

Quality Education News

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

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Quantity, yes but more importantly... Quality too

Dear Friend of Quality Education

The 2011 National Senior Certificate (NSC) results have been trumpeted across the nation. The 70.2% public school pass rate was dramatically revealed by the statistic being pulled out of a huge envelope in the Big Announcement style of FIFA World Cup President Sepp Blatter. Congratulations are definitely due. There's been a 2.4 % improvement over the previous year. Thousands of learners and teachers worked hard to make it happen. Then there has been the invaluable input from the business sector as well as education officials.

Yet there's a critical question to be asked about the results. Was it a Quality achievement? Quality-focussed schools have certain core goals. One of them is a striving for 'zero defect'. The target is to get to an ever-elusive defect and failure-free end result. A second core goal is 'continuous improvement'. No matter how outstanding the result, there's always something that could be done even fractionally better next time.

If we look at the results of the schools that wrote the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) exams, they achieved very close to 'zero defect'. The overall pass rate was 98. 4% while eligibility to do a bachelor's degree was 81. 7%. Such results reflect the excellent standard of teaching as well as resource availability in many but not all of these schools.

A closer scrutiny of the public school results shows that there are pockets of education excellence in the system. There were 544 of the 6570 schools nationally that had a 100% pass rate. About 500 schools account for Maths and Science passes that are 50% or more.

Yet only 24.3% of full-time learners obtained eligibility to enter a bachelor's degree course. Furthermore, Maths and Science results were very disturbing. One statistic is that only 46.3% of learners who wrote Maths passed. Of deep concern is the attrition rate as learners go through the school system. In 2000 about a million learners started school in Grade 1. By 2011 only 52% of that number wrote matric. Where are the other 48% of the learners?

Commentators in the media about the NSC results such as Karl Gernetzky, Wilmot James and Jonathan Jansen have made incisive observations. Focus on the quality. The present pass requirements into admission into a tertiary institution, for example, are too low. First-year failure rates are between 40 and 50%. A higher pass requirement such as 50% per subject would push up the academic quality of students entering higher education. It will also motivate learners to work harder. An article by Wilmot James in **The Star** had the headline: 'A pass is never good enough'. Maths and Science need particular attention; subject experts need to be encouraged to enter and stay in the classroom.

You might have noticed in the media how many of the top achievers wanted to study in fields such as commerce, computer technology, engineering and medicine. In contrast, how many wanted to become teachers? The Department of Basic Education has a slogan, 'Quality education for all'. To continually improve the quality of the education system, it is critical that we attract quality school leavers to enter the profession. Such teachers will further push up the quantity of young people passing exams. More importantly, they'll push up the quality of the passes too.

Richard Hayward

Gernetzky, K & Visser, A 2012. *Focus 'should be on quality' of exam results.* Business Day, Johannesburg. 4 January, page 3.

James, W 2012. *A pass is never good enough.* The Star, Johannesburg. 6 January, page 8.

Jansen, J 2012. *Political theatre means country praises mediocrity.* Saturday Star, Johannesburg. 7 January, page 17.



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.





‘Top-ups’ for teachers

Teachers who read the first 2012 issue of the **Sunday Times** were riveted by the front-page headline. The headline was, 'Ban on Model C bonuses'. The article implied that the Department of Basic Education had put regulations in place to bar teachers at those former Model C schools from getting bonuses from their governing bodies.

It is to be remembered though that the provincial education departments had asked schools in former years to submit budgets of proposed teacher salary 'top-ups'. In most cases, these additional payments were approved subject to the annual budget being passed by the parent community.

A practical problem that has occurred in the past has been that a small number of schools had abused the 'top up' process. Exorbitant bonuses had made school fees excessively high. The amended regulations aim to deal with this problem. A governing body may only give a maximum of two hours per day remuneration for extra work. On any other day, a maximum of six hours per day is allowed. The hourly rate is determined by a formula based on the total annual salary package of the staff member. Any benefits such as cell phones, free accommodation or groceries are forbidden unless a monetary value is attached to it.

Angie Motshekga, Minister of Basic Education, was quoted by Prega Govender in the **Sunday Times** as saying:

“It shouldn't be a disadvantage for someone teaching in a poor area that a person with the same qualification in another area gets more pay because parents in that area can afford it.”

Her argument is valid if the quality of education given by the two teachers is comparable and both are putting in a similar amount of work hours. However, what's to be done when there's a huge disparity in work performance? A single example is the Gauteng school with a 100% pass rate and hundreds of distinctions in the NSC exams. At a school of comparable size in another province, the pass rate was below 50% and not a single distinction. The excelling school had – in contrast to the other school - a staff doing literally hundreds of extra hours of teaching to ensure that their learners achieved. This included Saturday and holiday classes for struggling learners. The irony is that the principals of the two schools received identical monthly salaries. Also, the teachers at the two schools received – in relation to their respective salary notches – identical remuneration.

Additional remuneration is an incentive and tangible Thank You for teachers and principals who do additional excellent work. Thankfully, there will always be dedicated teachers who give of their very best irrespective of the pay package on the table. Yet it's a naïve school management team and governing body that completely ignores money as a motivator.

A reality is that South African public schools are at two extremes and many shades in between as regards resources. There are those public schools that are equal and even better than the private schools in the same town or city. They have superb teaching teams and outstanding physical resources. They are world-class. At the other extreme are

those schools that have under qualified teachers and that lack even the most basic of resources.

If the **Sunday Times** headline was riveting, the sub-heading was of grave concern. It read: 'Move to restrict rising fees could drive top teachers into private schools'. The shift of teachers from public to independent schools is already happening.

Since 1994, there has been an explosion in the number of non-state schools. One example is to be found with ISASA (Independent Schools Association of South Africa). In 1994 there were about 250 member schools. In November 2011 the figure had soared to 676. Simon Lee, Communication Manager of ISASA, has commented that, 'The sector as a whole has probably grown even more than that, as many of the low-to mid-fee schools (where the substantial growth has occurred) are not members of any association.'

Independent or private schools have a valuable role to play in our society. Often they lead the country in new teaching methodology and technology. These schools help alleviate the number of learners in an already overcrowded school system. Some of them give children from previously disadvantaged backgrounds a head start for life. A single example is the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy for Girls with its first NSC results reflecting a 100% pass rate.

It would be tragic in our country if the best teachers were to be concentrated in the independent sector. We need teachers of outstanding quality in all our schools – public and independent. Let's strive to make salary packages excellent for quality teachers irrespective of whether they're standing in front of a well used chalk-encrusted blackboard or the latest imported interactive whiteboard.

David Rogers analysed research done by Professor Peter Dalton of London University and Dr Oscar Marcenaro-Gutierrez from Malaga University on teacher salaries across a number of countries. One finding that is also very pertinent to South Africa is:

... higher pay attracts more able graduates into the profession, and once recruited, higher relative pay or performance-related pay could provide teachers with stronger incentives to improve pupil performance.

The title of David Roger's article was, 'Worth every penny – and a few more.' How true it is when it comes to top-ups for quality teachers! Where a school is able to add to the teacher's moderate salary, it should do so. The provincial education department has a responsibility of attracting and keeping teachers in the profession. Ethically managed, top-ups can further improve the quality of education in our schools.

Govender, P 2012. *Ban on 'Model C' bonuses*. Sunday Times, Johannesburg. 1 January, page 1.

Rogers, D 2011. *Worth every penny – and a few more*. Times Educational Supplement, tespro section, London. 25 November 2011, page 14.



'Eina!'

It must have been an 'Eina!' moment for the staff and learners of that particular school. On the front page of a Johannesburg daily was the news that the school had been the poorest performer in the 2011 NSC exams in Gauteng. A District Office was also singled out for public shaming. It was the lowest performing District as regards the overall pass rate average of its schools. How did the 'named and shamed' school learners, staff and officials feel about such negative publicity?

Achievements deserve to be congratulated. Those who achieve deserve to be praised. Yet what is the best way of doing so? For every winner there could be disgruntled and even envious folk who didn't quite get there. Competition can be healthy but not when there is humiliation and shame too.

...a school's rank does nothing to help parents, students, the community and other education stakeholders understand what's going on inside the school.

Ontario Education Quality and Accountability Office

Quality schools and businesses aren't scared of healthy competition. It's a powerful motivator of upping one's game and achieving excellence. Benchmark yourself as to what others are doing so that you can improve your own performance. Yet a quality organisation has a higher ideal than beating the opposition. Its main goal is to be the very best that it can possibly be. If it scores better than another institution, that's good to know but not of paramount importance.

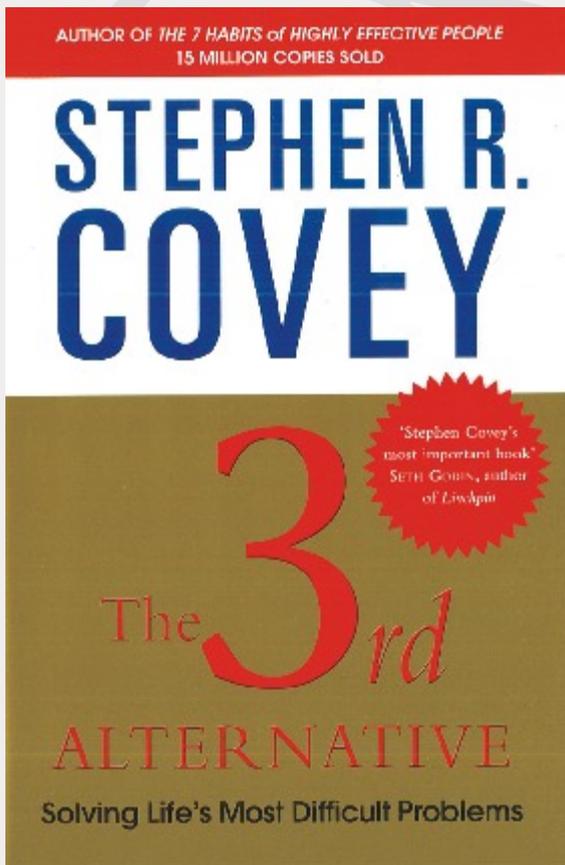
Can we release the annual NSC results in a less emotionally bruising way? Yes, it's important to get the big picture. We need to know whether a province or the country as a whole is on an upward trend. The different subjects need to be scrutinised to identify areas for decisive action. But do individual schools and District Offices need to have their results pored over by others who are unaware of all the factors that explain the results? Should we publish the results of individual learners school by school? Should we even publish their names?

Two top performing school systems in the most recent PISA (Programme for International Student Assessment) tests were Finland and Japan. Warwick Mansell, a British educational author, states that Finland has no inspections, no pupil-by-pupil national tests and a high-trust system based on training a highly skilled teaching workforce. Japan has no school-by-school league tables.

Let's throw out the 'big stick' approach of publicly thrashing poorly performing schools. Use positive incentives to improve performance. Publicly acclaim the areas of quality but never shame individual schools and District Offices. Motivate for continuous improvement through affirmation and encouragement but never through the 'Eina!' of humiliation.

Mansell, W 2011. *Other countries are proving that test-driven punishment and reward is not the right way to treat a school.* Times Educational Supplement, London. 24 June, page 25.

Read at least one chapter



There's one thing that teachers have in very short supply. That's time. Teachers are being encouraged to find the time to read this or that book. How many books do you have on your work desk or at home that fit into the 'must read' category?!

In your busy schedule, you mightn't have time to read the whole of Stephen R. Covey's latest book, *The 3rd alternative* (Simon & Schuster). The book is pertinent to education. It's worth buying for the staff library and costs about R255.

Stephen Covey is a world-famous writer on leadership and management issues. In *The 3rd alternative*, he puts forward a radical way of dealing with difficult problems at home, work, school and society. Traditionally when there are opposing viewpoints, too often the differences are dealt in one of two ways. There's either conflict or compromise. Covey asserts that these two alternatives don't always result in the best solutions being found. Rather aim for the 3rd alternative. It's a synergy of 'My way' and 'Your way' to get to 'Our way'. The 'Our Way' creates the 'New ideas' which is at a higher level than either previous levels of problem solving.

The recommended chapter to read is titled 'The 3rd alternative at school'. Read at least chapter 5. It's insightful and wise. You'll get tips on dealing with two every-day school realities: change management and conflict resolution. After reading chapter 5 you could very well want to dip into other chapters ... when you've the time!

2012 Proudly South African / CGF School Governance Award competition

The inaugural Governance Award was held last year. Third place went to Glenwood High School in Durban. St Peter's School, Rivonia, Gauteng took second position. The winning school was Victoria Girls' High School in Grahamstown. These winning schools were acknowledged at a glittering function held last year at the Sandton Convention Centre.

Entries are invited from any independent or public school in South Africa. The only pre-condition is that the school is a member of Proudly South Africa. Membership is free to all schools. Member schools will receive information about the competition. For membership queries, please speak to either Dalene du Preez or Gloria Moepi on 011-327-7778.

2012 CPD (Continuous Professional Development)

SAQI has a number of programmes designed for schools. The programmes are based on Total Quality Education (TQE) practices and principles. Workshops focus on a range of leadership and management issues. Dr Richard Hayward, the presenter, is a former principal of two public Gauteng schools. Kindly contact either Vanessa (012-349-5006; vanessa@saqi.co.za) or Richard on 011-888-3262; rpdhayward@yahoo.com) for the details. Poor schools are sponsored.