

# Quality Education News

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

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## Timeless values

### Dear Supporter of Quality Education

There are those precise moments in our lives that we never forget. We remember where we were when we first heard the news and who told it to us. For millions of South Africans and people across the world, the news of Nelson Mandela's passing away was one such moment.

Madiba's legacy is timeless. You might have seen the Nando advertisement in the newspapers: on a black background and printed in the company font type was the simple yet hugely powerful statement: '1918 – Forever.'

Across the world there was much sadness but also much spontaneous celebration. The world had to bid farewell to a peacemaker and politician of distinction; to a man who had brought hope to a nation that was on the brink of civil war. Where there was the likelihood of war there was now peace. Yet the affection and love evident in the countless paeans of praise paid to Nelson Mandela weren't solely based on his political achievements. It was his wonderful humanity and yes, his human flaws that made him so beloved.

Mandela's core values have become guiding stars for us too. President Barack Obama in his eulogy at the Memorial Service at the FNB Stadium stated that Madiba had become a personal role model. The same values could apply to any teacher anywhere.

Teachers have many opportunities to help young people live according to Mandela's values. The History and Life Orientation lesson lend themselves naturally to discussions on his life. At the weekly assemblies, the homilies could reflect on aspects of the great man's character. Those teachers involved in learner leadership training programmes can adapt so much from his courageous, principled life to create an awareness of timeless values.

What values in Madiba's life could we focus on? The list of his admirable traits is very long. A dozen starting line-up of Madiba values could be:

**1 Compassion** Once Madiba was talking to a group of children. They were all full of smiles except one little girl. Madiba gently chided her and told her that she must smile otherwise she wouldn't be happy. The girl replied that she couldn't smile. Madiba found out that the girl had Moebius Syndrome – a rare condition where the facial muscle nerves do not work. He asked many questions about the little girl's condition. Through Madiba's initiative, *The Star Smile Fund* was established. Today there are over a thousand

children who have had surgery to heal disfigured faces and put the smile back on their faces.

Every school has heartbreak cases in the classroom and staffroom. There are those hurting and being hurt children and staff. Be observant to what is happening to others and move into compassionate action.

**2 Courage** To be prepared to be sentenced to death as Mandela was because of his beliefs, was a display of incredible courage. As a politician, Mandela was fearless in speaking out against issues that he disagreed with. Presidents, prime ministers, clerics and people within his own political party were given verbal lashings. In time most of them came to realise how fair the criticisms were.

Daily in the classroom, staffroom and at meetings there is the need for the courage to speak up on matters of principle or where there are instances of unfairness. Often those courageous speakers are given harsh and cynical responses. Yet, in time, the courageous ones have been proven right.

**3 Emotional intelligence** This value understands and responds to what is emotionally important in another person's life. Anybody who watched the 1995 Rugby World Cup at Ellis Park will remember that defining moment when Madiba walked on to the pitch wearing a Springbok cap. He also wore the number 6 rugby jersey – the jersey number of Francois Pienaar, the captain. That moment of brilliant emotional insight helped turn the tide of millions of former foes of South Africa's first black president into friends.

Teachers know the truism: 'Know the child first before you try and put knowledge into its head.' The best teachers and school leaders show high levels of emotional intelligence in their interaction with others. They know what makes others tick and use that emotional awareness to bring out the best in their relationships.

**4 Focus** When Nelson Mandela made his final statement from the dock at the Rivonia Trial, the focus of his whole political life was summed up in these three sentences:

*During my lifetime I have dedicated myself to this struggle of the African people. I have fought against white domination and have fought against black domination. I have cherished the ideal of a democratic and free society in which all persons live together in harmony and with equal opportunities.*

When he was finally laid to rest in Qunu on Sunday, 15 December



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.



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2013, had Mandela reached the focus of his life's work? The answer is that South Africa is still a 'work-in-progress' towards those ideals. Yet it's important to be mindful of what would have happened to South Africa without his visionary focus.

A school and a teacher can drift aimlessly along from one year and one decade to the next. What was done last year was OK. Such thinking believes it will be just fine decades hence ... or there can be focus on what still needs to be done. Goals and target dates on the road to achievement are set. Will every goal be achieved? No, but in the spirit of continuous quality improvement, you'll get very much closer than having no focus.

**5 Forgiveness** Countless articles, books, CDs, DVDs and manuals have been written on the qualities expected of a leader. How many of them mention Forgiveness as a quality? Very few. Yet it was one of the most visible values seen in Mandela's life. He invited Percy Yutar, his prosecutor at the Rivonia Trial and responsible for him spending 27 years in jail, to have lunch with him. On another occasion, Mandela had coffee and koeksusters with Betsie Verwoerd, the widow of the architect of the policy of apartheid.

No school or organisation is 'filled with sweetness and light' where everyone always behaves maturely and tactfully with others. People (and remember to include parents!) make hurtful comments and tell lies about each other. Attempts are made to trash reputations. Bullies are to be found not only in the classroom and playgrounds but also in the staffroom. A spirit of forgiveness is needed to move on and do away with a bitterness to seek revenge.

**6 Humility** There's the incident where Madiba was given a blanket on an air flight to help him keep warm. When the plane landed, an air hostess wanted to take the blanket away from him. Madiba insisted that he fold it neatly first before giving it to her. Even as president, Madiba used to make his own bed every day. He realised that as a leader he was there to serve others first and not have an attitude of entitlement.

Do the leaders in your organisation show humility in their relationship with others? Do they blow their own trumpets of self-importance? Do they have reserved bays in the car park and special seats in the staffroom? De La Salle Holy Family College in Johannesburg has a motto which states the correct value powerfully: Be the first to serve.



Acknowledgement: Zapiro *In memory of Madiba*, Independent Newspapers, page 2, December 2013.

**7 Inclusivity** At a function attended by Madiba, the National Anthem was sung. The organisers, however, decided to delete the Afrikaans verse. Madiba chided them and insisted that the Anthem be sung again but with the Afrikaans verse included. On many occasions he did things that made everyone aware that all who lived in South Africa were part of the Rainbow Nation.

Today most of our schools are microcosms of our Rainbow Nation. In the spirit of Madiba we need to ensure that all who work and play in them feel welcome. Where culture, race and religion once separated us, those self-same issues are cause for celebration. We need to ensure that there's appreciation and respect for all the wonderfully enriching diversity of our country.

**8 Perseverance** Many political setbacks over decades were endured by Mandela before he became the first president of a democratic South Africa. His academic studies to become a lawyer were very difficult too. He studied law at Wits and was unsuccessful; he tried to complete the degree at the University of London but to no avail. While on Robben Island he completed the degree by correspondence at UNISA.

Mandela's perseverance with his studies is another example to every learner and teacher of the eventual triumph of never throwing in the towel. We are personally responsible for what we achieve. *Invictus*, written by William Ernest Henley, was a favourite poem of Mandela. It included the lines:

*It matters not how strait the gate  
How charged with punishment the scroll  
I am the master of my fate:  
I am the captain of my soul.*



**9 Sense of humour** Madiba had a delightful and tongue-in-cheek sense of humour. Once he was invited by Peter Sullivan of *The Star* to visit the newspaper and meet the staff. Madiba stopped at a man's desk and asked him what he did. The man replied that he was a sub-editor and stutteringly added that it was an enormous honour to meet him. "Not at all," replied Madiba. "Not at all. The honour is all mine. I will not wash this hand that shook yours for two weeks!"

Schools should be happy places. Young people laugh easily and see the funny side of things quickly. So should teachers. Very importantly, teachers shouldn't take themselves too seriously. Join in the fun ... to a degree!

**10 Teachability** Many of Mandela's statements about political decisions that he had taken, included the word 'collective'. Decisions taken were the end result of a great deal of listening by him. He was willing to learn from others; he was most teachable.

In our schools there are many chances to learn from each other. Once upon a time, teachers were seen as the source of all knowledge and all wisdom. Not any more. A school becomes a better school when everyone sees themselves as someone who grows because of a willingness to learn from others.

Besides the home, teachers are the most influential people in the lives of young people. Let's use our influence to let the legacy of Madiba live forever. Let's teach timeless values.

*Richard Hayward*



# When is it time to step down?



Nelson Mandela stepped down as President after only one term of office. The Constitution allowed for two terms. Millions of South Africans were saddened when he stepped down in 1999. They wanted him to stay in the Union Buildings for another five years. Yet Madiba was resolute about retiring. He believed that one term of office was enough. It was time for a new leader to drive the new South Africa down the democratic road.

Whether one is in a leadership position in a company, country or school there comes a time when one needs to say, 'Goodbye'. The organisation needs new ideas, new direction and new vigour. Every Quality organisation is in a state of continuous improvement. Ethical and strong leadership is a critical factor in bringing about never-ending progress.

If you're presently part of a school senior management team – Head of Department, Deputy/ Vice Principal or Head – when is the right time to bid Farewell and move on? A possible answer is to be found in Tim Brighouse and David Woods' book titled, *The A-Z of school improvement: principles and practice* (Publisher: Bloomsbury). The authors describe four phase of leadership, namely:

## Initiation

The first phase starts with one's appointment to the post. One learns what the job entails and the present situation in the school. It's a time of much listening and less talking. Observe what is happening around you. It's a time to try and establish a trusting rapport with your colleagues, learners, parents and the wider community. Remember that as you are observing others, they are observing you! Do you 'walk the talk' of who you claim to be?!

## Developmental

In the second phase you attempt to carry out what you believe are in the best interests of the school. You are trying to grow the school professionally by aligning your values with that of the school. These are challenging times. Not everyone will see your new initiatives as good for the school. Sadly and too often, selfish personal interests make your efforts at bringing about change very hard. Your character will be tested. Are you courageous and resolute in dealing with 'difficult' people and tough decisions? Do you keep up being a positive person in spite of the challenges?

## Plateau

In one way, the third phase is a pleasant place to find oneself. You've earned your professional 'stripes'. There is recognition of the many good things that you've done in your leadership role. The department or school is better because of your input. Your acceptance across most of the school community is high. Quite simply, the day-to-day issues are easier to handle and conflict situations are rarer.

However, there is a downside to the plateau phase. Everyone gets into a comfort zone. Targets have been reached and there's no apparent need to aim for further development.

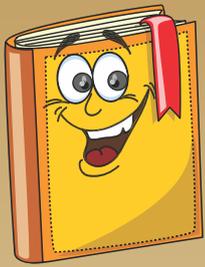
As one eminent headmaster of an excellent high school told me: 'I knew it was time to go when for the first time I used my position to stall a capital works project. The thought of all the extra work involved was just too exhausting.'

The wise leader moves quickly when they're at the plateau level. They might go on leave to recharge their 'professional enthusiasm' batteries; they might move to another school to be rejuvenated by new challenges.

## Decline

No matter how excellent one has been as a leader, there's always the right time to go. Mentally one hasn't the stamina any more to lead new projects with the same vigour and never-flagging enthusiasm. Leadership positions require the leader to put in the extra time. Besides a full day on the job, there are many meetings at night, weekend activities and the shortened school holidays because of administrative demands. You're becoming physically exhausted and others start to notice it too. You might even show warning signs of burnout, depression, distress, hypertension, memory loss and other health issues.

Quality leaders don't stay in the post until there's a cry of universal relief when they step down. Intuitively they recognise their own 'Sell by' date. Such a leader leaves when the most-often heard words are a genuine 'Fond Farewell' rather than a 'Good Riddance!' As the crisp quip states: 'Go while the going is good!'



# Answering the tough question, brilliantly

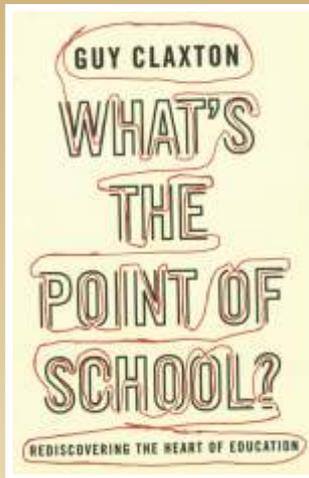
So, what should be the real purpose of a learner going to school? Professor Guy Claxton answers that question eloquently but in an enjoyable manner in his book. Last month our South African newspapers, radio talk shows and TV programmes were saturated with comments about the latest Grade 12 NSC exam results. A short while before that there were endless media comments about the ANA (Annual National Assessment) results. Of course, good ANA and exam results are important for any Quality school. Yet there are other factors that make for an excellent school.

Claxton makes this comment about schools without any direct reference to South Africa but the cap fits us too:

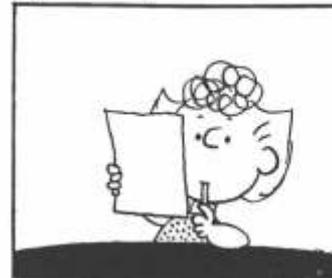
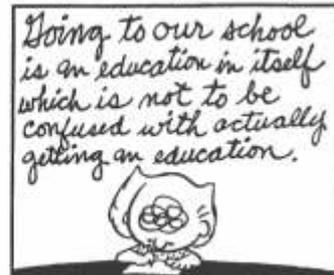
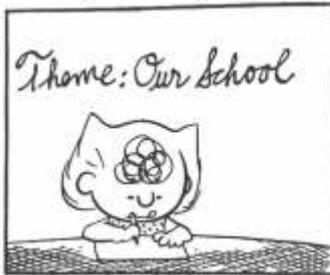
*We agonise about the content of the syllabus, and the dumbing down of examinations, yet the core failure of education to prepare young people for their complex and uncertain future passes, year after year, almost without comment.*

He makes the point that some schools are obsessed with making young people successful exam-passers. Yet there's a greater need for true success which is the ability to be, 'eager to learn and grow in the real-life world of work, leisure and relationships.' To be successful there's a need to build learning power – the ability to think critically, logically and the ability to adapt to an ever-changing society. Schools must not be time-warps of days long past.

Claxton's theories are presented lightly and wittily. There are many anecdotal stories to keep the reader turning the pages. He shows how in many different areas of their lives, young people can be guided to unlock their innate learning powers and individual thinking skills. The book is thought-provoking and is a cage-rattler of the mind. It's a book for the education official, parent or teacher who believes that maybe we've veered off the road of the true meaning of education. The book brilliantly shows how to get and keep meaningful school learning and teaching on the right track.



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(Acknowledgement: Peanuts at school Charles M Schulz)



## Total Quality Education (TQE): an introduction

TQE is an adaptation to the education profession of Total Quality Management which is used in the business, commercial, industrial sectors as well as other professions. One country that has applied Total Quality Management with outstanding results was Japan. At the end of the Second World War with the dropping of the atomic bombs in Hiroshima and Nagasaki, the country was in ashes – both figuratively and literally. Today Japan is a world financial and industrial superpower.

Thousands of schools and education authorities across the world have successfully implemented TQE. It's a leadership and management approach to education that can undoubtedly benefit South African schools too.

SACE has endorsed Richard Hayward's **Introduction to Total Quality Education** interactive workshop. It has been allocated 10 Professional Development points in the CPTD programme. All attendees will be given a copy of the second edition of *Making Quality Education happen: a how-to guide for every teacher*. The book has been generously sponsored by Caxton-CTP Printers. Successful candidates will have their certificates issued by the South African Quality Institute. Poor schools are sponsored. For more details, please contact him on either [rpdhayward@yahoo.com](mailto:rpdhayward@yahoo.com) or 011-888-3262.