

Public Sector Barometer: The Public Lecture Series

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ACHIEVING BETTER OUTCOMES IN EDUCATION CHALLENGES, INTERVENTIONS AND ISSUES IN GAUTENG PROVINCE OF SOUTH AFRICA

**The significance of a quality education system for
building the Gauteng Global City Region**

INTRODUCTION

Across the world quality education that gives young people the best chance of success in adult life, is regarded as a critical factor in achieving sustainable economic growth and social justice.

In Gauteng Province government and citizens agree that our twin problems of high rates of youth unemployment and a serious skills shortage could be solved by achieving better outcomes in education.

Achieving better outcomes in education is important not only for Gauteng but for South Africa as a whole. Gauteng Province contributes 33, 7% to the GDP of South Africa and represents 10% of the GDP of Africa. The Gauteng Global City Region strategy notes that Gauteng is the largest regional economy in Africa making it the global gateway to the economic development of South Africa and the African continent. It boasts 49.6% of all employee remuneration in the country, 52% of turnover of all institutions and economic activity of 41% of the total national Gross Value Added (GEGDS, 2010).

The Gauteng Employment, Growth and Development Strategy (GEGDS), adopted in 2010, highlights the contribution of skills shortages to retarding the province's growth and development and concludes that "although Gauteng has South Africa's finest skills development infrastructure, a significant provincial skills mismatch threatens to undermine the growth."

It is not surprising therefore that the GEGDS identifies improved educational outputs and one of the five key pillars to promote economic growth and development in the province. The GEGDS clearly highlights the demand for quality education when it concludes that:

In the global economy, especially for a small open economy like South Africa, there is a need for a contemporary society to adapt to fast changing national and international market forces. To do this, firms need to access a skilled workforce that can acquire the new skills and

so compete in the global arena. The competitive dynamics that arise from globalisation and the rising knowledge economy make it necessary for South Africa, and therefore Gauteng, to educate, train, and develop skills and capabilities of the existing and future workforce.

SOCIAL PARADIGM

The social consequences of poor educational outcomes on young people between the ages of 15 and 35 are dire. Forty percent of young people are unemployed. While unemployment amongst those who achieve a university degree stands at 10%; amongst those who drop out of school before matric it stands at between 70 and 80 percent; and unemployment amongst those who only achieve a matric stands at about 50%.

At the joint sitting of the National Council of Provinces and the National Assembly in June 2009 President Jacob Zuma spelt out the vision for improving outcomes in education for the five year term. He said: *“Education will be a key priority for the next five years. We want our teachers, learners and parents to work with government to turn our schools into thriving centres of excellence.”*

This important policy statement reflected the culmination of a process of review and introspection of government’s achievements and shortcomings in the education sphere outlined in Government’s 15 year review and the Road map for Education of the Development Bank of South Africa (DBSA).

These strategy documents note that over the past 15 years government has successfully achieved high levels of access to basic education in Gauteng. In 2007, the department had a gross enrolment ratio of 103% in both the primary and 100% in secondary schools. Our estimate is that the department has reached near universalisation in both primary and secondary schools. In 2010, nearly 75% of school going children reach matric level and 78,6% of learners who wrote Senior Certificate Examinations passed matric.

The percentage of girl learners in school is amongst the highest in the world and is comparing favourably with developing and developed countries. Based on StatsSA Data and enrolment numbers, close to 99% of girls in the province are in school. The primary school enrolment indicated that 49 % of learners are female learners whilst in secondary schools there are 51% female learners. Of those who reached matric level in 2010, 55% were girl learners of which 79% passed matric.

These figures suggest that government’s anti poverty policy interventions in the education sphere have been successful in helping to reduce school dropout amongst children from socially deprived backgrounds. In 2011, a total of 828 507 learners benefit from the school nutrition programme, which gives learners in the no-fee schools, both primary and secondary schools, hot and nutritious meals every school day. A total of 996 037 learners in Gauteng attend no fee schools and 116 876 learners who attend fee paying schools have been exempted from the payment of school fees.

EDUCATIONAL INTERVENTION

The Department is currently transporting a total of 49 624 learners to both primary and secondary schools throughout the province. The purpose is to ensure that learners that



stay beyond a five kilometre radius of a school are provided with scholar transport in order to ensure access to schooling. The scholar transport is provided in areas where there are no schools. This has ensured that no learner is denied access to schooling in the province despite the growth in learner enrolment. In addition 100 000 primary school learners were provided with school uniforms in 2011.

Education receives the largest budget at Provincial Government level and in the 2011/12 financial year the Department has received R25,9 bn. When comparing to the 2000/01 budget of R6,8 billion, there is an increase of 281%. This is on average an increase of 23% per annum and a real increase of 14% annually after discounting for inflation.

The challenge identified in both the 15 year review and the Education Road map is that despite significant investment in redressing education imbalances since 1994-2009, learner outcomes have shown marginal improvement in outcomes. The South African education system as a whole is the worst performing when compared with a range of developing countries in relation to outcomes in language and literacy.

Learner performance in international testing has been dismal. In the 2003 Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) study, South Africa was the worst performing country with score of 264 against the international average of 469 in mathematics and a score of 244 against an international average 474. In the 2006, the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), South African learners achieved an average of 302 against an international average of 500, and placed last.

There are several regional studies that have been conducted in relation to learner performance in literacy and numeracy including the SAQMEC II and SAQMEC III. In 2000, Grade 6 learners achieved an average of 576 against a national average of 492 and a regional average of 500. In 2007, Grade 6 learners performed on average 573 against national average of 491 and a regional average of 512. In both studies we were the second highest performing province and if benchmarked against the other participating regional countries we would have been second in 2000 and in 2007.

In the ANA tests conducted in February 2011, in the Grade 3 tests, Gauteng learners achieved 35% in literacy against a national average of 35% and 30 % in numeracy against a national average of 28%. In the Grade 6 tests, learners achieved 35% in literacy against the national average of 28% and 37% in numeracy against a national average of 30%.

There have been some system improvements. Of the original 105 420 learners that started Grade 1 in 2000, 78765 reached Grade 12. This is a 75% throughput rate and is massive increase when compared to a 57% throughput in 2008. With regard to mathematics and science, in 1996, 38 916 wrote mathematics (HG and SG) and 25 370 wrote physical science (HG and SG) while in 2010, 97 404 learners wrote mathematics (including mathematical literacy) and 40 340 wrote physical science.

According to Gauteng Master Skills Plan, the projected priority skills shortages to satisfy the skills gaps that will be required by 2015 are those in areas of: Engineering Technicians and Trades Workers including Automotive Sector (44,400), Education Professionals (42,600), Engineering, ICT and Science Technicians (42,000), Design, Engineering, Science and Transport Professionals (33,600), Health Professionals (16,800) to mention just a few.

In summary, we have made strides in universalising a quality education for all. We have:

- Increased access in primary schools to all children and have reached near universalisation in secondary schools.

- Reduced class size and learner educator ratios to more manageable levels
- Increased the per capita expenditure in pro-poor and progressive approach and have introduced no-fee education to almost 60% of learners
- Reduced the number of dysfunctional schools and improved governance in most schools.

But we have a few major challenges that continue to face us:

- Improving the quality of learning across all grades and phases.
- Improving the quality of resources in the classroom.
- Improving the conditions for effective teaching and learning including infrastructure and school safety.
- Reducing the mismatch between educational outcomes and labour market demands.

GETTING THE IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES RIGHT – SOME KEY ASSUMPTIONS

In order to address educational backlogs in and across the provincial education system we need a combination of strategies. Without underestimating the need to manage short-term constraints or disregarding the need to transform our system it must be emphasised that there is a need for a more long-term approach if transformation is to succeed. At the same time we must be cautious of policy overload since they do not allow the system the time to absorb the change and to ensure buy-in by all stakeholders.

A systemic approach is premised on the considered assumption that urgent relief to the system from the debilitating learner performance cited above will come from tackling macro, systemic aspects first, before attention is paid to the micro aspects. This makes sense particularly in the context where the majority of schools in the broader education system are dysfunctional. The model, we have adopted, proposes that in a situation where the majority of institutions are underperforming, a systemic approach is required to fix the failing systems. It makes sense, too, in terms of resource allocation by tackling key aspects that will have wide and longer-term effects across the system, and in terms of change management where the focus is on ensuring system functionality before focusing on how to secure excellence in the subsystems. While this approach does not suggest a 'revolution', it proposes, instead, planned widespread reform that includes defining and rolling out the necessary support and monitoring systems.

The systemic approach recognises that schools are part of a complex system and that transformation plans must include the various key and related factors at play. The idea is that when all the functions of the system are aligned, transformation will occur.

The model recognises that the provincial level needs to lead in the implementation of policy through the provision of clear frameworks that spell out policy implementation expectations for the districts, circuits and schools. These frameworks should cover, as a minimum, curriculum management, learning programmes and common assessments, to be rolled out consistently in every district, circuit and institution within agreed timeframes.

Furthermore, frameworks shared across the system bring transparency in terms of expectations between teachers, school managers and education managers and therefore serve as the basis for enforcing accountability in the system. For example, districts without



curriculum work schedules have no basis to enforce appropriate pacing. There can be no effective enforcement of accountability in systems if there are no clear, agreed and practical expectations recognised between the different levels of the system. The expectation that this could be done simply on the basis of broad policy is set up for failure.

Over and above the provision of leadership on policy implementation, the province should facilitate basic resourcing in schools – including the re-skilling of educators and provision of classrooms, desks and reading materials.

The five-year plan and the education strategy that began in 2009 has two main components, namely, a commitment to improving primary school literacy and numeracy outcomes, and a commitment to increasing matric pass rates. These priorities were chosen because public confidence in and support for education depend on demonstrated achievement of good outcomes for learners. These core goals are each supported by a large-scale strategy based substantially. There is extensive research to support this approach in our strategy most notable of these is the work of Michael Fullan in his book “The new meaning of educational change.”

SO WHAT ARE THE STRATEGIES THAT WE ARE PROMOTING?

The strategic focus of all our transformation strategies is the learner and the quality of learning attained for effective and lifelong growth, development and well-being. This focus clearly guides our thinking as to what has to be done to ensure that we are creating an enabling environment for effective teaching and learning to ensure that all our citizens are empowered to effectively participate in society and the economy.

In many parts of the world, educational change might aim for the right results – better outcomes for students, including students from groups that had previously lagged behind average achievement levels. However, many of these efforts have used wrongheaded approaches or failed to pay enough attention to what we are learning about effective large-scale change. In particular, many strategies place too much emphasis on test results as the main way to drive improvement.

In contrast, Gauteng’s education change strategy embodies vital principles, grounded in research, that are associated with meaningful and sustainable change. Changes are respectful of professional knowledge and practice. Main elements of change are coherent and aligned at the provincial, district and school level. Key partners – the provincial Department of Education, school governing bodies, schools, and provincial organizations of teachers, and other partners – work together. Change strategies are comprehensive and emphasise professional learning and strong leadership.

To ensure effective teaching and learning, the focus of our strategies are geared towards the learners and the classroom as a unit of change. For effective teaching and learning to take place, we have to ensure that classrooms are fully functional. We must continue to demand accountability for results, particularly in chronically failing schools. The purpose is not to punish the management, teachers and learners but to provide the right combination of incentives, support and resources that will accelerate the changes needed to improve the quality of education in those schools.

THE OUTCOMES BASED APPROACH TO IMPROVING LEARNER PERFORMANCE

In response to the generally agreed problem of learner underperformance the Presidency established a common set of targets for the Department of Basic Education and all provincial education departments to be achieved by 2009-2014. Central to these targets is improving outcomes in language, literacy and numeracy in the foundation phase and in English, Maths and Science in Secondary School and at matric level. These targets are encapsulated in a performance agreement which the Minister of Basic Education signed with the President and MECs signed with the Minister of Education.

The education sector has adopted Schooling 2025 which sets out the actions and targets so that every school can meet standards for results and discipline. Action Plan to 2014: Towards the realisation of Schooling 2025, is in many ways the country's first comprehensive long-term sector plan for schools. It is also an 'action plan' that is based on the outcomes approach with a detailed overview of what needs to be done within the current electoral term.

The outcomes based approach is about improving public sector delivery. For government, delivery means we need to be very clear and simple about what it is that we are going to achieve. It means having a smart and effective plan to ensure that we achieve the things we set out to achieve. Delivery means that we monitor how well we are doing, and when we get off track, we know that sooner rather than later, and get the plan back on track. From our perspective this outcomes based approach has assisted in focusing the Department on what it should achieve during this term.

With clear targets to achieve the serious work of tackling the department could begin.

The Gauteng Education Department in 2011 serves over 1 814 167 learners in 2 040 public ordinary schools. Through 108 public special schools in the province service 36 933 learners with special needs. 52 031 educators service these schools and another 13 023 public sector employees are employed in administrative capacities in schools. The department is also responsible for the registration and monitoring of over 519 independent ordinary and 21 special schools in the province serving 209 945 learners including 2062 learners with special needs.

WHERE TO START EATING AN ELEPHANT: LESSONS FROM GOOD PRACTICE IN THE PAST; LESSONS FROM UNHAPPINESS IN THE PRESENT

The first question with such a huge organisation was 'where to start? This term of government was not the first where serious efforts were made to turn around the education system. Serious and successful attempts had been made during the 1999-2004 term of office. These interventions had set up Education Action Zones (EAZs) which brought support and intervention to underperforming schools in the historically disadvantaged areas. Its success was measured in the fact that it improved matric results from 56,6% in 1999 to 81,5% in 2003. To date this is the best result the Gauteng Department of Education has achieved; results have been inconsistent since then.



Lessons to be learned from this intervention were firstly the issue of focusing on areas of the system characterised by underperformance rather than on the system as a whole. The second useful lesson from this time is the way in which broad based support was mobilised for underperforming schools ranging from monitoring and evaluation; support programmes for school management; decisive interventions to deal with discipline and labour relations matters; social cohesion support programmes for schools including cleaning and greening and academic catch up programmes for matriculants.

This programme faced two important limitations: the first was that it was never mainstreamed into the formal structures of the department and therefore it proved unsustainable. This raised the issue of institutionalisation as an important factor if any interventions are to have a longer term legacy.

The second limitation of the EAZ programme was the fact that the interventions were limited to secondary schools. The general perception at the time being that this is where problems resided. The introduction of the Annual National Assessments in 2008 demonstrated clearly that school under performance begins with a failure to establish the three Rs in the foundation phase.

Having studied the strengths and weaknesses of previous interventions it was time to study the system itself. For a period of three months the MEC met with every district official, and every school principal in the province.

These meetings demonstrated a deeply unhappy, divided demoralised introspective organisation with little understanding of or interest in the fact that our schools were not meeting the needs of our society. This attitude had been shaped by the bitter aftermath of the 2007 Public Sector Strike; the inability of the bureaucracy to meet the most basic needs of its employees including regular payment of teachers, managing leave deductions and registers, medical boarding, pension payouts, huge backlogs in labour relations cases and grievances were also expressed in relation to almost all work environment issues from provision of cell phones, laptops, pool cars and adequate office space.

Principals felt over monitored and under supported. They complained about inconsistent planning by head office and districts, silo management which results in competing priorities and programmes being implemented in a contradictory manner in schools, educator weaknesses as a response of constant curriculum changes and endless bureaucratic red tape.

A NEW VISION TO TAKE US FORWARD

If this huge disgruntled organisation was to be mobilised to meet the Presidential targets the first step was to identify a simple easily understandable vision and mission statement with a limited number of objectives.

The vision and mission we adopted was "To ensure our learners leave our institutions with the knowledge skills, values and abilities that will give them the best chance of success in their adult lives; this therefore means that we have to deliver quality education in the classroom each and every day."

Four simple pillars were identified to implement this vision during the five year period 2009-2014:

- Goal 1: Ensuring that Gauteng has effective schools and learning institutions.

- Goal 2: GDE Head Office and Districts-Providing relevant, coordinated effective support.
- Goal 3: Enabling young people to make the transition from school to further education and or work that provides further training opportunities.
- Goal 4: Strengthening partnerships with all stakeholders, resulting in education becoming a societal priority.

At the centre of the framework is a commitment to deliver quality education in the classroom every day. To do this we need to ensure that the inputs, for learners, teachers and management, are provided.

We need to ensure that the department is providing effective support not just from our education districts but the head office as well. The framework acknowledges the central role of social partners, that effective education requires deep societal change. We need strong, sustained and deep support from many corners of civil society, from our unions, SGB elected representative and faith-based communities.

TARGETING, DEFINING THE CENTRAL PROBLEM, ADDRESSING THE CONTEXT

To begin this process it was necessary to identify the schools for priority attention. Two existing measurements existed in the system to monitor learner performance: the matric examination and the Provincial Systemic Evaluation Tests from 2008. (We now have the 2011 results). We used the targets set in the Performance agreements as what we are trying to achieve so all schools that do not meet those targets are defined as under performing.

This gives us 391 high schools that have achieved less than 80% pass rate and 792 primary schools that have not achieved the 60% pass rate for languages, literacy and maths. The 1 183 schools have become the target for all support and interventions. We have introduced a concept of systemic change so that we move away from and small interventions to an approach of saying that good practice must be generalised to the system as a whole.

The second conceptual approach we have taken is to separate all the things we do in the Department into those that support classroom practice and those that tackle socio-economic factors. Earlier we spoke about the success these interventions have had in ensuring better access and learner retention in the system.

Our priority in this term of government is to address factors which contribute to poor learner outcomes: uneven teacher knowledge of curriculum content resulting in uneven curriculum coverage and uneven assessment practices resulting in learners not establishing proper understanding of key concepts and skills that results in compounded curriculum backlogs further up the education system. To address this we have identified five areas: support to teachers, support to learners, and support to parents, school safety and better infrastructure.

Improving Teaching

The recently adopted, Integrated Strategy Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa, sets out the need for teachers development in the problem statement:



“While it must be recognized that a wide variety of factors interact to impact on the quality of the education system in South Africa, teachers’ poor subject matter knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge are important contributors.

Teaching resources and learner support materials are important only insofar as teachers have the knowledge and competence to interpret and utilize them effectively. Teacher appraisal through the IQMS does not evaluate competence sufficiently deeply to assist teachers to identify their needs; in addition, by conflating developmental appraisal and performance appraisal the IQMS makes it even more difficult to identify teacher development needs transparently and accurately. A non-punitive system for assessing teachers’ current competences to deliver the curriculum and supporting them to develop in areas of their individual need is vital if the problem of poor quality education in the system is to be solved.”

In order to address these challenges, processes are needed that:

- Enable individual teachers to identify their own learning and professional development needs and to access opportunities to address these needs; and
- Identify system-wide priorities for teacher development that are applicable to groups of teachers.

In 2011/2012 budget year, almost 74 % of the GDE budget is allocated for personnel: an allocation of R19bn out of a total budget of R25.9 billion. GDE has employed 80 905 people, and 61 537 are teachers. This makes human capital the biggest single input in the education system. This means that any significant intervention in classroom practice has to begin by targeting teachers, heads of department and principals on curriculum implementation and management. From 1994 there have been three curriculum review processes, the latest of which resulted in the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), published by Minister Motshekga in Gazette no 33528 on 3 September 2010.

One of the issues educators and principals has risen with the MEC during district and school visits was unevenness in educator understanding of curriculum content. Educators have raised concerns regarding the quality of in-service training they have received through mass training sessions on curriculum content that have been limited in duration and involved a cascade training model. The Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) has its merits but it is a one size fits all solution to a complex and multi-layered problem.

In 2010 GDE adopted a new teacher training strategy focused on four pillars: influencing the content of pre-service training; systematic in service training; supporting teacher development centres; and building communities of practice.

In 2011 teacher training has four main focuses: the development of literacy and numeracy teaching skills for 6 500 foundation phase teachers; training 4 500 senior secondary school teachers on key curriculum areas for 13 matric subjects; training teachers in grades 10, 11 and 12, with a focus on maths, science and technology; and finally the training of 2 750 Grade R practitioners.

The training for foundation phase teachers focuses on key concepts in the numeracy curriculum and systematic training on how to teach children phonics, reading and writing. In addition six nongovernmental organisations have been contracted to supply and manage 125 full time coaches who work with a cluster of six to seven schools each. These coaches act

as a critical supportive friend to educators, visit them in their classrooms twice a month and ensure that skills learned in the training are being rolled out in practice.

The development of standardised lesson plans and assessment tasks for all foundation phase educators has been an important contribution to improving lesson quality, ensuring standardised skills and concepts are taught and have cut down on the somewhat pointless task of forcing educators to submit lesson plans on a weekly basis. This was much resented by educators and given poor learner performance; it has failed abysmally to add value to the system.

A similar process is being developed for the Senior Secondary Phase. The GDE has developed lesson plans for the senior secondary phase educators. The main purpose of these lesson plans is to create adequate opportunity for educators to prepare thoroughly for teaching. The lessons plans have been developed for 10 subjects namely, Accounting, Business Studies, Economics, English FAL, Geography, History, Life Sciences, Mathematics, Mathematical Literacy and Physical Sciences. All Secondary schools will receive the first trunch of lesson plans before the end of November 2011, and the second trunch will be delivered to schools before the end of the first term of the academic year in 2012. The underperforming secondary schools will receive hard copies and electronic copies will be made available to all schools.

Support for educators doesn't end with in service training. It also involves support to those who monitor the curriculum delivery in the form of milestones to pace curriculum delivery. The idea being that in order to ensure the curriculum is covered every year in every subject in every grade, standard portions should be covered every week throughout the year. These milestones are made available to educators themselves as well as to the heads of department, principals and deputy principals. Training is being provided to school management teams to assist with usage and monitoring.

In 2012 we will target educators in grades 4-9 for intensive training and support.

Support to learners

To ensure that learners perform better in the short term particularly those who are in their final years at school, a series of extra lessons and camps have been designed targeting learners in underperforming schools. The plan originally began in April 2010 as a supplementary teaching programme designed to deal with the prolonged school holidays resulting from Fifa's 2010 Football World Cup. These programmes were converted into catch up programmes after the three week Public Sector strike in July/August 2010.

During this time learners were also encouraged to form self-study groups and given guidelines for establishing and running such groups. At the height of the 2010 public sector strike over eighty of these groups were operating quietly in township schools and no doubt contributed to positive matric results that year.

In 2011 these camps began in February and were expanded to cover ten learning areas. In addition attempts are being made to run camps for grades 10 and 11 in Maths, Science and Accounting during school holidays. Attendance at these camps remains a challenge as learners in these grades do not feel the same pressure as their matric counterparts. From the Department's perspective, these camps have made significant contributions towards improved learner performance and are necessary to reduce the dropout rate. In the last two years 13% of learners in grade 10 and 11 have dropped out of the public education system.



Primary school learners also need additional support. School-based after care programmes which will offer children supervised play, physical education and supervised homework support is an area currently receiving attention. Plans are in the pipeline to recruit and train unemployed parents and community members to engage in these activities for two to three hours on a daily basis after the formal school day ends. The programme offers exciting possibilities not only to keep children from no fee schools safe in the afternoons, but to offer training and work opportunities to those with an interest in learning about educational support services.

Involving parents

A good education system has to rest on three legs: the teacher, the learner, and the learner's family. Traditionally family participation in Gauteng's schools has been very uneven with suburban schools receiving high levels of parental support and township schools generally low levels. In my view this low level of parental involvement has been compounded by the fee paying era when many parents who could not afford to pay school fees stopped attending school meetings because they were afraid of being embarrassed over non payment of fees.

To quote Glenys Knock in the book, *Parental Involvement: Developing Networks between school, home and community* (S. Wolfendale, ed.), aptly summarises that: "education involves us all and teachers must concede that they are not the only source of pedagogic expertise. We have to be prepared to open up our schools and classrooms, one of the hardest things for us to do. If, however, we are clear about our aims and objectives then we have nothing to fear, and parents and volunteer helpers become value allies and trusted partners." In other words, parents are an untapped source of strength to the school.

For many families their involvement in schooling stopped at the provision of uniforms and tuckshop money. This sends a perhaps unintended subliminal message to scholars about the extent to which the family values education and educational achievement.

To make President Zuma's call for Education to become a societal priority, a reality, GDE embarked on an ambitious programme to ensure greater parental involvement in schooling. Quarterly meetings were scheduled for Grade 12 parents to explain the SSIP programme and encourage them to ensure better attendance on Saturdays and during school holidays by learners. Discussions are also held with parents to encourage them to foster a sense of responsibility amongst their children and use measures other than corporal punishment to instil discipline.

To support the GPLS and to begin to foster a different culture of family support, families of primary school learners are being invited to workshops to understand what role they can play in better supporting the social and academic development of their children. Families are being encouraged to ask learners about their school day, use methods other than corporal punishment to foster discipline and interact regularly with their children's teachers.

Improving Safety

School safety remains a major factor in ensuring a better climate of learning and teaching in our schools. Burglaries bedevil schools with IT equipment; learners trade alcohols and drugs in township classrooms; weapons are brought into the classroom and have been used on

attacks on learners and teachers alike. Bullying, racism, xenophobia, gender discrimination and sexual assault are all threats to the Gauteng classroom.

The school safety strategy ensures schools have policies and protocols that are in line with the South African Schools Act. It begins a process of training that ensures schools governors and managers know what to do if an incident occurs in their school and prevents the secondary abuse of victims. A rapid reaction unit of counsellors is available to move into schools when incidents occur and interface with the South African Police Services.

Raids are conducted on high risk schools to confiscate weapons and drugs and prosecute offenders. Preventive programmes around bullying, gender sensitivity, anti-racism anti-xenophobia are being re-introduced.

Over 500 schools will have been properly fenced by the end of this year. We have just introduced patrollers to the first 100 high risk schools and we hope in the course of this year to provide these patrollers with a stipend and expand the programme to other schools under threat.

Building better Infrastructure

Over the past 15 years the Provincial Education Department has embarked on a massive school building programme to ensure that all learners have access to proper schooling. A significant role has been played by the private sector in investing in schools in historically disadvantaged areas. Since the new dispensation, a total of 143 primary and secondary schools have been completed. In addition 927 ablution facilities and 144 administration blocks have been built. 213 science laboratories were refurbished and 1 665 computer centres have been established.

However apartheid education left a legacy of many primary schools and not enough high schools in most townships. Few township high schools were built with halls, libraries, laboratories or sports fields. Numerous schools inherited by Gauteng from North West have no administration blocks or proper ablution facilities either. The Department received a total of 212 schools, of which 41 had no offices, 57 had no toilets for the staff, 30 had no toilets for learners, 38 had no electricity and 65 had no water or sanitation.

Since 1995, Gauteng has seen an average growth of approximately two- to three percent. Annually this translates to an increase of 30 to 400 new learners that enter the Gauteng Education system. The public ordinary schooling sector has grown by over 50% since 1995.

Rapid in-migration into the province means that while there are unused schools in some of the old townships there are shortages of schools in other areas, with the north of Johannesburg, Western Tshwane and the informal settlements of Ekurhuleni, facing particular challenges. To alleviate severe overcrowding and reduce class sizes, 3 356 mobile classrooms have been provided as well as 423 mobile toilet blocks. In the newly formalised settlements where no schools existed at all, 15 prefabricated schools have been supplied. Despite this, recent research work by the department suggests that there is a shortage of 212 schools in the province and currently less than ten new schools are opened every year.

As a result, overcrowding and dilapidated school buildings still attract widespread criticism in the education sector. Over crowding and large class sizes definitely impact on the quality of classroom learning and on learner and teacher morale.

To radically alter this picture the Gauteng Executive Council decided in 2009 to borrow money for social infrastructure and together with the Development Bank of SA is in the process of rolling out a plan to build 130 schools in the province and totally refurbish 200.



Recurrent under spending on the infrastructure budget has necessitated a new way of dealing with this challenge. To improve the targeting of our maintenance plan we are planning to decentralise the function of school maintenance to be managed at school level. This will involve, allocating schools with a track record of good financial management a larger maintenance budget to undertake urgent repairs themselves. This will be in addition to the 12% for maintenance already earmarked in the school subsidy. To support schools, the department will establish localised school-based maintenance teams that will be contracted by the schools to undertake the repairs. These teams will be under the supervision of a contracted project management team which will support and quality assure the work done at a school.

Promoting political stability of the education system

Processes of reforming government systems world-wide face a common challenge which has been termed the reality rationality gap: meaning that however good the plan may be it will face challenges from stakeholders whose sectional and individual interests can be challenged by a comprehensive change process.

Since the 1976 uprising, SA's schooling system has been on the front line of struggles for a just and equal society. Both learners and educators were in the forefront of struggles against apartheid for over twenty years. The consequence of this is that the education sector has been well endowed with civil society organisations, intellectuals, and activists all of whom have a view on the problems and solutions facing the education sector.

This has presented us with two important tasks: building support for the change agenda with all those interested and managing those organisations and individuals who have tried to hold the system hostage for their own sectional agendas.

It is this problem which resulted in President Jacob Zuma in the State of the Nation Address presented to the Joint sitting of Parliament in Cape Town on 3 June 2009, calling for agreement around educational non-negotiable: stated that "...*We reiterate our non negotiable. Teachers should be in school, in class, on time, teaching, with no neglect of duty and no abuse of pupils! The children should be in class, on time, learning, be respectful of their teachers and each other, and do their homework*".

Recognition of these realities have also motivated organised labour, school governing bodies and student organisations to come together with others in the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign aimed at fostering political stability in the education sector.

The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign has been a major focus of work over the last two years. The Soweto Summit hosted on 9 April this year was a major milestone in ensuring that we turn the tide in the performance of Soweto Schools and the climate of school disruptions that has characterised this area for the past 15 years.

CONCLUSION

The fruits of the systemic changes we are attempting across the system will take time to harvest and it is important that we remain focused and committed to the ambitious plan we have adopted. International experience suggests that it takes at least 5 to 10 years to see

systemic change in an education system. As Earl *et al.* conclude in their paper, Large-scale education reform: Life cycles and implications for sustainability,

“it is important to recognise that there are no right answers and no perfect solutions to sustaining education reform into the mature stage of a reform life cycle. The literature confirms the importance of central policy, school capacity and the intervening infrastructure. With no firm right answers, however, policy makers and implementation leaders are faced with a series of dilemmas and decisions as they travel the path of reform. Governments must maintain and balance ‘high pressure and high support’, while encouraging the local adaptations and innovations that are critical for building a sense of ownership and extending the reform in the service of learning for pupils.”

While we acknowledge the long road ahead we are confident that we are on the right path. We draw inspiration in January 2010 when we achieved our first victory: a 6,7 percent increase in our matric pass rate. It was an important affirmation of what can be achieved when teachers, learners, and communities work together to change an education system. We cannot fail our youth. Their future and ours depends our succeeding.

