



NATIONAL REPORT 2012

Summary Report





National Report 2012

Summary

April 2013

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1 NEEDU'S approach to systemic school evaluation

1.1 A brief history of NEEDU

The National Education Evaluation and Development Unit (NEEDU) is a unit which is independent of that part of the civil service responsible for the administration of schools, and reporting directly to the Minister of Basic Education. The need for a facility of this kind was first formally articulated in a resolution passed at the Polokwane conference of the ANC in December 2007. This was followed by the appointment by the then Minister Naledi Pandor of a Committee to investigate the matter. The Ministerial Committee recommended the establishment of NEEDU, and Minister Angie Motshekga set up the institution shortly after she was appointed in 2009.

The Ministerial Committee recommended that NEEDU should provide the Minister of Education with an authoritative, analytical and accurate account on the state of schools in South Africa and, in particular, on the status of teaching and learning. The present document is a summary of the first such report to the Minister.

1.2 Priorities

The focus in 2012 was the Foundation Phase (FP), Grades 1-3, in view of the fact that the new curriculum (CAPS) was due to be instituted in that year. It is here that the base for all future learning is established, and if the rudiments of reading, writing and calculating are not firmly entrenched by the end of Grade 3, then both learning opportunities and the larger life chances of young citizens will be curtailed. While Grade R is formally part of the FP, given the specialist nature of this important pre-school year, it was decided not to evaluate it in 2012 but to make it a special focus at a later date.

1.3 Evaluation design and method

Three assumptions underpin NEEDU's evaluation design for 2012. First, the quality of teaching and learning is best measured through the *direct outcomes* of learning. Indirect proxies, such as plans, completed monitoring schedules, and the like, are unreliable sources of information about learning. The *writing* revealed in learner books, and one-on-one assessment of learner *reading*, were the key measures in assessing the quality of curriculum delivery in schools, together with the 2012 scores from the Annual National Assessment (ANA) tests.

A second consideration was to examine the quality of instructional leadership in the school system, a set of practices designed to direct and focus curriculum delivery. Instructional leadership is exercised by the national DBE, nine provinces, 86 districts and more than 26 000 school management teams. The evaluation assumes that good instructional leadership in schools is characterised by coherent curriculum planning and coordination, effective language policies and programmes, good time management, procurement and deployment of books, promoting high levels of writing, using assessment to improve teaching and learning, and fostering professional development among educators. Provincial and district offices provide monitoring and support services to schools with respect to these practices, while the DBE supplies policy direction, national intervention programmes and monitoring services.

The choice of sample was a third key element of the NEEDU evaluation design for 2012. Given the strong urbanising trends of the South African population it was decided to select 134 primary schools and their respective district and provincial offices predominantly from areas of high population inflow (Table 1). This factor needs to be taken into account when viewing the findings described below, which may differ in schools in other environments, such as high schools, rural schools, etc.

Table 1: Institutions visited in 2012¹

| PROVINCE | DISTRICT | SCHOOLS |
|---------------|----------------------------|---|
| Free State | Thabo Mafutsanyana | Bethlehem Intermediate, Bohlokong, Clarens, Impucuko, Impumelelo, Motshepuwa, Nthute, Phinduzame, Sekoko, Thabang |
| Gauteng | Johannesburg Central | Donaldson, Isiseko, Isu'lihle, Jabavu-East, Luyolo, Mambo, Nonto, Zibambele |
| | Johannesburg West | Dr Mary Malahlela, Harry Gwala, Hector Peterson, Klip Valley, Lodirile, Roodepoort, Thatthesakho, Unified Public |
| Northern Cape | Frances Baard | Beacon, Boitshoko, Endeavour, Isago, Kevin Nkoane, Kim Kgolo, Kimberley, Laerskool Vooruitsig, Letshego, Molehabangwe, Montshiwa, Olympic, Progress, Reneilwe, Sol Plaatjie, Tshiamo, Tshwarelela, West End |
| Western Cape | West Coast | Augsburg Agricultural, Laurie Hugo, Liebenberg, Masiphathisani, Naphakade, Panorama, Piketberg, Sederberg |
| | Metro North | Kenridge, Nal'ikamva, Parow-west, Rosendal, Ruyterwacht, Simonsberg, Table View, Tafelberg Special |
| North West | Bojanala | Karlienspark, Kloof View, Lekwakwa, Rampa, Reuben Monareng, Laerskool Rustenburg, Rutanang, Zinniaville |
| | Tlokwe (Dr Kenneth Kaunda) | Berts Bricks, Keagile, Madibeng, Mooirivier, Potchefstroom, Promosa, Tshepo, Tshupane |
| Mpumalanga | Ehlanzeni | Celani, Ifaethu, Inkambeni, Khombindlela, Lundanda, Majika, Laerskool Numbi, Tfolinhlanhla |
| | Gert Sibande | Laerskool Badplaas, D & C comprehensive, Elukwatini, Father Charles, Izithandani, Letsakuthula, Makhosonke, Nhlazatshe, Siyeta, Tsatsimfundvo |
| Limpopo | Vhembe district | Jim Tshivhanelo, Lurenzheni, Makumbane, Manamani, Muvhi Tshikovha, Tshedza, Tshisahulu, Tswana |
| | Waterberg district | Albert Lithuli, Blaauwboschkuil, Hleketani, Jinnah Park, Khabele, Malebone, Mmamakwa, Mmampatile |
| KZN | Ilembe | Dinuphozo, Dr B W Vilakazi, RA Padayachee, Shakaskraal SA, Shakaskraal, Thembeni, Tinley Manor, Umhlali |
| | Umlazi | Addington, Entuthukweni, Greyville, HP Ngwenya, Msizi Dube, Sandakahle, Ukukhanya Kwelanga, Umlazi |
| Eastern Cape | Mount Frere | Mahamane, Mandileni, Mount Ayliff, Nguse, Qaizana, Sihlahleni, St Georges, Thembisa |

NEEDU's work in 2012 started with a description of the instructional leadership practices up and down the 15 'slices' of the system shown in Table 1, and tracing their connections to the policy directives of the DBE, on one hand, and to the learning outcomes in target schools, on the other.

¹ One school refused entry to NEEDU evaluators, resulting in 133 school reports.

1.4 Reporting

Each school visited received a report with recommendations for improving the quality of teaching and learning. A composite report consisting of descriptions of policies and practices in the respective provincial and district offices, and a summary of the school reports for each district, was then prepared for each of the districts. After finalisation of the 133 school reports and 15 provincial/district reports, a National Report was written for the attention of the Minister, the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and the public.

2. Diagnosis

It is widely known that South African schools perform below expectations. But much less is known about why this should be so. Is it because they *won't* or because they *can't*? The implications for school improvement are very different, dependent on how this question is answered. If poor school performance is predominantly caused by teachers being *ill disciplined* – for example, being absent from school for no legitimate reason, or not being in class when they should be – then they need to be disciplined, a job which lies firmly in the purview of school Principals and Circuit Managers (CMs). Where poor oversight and management coincides with ill-discipline, the situation merits outside intervention. Under these circumstances, the systemic focus must be on strengthening management capacity at school and district levels. If, on the other hand, teachers being *unable* to deliver the curriculum is the dominant cause of school underperformance, then the solution must take a different course, focused on capacitating teachers, through strengthening their knowledge resources.

2.1 The case for *won't*

The most obvious manifestation of ill-discipline in a school is the way in which time is used. The method adopted in this evaluation to assess time management in schools carries rather wide margins of error. With this caveat in mind, we estimate that the timetable is adhered to around 90% of the time in about two-thirds of the sample of 133 primary schools evaluated in 2012. In the remaining one-third of schools, significant learning time was lost through learner and teacher late-coming, not going to class promptly after break, not going to class at all, not maintaining learning activities during class, and leaving the school during school hours for training, union meetings, funerals and memorial services.

Teacher leave is a problem of a different sort. The HSRC estimated that in 2008 the average teacher stayed away from school for nearly four weeks. This is 10% of the school year and must have a significant depressing effect on the quality of learning outcomes. This figure seems very high, yet it is remarkably close to the 19.4 days derived by the 2007 SACMEQ III study. What makes this such an intractable problem is that much of this absence is taken quite legally within government sick leave regulations.

2.2 The case for *can't*

School X (Box 1) provides food for thought when considering the *can't/won't* question which structures our search for factors inhibiting learning in South African schools.

Box 1: School X – Leadership

The school is situated in a village in a predominantly rural province. Since discovering some 10 years ago, through referral to the local clinic, that one of the pupils at X had very poor vision, the Principal has instituted programmes to cater for a variety of learning and physical disabilities. A total of 49 of the 619 learners in the school are differently abled in some or other way. The largest programme is a separate class for 8 hearing-impaired learners, who are taught by a tutor employed for that purpose and paid by the province.

The point of this example is to illustrate the resourcefulness, drive, energy and nurturing nature of Mrs P, principal of X, under conditions of extreme poverty and isolation. In establishing a number of specialist programmes for the different needs of variously abled learners (sight impairment, hearing difficulties, cerebral palsy), Mrs P is dramatically improving the life chances of the most disadvantaged learners in her care, who would otherwise languish at home. It would be uncharitable to conclude that such an outstanding leader could fail to provide the very best for all her charges through ill-discipline, laziness or dishonesty. Surely, if the learners at X are not reading and writing at the expected standard, it must be due to some other cause?

It happens that reading is relatively well done at School X: Six of the best learners in Grade 2 read more fluently than most of the 615 tested across the country in 2012. The classes were better supplied with books than most, and time management was judged to be exemplary. However, the responses of learners at School X to a simple comprehension test were less impressive, averaging just over 3 out of 5 for the 6 learners tested. Similarly, the school's ANA scores for Grade 3 lie on the provincial mean for mathematics (35%) and below average for HL (40%). And the quantity and quality of writing in FP learners' books are inadequate in both language and mathematics.

Two Grade 2 reading lessons were observed at the school, and it seemed that both teachers were able to take their learners to a basic level of literacy, but stopped short of leading them to independent reading and levels of textual analysis beyond simple recall. Too much time was spent on repetitive churning and discussing peripheral textual features. In other words, there appeared to be an emphasis on reading as collective decoding rather than on reading for individual understanding.

The school has a large room available as a library, which contains a reasonable store of books. The library had not been open to learners since the librarian left earlier in the year, although teachers had access. The most interesting acquisition was an extensive set of Ladybird readers consisting of dozens of titles and around 300 volumes in total, none of which had been opened previously, as shown by cracking spines when evaluators did so.

The question must be asked: what prevents this school from taking its best learners to reading levels beyond the average? Why are the best six readers in the school not all reading at the 'top' benchmark? Could the school be doing more to stimulate reading? If the answer to the last question is affirmative, what should the school do to improve learning further? For a start the school could make the Ladybird readers, currently gathering dust in their library, available to the learners. Even if only the best readers were given access to the books they would find their own way through this series, expanding their vocabulary, stretching their grammatical repertoires and stimulating their imaginations. However, there are sufficient books for all learners in the school to have periodic access, which would be bound to lure at least a few more into the pleasures of independent reading, and raise the average ability of most. So, the most important question then becomes: why does School X not understand this truth about reading that seems so obvious to skilled readers? Why do they not push their young readers to read more? We attempt to answer this question in Section 2.3.

2.3 What is it that educators don't know?

SACMEQ III provided the first opportunity to assess the extent of teacher subject knowledge in a systematic way, administering language and maths tests to a national sample of Grade 6 teachers in 2007. This data is particularly interesting in that a number of items were common to the learner and teacher tests, providing the opportunity to compare teacher and learner scores directly.

The SACMEQ language test consists of comprehension exercises on 11 separate texts, ranging in difficulty from those containing simple vocabulary and syntax only, to relatively dense technical descriptions and complex discursive passages. While South African teachers did relatively well on questions requiring the simple retrieval of information explicitly stated in the text (scoring an average of 75,1%), scores dropped dramatically as soon as the higher cognitive functions of inference (55,2%), interpretation (36,6%) and evaluation (39,7%) were invoked.

Scores on the maths test show a similar decline for more complex topics, from a mean of 67,2% for arithmetic operations, itself not an encouraging result for these fundamental skills, to 49,7% for the key topic area of fractions, ratio and proportion, and 46,5% for items involving the use of algebraic logic to solve problems.

It would seem obvious that, if a teacher does not construct reading, speaking and writing tasks to elicit higher order comprehension and problem-solving processes in her learners in class, it must be because she does not understand how these activities function in developing cognitive capacity. This lack of pedagogical understanding, in turn, is certain to arise if she does not herself undertake complex problem-solving activities or apply the perspectives of inference, interpretation and evaluation to her own appreciation of her subject. In other words, sound subject knowledge is a necessary (though not sufficient) condition for effective teaching.

South African primary school teachers generally exhibit poor subject knowledge in language and mathematics, and consequently an incomplete understanding of both the requirements of the curriculum and how to animate it in their classes. The same applies to subject advisors and circuit managers in district offices and indeed to many officials higher up the system too. While indiscipline and institutional inefficiency are effective barriers to learning in around one third of the 2012 NEEDU sample, poor subject knowledge on the part of educators at every level of the system is evidently a far more widespread and, as we shall argue later, perhaps more intractable curtailment to learning in FP classrooms across the country.

3. Findings from the 2012 school visits

3.1 Language

The Language in Education Policy (LiEP) affords all learners the right to learn in the language of their choice, typically their home language (HL). The underlying principle of the LiEP is to maintain the use of HL as the language of teaching and learning (LOLT), especially in the FP, while incrementally providing access to additional language(s). However, according to the South African Schools Act, School Governing Bodies (SGBs) have the power to determine the language policy of a school. The difficulties faced by schools in implementing the LiEP fall into three categories: a mismatch between the LOLT in the FP and the HL of many learners, the dialectization of African languages, and the problem of terminology in mathematics.

3.1.1 Incongruence between LOLT and home language of learners

Across the entire NEEDU sample for 2012, the foundation phase LOLT matched the home language of *most* teachers and *most* learners in just over 70% of schools. However, in many schools, the

learner population is widely divergent in home background and HL. The most extreme example was seen in one school in Johannesburg West, where all 11 official languages were represented. Under such circumstances, whichever language is chosen as the LOLT, large number of learners, in many cases the majority, receive instruction in a language which is not their HL.

One-third of schools visited by NEEDU in 2012 offered English as LOLT in the FP for African-language speakers in at least one class. This occurred in ex-HOA (White), ex-HOD (Indian) and ex-HOR (coloured) schools where the LOLT was either English or Afrikaans and the majority of learners came to the school from the surrounding townships and spoke one or more of a number of African languages. In some of these schools no African language is taught at all, a problem that will be alleviated when new policy comes into effect mandating the learning of an African language in all schools.

In addition, an increasing number of former DET and homeland schools provide English as the LOLT in the FP. A few are situated in urban areas and contain a significant number of African middle class learners. Most, however, serve poor learners in townships and rural areas. School X (Box 1) is an example of a school in the latter category, where the principal explained the motivation behind this choice as follows:

Because our children live in the rural area and are very disadvantaged, we decided to use English as LOLT, to expose them to the modern world, so they can understand what is happening on TV. It is difficult, but we are doing it at our own pace and parents are very happy about it.

Another school in an Eastern Cape village serving isiXhosa learners justified the decision to change to English as LOLT on the grounds that parents were demanding it, threatening to remove their children from the school if their demands were not met.

3.1.2 Dialectisation of languages

A problem commonly experienced by schools is that the African language spoken by many township children is seldom the standard form of that language. In the Kimberley district of the Northern Cape, for example, teachers pointed to the differences between the Setswana spoken in Kimberley, from that spoken in Taung in the North West Province, which, in turn, differed from that spoken in Botswana. The following response from one interviewee illustrates the point:

We speak a deurmekaar Setswana. In most cases an Afrikaans or English word replaces the real word. For example, colours: colour the ball in brown in proper Setswana would be 'Tshasa bolo kammala o mohonou'. The word 'honou' is not used in the community at all, hence the child will not hear it, nor have the need to use it. We simply use the English word brown but we teach the learners these terms for the sake of the [ANA] tests and DBE workbooks, but the learner finds it difficult and confusing.

All languages continuously evolve, and are thus prone to dialectisation. The major stabilizing and standardizing force is literature, and here African languages are in a particularly vulnerable position, since too few books of any kind exist in the country's nine official African languages.

3.1.3 Teaching and learning Maths in languages other than English or Afrikaans

Although terminology has been developed for mathematical entities and operations in African languages, teachers are generally not familiar with them, nor are they used in everyday commercial transactions. Teachers complained that when the 'official' terminology appears in, for example, the ANA test papers, it causes confusion among learners. Across the country, evaluators encountered the view that mathematics would be best taught in English from Grade 1, or at least that Africanised English terms be used, since the latter are more widely known by teachers, parents and learners than the more recently contrived 'official' terms. Some schools unofficially adopted this as their chosen solution to the problem.

3.2 Literacy

3.2.1 Reading fluency

Reading instruction was observed in a total of 215 Grade 2 classes. In addition, the three best readers, nominated by the teacher in each class observed, were tested for reading fluency in the LOLT of the class. The Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) test was used to test reading fluency.

Since norms for reading fluency have not been developed for South Africa, we used a provisional set of norms, where the *top* learners in Grade 2 read at an average rate of around 125 words per minute (wpm) by mid-year, *average* learners read at about 70 wpm, while *slower* learners average about 20 wpm. The most striking feature of this exercise is the fact that 72% of the three *best learners* in each class observed are reading *below the average* benchmark for Grade 2 learners, and that 22% are on or below the *poor* benchmark.

3.2.2 Books

By far the majority of classes visited contained very few reading books. In many such schools the state of the 'reading corner' suggested general apathy and disinterest on the part of the teacher to encourage reading. Much of the responsibility for improving this situation must lie with the provinces, where the budgets for LTSM do not provide for supplying schools at the required levels. However, putting up with having only four or five distinct titles available for learners in each class of the FP to read over a full year, speaks to the lack of understanding among school leaders and teachers of both what it means to be literate, and the specifications of the official curriculum. Where principals and teachers understand the requirements of their subject they make a plan to acquire or create the appropriate reading material, and manage these carefully to serve succeeding generations of learners.

There was a consensus across the schools evaluated in 2012 that maths textbooks, as such, were not appropriate in the FP. This attitude towards maths textbooks in the FP reflects the ubiquitous worksheet culture that dominates South African schools. In the hands of highly expert and very conscientious teachers, a well-developed set of worksheets can be the force and means for driving progress through the curriculum. These teachers are in the minority. This practice is not recommended for most classes, as worksheets developed by teachers are generally not as systematically designed

as textbooks or workbooks, and often contain large gaps and inconsistent progression in the development of concepts and skills. They are frequently pitched at an inappropriately low level of cognitive demand.

Under the book-poor conditions described above, the provision by the DBE of workbooks in key subjects for primary school learners is an important initiative. The workbooks are generally structured as sets of activities, with each activity covering a two page spread and intended to provide work for one or two lesson. The DBE has mandated that use of the books is compulsory, although they are intended to be supplementary to the textbooks purchased annually by schools. The overwhelming majority of school visited had books in both the LOLT and maths for all three grades in the FP. Teachers generally found the DBE workbooks useful, rating them between 4 and 9 on a 10-point scale. Most were enthusiastic about the books and said that learners loved them. However, as we shall see below, use of these books is far from optimal.

3.2.3 Writing

The educational importance of writing

In language and the content subjects learners should write at least 4 times a week, which would translate into a minimum of around two pages per week for Grade 1 learners, moving to about four pages a week in Grade 3. At least once a week they should undertake extended writing. The latter should consist predominantly of sentences in Grade 1, paragraphs in Grade 2, and extended passages (two or more linked paragraphs) in Grade 3. From the second half of Grade 1 learners should be led to write stories about themselves, their families and friends, describing experiences, expressing their feelings, and analysing events. These are the activities which develop the higher cognitive functions of inference, analysis and interpretation and require systematic development from the earliest years of formal schooling.

In mathematics classes FP learners should also be required to write at least 4 days a week, and at least once a week they should work on 'word problems', generally posed as simulations of 'real life' situations. The first task in solving these problems is to understand the language, conceptualise the task and translate it into one or more mathematical operations. Here the cognitive processes of induction, deduction, extrapolation and proportional reasoning are exercised.

With these requirements in view, an important aspect of the evaluation methodology in 2012 was to examine learners' books in order to assess the quantity and quality of writing undertaken, both in class and at home. We examined all the LOLT and mathematics exercise books used by the best learner, as nominated by the teacher, in each of two classes in each grade of the FP. We also looked at the extent to which the DBE workbooks were used.

Frequency of writing in exercise books in language and mathematics

This exercise revealed that far too little writing is done in many classes in the sample, particularly in Grades 2 and 3. Although the average number of pages written per week in Grade 1 is around two or more in 11 of the 15 districts visited, there is inadequate progression as learners move through the grades. Thus, nine of the districts have a mean figure of fewer than three pages per week for Grade 2 and only four districts exhibit a mean of around 4 or more pages per week in Grade 3. In only two districts did the average quantities of writing approach the norms described above for all three grades. Furthermore, in some districts there seems to be no progression from one grade to the next.

Writing quality

Evaluators counted the number of exercises in learner language books that involved the writing of sentences, paragraphs (three or more linked sentences) and extended passages (two or more linked paragraphs). In only two districts did the average number of exercises containing paragraphs or longer get close to or exceed 1 per week in Grade 3. In another three districts, the average was around three-quarters of an exercise per week, but in the remaining 10 districts, learners in Grade 3 hardly ever undertook writing that extends beyond isolated sentences. The figures were even lower in Grade 2 and in almost all schools across the sample, the number of times that Grade 1 learners are required to practice original consequential thinking and record this in writing is negligible. Under these circumstances, conceptual development is bound to be extremely slow.

Use of DBE workbooks

Evaluators counted the number of pages in DBE workbooks that showed evidence that they had been read or written on. Again we requested to see the books of the best learner in each class. A minority of schools were found to be making good use of the books, which is a very encouraging sign in only the second year of this important initiative. However, most schools were not utilising the resource to its full potential. If the DBE prescriptions were followed, classes would be working through up to eight pages a week, while the figures indicated that the average use in the majority of districts was less than half of this.

3.3 Curriculum planning and coordination: Leading for learning

A decade ago most principals saw themselves as administrators and accounting officers, and generally left teachers to their own devices. In contrast, in the schools visited in 2012, evaluators found a growing awareness among principals of the importance of instructional leadership and of their own responsibility to lead the learning programme in the school. We also noted provincial and district level efforts to set up systems to monitor and support principals in this their central function.

However, although many schools are now ‘talking the talk’ of monitoring, their practices generally lack substance. Many SMT members (principals, deputy principals and HODs) told evaluators that they monitored teachers’ work by checking that teacher annual plans and lesson plans were congruent, that these were reflected in the writing found in learners’ exercise books, and that this, in turn, was aligned with CAPS requirements. These assertions were corroborated by teachers, and supported by appropriate signatures and school stamps in learner books. In many cases there were files of completed schedules (monitoring ‘tools’ and ‘instruments’) recording that the appropriate procedures were carried out. Yet, when evaluators looked at the quantity and quality of learner written work, these diverged markedly from the norms specified by CAPS. Clearly, more explicit guidance on what should be monitored is needed.

3.4 Assessment

Assessment completes any learning cycle, and simultaneously foreshadows the next cycle, as follows:

| |
|---|
| <p>assess => diagnose => identify learning effects => build => assess</p> |
|---|

The ANA exercise was piloted by the DBE in 2010 and implemented the following year. The various ANA publications list numerous goals for the programme. These fall into two broad categories. The one set of goals aims to assist participants in the school system – learners, teachers, school leaders and system-level officials – to improve their own performance. The second is directed at monitoring performance of individual schools for accountability purposes and of tracking improvement in the system as a whole. These are distinguished in the literature as *assessment for learning*, and *assessment of learning*, respectively.

3.4.1 Assessment for learning

Because teachers administer the ANA tests and mark learner responses themselves they are exposed to good testing practice and appropriate standards. They can also see, first hand, the strengths and weaknesses of their learners, and hence come to understand the efficacy of their own teaching. This is well illustrated in the realization at School Y that disappointing scores in the 2011 ANA mathematics tests were caused as much by the low reading ability of learners as by their lack of understanding of multiplication. As a result, the school has instituted a programme of early morning classes in which special attention is given to reading, writing, spelling, multiplication and the completion of word problems in mathematics.

Unfortunately, the use of the ANA results to improve teaching shown at School Y is in stark contrast to practices at most schools visited in 2012. Many South African teachers seem quite unaware of the potential presented by the ANA scores. At another village school, just across a small field from School Y, the HOD was most interested in the diagnostic uses of ANA, when these were explained to him by NEEDU evaluators, and said that he would like to receive the DBE guidelines in this regard. Evaluators later found a copy of the guidelines neatly stored in the school's ANA file.

The only system-wide use of ANA to focus and direct teaching and learning was exhibited by the Free State DOE. Each of the ten schools visited in the Thabo Mafutsanyana district had a Subject Academic Performance Improvement Plan (SAPIP), containing detailed analyses of test scores, against the requirements of the curriculum. Evaluators heard the SAPIPs described in the same way at provincial, district and school level intervention programmes, reflecting a coherent message driven from the HOD and MEC in Bloemfontein, through the district office, to every school visited in the district.

3.4.2 Assessment of learning

The second set of purposes of assessment exercises such as ANA is about holding schools accountable for their results, and tracking changes in performance at the system level. The design of ANA makes the test scores less suited to these purposes. There are many factors which raise questions about the validity and reliability of ANA results, rendering comparisons between schools on the same test, or within the same school or unit of the system over time, prone to significant margins of error. As an example of the difficulties involved in the last of these, NEEDU found anomalies in the 2011 scores for a number of schools, where the scores obtained from the DBE's national data base were disputed by the school, who offered a different set of results. Other schools could produce their results, but did not feature in the national database.

It was clear to NEEDU evaluators that the administration of the tests and collation of the marks had improved considerably between the 2011 and 2012 rounds of testing. Considering the magnitude of the operation, progress to date on the deployment of ANA has been very promising. Nevertheless, the 2012 results are still not considered, in the words of the DBE report, to be reliable enough to accurately measure changes from one year to the next, and here too NEEDU found some discrepancies between the scores supplied by schools and those reflected in the national database.

3.5 Professional development

If the diagnosis offered in Section 2 is correct, then *capacitating* teachers by one or other model of *providing knowledge resources* must be the most important factor in any reform strategy for schools. This has long been recognized. Over the last two decades billions of rands have been poured into what we have called *teacher subject knowledge capacitation*, through a plethora of teacher in-service training (INSET) programmes, while the pre-service (PRESET) sector has been radically restructured in the last 10 years. However, there is general dissatisfaction with these efforts, with INSET widely perceived to have been ineffective, while any improvement in the quality of beginning teachers awaits demonstration. These views were confirmed by NEEDU respondents during visits to schools, districts and provinces in 2012.

3.5.1 PRESET

A number of provincial and district level officials expressed dissatisfaction with PRESET with respect to both the general quality of newly qualified teachers and the mismatch between the skills needed at schools (for example, mathematics) and the subject specialisations of graduates.

3.5.2 INSET

On the question of INSET, one senior manager had this to say:

There is a lot of paper chase in the system, and teachers follow the easier courses, to get more qualifications and to get once-off payments. Teachers are put onto programmes which have nothing to do with improving teaching and learning. School managers do leadership training that has little to do with the realities of managing schools.

Regarding attempts by district officials to capacitate teachers, cluster and afternoon workshops were a common practice in 13 of the 15 districts visited. Yet, the view that this is an ineffective mechanism is widespread.

Despite their poor subject knowledge, the large majority of South African educators are considered to be appropriately qualified, as indicated by possession of a Senior Certificate (Grade 12) and a minimum of four years of appropriate post-school training, or the equivalent. Educator qualifications have increased dramatically in the last two decades: in 1990 only 53% of educators were appropriately qualified by these yardsticks, and by 2008 this had increased to 94,4%. The massive growth in teacher qualifications over the last decade has been fuelled by the part-time Accelerated Certificates of Education (ACE) offered by universities. Noting high variability across this field, the Council on Higher Education (CHE) has questioned the quality of most of these programmes. In its Report on the National Review of Academic and Professional Programmes in Education, the CHE had this to say:

... HEIs end up paying insufficient attention to the ACE Mathematics, and indeed to other ACEs, because the ACE is perceived as the lowest of their priorities. ... The most vulnerable students in the institution then come to be the recipients of the minimal amount of attention, time and support that the institution can provide.

The absence of a sustained plan that addresses the continuum of learning that is required, and in particular that addresses poor subject specialisation knowledge, is perhaps the greatest weakness of the ACE programmes.

The two week block release programme offered by the WCED's Cape Teaching and Leadership Institute (CTLI) is the only in-service initiative which has shown to be associated with significant rises in pupil scores in both reading and maths in the annual provincial tests. The model of training offered by the CTLI is also used by Gauteng's SciBono Centre, and the Maths and Science Teacher Education College (MASTEC) in Limpopo. The cornerstone of this model is an intensive residential course of relatively long duration – two weeks for CTLI and SciBono, and nine weeks in the case of MASTEC – with substitute teachers employed to release teachers for training. While research on these programmes is incomplete, the model does appear to hold some promise.

3.5.3 Systemic interventions

The DBE and a number of provinces visited in 2012 said they had programmes designed to improve the quality of teaching in the FP. However, on visiting districts and schools, it was found that only two such interventions were being implemented to any degree, the LitNum Intervention (LNI) of the WCED and the Gauteng Primary Language and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS). We summarise each of these below, and draw a number of lessons from their experiences in the last 3 or 4 years.

The LitNum Intervention of the WCED

Commencing in 2009, the first phase of the LNI saw the vacation training of teachers from 250 primary schools across all districts in the Western Cape. This took the form of five days of residential training at the CTLI. Eight teachers from each of 125 schools were selected to be the recipients of language in-service training and support. A further eight teachers from another 125 schools were selected to be the recipients of maths training and support. The following year, the first group of schools received training in maths, while the second was trained in language. In addition, teachers were visited in their schools by service provider personnel to provide on-site support.

After a year of the programme, the model was adapted for the second phase, based on the realization that the cascade model of training used in Phase 1 was ineffective in changing practices. Starting in 2011, all teachers in the Foundation and Intermediate phases at the selected schools were selected for the vacation training. The change in design significantly increased the numbers of teachers who attended the vacation training, putting stress on the training structure. To address the shortage of trainers (originally provided by the NGOs) curriculum advisors from the participating districts were invited to work alongside the trainers, and train to become trainers themselves. This new element of the programme effectively entrenched it within the WCED structures. The provision of resources for teaching language and mathematics in the Foundation Phase is a key component of the strategy.

The LNI was viewed in a positive light by most participants interviewed by NEEDU in participating schools. The intervention has boasted some successes but three years into the formal programme it has yet to yield significant improvements in learner performance.

The Gauteng Primary Language and Mathematics Strategy

In 2011, the GDE launched the GPLMS to address the low level of literacy achievement in the FP. By late 2011, it was realised that a programme was needed in both mathematics and languages, and in the whole of the GET band (Grades 1-7). The project evolved to become the GPLMS, with the mathematics component being piloted with Intermediate and Senior Phase teachers and learners in the second term of 2012.

By the end of 2012, the project was assisting 832 targeted schools, reaching nearly 600 000 primary learners in the province. The slow pace which characterizes the majority of South African classes has long been recognised as one of the principal factors retarding learning progress, resulting in most learners falling progressively further behind as they move through the grades. A central feature of the GPLMS is the use of a set of *scripted lesson plans*, designed as a practical mechanism to provide knowledge resources to teachers in a direct manner to enable them to pick up the pace in classrooms. The teachers are visited fortnightly by 'coaches', hired for the purpose from outside the GDE, to assess and assist progress.

Materials, packaged specifically for the teachers on the project, are a second key component of the strategy. Realising that a primary constraint on reading progress in the GET band is a paucity of structured reading material, the project has commissioned the publication of 16 sets of graded readers in all official languages. These were due to be produced by the end of 2012.

The maths component of the project is not as advanced as the language component, partly because it was introduced a full year after the latter, but also because of design and implementation issues unique to maths education. These problems, in turn, reflect a lack of consensus in the field concerning best-practice pedagogy and materials design. Problems encountered by teachers in using the material in their classes caused the GPLMS to withdraw and redesign its original set of mathematics lesson plans.

The teacher development component of the GPLMS comprises two parts: 'just in time training', which focuses on using the lesson plans in class; and a formal mathematics INSET programme, which seeks to support identified teachers that need basic mathematics content and pedagogical knowledge.

NEEDU evaluators noticed an important shift at GDE head office, from the preoccupation with Grade 12, to laying a solid foundation in the early grades through the GPLMS. District officials, however, were far less knowledgeable about GPLMS, and where they did know about it, far less enthusiastic than their provincial peers. The lack of clear role of district officials and/or the prevailing misunderstanding of their roles regarding GPLMS poses a threat to the successful implementation of the programme.

Ideally, tracking the progress of learner achievement from the ANA results of 2011 to 2012 would provide quantitative evidence of education gains for those learners who have had one or two years of intensive FP language and mathematics instruction. Unfortunately, as we have already said, the nature of the 2011 administration of the ANA tests was not standardized to the extent that would allow for reliable comparisons. And, while 2012 represented a significant advance in quality on 2011, the ANA exercise needs to achieve even tighter standardisation of administration and data collation, and careful attention to the psychometric comparability of succeeding tests before it can be reliably used to track school change over time.

Lessons from the LNI and the GPLMS

If we accept that learning to read, write and count in the first three school grades is the foundation for all further learning, and if we acknowledge that South African learners start falling behind in the very first year, then the LNI and the GPLMS are arguably the two most promising educational programmes currently in progress. They are the first systemic programmes that have gone beyond the planning phase, and taken to a scale beyond NGO-driven pilots. At this relatively early stage in what should be the natural lives of these two interventions, five interrelated lessons are emerging.

Focus

The most interesting difference between the LNI and GPLMS lies in the particular aspect of teacher capacity which each has chosen as its focus. The LNI has prioritized *teacher subject knowledge* as the key to more effective delivery of the curriculum. The premise of this focus seems to be that teachers cannot teach what they don't understand very well, and that once they have this understanding, they will be better able to make sense of the curriculum, make better pedagogical choices, and consequently be more effective orchestrators of classroom behaviour.

The GPLMS, on the other hand, assumes that effective classroom practices can be *scripted*, and that if teachers are taught how to follow the script by expert pedagogues, the learners will be presented with a far more coherent induction into the disciplinary field in the short run, and teachers will come to grasp what it is they did not know in the medium and longer term.

Design

Both programmes have undergone significant changes in design since initiation. In the case of the LNI, it was found that cascade training was ineffective, and in Phase 2 all teachers in participating schools are now included in the training. A notable feature of the GPLMS is that, after two years, the language component is still under construction. Lesson plans remain in a state of dynamic evolution in response to classroom conditions, while available reading materials require significant supplementation through newly commissioned readers. After one year the mathematics component was taken back to the drawing board, with lesson plans and workbooks being entirely rewritten.

The important lesson to emerge from this feature of both the LNI and GPLMS is one that South Africans have ignored in the past: the need to spend time perfecting the design of ambitious new programmes, to provide time and space for adaptations to ensure their suitability for target classrooms.

Bedding down

Closely related to the last point is that, once the programme design has been finalised, initiatives such as these require sustained effort over a number of years before they are likely to become embedded in the standard operating procedures of the complex set of institutions and systems comprising schooling. Over the past 18 years each new administration, following the election that brought them into office, has introduced significantly new curriculum policies and other projects. While continuous renewal and refinement are important elements in getting schools to operate optimally, a key element in bedding policies down is *stability and continuity*, as evaluations in highly successful countries like Finland have shown.

Institutional location

A prominent, although relatively recent, feature of the LNI is the involvement of Curriculum Advisors in the programme. Nevertheless, the support work in schools continues to be done by NGO personnel, an expensive option which is not sustainable. The GPLMS also employs NGOs to conduct the in-school support to teachers, on the assumption that Subject Advisors have neither the capacity nor the resources to do the job.

Because of cost, the school support model common to both programmes is unsustainable. Yet both provinces continue to be hampered in their attempts to systematize this function, due to insufficient numbers of curriculum advisors in districts, and by the low capacity of many advisors. This situation poses a dilemma for both provincial governments and national policy makers. While the recent policy on school districts issued by the DBE takes important steps towards standardising the roles and workloads of district officials, it is silent on the critically important issue of capacity.

Impact

It has become clear that acceptance of, and even enthusiasm towards, these programmes is not a sufficient condition for achieving improved outcomes. Effecting pedagogical change in classrooms requires far more than going through the motions of a new set of routines, even where these are periodically monitored by expert visiting coaches. Improving teaching requires not only an explicit restructuring of daily activities, but also continuous guidance on how to engage with the *substance* of the new routines.

Establishing whether or not a programme of this nature does impact on the quality of learning outcomes is the ultimate measure of its worth. In order to use resources to best advantage, it is important to establish which aspects of such interventions are most effective, and this requires rigorous, longitudinal evaluation by an expert outside party. In particular, it is important for the design of future programmes to determine the *relative efficacy of the model of teacher capacitation* of the two interventions.

3.5.4 Within-school professional development

It became evident to NEEDU evaluators that any school can improve the average level of its own capacity merely by sharing the knowledge held by the best teachers. For example, during the investigation of Grade 2 reading across the country, evaluators found that one of the teachers in each pair observed exhibited more appropriate pacing and level of cognitive engagement in her class than the other, often very markedly so. Such a situation is ideal for internal staff development, led by the SMT, where the two teachers, together with others at the same grade level, learn from each other through lesson observation, team teaching and mentoring. Yet these practices were seen in a very small minority of schools.

4. Recommendations

4.1 Achieving institutional functionality

Recommendation 1a

Principals are responsible for maintaining efficient time management practices in their schools. Circuit Managers are responsible for ensuring that principals do their jobs in this regard. Circuit Managers must work with principals in schools in which time is not optimally used for teaching and learning. Principals must be assisted to exert firm leadership and sound time keeping practices throughout the school. CMs and principals must be equipped with training in basic HR procedures. Each province needs a strong HR school strategy, including leave management policy, and a provincial level capacity to deal with problematic cases.

Recommendation 1b

The DBE should conduct an investigation into the regulations regarding sick leave so as to prevent abuse of the system.

4.2 Instructional leadership

4.2.1 Building the school management team

Recommendation 2

It is the responsibility of the principal to lead curriculum delivery. While tasks and responsibilities should be formally distributed to members of the SMT and teachers, the principal must direct the overall strategy. A division of labour must be established within the school, with important tasks defined, planned and allocated to senior members of staff. It is the function of the district office and of Circuit Managers in particular, to ensure that a set of roles and responsibilities is developed and assigned. This assignment should be signed off and monitored by the CM.

The SMT must meet regularly to monitor progress against explicit learning goals, identify problems and plan activities. The tasks that require the establishment and maintenance of systems are: design of appropriate language policy, in consultation with the SGB; curriculum planning; construction of school norms for reading and writing; procuring and managing LTSM; moderation of assessment; analysis of test results to identify areas that require attention; and teacher professional development. Each of these is discussed in more detail below.

4.2.2 Language

Some or other combination of three main strategies is needed to address this complex and thorny issue.

- 1) Leave the situation as it is. Under these conditions schools are increasingly opting for English as LOLT in the FP.
- 2) Standardise the African languages.

3) Make English the LOLT in the FP. This will pre-empt unregulated drift.

Recommendation 3A

The DBE needs to commission the writing of graded sets of reading materials for use in the FP for the nine official African languages. The question of language standardisation must be taken into account in this process.

Recommendation 3B

Additional language-trained subject advisors in each of the main languages spoken in each district are required to provide leadership, advice and training to schools, teachers and parents. Their main task must be to assist SGBs to make wise language choices for LOLT and FAL, and to develop programmes for improving the proficiency of teachers and learners in their chosen LOLT. It is important that the language choices of parents are respected.

While most schools struggle with language issues, few have investigated programmes dedicated to this goal. It is recommended that provinces investigate such programmes and issue a list of preferred programmes. The most effective of these could be implemented in selected schools, led by Subject Advisors.

Recommendation 3C

Schools must make a special effort to improve the proficiency of learners and teachers in both LOLT and FAL. One option is to recruit first language speakers to teach language classes for both LOLT and FAL, wherever feasible.

Recommendation 3B

The planned introduction of an African language, other than Afrikaans, for all children is a positive policy in the interests of nation building. The current shortage of African language teachers indicates that implementation should occur with caution, and only when teachers are available.

4.2.3 Reading

Recommendation 4

National norms should be set for reading proficiency, led by the DBE. Fluency and comprehension levels should be defined by grade level. District and provincial curriculum officials should coordinate their implementation at the district level, together with the involvement of teachers. National norms for reading in South African languages are not currently available, and should be developed during 2013. A suggested starting point is provided in Table 2.

Table 2: Suggested norms for reading fluency, FP

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

Since 2013 is the final year of CAPS training, training workshops in the use of these norms, and the others we discuss below, should commence in 2014, funded through the Skills Levy.

Recommendation 5

Members of the SMT should monitor learner reading systematically, using an appropriate set of norms. Learners throughout the school should be assessed annually, and the progress of weaker readers tracked at least quarterly.

Recommendation 6

The LNI of the WCED and GPLMS should be the subject of rigorous evaluations to assess their impact. In view of the fact that the findings of such a study are in the national interest, it is recommended that the evaluation be commissioned and directed by the DBE.

4.2.4 Writing

Recommendation 7

National norms for writing in the LOLT and FAL have been suggested in the CAPS. These should be adapted by the DBE and provinces during 2013, in terms of the quantity and quality of independent writing to be undertaken in learners' exercise books. This is another process that should involve subject advisors and HODs. An example of such a set of norms for writing in the LOLT is shown in Table 3.

Table 3: Suggested norms for writing in LOLT, grades 1-3

| Grade | By the end of Term 2 | | By the end of Term 4 | |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|
| | CAPS Requirements | Suggested number | CAPS Requirements | Suggested number |
| GRADE 1 | Writing sentences | At least 5 exercises of sentence writing by the end of the semester | Paragraph - three sentences | At least one exercise per week throughout the second semester |
| GRADE 2 | Paragraph – 4 to 6 sentences | At least once exercise per week in the first semester | Story – 1 to 2 paragraphs (10 sentences) | At least one exercise per week for the last semester |
| GRADE 3 | Story – 2 paragraphs (10 sentences) | At least one exercise per week | Story – 2 paragraphs (12 or more sentences) | At least one exercise per week for the last semester |

In the same way, norms should be set for writing in mathematics. An example is given in Table 4, which summarises the CAPS requirements for the various topics and their number ranges to be explored in maths writing in classes in the FP.

Table 4: Suggested norms for the number range exhibited in mathematics writing, Grades 1-3

| Topic | End of term | Grade 1 | Grade 2 | Grade 3 |
|--------------------------|-------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Addition and subtraction | 2 | Add to 10 Subtract from 10 | Answers up to 50 | Answers up to 400 |
| | 4 | Add to 20 Subtract from 20 | Answers up to 99 | Answers up to 999 |
| Multiplication | 2 | Up to 10 | 1 to 10, by 2 and 5 | 1 to 10 by 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 to 50 |
| | 4 | Up to 20 | 1 to 10, by 2, 5, 3, 4 | 1 to 10 by 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 to 100 |
| Division | 2 | N/A | Up to 30, may include remainders | Divide nos up to 50 by 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 |
| | 4 | N/A | Up to 50, may include remainders | Divide nos up to 99 by 2, 3, 4, 5, 10 |
| Problem solving | 2 | Answers up to 10 | Answers up to 50 | Answers up to 400 |
| | 4 | Answers up to 20 | Answers up to 99 | Answers up to 999 |
| Fractions | 2 | N/A | Halves, quarters, thirds and fifths | Sixths and eighths |
| | 4 | N/A | | |

Recommendation 8

School leaders should monitor learner writing throughout the school, according to a set of norms. This is best done by examining learner books quarterly. In particular, a systematic programme of extended writing should be developed for each grade. It is not enough merely to look at learner books and stamp and sign them: the *quality* of writing in both language and mathematics must be systematically assessed.

4.2.5 Books

Recommendation 9

The DBE workbook programme should be continued. The books should be assessed against the curriculum and amended where necessary. Teacher guides should be developed. Learners should work systematically through the DBE workbooks during the course of the year, and assisting teachers to do so is another instructional leadership task for the SMT.

Recommendation 10

Increased allocations from the provincial budget must be found to better equip schools with increased quantities of reading material in the FP. Subject advisors should research this field and identify suitable sets of graded readers in the various LOLTs and FALs offered in the district. The DBE and provinces should issue lists of preferred readers.

Principals should ensure that readers are procured in greater quantities and effectively deployed in FP language classes. Learners should be reading at least one book a week throughout the FP, which means that classes should have at least 30–40 different readers available, as part of one or more graded sets. All schools should work towards this ideal. An effective book retrieval system must be established in each school to manage these resources cost-effectively.

Procurement of a textbook and/or workbook for mathematics for each grade in the FP is also strongly recommended.

4.2.6 Assessment

Recommendation 11A

Regarding the use of the ANA tests to assist teachers, the province and district should use the 2012 ANA scores to help schools undertake useful item analyses of assessment exercises. SMT members should be directed to moderate test and examination papers to ensure they are at the right standard specified by the curriculum.

Recommendation 11B

Regarding the use of ANA for systemic assessment purposes, it is important that the exercise enjoys the highest levels of confidence among teachers, academics and the general public. Therefore, before attempting to make claims about changes in test scores over time, the system needs to achieve tighter standardisation of administration and data collation, and give careful attention to the psychometric comparability of succeeding tests. It is recommended that an external agency be commissioned to undertake these tasks, with the participation of DBE officials.

4.2.7 Professional development

Recommendation 12

The DBE should commission a study to investigate models for effective teacher capacitation, including INSET. In particular, the LNI and GPLMS should be subjected to rigorous evaluations to assess their impact.

At school level, SMTs should structure and lead systematic learning opportunities for teachers. In the Foundation Phase these should be focused on difficult topic areas, and the exploration of different pedagogical techniques for particular topics, especially the teaching of reading and the concept of number.

The task of provincial and district officials is to develop the capacity among school leaders to maintain an effective system of in-school professional development. Programmes to develop reading, literacy and English proficiency are urgently needed.

4.3 Professionalising the civil service

The Mangaung Policy Conference of the ANC noted that government capacity in Basic Education, in large parts, shows signs of incompetence, corruption, ill-discipline and irregularities in employment and promotions. The Diagnostic Report of the National Planning Commission characterized these conditions as symptomatic of civilizations in decline.

More optimistically, these signs are also typical of those preceding periods of renewal, as happened in England in the nineteenth century. Following the debacle of the Crimean War, the Northcote-Trevelyan committee was established to investigate ways of making the civil service more efficient. In their report of 1854 Northcote and Trevelyan diagnosed the problem as arising from the tendency for the well-born to use their influence to place those sons who were not suited to competition in the 'open professions' in the civil service. Under this system of patronage, the service came to be dominated by the *'the unambitious, and the indolent or incapable'*, and both internal efficiency and public estimation suffered. Northcote and Trevelyan proposed the use of a different principal for employment and promotion, one of merit and equality of opportunity. The mechanism for effecting this principal was the civil service exam, a system used in China, on and off, for 2 000 years until its abolition in 1905.

Historical precedent tells us that an assessment of expertise as a precondition for entry into defined jobs in the civil service is a mechanism to combat seniority and patronage and promote efficiency. Its introduction is inevitably met with resistance from within for the obvious reason that the many incumbents who have been beneficiaries of patronage will be threatened by such a change. For this reason, many attempts to reform the public sector are met with failure. Success depends on strong political will exercised over a sufficient period of time to entrench the new ways of doing things. The Northcote-Trevelyan proposals, that took the best part of three decades to become embedded in much of the English civil service, is one such example.

We suggest that implementation of a programme of screening prospective employees for their expertise begins with four key positions: Phase- or Subject Heads at school level (generally known as Heads of Department or HODs) and Principals, and district-level Subject Advisors and Circuit Managers.

School HODs and Subject Advisors**Recommendation 13**

The DBE, in conjunction with experts from the tertiary sector, should establish during 2013 the competencies required to exercise the functions of HOD and SA, and devise tests for assessing these competencies. These will include sound subject knowledge and proven teaching expertise at the entry level. In future, all new HODs must be appointed using these guidelines. This will establish the baseline competency for higher promotion posts, to principal then CM or SA at district level.

Circuit Managers and Principals**Recommendation 14**

The DBE, in conjunction with experts from the tertiary sector, should revisit the norms it uses to appoint principals, and devise tests to assess these competencies. Once the norms have been revised according to the requirements of the job, all future appointments should be made according to these criteria. The requirements must include having been a successful HOD or deputy principal. In addition, prospective principals must be competent in HR management, including conflict resolution and the principles of industrial relations, understanding the legal and departmental regulations, and being held in high esteem by their peers. The same applies to circuit managers, whose first requirement must be that they were excellent principals.

Acknowledgements

The NEEDU **National Report 2012** and **Summary** were written by Nick Taylor, with assistance from Kim Draper, Johan Muller, and Sibusiso Sithole.

The National Report was based on 15 **District Reports**, to which the following contributed: Darryl Boswell, Jeanette Marchant, Jennifer Roberts, Kim Draper, Margaret Mayers, Nick Taylor, Sibusiso Sithole.

The District Reports, in turn, were derived from 133 **School Reports** written by: Arackal George, Azwindini Masia, Ben Lubisi, Bhekisisa Mvelase, Bongzi Maria Nkabinde, Caashief Lombard, Christopher Deliwe, Claudette Coolen, Darryl Boswell, Elise Lecuona, Getrude Marajh, Gugulethu Bophela, Jeanette Marchant, Jennifer Roberts, June Engelbrecht, Kim Draper, Lindile Mtongana, Margaret Mayers, Mark Potterton, Nancy Mdabula, Nick Taylor, Nompumelelo Mtshali, Rose Magwai, Selvin Daniels, Shaeda Dadabhay, Sibusiso Sithole, Suliman Saloojee, Vithagan Rajagopaul, Yousuf Gabru

Administrative and logistical support was provided by: Adrie van Staden, Leah Mokgawa, and Mogale Vuma

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ISBN 978 - 1 - 4315 - 1843 - 2

