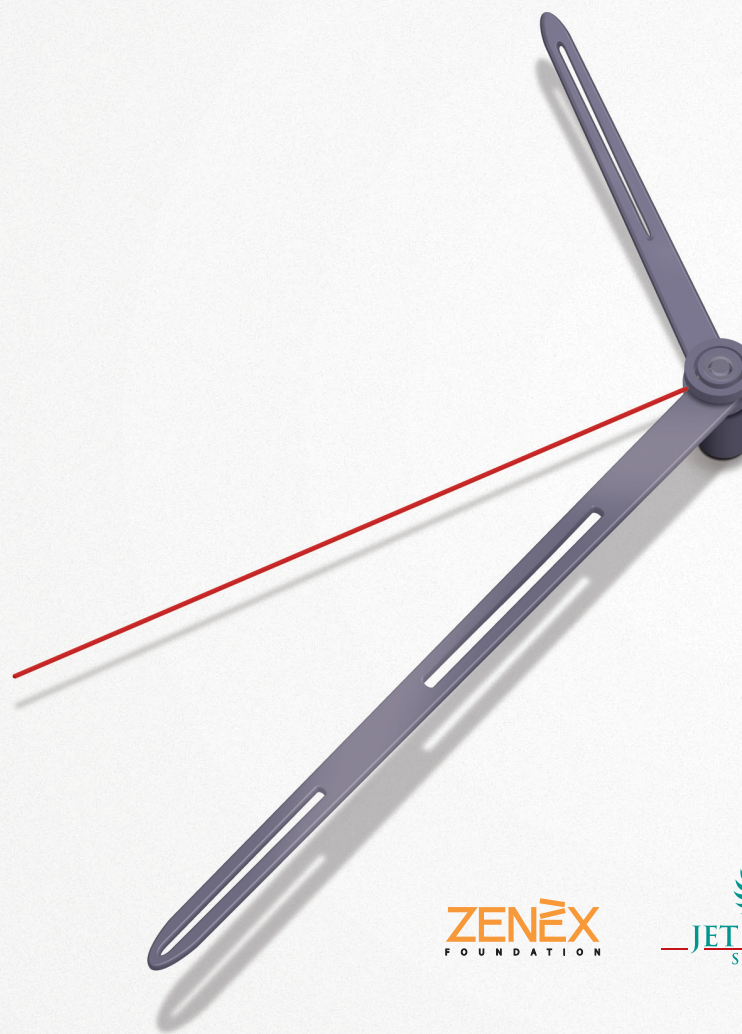


2012 Leadership dialogue

THE STATE AND FUTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN SOUTH AFRICA

*A public initiative to contribute towards the
implementation of the National Development Plan and the
Action Plan to 2014: Towards the Realisation of Schooling 2025*

Thursday 6 December 2012



ZENEX
FOUNDATION

JET EDUCATION
SERVICES

basic education
Department:
Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

BACKGROUND

to the dialogue

A leadership collective including Sizwe Nxasana, Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Futhi Mtoba, Godwin Khosa, Ihron Rensburg, Thobile Ntola and John Maluleke met to discuss how we can help the DBE to realise its vision encapsulated in the *Action Plan Towards 2014* and implement the National Development Plan for the education sector. This collective agreed to initiate a national discussion, beginning with a Leadership Dialogue, that will reflect on what has gone well or not gone well over the past years and what needs to be done going forward. This decision was taken to establish a common mission among the key stakeholders who are supposed to put the plans into effect.

The features of the envisaged Dialogue are that it will

- Create an avenue for open, honest engagement among key stakeholders such as the teacher unions, student organisations, civil society organisations, business and government
- Be apolitical and inclusive, providing an opportunity for even politically inclined organisations to explore joint societal actions
- Develop action plans for various stakeholders
- Look for 'quick wins', but take a long-term view.

In preparation for the Dialogue the committee collected inputs about what has *gone well or not gone well over the past years in education and what needs to be done going forward in the short, medium and long term*. This report presents a consolidation of the views expressed by different stakeholders in response to these questions. The report does not present the responses interviewees verbatim but captures the ideas expressed during the interviews; attempts have been made, however, to use interviewees' exact words and statements where possible. All the interviews were captured in writing and then analysed into this consolidated report. The intention of the data gathering process was to collect sentiments and recommendations from the key stakeholders in education with a view to providing a basis for the dialogue.

The report was prepared by JET Education Services

LIST

of pre-dialogue contributors

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WHAT HAS GONE OR IS GOING RIGHT IN EDUCATION?

SCHOOLS, TEACHERS AND LEARNERS

- The establishing of School Governing Bodies was the right idea. Some SGBs are doing really well.
- Township schools have some degree of functionality, rather than having schooling only from 09h00 to 11h00 as was the case in 1994.
- Most of our primary school teachers are solid middle aged, middle class women in the system. They are our assets and should not be thought of as drunkards.
- We probably have the best learners if we compare ourselves with what is going on in countries like the UK. Most kids are respectful and accepting of authority. And there is a great amount of social cohesion in the system.
- Diversity in the form of acceptance of different languages and children with disabilities has been embraced.

POLICIES AND SYSTEMS

- The national department has moved towards an evidence-based policy decision making process.
- There is greater stability in the system: we have merged the former departments of education into one single department of education.
- The national education department has the logistical capability to manage a matric examination process, with over 0.5 million learners.
- There is greater access to education in both primary and secondary schools, but some issues beyond access were not thought through in advance, for example transport and resources.
- The introduction of Grade R as a compulsory year is a major step forward, although we are experiencing some problems with implementation.
- The splitting of the Department of Education into the Department of Basic Education and Department of Higher Education and Training was a good move.

STRATEGIC INTERVENTIONS

- The roll-out of the DBE's workbooks has contributed to standardising the teaching input and coverage of the work.
- The introduction of the ANA as an accountability tool gives us the opportunity to see what is going on in primary schools, whereas previously the only information we had was based on the matric results. We can now use the data to understand why some of our 300 schools in poor communities are doing well.
- There are pockets of literacy and numeracy initiatives taking place.
- Teacher union funds have been made available for teacher development.

COMMUNICATION AND INVOLVEMENT

- There is a much more open conversation about the challenges in education. People are no longer scared to speak out about what is going wrong and can now express their frustrations.
- People are doing things on their own on a small scale, wherever they find themselves, and they have not given up hope.

The set of issues that emerged from the interviews are reflected in the following table.

A MAP OF ISSUES RAISED BY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS

1. TEACHER UNIONS	2. PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE	3. COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT	4. GOVERNMENT'S CAPACITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An overwhelming majority of the interviewees raised issues about unions. • Unions are too strong; one union dominates the space and dismisses any other opinion. • Unions exert peer pressure on teachers. • Other views are that unions are not to blame, but rather a weak state, politicisation of education and lack of subject expertise, particularly among subject advisors and heads of departments in schools who are supposed to monitor classroom learning and teaching. • Teachers must not ask for more money before they deliver a 50% pass rate. • SADTU recently averted a number of strikes at the local level. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is a need to strengthen the recruitment of staff by clearly specifying and advocating recruitment criteria. • Start with recruiting good district directors, curriculum heads and principals. • Focus on content knowledge expertise and competency to select the best and test applicants for new jobs. • A skills audit should be carried out to establish the gap in the executive levels of the system and start development for those who have potential. • Balance expertise driven recruitment against principled deployment. • In key positions, appoint people who have proven successes. • Reverse the politicisation of teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education should remain a public and not a state asset. • Stakeholders are not being listened to. • Existing talent and capacity that exist outside the confines of the education system should be utilised. • Review the school governance model; bring back traditional leaders and churches. • There is need for greater accountability and better coordination by the state. • Re-launch the NECC and establish the education and training councils as envisaged in the NEPA. • Training on ethics is required across all levels of government across the length and breadth of the country as a way of rebuilding public accountability. • The dialogue must not end with big players but be duplicated in schools and communities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher unions are of the view that the capacity of the state is not strong enough to implement policies. • There is a need to strengthen leadership capacity at the executive levels of the national and provincial departments. (Refer to the section on human resources). • The bureaucracy at provincial level is too big, e.g. 2500 for 1400 schools in the Free State. • Different Ministers have initiated different programmes, e.g. COLTS, Tirisano, Foundation for Learning and the Action Plan). • The vision of the state should stay constant despite different political terms of office. • Vision 2025 should incorporate best practices.

A MAP OF ISSUES RAISED BY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS ctd.

5. GOVERNING BODIES	6. LANGUAGE	7. HUMAN RESOURCES	8. BROADER MEANING OF EDUCATION
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• SGB associations should be used to the advantage of all schools by increasing common vision and coordination.• The associations should be funded in some way.• Review legislation to bring back traditional leaders and churches.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Don't destroy the language capacity in our schools, especially Afrikaans. For the Afrikaans speakers language is a very emotive issue, and its decline represents a perceived threat to the language group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase the number of books in the classroom.• Ensure better utilisation of HR by improving selection and promotion processes.• Improve the way in which misconduct is dealt with. The role of SACE needs improvement.• Acknowledge good performance.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Politicisation of the education system and the lives of children must be brought to a stop.• We should not lose sight of the ideal of holistic learner development. Learners should feel safe and enjoy learning.• Violence and ill-discipline should be addressed as part of the Foundations of Learning.• Education should be pitched as a public and not a state responsibility.• There is a great deal of focus on TTT, but not enough on how to ensure that children learn and how to nurture learning.

A MAP OF ISSUES RAISED BY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS ctd.

9. PRINCIPLES FOR IMPROVEMENT	10. TEACHER DEVELOPMENT	11. COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP	12. PRIVATE SECTOR ASSISTANCE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Note that there will be no quick wins in education; improvement has to be carefully planned. A short-term intervention should be construed as being a 10-year programme. Interventions should be simplified, kept to 2 or 3 priorities and should revolve around CAPS. Focus on numeracy and literacy Increase focus on interventions that do not require additional funding. Tighten the contracts for service providers involved in improvement interventions. Political will is a condition of success. Address the system as a whole Focus on daily instructional challenges and practices instead of programmes like the ACE. Create more positive conversations concerning teachers; the current conversations are negative and threatening. We need to transcend our conversations from what's not working to how to sort out the problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Training as a strategy for improvement needs to be evaluated. Support for improvement should be focused on HOD's in schools who should be responsible for supporting and monitoring learning in classrooms. Teachers are too big a group to focus on. Serious consideration should be given to team-teaching as a development strategy. Mentorships should be explored further as teacher development strategies. Need to ensure better trained teachers at pre-service level and avoid sending the new teachers to dysfunctional schools. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More courageous leadership that will drive strategy without fear or favour is needed. E.g. implementation of Post Provisioning Model in the Eastern Cape. The ANC and SACP should assist when union members/ regions and communities derail schooling. A toll-free number should be established communities to report school disruptions. Widespread training on good governance is required at school, district and provincial levels. Our leaders must set example and model how the officials and learners behave. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a view that the private sector investments of the previous two decades have not yielded much tangible outcomes. The private sector can provide resources and help increase utilisation. Working parallel to and from outside of government will not yield tangible improvement. The private sector investment remains weakly coordinated and can be counterproductive if not properly coordinated and integrated with Government's. Government (DBE) must support initiatives developed by NGOs in particular, as the latter are hugely supportive of the former. They must be tapped into and embedded.

A MAP OF ISSUES RAISED BY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS ctd.

13. RESEARCH	14. DISTRICTS	15. SCHOOL MONITORING	16. RESOURCES: TEACHERS, BOOKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More research on the practical aspects of teaching school management is needed.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Districts are currently weak but they hold great potential for driving improvement, more so since they are not heavily politicised and involved in rent-seeking tendencies that bedevil the other layers of the system since they run a paper budget.• District capacity needs to be improved and configured according to the role we want districts to play; currently districts are staffed by people with the wrong skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Improve the way in which misconduct is dealt with. The role of SACE needs improvement.• Acknowledge good performance.• Unions aren't against school monitoring.• HODs and advisors should know the structure in order to monitor it.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The R8 billion infrastructure allocation should be spent quickly.• Significant infrastructure budgets in provincial departments remain underutilised and returned to Treasury.• There is no reliable data on the infrastructure backlog.• The delivery of the textbooks has been badly managed and dealt the education system a heavy blow. Even where they are delivered they are still not fully utilised.• The Post Provisioning Model needs to be implemented more effectively in order to improve the efficiency of the system.

A MAP OF ISSUES RAISED BY EDUCATION STAKEHOLDERS ctd.

17. USE OF TECHNOLOGY	18. LEARNERS	19. DELEGATION OF AUTHORITY TO SCHOOLS	20. PARENT INVOLVEMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The innovative and effective technology-based intervention such as those that broadcast lessons from good schools to other neighbouring schools. Young people must be connected to information, opportunities and financial options relating to their education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Disciplinary issues are on the rise. Provide more psycho-social services. Provide assistance to traumatised learners. Develop a national nutrition strategy. Nutrition is problematic, has led to 20% stunted development. Investigate having a conditional cash transfer as a means to keep children in school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Good schools are punished for doing well. Leave alone the better performing schools. Access the good schools to their declared per capita funding and transfer properties to them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rebuild public accountability through giving parents checklists of what they should expect from the school, teachers and learners. The public broadcaster should be used to reinforce good practices and behaviours.

SIX FOCUS THEMES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AT THE DIALOGUE

THEME 1: PROFESSIONALISATION OF THE CIVIL SERVICE

Description of the challenges

There is a sense from the respondents that the civil service is staffed with inappropriate people who do not have the required skills, expertise, attitudes and levels of commitment and the interests of learners at heart. The issue was raised in respect to the teachers, school managers and managers in the other levels of the education system. Several of people raised the practice of cadre deployment which is applied across all levels of the system as the key cause of the problem. It is interesting to note that all the teacher unions, like most other respondents, see a low level of professionalism and the tradition of 'cadre deployment' in the civil service as problems. There was an alternative view that the challenge to cadre deployment does not imply that the ruling party should not appoint people at the most senior level who understand and associate with its vision, but that expertise should be a precondition for appointment.

Linked to the professionalisation of the civil service, and teaching in particular, is the role of unions. An overwhelming majority of the interviewees raised issues about unions. Sentiments expressed were that unions are too strong; one union dominates the space and dismisses any other opinions; and unions exert undue peer pressure on teachers. Other views are that unions are not to blame, but rather the state for its weakness against the unions, allowing the politicisation of education and failure to remedy the lack of subject expertise, particularly among subject advisors and heads of departments in schools who are supposed to monitor classroom learning and teaching.

Suggestions

- Strengthen the recruitment of staff by clearly specifying and advocating recruitment criteria.
- Start with recruiting good district directors, curriculum heads and principals.
- Focus on content knowledge expertise and competence to select the best teachers and subject heads and advisors. Test applicants for new jobs.
- Government should carry out a skills audit to establish the competency gaps at the executive levels of system.
- Develop staff that have potential and retain expertise.
- In key positions, appoint people who have proven successes.
- Improve the way misconduct is dealt with in the system.
- Acknowledge good performance.
- There is a need for a plan to improve the role of the South African Council of Educators whose responsibility is to safeguard the professional standards of teaching.
- Build public understanding of the characteristics of good public servants. Public agreements and national advocacy campaigns should be initiated to build broad public accountability. Use a variety of media (posters, the public broadcaster, newspapers) to reinforce the vision and public accountability messages, e.g. LeadSA campaign.
- Initiate efforts dedicated to professionalising the unions through union and public service oriented programmes in crucial areas such as ethics and good corporate governance.
- As anticipated by the NDP, programmes should be found to promote the professionalisation of the teacher unions, focusing specifically on working with the branch and regional structures of the unions. The funding of teacher development programmes run by unions should be promoted and supported to increase the unions' focus on professional development. In addition, more effort should be made to change the mindset of a critical mass of teachers with the aim of doing away with destructive group actions by teachers, such as the action of choosing to go on strike to protect a teacher who molested a learner.
- Instances of SADTU in KwaZulu-Natal organising a protest march outside on a Saturday and the efforts by SADTU's national office to avert several potential strike actions at regional levels should be seen in a positive light and encouraged.

SIX FOCUS THEMES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AT THE DIALOGUE

THEME 2: COURAGEOUS LEADERSHIP

Description of the challenges

Leadership was cited by several interviewees as a critical but missing requirement for the necessary improvement to occur. Calls have been made by interviewees for more courageous leadership across political and bureaucratic spheres. Political leadership was called for specifically in contexts where hard, unpopular decisions have to be made against structures that undermine national interests and for the implementation of programmes that are in the interest of the nation. The cases of the closure of schools in the Northern Cape and the disruption of schools by unions were cited as examples of the actions that undermine national interests. The necessary implementation of the Post Provisioning Model in the Eastern Cape was mentioned as an example of an unpopular programme that has to be faced head-on for the benefit of the nation. There is a thread running through the interviews that suggests the need for more courageous leadership that will drive strategy without fear or favour. The case of the Gauteng ANC which nipped a potential strike initiated by a regional union structure in the bud, was hailed as a good example of how the ruling party and other political parties could intervene constructively to curb actions that are against the national interest. The views of the interviewees are that such leadership should be exercised in the bureaucracy also ranging from the national level stretching through to school principals and subject heads.

Suggestions

- A more active role must be played by the ANC and the SACP to keep a check on actions that undermine schooling.
- Widespread training on good governance is required at school, district and provincial levels.
- Actions must be taken to empower managers to make decisions and to face consequences for the decisions they make.
- Leaders must set examples and provide models of behaviour for officials and learners to follow.
- A toll-free number should be established for communities to report school disruptions.

SIX FOCUS THEMES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AT THE DIALOGUE

THEME 3: GOVERNMENT CAPACITY TO DELIVER

Description of the challenges

Concerns have been raised regarding the capacity of the state to deliver national policies and programmes effectively. There is a view that there is a need to strengthen leadership capacity at the executive levels of the national and provincial departments. Secondly, there is a view that the provincial level of the department is bloated and the districts are understaffed: the number of directors is perceived to be disproportionate to the number of schools in provinces. Thirdly, interviewees are concerned about the change of strategies with every minister that take office. There is also a concern that the lack of continuity of heads of education departments robs Government of the capacity to deliver. Turnover at HOD level is perceived to be high and regarded as a capacity constraint. There is also a perception that middle and junior level staff are misallocated in the system due to wrong career-pathing e.g. the best maths specialists are sitting in administrative positions. Lack of systems and data, together with the recent delay in textbook delivery in Limpopo and infrastructure provision in the Eastern Cape are cited as examples of Government’s weakness to deliver.

Suggestions

- Education Heads of Departments with a sense of change agency must be selected and retained.
- Districts and circuits must be properly staffed. A test case of a well-staffed circuit and district should be tried out.

SIX FOCUS THEMES FOR FURTHER DISCUSSION AT THE DIALOGUE

THEME 5: COMMUNITY AND PARENT INVOLVEMENT – STATE VERSUS PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Description of the challenges

While the concept of community involvement carries a clear message about the expected role of the community at large in education, several stakeholders have expressed a sense of disenfranchisement. There are a number of stakeholders that feel that they are not being listened to, but are expected to listen to government (NGOs in particular) and there is significant capacity and talent in the form of private schools, associations, churches and traditional leaders that remains untapped. Also, there are concerns that the coordination of government and civil society activities is weak.

With regard to parent involvement, there is a widespread view among the interviewees that parent involvement accounts for a significant difference in the performance of middle class children. The monitoring and support of parents in the home environment influences learners to put additional effort into learning. While illiteracy is acknowledged to be a hindrance, arguments are made for empowering illiterate parents to carry out basic monitoring of their children's education.

Suggestions

- Utilise existing talent and capacity that exists outside the confines of the education system by bringing traditional and churches leaders back into school life: this will require a review of the school governance model.
- Acknowledge and act on the need for greater accountability and better coordination of state/ civil society activities. For this purpose, two suggestions have been made, namely, re-launching the NECC and/or establishing the education and training councils as envisaged in the National Education Policy Act.
- Train all levels of government across the length and breadth of the country in ethics as a way of establishing commitment to education and the rebuilding of public accountability.
- Rebuild public accountability through providing parents with checklists of what to expect from the school, teachers and learners. The public broadcaster should be used to reinforce good practices and behaviour in this respect. The ESKOM energy saving campaign is an example of a programme that can be used to increase after school reading and homework time.
- Engage parents to assist in protecting learning and teaching time.
