

Quality Education News

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promoting educational excellence.

The Editor observes ...

Dear Supporter of Quality Education

It's not only the children who are smiling. It's the teachers too. The December holidays will soon be here. Yet before that final school bell, there's a huge amount of work to be done by the staff. One of them is to ensure that the 2010 staff complement is excellent.

There are many teachers in the school system but how many of them should be in the classroom? Obviously, there are outstanding teachers to be found throughout the country. Yet how many are below the standard needed for true quality education to happen?

Aubrey Matshiqi wrote an article in *Business Day* (9 October 2009) titled *Why the best people do not become teachers*. The title – I think – isn't an absolutely fair reflection of what he wrote in the article itself. He spoke of the diligent and dignified teachers that taught him. The reality is that some of the best people **do** become teachers. The problem though is that not enough of them enter the profession.

What can be done to encourage our finest young people to become teachers? In Scandinavian countries teaching is a much sought-after profession. Why? Salaries are very good; the professional and academic training is thorough and teachers are highly regarded in society. Also, the profession is treated professionally. Teachers are given the freedom and space to teach the curriculum as they deem most suitable to the unique set of youngsters found in every class. Prescription to the smallest detail by education officials is out; professional autonomy is in.

Research done by a South African teacher union in the 1990s identified salaries and paperwork as the two major stressors for teachers. (These findings were corroborated in subsequent research done by the Department of National Education). Teachers' salaries are presently receiving commendable attention. When the OSD (Occupation Specific Dispensation) is fully implemented, a major stressor will be significantly reduced. May it serve as an incentive to possible entrants to teaching.

Too much paperwork - or that apt Afrikaans word - *papierboerdery*, is still too evident. Outcomes Based Education has resulted in Amazonian-sized forests being cut down to meet the paper demands. Yet there are hopeful signs. Paperwork is being gradually reduced. Portfolios of the learners' work are being stopped.

Teachers want to teach and not find their days filled with paperwork demands.

A sad reality is that many education department officials regard and describe principals only as 'managers'. Yes, in some ways they are managers. They need to ensure the effective day-to-day running of schools. More importantly though, principals are leaders. These leaders are visionary; they challenge and want to change dysfunctional aspects of the school system. 'Continuous improvement' is regarded as crucial. Yet some education authorities seem scared and wary of maverick leaders. Too often they want uncritical compliance to highly prescriptive manuals and reams of regulations.

If we wish to attract more of the best people to enter the profession, we need to ensure that they experience 21st leadership styles. They don't want to endure leadership styles of the 1950 and 1960s. There's a need to drop-kick authoritarian and paternalistic leadership styles through the posts and out of the field of education.

May you have a quality staff complement in 2010 to continue the good work done this year.

Here's wishing you a happy, restful and joyous Festive Season.

Sincerely

Richard Hayward

Thank you

When the first issue of QEN was published in 2006, it reached the desktop of hundreds of readers. This issue will reach thousands. Many readers put QEN on their own websites for others to download. Then there are those readers who print copies for colleagues at schools that have no internet facilities. Thanks for spreading the Quality message in such a meaningful, practical way.

Your ongoing comments about QEN are always appreciated ... even if you occasionally disagree with something that has been written.

There's a quintet of quality folk that I would like to mention by name. At SAQI headquarters in Pretoria are Vanessa du Toit, Rosaria de Peniché and Paul Harding who enthusiastically support this newsletter in countless ways. Aubrey Jansen is the graphic artist who adds sparkle to the pages through his gifted imaginative flair. Then in Cape Town there is Michelle Janse van Rensburg. She manages superbly the online distribution to the My School subscribers.

To the quintet and everyone else helping to spread the Quality message, many thanks.



This newsletter is edited by SAQI and distributed to those schools benefiting from their participation in the MySchool programme. MySchool acts as a conduit which raises and delivers essential funding for education and social development on a sustainable basis. This enables members of the community to participate in the future development of our nation.



Getting a Quality matric for R600

Those not in the know think that outstanding Quality costs money. Of course, money helps. Yet excellent quality can be achieved with minimal money. The *Sunday Times* (18 October 2009) announced its' top 100 state high schools in the country. In eighth position nationwide was Mbilwi Secondary in Limpopo province. All 201 matriculants of last year passed. An amazing 93% of the students obtained a university exemption and there were 309 distinctions. School fees were just R600 a year.

How does Mbilwi Secondary gets such results? Nditsheni Ramugondo, the principal, refers to the high level of commitment of his entire staff as well as firm discipline. A strong work ethic permeates the school. He makes the assertion that resources are not everything. All that's required are a chalkboard, a dedicated teacher and willing learners.

The top school in the *Sunday Times* survey was Westerford High School in Cape Town. Besides the 100% pass rate, there was a 99% university exemption achievement. In the interview conducted with the principal, Rob le Roux, the newspaper was told that teacher appointments were vital. He expected teachers to be dedicated, enthusiastic and prepared to go the extra mile. When the formal teaching day ends, there are 20 sports and 40 other activities available for the children. The school selflessly serves its learners. The gates open at 06:00 and close at 22:00.

Mbilwi Secondary and Westerford High, together with other excellent schools, reflect characteristics that are common to quality schools. Five such criteria are:

- **Values:** Enthusiasm, focus, hard work, respect, self-discipline and teamwork are desired values. Everyone in the school understands these and other values. There's a commitment to abide by them.
- **Leadership:** People of all ages contribute to the leadership of the school. Servant leadership is shown where far more time is given to the school than prescribed by the education department. Bold, visionary leadership creates the climate for trying out new ideas. At Westerford, for example, there is no bell to indicate the start of the next lesson of the day. This simple action helps to reduce the noise level and improves the work environment. Quality schools display high levels of emotional intelligence to ensure a happy learning and teaching place for everyone.

It's not just about academic achievement. It's also about fulfilling and supporting each other in all respects. The school has a sisterhood, one big family in which we stand together and draw strength from each other.

Lize Stofberg, Head Girl of Afrikaanse Hoër Meisieskool, Pretoria quoted in the *Sunday Times*

- **Management:** The day-to-day functioning of the school is efficient. Class, learning area and extramural timetables are in place. There's a firm yet sensitive-to-the-child disciplinary code. Teaching and learning time is used optimally.

- **Communication:** There's friendly communication amongst the children, parents and staff to ensure positive interaction. Regular newsletters and – if the school has the financial resources – SMS messaging and a website, keep everyone 'up to speed' as to what's happening. Staff are available outside school hours if emergencies or major problems occur. Roelof Oosthuizen, principal of Potchefstroom Gimnasium (top school in North West province) has his cellphone number on the school website.
- **Teacher appointments:** Staff are appointed on their ability to perform and bring out the best in learners. Appointments are not based on cronyism, nepotism or teacher-union affiliation. Merit is the most important criterion for staff selection.

The survey only looked at high schools. There are obviously many more excellent high and primary schools. They would also adhere to at least the five criteria mentioned above.

One of the familiar books on Quality is P Crosby's *Quality is free*. Mbilwi Secondary is an example of the validity of the book title. For next to nothing, Mbilwi Secondary is able to give learners a matric qualification of outstanding quality.

The 2009 Grade 12 results will be made public early in January of next year. No doubt many of the current top 100 as well as hundreds of other high schools will excel again. Some of these schools will be moneyed, others not. Yet there's one common factor ... they'll excel because they use quality leadership and management principles.



Values

Leadership

Management

Communication

Teacher appointments

A date to remember

Don't forget to remember the twelfth of November! Thursday, 12 November is World Quality Day. No doubt there's much of excellent quality in your school ... the children, the staff, the achievements in and outside the classroom and of course, you! World Quality Day encourages everyone to celebrate those aspects of excellent quality found in the school. The 2009 theme is: **Putting Quality at the heart of every organisation.**

Celebrate the Quality Kids, Teachers, Teams and other kinds of Quality on the Big Day. For ideas, visit the SAQI website (www.saqi.co.za) and read their hints. You might like to festoon the school foyer with green and white balloons as well as ribbons. Have displays and posters that focus on the different ways in which quality is evident.

World Quality Day is an excellent chance to show that your school has a Quality heart.

The SAQI team enjoys reading about your quality endeavours. Please continue to keep us 'in the know'. The contact details are www.saqi@co.za or rpdhayward@yahoo.com. All correspondence is acknowledged.



A book for the holidays

Soon the holidays will be here. All the report cards will have been done; all the end-of-year events ticked off. It'll be time to collapse in a relaxed, happy heap! Dare we mention educational reading for the holidays?! An absorbing, controversial but thought-provoking book is recommended. It deals with the sort of questions that teachers ask although the book isn't directed specifically at teachers. The title is ***Outliers-the story of success*** by Malcolm Gladwell (Penguin Books, Price: R 174).

What is an outlier? Gladwell gives two dictionary definitions. The one is that an outlier is something that is situated away from the main or related body; the other is that something is statistically different from others in the sample. A main focus of the book is the reasons why some people excel. He makes challenging statements and gives fascinating case studies that make for rapid page-turning reading.

One of Gladwell's controversial statements is that the date of one's birth affects one's level of success. He gives a number of examples to prove his point. A school-related example is the age cut-off dates for sports. So for example, right at primary school level the older Under 9 soccer players are likely to get into the A team. Why? They're usually bigger, stronger and have better motor coordination than team mates who are six months younger. What happens to A team players? They usually get the better coaches, more practices and more games. Their skills improve at a greater speed than the younger players.

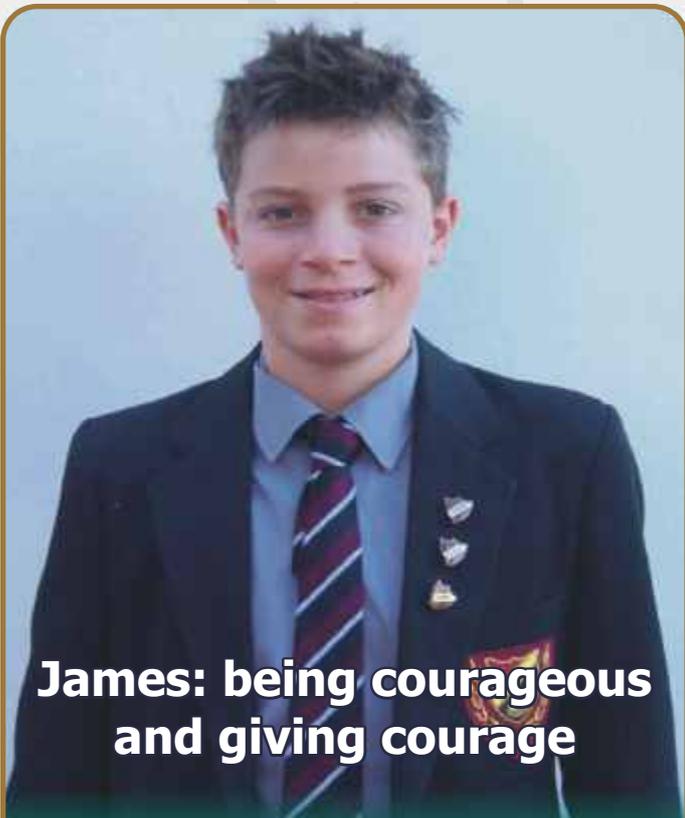
Who gets chosen the next year for the Under 10 team?! The age advantage of the previous year continues. The more skilled player gets selected first and all the extra,

better coaching that goes with it. The 'unfairness' continues! The sport ability gap widens and increases with every passing year. So much potential talent is often never really used in a school because of birth dates!

Asian children often excel in Maths. They're frequent winners at Prize-Givings and Maths Olympiads. Is it because they are cleverer? Maxwell explains that such excellence is not because of higher intelligence. The English number system is highly irregular; the Asian highly logical. This means that Asian children can count to high numbers at a much younger age than English-speaking ones. These children therefore have a head start in Grade One which widens as they go through the school system.

Gladwell writes about his 'ten-thousand-hour rule' to achieve success. He believes that about ten thousand hours of hard work and practice are needed to achieve outstanding quality in a particular area. A brilliant mind and creative flair aren't enough. He supports his theory by giving short biographies of people such as the Beatles, Bill Gates and Mozart. These achievers put in the time ... 10,000 hours and more ... before they achieved real success. Most teachers have encountered geniuses in their classrooms. Yet so many of these geniuses fade away. Gladwell gives reasons as to why this happens.

Besides being a good read, the book shows what drives but also impedes success in our own lives. There's a fascinating chapter on the tragic consequences of rigid, top-down leadership style in the cockpits of a major airline. (Senior management teams can see the parallels in a school). The front cover of the book has a single gold star embossed on it. The book deserves five.



James: being courageous and giving courage

Teachers and school heads give Assembly homilies to the children about values. Yet children themselves can teach their teachers. They often are examples to adults on how to bravely live out their values. James Bezuidenhout is such a youngster. He is in Grade Seven at Pridwin Preparatory School, Johannesburg.

James loves sport. One of his favourite activities is swimming. When he was in Grade Five, he told his mother that he had a pain in one of his legs. Cancer was diagnosed. After a year of arduous treatment it was decided that the leg needed to be amputated.

This friendly, popular and most brave youngster underwent the surgery. Not once did he ask, "Why me?" He gave his traumatised family inner courage. When his mother was looking for the strength to cope, James gave it. He would not dwell on what had happened but what needed to be done in the future. So, he would ask, "Mom, let's go and look at what prosthetics are available."

After the surgery James asked Lynne Delaté, his swimming coach, if he could rejoin the team. He wanted to keep fit. She welcomed him back. So did the relay members who wanted him back in their team. Winning races wasn't the most important thing for his team mates ... James was. Yet an amazing thing happened. At the galas, James's team was unbeaten.

One of James's goals is to take part in the Para-Olympics. He's already broken a number of South African disability records. He's currently a member of the Gauteng Under 13 water polo team. When these Olympics are held, do remember James ... James Bezuidenhout, a fine young gentleman of great courage.

On the Quality road at two in the morning!



Early starters for Quality: The staff of Mahatlani Primary School in Polokwane posed for a photograph. This dedicated team set out at two in the morning to be on time for a Quality in Education forum.

Teaching is much more than a job. It's a vocation. A short while ago, SAQI had a Quality in Education forum kindly hosted by Pretoria Girls' High School. When this Saturday morning forum began, the audience was told of the Mahatlani Primary School teachers in their midst. This school is situated in Polokwane. Mr Thomas Mboweni and his enthusiastic teachers left their homes at two in the morning to be on time. Such dedicated commitment earned them a round of spontaneous sustained applause.

SAQI has a range of leadership and management programmes. These programmes workshop the principles and practices of Total Quality Education (TQE). The growing number of South African schools using TQE have been thrilled with the results. Schools have been amazed that so much education excellence can be achieved. Poor schools are sponsored.

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