

# Quality Education News

Tel: 012-349-5006 ♦ Fax: 012-349-1232 ♦ www.saqi.co.za

Issue 11

September 2009

A quarterly publication issued by the South African Quality Institute in the interest of promoting educational excellence.

## The Editor comments ...

### Dear Supporter of Quality Education

So, where was the mayor at half-past three on that fateful afternoon? The mayor of Balfour, Mpumalanga wasn't in his parlour nor in any of the municipal offices. Recently, President Jacob Zuma paid him an unannounced visit.

In a way, the president's visit was a quality check. Was the municipality working hard to deal with the grievances of the people in the community?

Nobody likes the thought of someone looking over one's shoulder to see if the work is being done. Teachers are sensitive in this regard. They maintain that as professionals, they should be left alone and trusted to do their job properly.

Two points could be considered by those who object to being checked on. The first concerns the reality of the South African school system. Our school system is in a mess. The 2009 first-year intake at universities have poor literacy and mathematics competency levels. One commentator savagely described the overall intake as, "confident illiterates". There are dysfunctional schools, district offices and provincial administrations across the country. Obviously, there are sparkling diamond-studded exceptions in the education system.

Secondly, even excellent schools can 'up' their performance. There's no such thing as the perfect school. 'Continuous

improvement' is a mantra of every cutting-edge, dynamic school.

Successful businesses, industries and professions believe in quality assurance. By reaching certain standards, quality is guaranteed. When these levels are maintained, they have satisfied customers. As an example, think of a well-run garage. Before a car leaves the garage after a service, the mechanic goes through a check-list. This internal evaluation helps ensure that a certain level of quality has been given. Satisfied customers are normally returning customers for a business.

If we want to improve our education system, we need to look at every institution with quality-focussed eyes. Every institution needs internal reflection and self-evaluation. Questions to ask are:

- ♦ What's the present level of quality in my classroom, office or school?
- ♦ Where would we like it to be tomorrow, a month, a year, five years and in a decade?
- ♦ What do we start doing today to get there?

Besides the internal evaluation, there's a need for external evaluation. This happens when outside bodies (examples: CIE, IQAA, Ofsted, Umalusi) visit institutions. Their functions are to verify the internal evaluation and recommend

further improvements. These evaluators should all have track records of professional excellence. They're 'critical friends' to their school-based colleagues. None of them should be inspectors with mind frames of the recently deceased Scorpions or the fledgling Hawks.

Putting quality into any organisation requires dedication and much hard work over a period of time. Should the president make a surprise visit to a quality institution, he would find staff on task at half-past three in the afternoon!

Sincerely

Richard Hayward

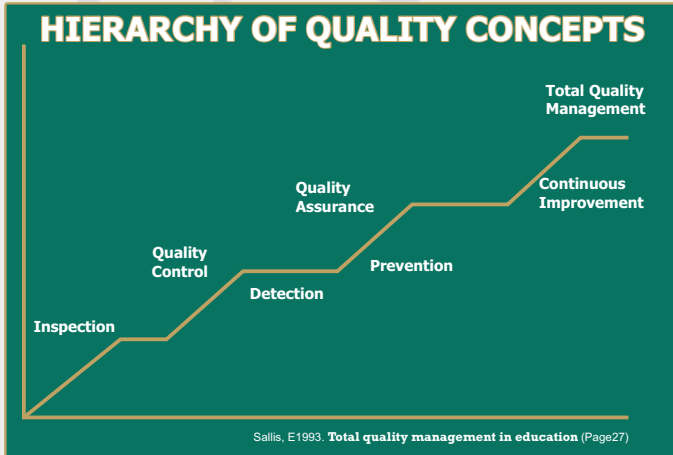


This newsletter is edited by SAQI and distributed to those schools benefiting from their participation in the MySchool programme. MySchool acts as a conduit which raises and delivers essential funding for education and social development on a sustainable basis. This enables members of the community to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





# Adding Quality to Quality Assurance



The word 'Inspection' has become a fearful word for many teachers. There was a time in Britain when teachers had a monetary reason to fear the inspector's visit. If the children didn't know their work, the teacher wouldn't be paid. The principle, 'Payment by results' applied. Even when teachers of today are guaranteed a full salary – quite apart from what the children know or don't know – there is unease at the thought of an inspection.

Some teachers reading this article might have been at the mercy of bullying inspectors. These individuals were obsessed about total, unswerving compliance. The big question was: Have you complied with departmental regulations to the tiniest detail? Such an inspector frowned on the teacher who used initiative, who adapted policies to the specific needs of the children. The departmental manuals and policies according to these inspectors had all the right answers. No initiative or thinking was required. The education department has done it for you!

Fortunately, there are far more progressive ways of doing evaluations in the 21st century. There's still, however, a need to do inspections to ensure that the basics are in place, that there's general compliance. Does the school have enough qualified teachers? Has every child sufficient stationery and textbooks? Is there a proper place at a desk for every child? Five minutes after the morning school bell rings, are all children in class together with a teacher?

Inspections identify defects. Crucially though, when inspectors come across shortfalls, they should have the authority to immediately take action to rectify the problems. This doesn't happen enough in our schools.

An inspection is a form of quality control. It is an after-the-event process. Inspections examine what has been done. Faulty and areas-for-improvement aspects of the school are identified. Nationwide benchmark tests (for example, Numeracy exams in

Grade 3) are indicators of the level at which the school has met certain standards.

Quality assurance moves beyond inspection and quality control. As Sallis (1993:26) observes:

*It is a before and during-the-event process. Its concern is to prevent faults occurring in the first place ... quality assurance is a means of producing defect- and fault-free products ... getting things 'right first time, every time'.*

The concept 'Quality Assurance' comes from the business and industrial world. Children aren't 'products'. Nor is the aim of schools to make them 'defect- and fault-free'! Yet we do wish them to be the best that they can possibly be. In the classroom, for example, the English teacher wants everyone to be able to read, write and speak the language. Quality assurance guides you to the means and principles to get to the 100% pass rate.

Quality assurance maintains that everyone has a part to play in bringing about quality. That part may be played by the child, departmental official, parent or staff member. They all have ideas on how to make improvements. Ideas are invited and welcomed.

Total quality management in a garage or hotel, for example, goes beyond quality assurance. It has as its aim a desire of creating a quality culture where every staff member is giving the customer, "... what they want, when they want it and how they want it. It involves moving with changing customer expectations ... and exceed (ing) their expectations" (Sallis:26-27).

It can be argued that a school or education department isn't a garage or hotel. They don't have customers to whom they need to provide a service ... or do they?! In a way they do. Teachers do provide a service. They teach children and guide parents on how to raise their youngsters. Departmental officials are at the service of schools. Children and their parents are clients or 'customers' of what the school system offers.

Quality assurance evaluations if handled empathically and professionally, take good schools to great heights.

Billions of rands are allocated annually from the national budget for education. Is the money being spent wisely? Are South African children getting a decent education? Where there is poor quality education, what is being done to bring about improvements? We need quality education experts to go into the schools. They need to tell the 'whole truth and nothing but the truth' about what they see.

Quality assurance evaluations are critically needed in our schools. Have evaluations so that one day every South African school is a place of education excellence.



# Ask them!

What do your learners think about your teaching? How about doing a bit of professional quality assurance for yourself?! If you want to make 2010 an even better year in the classroom, ask them. Get them to fill in a short questionnaire. Assure them that the questionnaires will be read only when the school year is over. Once they've completed the questionnaire, put their answers in an envelope. Seal it in front of them! Three typical questions are:

- ❖ What did you like most about lessons this year?
- ❖ What could have been done to improve lessons during 2009?
- ❖ Give suggestions on how lessons could be even better next year.

More extensive questionnaires could be given to leaving groups such as the Grade 7 and 12s. These questionnaires could cover areas such as discipline, extra-mural programme, school uniform and tuck shop.



## What's at the heart of your school?

This year World Quality Day is celebrated on Thursday, 12 November. Green and white balloons, banners and posters will brighten many rooms on that day. In South Africa the 2009 theme is, **Putting Quality at the heart of every organisation**. Every good school is imbued with quality.

For many prospective families and visitors to a school, their first impressions are obtained by what they see in the entrance foyer. At one outstanding South African school, an eye-catching poster was on display in the foyer. The poster had a heading, "I'm at a quality school because ..." Underneath the heading there were learners' one-liners. A sample of the students' astute but occasionally wacky comments were:

- ... our sports coaches are brilliant and it shows!
- ... nobody cares for us like our teachers
- ... the tuck shop hamburgers are cheaper than the café down the road
- ... everybody passes matric here ... but there might be an exception this year!
- ... if you love being a winner, this school shows you how!

Make the children, staff, parents and visitors aware of the quality in your school. Celebrate the quality teaching achievements. Celebrate not only the amazing achievements but also the exceptional efforts in the academic, cultural and sporting spheres. Remember also to celebrate those very special Quality Kids and staff members whose values are the golden heart of your school.



## Google and goggle at the prices

Visit the SAQI website and goggle at the education material that is available at amazingly cheap prices. The Human Values Foundation in the United Kingdom, for example, allows SAQI to sell its material to schools at reproduction cost price. Buy at slaughter-house prices! Their outstanding Values Education programmes are used by schools across the world.

## THE LIONESSES

Once there was a huge argument amongst the animals of the jungle. They argued as to who could produce the largest litter. Some animals shamefacedly admitted to having only two. Others boasted proudly of having a litter of twelve.

At last the animals called on the lioness.

"And how many cubs do you give birth?" they asked the quietly confident lioness.  
"One," she replied wisely, "but that one is a lion!"

Moral: Quality is more important than quantity.



## HELPING TO SPREAD THE QUALITY MESSAGE

To date, SAQI has had enquiries about their Total Quality Education programmes from schools in all nine provinces. Presentations and workshops on quality issues have been done in six of them. Programmes are adapted to the specific requests of the school. Examples of topics are:

- ◆ Total Quality Education: the five pillars of a Quality school
- ◆ Leadership challenges in the Quality school
- ◆ Reducing bullying in the playground and staffroom
- ◆ Developing leadership skills of staff and students
- ◆ Looking at leadership styles
- ◆ Managing change
- ◆ Dealing with teacher stress

Poor schools are sponsored. Kindly contact Vanessa du Toit (012-349-5006) or Richard Hayward (011-888-3262) for more details.

Free back copies of this QEN newsletter are available. Go to either the SAQI ([www.saqi.co.za](http://www.saqi.co.za)) or My School ([www.MySchool.co.za](http://www.MySchool.co.za)) website to get your copies.

## Making Quality Education happen : a 'how-to' guide for every teacher



Richard Hayward

Caxton and the CTP Group have generously sponsored Richard Hayward's *Making Quality Education happen: a how-to guide for every teacher* book. (There's a R30 packaging and registered posting fee).

"Quality is not an act. It is a habit."  
Aristotle