

i n s i g h t @ i p t

Introduction 1
Editorial comment from
the IPT

Without an educated populace and safe streets, we cannot expect to progress either socially or economically. The July 1999 issue of insight@ ipt looked at election promises made by ministers during the June elections. This issue reviews the roles of the provincial Education Minister and the Minister of Safety and Security. Despite public commitment to making visible changes, little has been realised on the ground. Once again, we see an excess of committees, examining the same issues as in previous years, without outcomes. It seems that there is no continuity from election to election, just new impressive sounding processes. All on paper, all done with smoke and mirrors, we see portfolio sub-committees shuffled and new strategic plans.

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Education and Culture
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An evaluation of the
work of the provincial
education minister over
the past year.

One alarming example is the Department of Education. It has been almost a year since Eileen KaNkosi-Shandu took office and, playing to the gallery aside, we are still waiting for improvements in the system. The pass rate remained abysmal. Once again textbooks were not available at the start of the term while providers wrangled for tenders. Perhaps to distract attention, a Three Year Strategic Plan for Education was launched in February. There is no place for yet another strategic plan. Once the hype is over, the plan gathers dust on a shelf, never to be implemented. Success in turning around this situation will not be about three year plans but about implementation of good basics.

**KwaZulu-Natal
Minister of Safety and
Security Inkosi Nyanga
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An evaluation of the
work of the provincial
safety and security
minister over the past
year.

The Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service Campaign (COLTS) that was launched in 1997 has been almost ignored in the province and is now relegated to the backburner nationally -- another project costing vast sums of money scrapped without any commitment to make it work. The failure of the Education Department is due to incompetence within the Department itself. It needs management, not fancy strategies.

In a recent attempt to source information regarding training material for school governing bodies and representative councils of learners we made 15 calls to the provincial education department. Of those, eight were to Ulundi of which one was answered. Of the seven calls to Truro House, no one had any idea what we were talking about. Of those who answered in Truro House, three had never heard of Dr M Lotter who is the Provincial Director, Education Provision.

Ignoring recommendations of two committees, the minister appointed her brother, Isaac Nkosi, as Deputy Director General of Education. He will earn R255,735 a year plus benefits to help 'manage' this already dysfunctional department. KaNkosi-Shandu was amazed the appointment was questioned. We would query the judgement of a person who fails to understand nepotism, given that delivery in KwaZulu-Natal has been hampered for so long by nepotism, cronyism and corruption.

KwaZulu-Natal Education and Culture Minister Eileen KaNkosi-Shandu

Known by the nickname “Big Stick”, Eileen KaNkosi-Shandu is well regarded for her firm hand with officials in the Department of Education and Culture. She has been very active in visiting schools and districts since her appointment in February 1999 and has tried hard to reintroduce discipline and structured processes in the education system in KwaZulu-Natal. She does not always react kindly to input provided by her colleagues in the legislature, but has been known to implement some suggestions made by them. Her biggest difficulty is a lack of support, both in terms of administration and resources, to adequately improve service delivery. While some of her officials are very competent, they are in short supply.

Reaction to the Matric Results

It has been a difficult time in office for the Minister. There have been issues regarding the redeployment of teachers and the matriculation pass rate of 51 percent was only fractionally better than the worst results ever recorded in the province – 50,3 percent. Department spokesman Mandla Msibi summarised KaNkosi-Shandu’s attitude towards educators (Mercury January 17 2000): “The department is determined to crack down on schools which continuously perform badly. Some poorly resourced schools have been getting 100 percent pass rates for a number of years, so that won’t be an acceptable excuse.”

A postmortem of the matric results concluded that 675 of 1240 centres offering matric needed the department’s help. Twenty-eight provincial schools, which had a pass rate of five percent or less, were sent letters threatening closure unless principals could

motivate why the schools should remain open. In 17 of the 28 no pupils passed matric.

A number of measures to improve results in 2000 were announced by KaNkosi-Shandu soon after the 1999 results were released. Any initial doubt as to whether the Minister would implement the measures were slightly lessened when Premier Lionel Mtshali announced during his State of the Province address on February 14, 2000, that changes had been made.

Mtshali announced in his address that the 28 KwaZulu-Natal Senior Certificate Centres which had a pass rate of five percent or less were deregistered and Grade 12 classes closed as from February 10, 2000. He said that regions had been instructed to ensure affected learners were placed in neighbouring schools. He said: “It is the firm belief of the Department that all the 28 schools are neither ready nor capable of offering matric work.”

KaNkosi-Shandu is determined to continue to implement such measures at schools. According to Mtshali, letters have been written to principals and governing bodies of public secondary schools: “All schools that enter candidates for the 2000 Senior Certificate Examination and which do not achieve a pass rate of at least 15, will have their Grade 12 classes closed in 2001. A further investigation of the competence of the school to offer Grade 10 and 11 will follow. It is only after a school has improved teaching in Grade 10 and 11 and learners have proved their competence in a standardised Grade 11 examination that the school will be registered for Grade 12.”

Controlled Quarterly Testing Programme

KaNkosi-Shandu also announced after the matric results were released that any school

that obtained a pass rate of less than 60 percent would be forced to participate in a controlled quarterly testing programme. Mtshali announced in February that this measure – “a vigorous monitoring and systematised evaluation of work at quarterly intervals” – would apply to schools that obtained less than a 50 percent pass rate. The programme attempts to ensure that relevant schools “progress at a pace which will enable them to complete the syllabus by the second week of August”. Tests to be set by panels of subject advisors and moderated with the assistance of the Examinations Directorate will be written, the first from March 13 to 17 this year. The tests are to be controlled by Principals “in the same strict manner as they preside over the writing of the end of the year matric examination”. Similar testing of Grade 7 pupils will also be implemented, the results to reach the Education Department twice a year.

Starting School Early

The Minister suggested that institutions that obtained less than 60 percent should be at school an hour earlier so that pupils could use the time to read every morning of the week. This proposal was also realised in Mtshali’s address when he announced that schools in which less than half the matric pupils passed would begin school one hour before the stipulated time every morning “to afford their learners an opportunity to read silently”. He said that “the lack of the culture of reading is one of the major factors which contributes to poor comprehension of Grade 12 work”.

Attendance Registers for Teachers

Teachers will not escape the crackdown. KaNkosi-Shandu has announced that attendance registers are being introduced and teachers will be compelled to sign in every

morning and sign out should they leave the school before closing.

Budget

KaNkosi-Shandu’s job is made difficult by a budget which provides the lowest funding per matric pupil in the country – R2,642 – and the highest pupil-teacher ratio of 36 pupils to one teacher. Most of the budget – more than 90 percent – is swallowed by personnel expenditure. Historic underfunding of former KwaZulu schools has also created a huge backlog.

From this year, 60 percent of the provincial budget will go to the poorest 40 percent of the schools. But there is a fear that focussing more than half the budget on less than half of the schools in the province – although previously disadvantaged institutions – could result in the lowering of standards in the whole system. However, it is previously advantaged schools that have relatively good facilities and access to resources. Many rural schools function without sufficient classrooms, no adequate sanitation facilities and, in a number of cases, children are having to learn in buildings that are regarded as safety hazards.

KaNkosi-Shandu has provided support for a ‘ghost-busting’ exercise which targeted corrupt officials and teachers – particularly those who had been employed as a result of fake qualifications – and was begun nationally prior to her appointment. More than 320 employees have been removed from the payroll as a result of these measures.

Further improvements in the financial administration of the department would ensure more savings in the budget. Another possibility that may address the facility crisis that faces the rural schools, in particular,

would be for the Minister to lobby for additional funds from the national government which would be used only for improving the facilities in several run-down schools in the province.

No textbooks

The start of the school year in 2000 was not altogether positive. No textbooks were available because of a wrangling among book suppliers during the tender process which was riddled with allegations by tenderers against each other. This process is to be investigated by the provincial legislature's Finance Portfolio Committee because it has resulted in the department exceeding its budget by several million rands.

Strategic Three Year Plan for Education

KaNkosi-Shandu announced a strategic three year plan for provincial education on February 1. The plan encompasses the sectors of education, arts/culture and sports/recreation, including libraries, museums and youth affairs and sets out clearly defined goals. The focus of the plan is on improving service delivery and incorporates KaNkosi-Shandu's plans to run the department like a business. The plan covers issues such as teaching financial and administrative skills to school officials, promoting the advancement of women, education around Aids and promoting adult basic education.

Another part of the three year plan will see the launch in February of an education council – consisting of unions, business, universities, technikons and other stakeholders – to advise the Minister on key issues. This body, spokesman Mandla Msibi says, has been elected through governing bodies and other stakeholders and is representative of the people.

Continuous Assessment

For the first time this year, continuous assessment, employed in some provinces in South Africa, will be used to grade pupils. Other departmental plans include workshops to help teachers prepare learning materials.

School Security

The Minister in July 1999 initiated a cabinet committee to identify schools beset by violence and come up with proposals to address the issue of school violence. This followed a statement by KaNkosi-Shandu in the provincial legislature in which she voiced her concerns about violence in schools. The committee was headed by KaNkosi-Shandu and the members were Minister of Agriculture and Environment Narend Singh, Minister of Economic Affairs and Tourism, Mike Mabuyakhulu and Safety and Security Minister Inkosi Nyanga Ngubane. Community organisations, including the local police, school governing bodies and parents would be briefed by the committee on ways to prevent violence and criminal behaviour at schools.

The cabinet committee has held meetings and received reports from the South African Police Services. A plan of action that will see the setting up of regional and local committees that will report to the cabinet committee all instances of school violence rather than only those that have been reported to the police is expected. However, details of this of not been released.

The Education portfolio committee has also set up a sub-committee which will focus on school violence. Chairperson of the committee, Jo-Ann Downs of the African Christian Democratic Party says that the sub-committee, which was formed prior to the

cabinet committee making a plan of action known, will monitor the progress of the cabinet committee and will also look at disciplinary measures at schools.

It remains to be seen whether these committees will use the documentation that has been compiled and the experience obtained through community initiatives, such as efforts like the Independent Projects Trust-hosted Community Alliance for Safe Schools (CASS).

Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (Colts) Campaign

One of the primary objectives of the Culture of Learning, Teaching and Service (Colts) was to improve security at schools. However, there seems to be little utilisation of the Colts programme in KwaZulu-Natal, particularly in comparison to the way it operates in Gauteng. The Colts campaign, established in 1997, attempted to achieve some of the dedication that resulted in schools achieving 100 percent pass rate without significant resources.

However, it has largely failed to make significant successes in KwaZulu-Natal and urgently needs KaNkosi-Shandu's attention.

One educator Kanya Padayachee criticises the campaign for attempting to foist change upon schools without creating change agents from within the schools themselves (Daily News January 11, 2000). However, she does say that the broad aims and objectives of the Colts campaign are vital to education transformation in South Africa.

Although the conditions are different in KwaZulu-Natal to those in Gauteng, the campaign could improve teaching and learning in schools in this province, but the campaign needs to be implemented fully.

Corporal Punishment

KaNkosi-Shandu has reportedly called for the reintroduction of corporal punishment, which is illegal although still used and supported by some. This is despite numerous studies which have shown that corporal punishment encourages antisocial aggression, vandalism and perpetuates the cycle of violence.

She has also been accused of slipping into archaic practices of teacher-bashing, according to senior lecturer and education consultant Themba Ndhlovu of the University of Natal's School of Education.

Monitoring

A "crack unit" of about 200 educationists set up by national education minister Kader Asmal in February 2000 to monitor and mentor underachieving schools nationally will take some pressure off KaNkosi-Shandu. This may result in changes in the current system in which there is the complete absence of inspections at some provincial schools and inadequate scrutinies at others.

Spokesman Mandla Msibi says that regional offices have been strengthened to cope with changes and district managers have attended a seminar where the implementation of the three year plan was discussed. It remains to be seen whether KaNkosi-Shandu's measures are fully implemented and continue to be in place throughout the year.

Conclusion

Most commentators seem to agree that there is no doubting KaNkosi-Shandu's intent to make an improvement in education in KwaZulu-Natal. However, there are still doubts as to whether measures will be implemented and a concern that existing information is not utilised by the Minister.

KwaZulu-Natal Minister of Safety and Security Inkosi Nyanga Ngubane

Scanning the print media for news of what Inkosi Nyanga Ngubane has done with regards to his portfolio of safety and security in the past year does not provide one with much insight.

Heavy Load from Three Portfolios

Even people within his own political party – the Inkatha Freedom Party – say that he has not spent much energy on this portfolio. The reasons, they say, are that he has other areas to focus on – he is minister of local government and traditional affairs – and that if one considers the powers available to a provincial Safety and Security Minister, there is not much that he is allowed to do. The Minister is busy with the other two portfolios that he was given by Premier Lionel Mtshali. With the local government elections expected to be held in November and as the debate continues over demarcations, it is understandable that matters relating to that portfolio are at the forefront of his mind. It is no personal criticism of the Minister to say that he does not have the capacity to handle all three ministries – it seems an almost impossible task for anyone. Making it seem even more insurmountable is the distance between the Ministry offices – the Traditional Affairs Ministry is based in Ulundi, Local Government in Pietermaritzburg and Safety and Security in Durban.

Powers Available to the Minister

With regards to the competencies available to a provincial Safety and Security Minister Section 206 of the Constitution is useful:

“Each province is entitled –

- (a) to monitor police conduct;
- (b) to oversee the effectiveness and efficiency of the police service, including receiving reports on the police service;
- (c) to promote good relations between the police and the community;
- (d) to assess the effectiveness of visible policing; and
- (e) to liaise with the Cabinet member responsible for policing with respect to crime and policing in the province.

The Constitution also gives the province the power to “investigate, or appoint a commission of inquiry into, any complaints of police inefficiency or a breakdown in relations between the police and any community”; and to make recommendations to the Cabinet member responsible for policing.

Some will say that this allows the Minister to do little more than monitor policing in the province and check that national policy is carried out. But this in itself is an important task – and not as powerless as it may seem. This view is held by KwaZulu-Natal Premier Lionel Mtshali who said in his State of the Province address on February 14, 2000: “The least powers and functions we do have are critical to making a difference where it matters the most, that is on how communities operate and relate to the reality of crime in their midst.”

It is within Ngubane’s power, for example, to visit a police station unannounced. While he cannot specifically order police officers to change their conduct should this not be in line with police policy, they would probably do it anyway, if in the wrong. If necessary he can

always raise issues with the provincial police commissioner and the national Minister of Safety and Security. The publicity gained by doing such “spot checks” and publicly lobbying for better resources will show the public in KwaZulu-Natal that the Minister is serious about combatting crime. Of course, complementing police officers for good conduct is likely to boost morale and give publicity to their positive actions.

Success in Greytown

One area in which he did make a positive contribution – in his capacity as both traditional affairs and safety and security minister – has been in the Umvoti valley near Greytown. In November 1998 he attended a meeting in the area regarding a boundary dispute that has resulted in the murder of hundreds of people. Some 10 months later he visited migrant workers from the area to ask them to stop the violence which had spread from the valley to Gauteng where they worked. Combined with local initiatives whereby feuding factions formed a joint committee in an attempt to put an end to years of fighting, peace may be achieved.

Facing Criminal Charges

This example suggests that Ngubane does have the potential to make an impact. However, his credibility as Minister of Safety and Security is rather undermined by the fact that he is still facing criminal charges for the unlawful possession of a gun. The charges follow his arrest in April 1999. Ngubane is due to appear in court again in June.

Failure to Attend Meetings

Another damper during his term of office has been a run-in with the Durban Area Community Policing Board which became

publicly ugly in December 1999. The Board criticised the Minister for being “disorganised” and for causing them “unnecessary” costs when he did not attend a meeting with the Board. The Minister, in return, slammed the Board and said: “I asked my office to call the meeting off because the board planned to hijack it and do their own thing. They were planning to engage me in other matters that were not even the responsibility of my office.” Ngubane said that he would arrange a meeting with the Board in January when he would give them time to express themselves (Daily News December 15 1999). By mid-February this meeting had not been scheduled.

Another meeting which has gained Ngubane rather bad publicity for *not* attending was with members of the farming community. It related the issue of farm attacks. KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Union president Fred Visser accused the Minister for not having the guts to face farmers to discuss the security issue by “ducking and diving” and postponing scheduled meetings for six months (Mercury January 28, 2000). However, Ngubane indicated early in February that he would meet the KwaZulu-Natal Agricultural Union on February 28. He said that roleplayers including the police services and traditional structures would attend the summit. This meeting did take place with Ngubane present, but the results are still to be realised.

The Budget

Ngubane’s department is severely hampered by the minuscule budget that it receives because safety and security is not considered to be a service delivery portfolio like health, education and welfare. As one politician commented in the legislature a few months ago, the money available to the Department was less than the budget of a large school like

Maritzburg College. Of the R4,901,000 available to the Minister for the 1999/2000 financial year, R3,315,000 was allocated to the Peace Committee structures. This leaves only R1,586,000 for the running of the Safety and Security Ministry. After personnel costs, little money remains for the department to actively monitor policing.

The Peace Committee is currently under review after being the subject of some controversy. The Committee's previous director, Dennis Nkosi was charged criminally with 15 counts of fraud involving misappropriation of at least R70,000. In another scandal, African Christian Democratic Party legislature member Jo-Ann Downs revealed that the co-chairs of the Committee, members of parliament Blessed Gwala (of the Inkatha Freedom Party) and Meshack Radebe (of the African National Congress) had spent R260,000 on hired vehicles and transport costs in about six months. One co-chair allegedly claimed a petrol allowance for about 15,000km in one month.

The small budget available to the Minister also affects the number of people employed by the Department. In the case of Safety and Security, the Department officials make up what is referred to as the Secretariat of Safety and Security. Provision is made for a Secretariat in the Police Act of 1995 and it is the provincial functions listed in the Constitution (see above) that are performed by the Secretariat in order to provide support to the Minister.

Two audits of the provincial Secretariat have suggested that the body should employ at least 40 people. But there are only 10 – and two of those have been seconded from the police services, because the Secretariat cannot afford to pay their salaries. Of more concern though is that, although all Secretariat

employees are involved in the work of the department, the head of the Secretariat in KwaZulu-Natal General Wynand van der Merwe considers eight people to be involved primarily with administrative work rather than projects and monitoring.

Vacancies in the Police Services

One issue that Ngubane indicated in September he would address at a meeting with national Minister Steve Tshwete and provincial ministers related to 4395 vacancies within the police services in KwaZulu-Natal. In November, provincial police commissioner Chris Serfontein appealed to the safety and security portfolio committee: "We are losing staff in dozens every month and even hundreds some months." He regarded the situation as so dire that the police were helpless in the face of pension money theft from the elderly. A question asked by the Democratic Party about Ngubane's action in this regard was met with a brief response in which the Minister stated only that the issue had been discussed and a plan was in place.

Conclusion

Minister Ngubane urgently needs a far greater profile and presence in terms of safety and security issues for KwaZulu-Natal citizens to be convinced that the provincial government takes crime seriously in the province.

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