger across the top of four cans, stopped at one, picked it up and placed it into her basket. Decisive. No doubt she knew exactly when she would serve the contents of the tin, and to whom. She turned to move further down the aisle.

Just as she did so, a young man with sandy-coloured hair and intense blue eyes stepped in front of her, blocking her way. "I just wanted to say thank you Ma'am", he blurted out while not taking his intense gaze off her face. The woman's recognition was instant, "Peter, my goodness," she beamed, "how are you?" "No, thank you Ma'am, I just wanted to say I think of you every day. It is the life lessons."

"Are you enjoying the university? Is the course what you thought it would be?" she asked him. "No, it's fine. Okay. Thank you. I just wanted to say..." Awkwardly he trailed off, turned quickly and disappeared into the sun outside the door. The woman stood quite still for a moment, her head tilted to one side. *A Defining Moment*

A short BBC Education Video entitled, "What makes a good teacher?" came to mind. With a microphone thrust into their faces random people from the street were asked to say what makes a good teacher. The answer varied: "Someone who is interested in what they are doing"; "Someone who loves what they are doing, and has passion"; "A person with knowledge of what they teach"; "Someone with rapport and who gets on with children"; "A helper, as teaching is a helping profession".

Looking at the woman who had now wandered off looking for vegetables, one wonders into which category she would fall. Or was there something more?

\*

The buildings were solid, though basically empty. The main administrative block and the twenty classrooms sat firmly baking in the blazing summer sun. The ground they were built on was parched and swept clean. Not a blade of grass, except for what clung to the side of the koppie on the other side of the dusty, uneven makeshift soccer field with its drunken goal-posts tied together with discarded bunting that flicked in the hot wind.

We were just taking our leave of the headmaster when a shy child, about six years old, materialised from nowhere and



self-consciously sidled up to the man, grabbing at the hand with which he drew her closer. He bent down and she put her dusty little head against his ear turning her face away from us and spoke in breathless snatches.

He straightened up, swinging the little girl onto his hip as he did so. *A Defining Moment.*

He excused himself and explained that he had to go and we greeted him goodbye. We later learnt that the girl and her four-year-old brother had sat by their mother's bed waiting for her to wake. By midday they could wait no longer. The woman had gone to bed with them the previous night and though the two sat on the floor at the foot of the bed waiting patiently for hours the next morning, she would not wake. So they thought that perhaps their headmaster could make her get up. After all, they all stood up when he came into the classroom. That day the school had acquired another pair of AIDS orphans and the headmaster's family had increased by two.

That was four years ago. Presently, the school which is situated in the poorest of poor areas on the rural slopes of the Magaliesberg range, is surrounded by colourful indigenous gardens. Mothers maintain a constant supply of fresh vegetables from the school's own market garden and in season the children are allowed to pick fruit from the orchard. Throughout the year, at sunrise, more mothers light the gas rings in "The Angel's Kitchen" to prepare food for the several hundred pupils who come to school for nourishment - physical, mental and emotional. Here they are loved and cared for. A steady stream of local and international guests marvel at the joyful songs of welcome, and the serious air of learning that blows across the clipped lawns where, only recently, dust-whirls twisted in the heat.

\*

Websites, influential journals, erudite speakers clutching the tops of podiums around the world, think-tanks, symposiums, conferences - the march goes on. All teachers anxiously want their pupils to succeed in life. "What would have been described as a good education half a century ago is no longer enough to prepare the learner for tertiary study, a career and citizenship in the 21st century" the chairman of the board of companies says sagely as his eyes slide smoothly over the glossy page of nine-digit figures in the Annual Report, "Skiing on the cool snow-covered slopes of the Alps in Mégève is going to happen after all."

Some teenaged pupils send and receive, on average, 185 text messages a day and appear to have the uncanny ability to navigate their way through the day without looking up from their touch screen devices. As for the teacher, turning on the dusty over-head projector in the sticky heat of the over-crowded classroom, is an event. It seems the times are out of joint.

On its magnificently efficient website, one of the world's most prestigious teacher unions comments urgently that despite the establishment of the "21st Century Skills" movement some ten years ago, teachers are still posing important questions about how to move 21st century education forward. There does appear to be consensus, however, that there are four critical skills without which 21st century education cannot successfully move forward. They are known as the "Four Cs" namely "critical thinking", "communication", "collaboration" and "creativity".

In an autumn garden in a leafy suburb, twenty-one nursery school children are crowded around the teacher. He has created his own disorder. "Today" he said, in what amounted to a spine-chilling whisper, "we are going to have an



adventure". The group of children exploded into hysterical movement, hopping up and down. The decibel count of their collective screaming, keeping time with their excitement. Calmly the man divided the crowd into five groups giving each group a brightly coloured plastic dish. Each group sat in a circle around their dish. With earnestness that reflected the importance of what he was saying, the teacher talked vividly about the season, the dropping temperatures, the kaleidoscopic change of colours of the leaves and how the lawns were now not green anymore, but mottled with the patchwork colours of the fallen leaves.

And then the adventure started. The blue group was instructed to fill their dish with leaves that looked like a certain shape example that was shown to them. The red group had to fill their dish with all the leaves that looked like another example, etc. The groups dashed off in all directions, determined to make their journeys of discovery. Conversation was loud, spontaneous and direct: "No, no you can't put that one in, it doesn't look like our one", "That one is too big!", "That's mine, I saw it first."

At last all the dishes were full and the groups, possessively clutching their discoveries settled on the classroom floor. Each group had a turn to show their findings. Sam, their teacher, told each group what their shape was called. There were round leaves, oval leaves, long thin leaves, and even leaves that looked like squares and triangles. Then the children were asked to put all their leaves into little piles of the same size and colour. The piles were arranged on the long table under the window, the sun emphasising the brilliance of their colours. Each group proudly stood by their display, while impatiently waiting for their turn to "show and tell". Critical thinking, communication, collaboration and creativity\* had been exercised. And the foundations of the intrinsic principle upon which all science depends - classification - had been laid. *A Defining Moment.*

\*

To date, 2012 has been a dreadful year for many learners and teachers. The many and critical problems that beset our education system have left a bitter taste in the mouths of many educators. There have been blame-games and recriminations, accusations and counter-accusations. But the worst of all is that the muddied waters have obstructed the view of the good things that have gone on. The "defining moments" have continued throughout the country, despite all the problems.

So what is it that makes a good teacher - one of those special professionals who have shaped our lives, sometimes obviously, but most often imperceptibly?

We submit that it is those teachers who have lived and projected a sense of positiveness, personal resourcefulness and belief in the cause of education at large. With Hemingway their mantra seems at all times to be: Now is no time to think of what I do not have. Rather, I have to think of what I can do with what I've got. They honour the child and in doing so, honour themselves and their profession. They stand up for themselves with integrity.

*These are the members of the profession for whom we are proud to take a stand.*

\*For a full discussion on the "Four Cs" see the NEA (National Education Association) website: <http://www.nea.org/>



# National Teachers' Union



## Teachers Can Still Teach, and Learners Can Still Learn

In order to reach out and stay in contact with our stakeholders in different regions of the Republic of South Africa, the National Teachers' Union had massive road shows all over the country. The purpose of the latest road shows was to talk about the state of the education system in South Africa.

During NATU's visit to teachers in the North West, Gauteng, Free State, Mpumalanga, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape Province all teachers confirmed that they still had confidence in the education system. However, some key challenges were identified, which - as will be recognised as these challenges are discussed - leads NATU to strongly support and encourage further development of teachers in terms of qualifications.

In 2007 a Collective Agreement in the PSCBC was signed, which indicated that improvement in qualification was to be recognised by the State as the Employer. Teachers then decided to upgrade and some even studied further towards a Masters Degree or Doctorate, with the expectation that the Department of Education would recognise them and remunerate accordingly.

However, since the conclusion of this important resolution, the Education Department did not demonstrate any intention of recognising the improvement of qualifications. During the road shows teachers indicated to NATU that they are concerned because the Education Department is considered to be the one who should encourage improvement of teacher qualifications so that teachers can excel in research and master their own subject contents further as well as become exemplary to the youngsters they are teaching.

NATU is of the position that while we agree that no-one can praise Apartheid and the Pre-1994 era as it managed to subject the majority of South Africans to inferior education and discriminated against people on the basis of Race and Gender, they still managed to avail study leave with full pay for teachers. Considering this, it has to be stated that the democratic revolution has to be able to create better opportunities for teachers to develop themselves further. The current government should be able to assist those who are unqualified to improve their qualification and find a way to link salaries to academic achievements.

The country will continue to blame the collapsing education system on teachers while too little is being done to encourage the improvement in the qualifications of teachers. NATU will soon be advocating campaigns for the



abolishment of policies that seek to discourage teachers from getting high qualifications as we want subject specialists who can prove that they are "mothers and fathers" of information through their academic achievements.

During the road shows, teachers indicated that it is a misrepresentation of the profession to limit their salaries to REQV15, and that this is the worst policy, bearing in mind that we are a democracy of 18 years old.

The failure of the Department to allow teachers to climb the academic ladder is denying them an opportunity to be highly qualified as they demonstrate subject matter competency in those subjects they teach.

All the regions that were visited by NATU are of the opinion that teacher professional development through academic achievements has been demonstrated to have a positive impact on valued outcomes.

From the above question has to be asked as to why funds cannot be allocated to the improvement of qualifications if teachers are willing and committed to learning? Teachers cannot motivate learners to learn if they themselves are not committed to learning. Imagine having a swim coach who cannot swim... If teachers get the opportunity to continue learning, then learners will also be motivated to learn - while their teachers teach them.

During this special month for teachers, NATU would like to wish all the teachers a HAPPY WORLD TEACHERS' DAY.

PHAMBILI NGEMFUNDO PHAMBILI



# Professional Educators' Union



## Adapting to Change for Continuous Quality Education.

PEU had its Annual National Education Conference on 10 March 2012 in Mpumalanga Province. The theme of the event was "Adapting to Change for Continuous Quality Education" and various matters relevant to teachers were discussed.

The Deputy Chairperson of Mpumalanga Province, Mr Magadze, set the tone of the conference by quoting John Maxwell saying "Wise people learn from their mistakes, wiser people learn from the mistakes of others while wisest people learn from the success of others."

He went on to state that with the numerous curriculum changes that took place after 1994: from C2005 to RNCS to NCS and now CAPS; many teachers were left confused and frustrated, and as a union PEU remained there for her members in order to help them being equipped and ready to adapt to changes. To further illustrate the change he mentioned that OBE was introduced during the leadership of Professor Bengu; NCS was introduced by Naledi Pandor, and Minister Angie Motshekga promoted the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

Therefore a quick intervention plan was constructed whereby the various social partners (unions) agreed to help with the training of CAPS across the country. Approximately 51 educators from PEU were trained in Life Orientation and Consumer Studies in Mpumalanga Province and further training of educators were planned as per the instructions from the Department.

Following the introduction, the President of PEU, Madam Makgoba Maggy Mamaponya, officially opened the National Education Conference by making a confession and confirming to delegates that the South African Education System has been going through change from 1994 until now, including in the Department itself. Furthermore she emphasised that there is a need for us as professionals to take stock on basic education and to determine where it starts and where it ends.

Post-schooling and FET Colleges are necessary elements that PEU has to consider. Considering the Green Paper on post-schooling, the challenges regarding post-schooling must be identified in order to determine what is wrong with our system. Furthermore, PEU's SETA has to deal with further skills development of human resources.



The President of PEU is of the position that there are only two people who are important in education, namely the learner and the teacher. And therefore she considered the theme of the conference as very relevant to the time and audience of the day. She emphasised that the inputs of PEU are very important in both divisions of the education system, i.e. Department of Basic Education (DBE) and Further Education and Training (FET).

Dr E.A. Nkosi, who represented the Department of Basic Education at the conference, gave a CAPS overview of Grades R-12 and identified some of the challenges on the implementation of the NCS, namely Overload, Confusion and Learner underperformance in international and local assessments etc. Subsequently the Minister appointed a Task Team to review the implementation of the NCS and who had to investigate the following key areas:

"Curriculum policy and guideline documents"; "Transition between grades and phases"; "Assessment, particularly textbooks"; and "Teacher support and training (for curriculum implementation)". Recommendations that were made for immediate implementation included the discontinuation of the Learner Portfolio File; Requirements for a single teacher file for planning and assessment; Reduction on the number of projects required by learners; and the discontinuation of Common Task Assessments (CTAs). Recommendations with a longer term effect for implementation between 2012 and 2012 included: "The reduction of the number of Learning Areas in the Intermediate Phase of General Education and Training Band"; "The teaching of English as a First Additional Language to be given priority and taught from Grade 1"; "Regular external systematic assessment of Mathematics, Home Language and English First Additional Language in Grade 3, 6 and 9"; "The development of Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements per learning area and subject".

Mr Knox Thelani pointed out, during his key note address that most learners study careers that they never wanted because of subject choice. Due to the wrong subject choices, students have to change courses after spending a year at tertiary institutions. Eventually graduates cannot be employed due to the courses they have taken. A lot of the times these things occur due to schools forcing students to choose wrong subjects, merely because they want high percentage pass rates at the end of the year.

However, teachers have to ask themselves what changes they are implementing or admiring as teachers as leadership is also about responsibility. We need fresh ideas and we have to do our part as God does His part. South Africans should not ask what government can do for them, but what they can do themselves - as they are the government. Change is contagious, and we have to be professional.

An important subject, namely Mathematics, was also discussed during the conference. Mr Ngwenya, a PEU Education Sub-committee Member, highlighted (on the topic of CAPS orientation in Mathematics) to the delegates the following: Mathematics is a subject that stimulates skills and critical thinking, and hence it assists learners to develop. The reason why so many learners do not pass mathematics is because they lack basic knowledge of algebra. There is thus a need for educators to use their inborn skills, and for all educators in foundation phase to have mathematical skills.

The Conference was closed by Mr Z.H. Sinuka, Vice President of the PEU. Mr Sinuka expressed his delight at seeing quality people gathering together to exchange knowledge and experiences in their profession. The PEU, as a



UNION, has a role to play in developing its membership on all phases of leadership and this can be done by applying a principle of collective leadership. This means that on the side of unionism, we must be able to develop trade unionists that will carry the union and attract more members as a means of ensuring that PEU survives from generation to generation irrespective of the political changes, economic instabilities, social pressure and changes within the profession.

Subsequently, every individual PEU member should ask him-or herself: "What kind of an ambassador am I?" If we can answer this question, we will be able to look at ourselves and apply introspection, which will lead us to one of the principles we have adopted in the previous National Education Conference, namely Criticism and Self-criticism. To lead therefore means to sacrifice with the aim of ensuring that PEU benefits from your activity more at the end than the benefits obtained from PEU, and if we do not do that, we will exhaust the resources of PEU.

As a professional body, PEU focuses on the core business of the profession, which is teaching and learning. We treat learners as clients in business and such a relationship is a business-like relationship, meaning that the type of services we deliver should satisfy the needs of the client. Unfortunately for the teaching profession, the mistakes that are done in the process cannot be locked behind bars as we will always meet them on the streets as jobless individuals, unskilled people, and the unemployable majority.

The National Education Conference thus serves as a platform where we can focus on sharpening our minds to be ready to deal with changes in the education system that are done as a means of trying to redress the imbalances of the past.

It takes people like us to change society, nobody else will come from elsewhere to solve our problems, and we are on our own. PEU thus opens an opportunity for its members to interact with educational changes, needs of educators as practitioners and strategies to handle the curriculum on an annual basis through this forum called the Education Conference. So, take a look at the members next to you and say to him or her "you are at the right place".



*Education standing committee & 2 speakers of the day*



*Makgoba MM, President of PEU*





*Dr Nkosi E.A., from DBE*



*Ngwenya H.L., PEU Education standing committee member*



*Sinuka ZH., vice President*



*Some of the education conference delegates*



*Mr Knox Thelani*



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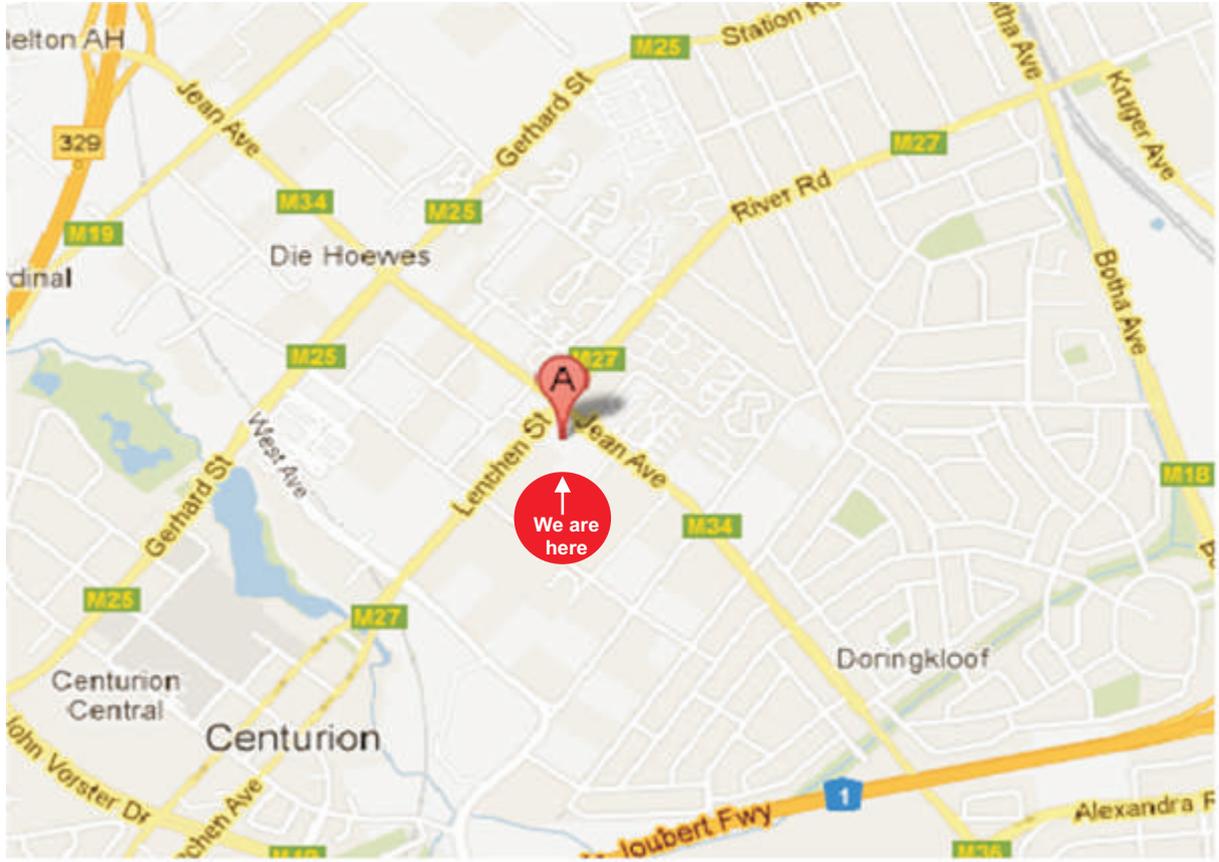
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*Towards Excellence in Education*

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