

i n s i g h t @ i p t

Introduction	1	<i>Faith Gasa, the new minister of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education (KZN DOE), confronts major problems of education management and accountability following the firing of the former minister, Eileen KaNkosi Shandu, for nepotism on August 22nd. The IPT believes that a change of ministers was appropriate since nepotism and corruption contribute to poor management and ultimately poor performance in schools. This issue of insight is dedicated to the new minister in the hope that she will use it to address some significant problems of education management.</i>
Seven Debated Issues around the Effective Management of Education.....	2	<i>A behind the scenes look at seven of the education stories that made the headlines in 2000.</i>
Provincial Education Budgets.....	2	<i>A healthy aspect of any democracy falls to the “Fourth Estate”, those organisations and the media that offer a critical ‘watchdog’ look at government departments. NGOs are well-placed to do this and one of the functions of insight@ipt is to stimulate debate and advocate for the best service delivery possible. This issue of insight takes a look at seven performance areas for which the KZN DOE has been critiqued this past year, especially in the media. We look behind the sensational stories to fairly evaluate the accountable role of the KZN Department of Education.</i>
School funding priorities.....	3	<i>The IPT is quite aware that the government departments we work with, usually Education or Safety and Security, can be wrongly criticised in the media. For instance, the problems related to text book delivery related mainly to problems with the Tender Board and not the Department of Education even though news stories indicated otherwise. Sometimes poor planning at national level (e.g., the re-deployment of teachers) results in chaos at provincial level. We also accept that there is significant room for improved provincial performance. In our next issue we criticise the KZN DOE for a slow and inadequate response to security issues and believe that constant pressure must be exerted to tackle this.</i>
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Conclusion on Education Management.....	7	<i>Thus, fair criticism is the aim of this issue and it does seem that a problems can be traced to both provincial and national level. Even concerning national level, the province, which must implement national policy, has major responsibilities in terms of how this is done and for negotiating with national role-players when policy appears to create problems on the ground.</i>

Seven Debated Issues

Since the beginning of the year, the media has been awash with stories critical of the education department and this has given rise to debate surrounding effective management. Newspapers in KZN often sensationalise stories, focus on the provincial education minister and seldom discuss solutions.

So, this is a behind-the-scenes look at seven of the education stories that made the headlines in 2000 but with a view to sorting the origin of the problem, especially the government tier responsible, and identifying what must be done. This will allow us to establish benchmarks to monitor the progress of the education department on these issues as the matric exam results, financial audits, and reviews are reported in the coming months.

Seven issues that arise repeatedly in the media and in legislative debate include:

- (1) the poor financial status of provincial education;
- (2) methods for allocating funds from the province to individual schools;
- (3) confusion and chaos resulting from the rationalisation and re-deployment programme;
- (4) non-delivery of text books and stationery;
- (5) absent educators;
- (6) poor matric examination results and
- (7) non-functional school governing bodies.

Another key issue is violence in schools but this will be addressed in the next issue of *insight*.

Provincial Education Budget

Accountability for the poor financial status of provincial education can be attributed both to national under-funding of the province, to inadequate internal controls, lack of capacity lack of training, and lack of accountability.

That KwaZulu-Natal has the lowest allocation of funds per learner in the country is an unfair if not appalling restraint on the attempt to provide quality education in KZN. While Gauteng is awarded R4,589 per learner and the national funding average is R3,232 per pupil, KZN receives a paltry R2,643 a pupil. More than six years after the first General Elections, there is no just reason why a learner from KZN should be disadvantaged compared to other provinces. If children's lives are being sacrificed for political party gains, such behaviour is even more shocking.

The budgetary constraint under which the KZN Department of Education has operated. helps to account for problems of learning and teaching such as KwaZulu-Natal's secondary school learner to educator ratio of 1:38 that is the highest in the country. Furthermore, with over 90% of the provincial budget awarded for salaries, hardly any money is available to upgrade the resources of the 5,600 schools in the province. This includes no money to upgrade the rural schools that are often in a shockingly dilapidated state. Finally, insufficient funds limit the purchase of new books. The KZN DOE has been carrying on with out-dated text books and 'topping up' where necessary.

Since 37% of the provincial budget already goes to education (R19,65 billion), it would be difficult for KZN to make more money available provincially. The province is looking at closing some 300 uneconomically sized schools with very small enrollments, both primary and secondary, that include about

1000 paid educators who could be re-deployed.

Ultimately, the national tier must provide a fair distribution of its budget to the provinces if KZN is to meet the educational needs of all its learners. Pushing up the teacher to pupil ratio to 40:1 and above does not solve the problem because this does not serve the goal of creating conditions under which educators and their learners are able to achieve quality learning.

Being short-changed by national government is a grave injustice but it does not excuse poor management of the resources that are available. Fraud, corruption and nepotism seem endemic. In the past, senior officials of the provincial DOE have faced public accounts committees to explain unusually high travel claims, some clearly fraudulent ones, and unauthorised expenditures totalling R506 million during the 1997/98 financial year. Some staff members were receiving housing allowances but not occupying the dwellings.

Nepotism in appointments has been a huge problem affecting work performance and efficiency. Many times relatives and friends who are not best qualified to assume senior roles have been promoted to those positions due to their connections rather than their capacity to perform within that position. The appointment of the former KZN DOE Minister's brother as Deputy-Director General within her department has been one recent and well publicised case.

A key performance indicator of provincial management will be the audits at the end of this financial year. Of course, many schools and a few officials do not submit properly audited financial statements. This must be monitored so that we have proper evidence that the provincial DOE has rooted out mismanagement and corruption as these substantial losses undermine education

delivery in the province, both at administrative and school level (e.g., missing school fees).

School Funding Priorities

Since January 2000, the funding of all provincial schools has been on a 'priority of needs' basis. Every school was assigned a number between one and ten to indicate its priority status. The most disadvantaged of schools rates a '1' and receives the highest per capita allocation while the most advantaged of schools rates a '10' and receives the lowest per capita allocation (basically, this leaves salary provisions for educators and one secretary and one cleaner).

Of the 5,600 provincial schools, about 800 are rated as 'ten', of which 200 are former model C schools and the remainder former House of Delegate schools. For instance, all Chatsworth schools (a former 'Indian Group Area') fall in a category between seven and ten. A school during the 1999-2000 budget year that received a 10 rating is considered self-reliant (a Section 21 school in terms of the South African Schools Act) and received a per pupil allocation of R41.12. Below ten schools receive incrementally more per capita. Ultimately, the difference between schools between levels ten can amount to a hundreds of thousands of rands.

This system has created controversy particularly with regard to previous House of Delegates schools since disadvantaged Black learners are frequently a majority in these schools today.

Two types of criteria were included in the national formula:

Community Based Criteria:

- average years of education
- dependency ratio
- per capita income
- access roads

School Based Criteria

- learner to classroom ratio
- power supply at the school
- water supply at school
- condition of the building

Since the standards for prioritising a school were developed nationally, the KZN DOE cannot be faulted unless it misapplies the formula and the IPT has no information that this has been the problem. Clearly, the national formula is creating problems for many KZN schools.

In terms of method, the check list approach to evaluating the circumstances surrounding thousands of different schools cannot work efficiently. The IPT, in concert with international experience, has found that only a qualitative needs assessment can really address priorities properly.

The criteria for budgetary allocations to schools fails to take account of the areas from which the learners originate. For example, some schools in Glenmore, an attractive suburban area on Durban's Berea, include children from the informal settlement of Cato Crest. One junior school in the area rates a '9' but is 100% disadvantaged Black youth from Cato Crest. Many of their parents cannot pay the kind of school fees that would allow for sufficient staff to improve the teacher to pupil ratio.

Owing to racial integration, there are many other schools in better-off areas with majority attendance by learners from the poorest of circumstances. When the area immediately surrounding the school does not reflect the real economic conditions of the learner, highly disadvantaged learners are left without proper resources and the school is strapped for funds.

Overall, it appears that confusion and problems are being generated at the provincial

level based on rigid national level criteria for determining priorities in funding. The criteria need to be urgently re-examined or else the problem compounds over time. A benchmark for provincial performance will be ensuring that this takes place.

Rationalisation and re-deployment

The chaos associated with rationalisation and redeployment has plagued provincial education throughout this year. Since some schools are over-staffed and others under-staffed there has been a major effort since 1998 to rationalise personnel through re-deployment. This is the result of *national* directives but it is the province's role to implement the policy according to certain procedures and according to the budget of each province (this limits the number of teachers that can be employed).

The KZN DOE has approached redeployment by examining teacher to pupil ratios and redeploying 'surplus' teachers from overstaffed schools to under-staffed schools. The department began with a poor data base as to the number of teachers and pupils in schools and this generated many of the bureaucratic snarl-ups. A 1998-1999 headcount had been conducted and while it has been acknowledged as being inaccurate, this has not yet been followed-up by provincial management. What caused this poor data base? Schools under-reporting or over-reporting? Enrolling under-aged children? Poor data collection? Fraud?

To date, approximately 4000 KZN educators have been redeployed. The most unfortunate outcome has been the resignation of many educators, particularly in the sciences, mathematics, commercial and technical subjects (the areas most in need). Many excellent and experienced members of management within the DOE have also left. It has also drained the budget by proving to be a more expensive process than originally

anticipated. Complaints and disputes have also contributed to a lowering of morale. In some cases, children arrived at school to find they did not have a teacher any longer. Fairly often, redeployed teachers did not show up to take their new posts, leading to the retention of temporary teachers. All these problems have flown in the face of efforts to restore the culture of learning, teaching and service.

In terms of accountability, it is short-term thinking from national level that led to long term provincial problems. The flaws included short timetables and deadlines coupled with a lack of capacity. A slower pace of reform, one that was inclusive, much more communicative and included training for change management was required (various officials could not understand the complex processes).

National policy also took no account of losses from HIV-AIDS and the marketability of teachers (e.g., the rapid emigration of demoralised teachers of all races, especially to the UK, New Zealand, Canada and the United States). The bleeding continues.

The Education Department is now moving back into recruitment mode after forcing away some its best teachers. The benchmark for improved performance is the ability of the KZN department to cope with change and properly staff schools. Measures in this direction might include professional consultation in change management and strategic planning workshops.

Text Books and Stationery

This year was about the fourth in a row that text books and stationery have not arrived in a timely manner in most KZN schools. This compromises both teaching and learning.

One of the major problems has been with the tender board. The KZN DOE did submit all

documents as required by the tender board and on time yet the Tender Board did not confirm that the DOE could issue orders to suppliers until quite late in 1999.

That much of the problem appears to have been bureaucratic red tape, underlines the need to increase efficiency in terms of other departments and statutory bodies that effect the DOE's function. Delays may also occur at the school level for certain budgetary items. Many new systems have gone into place including the norms and standards for providing finances to schools. The poorest schools are being prioritised but often these are the same schools with the least capacity for budgeting and management.

To the credit of the KZN Department of Education, the former KZN minister pursued the tender board delays through the Minister of Finance to ensure that the text books are on time in 2001. She had promised to take further legal steps if it was not resolved in this manner. Of course, the ultimate benchmark for performance will be the timely delivery of text books.

Absentee Educators

A major debate this year among politicians in the provincial legislature was the high number of KZN teachers who are not in school. Often disagreement was along party lines owing to this unusual fact: more than 50% of local government councilors are teachers (especially in rural areas). In this dual capacity, they are often earning two salaries and have split their allegiance between educating learners and engaging in politics. When teachers and principals are absent from school owing to their political obligations, the quality of education suffers.

Former Education Minister KaNkosi Shandu originally questioned the validity of the

complaint and therefore was very slow to act on it. The minister had consistently argued that teachers are the educated people in the rural areas who could provide appropriate leadership. Hence, the underdeveloped areas would suffer if teachers were forced to give up their governmental responsibilities.

Clearly, without teachers in schools during class hours, there is no culture of teaching, learning, and service. The minister should have generated a policy regarding teachers who are also councilors rather than argue the point. She came under the spotlight on the issue during meetings of the KwaZulu-Natal legislature and in the final analysis met with embarrassment when the national government stepped in and solved the problem. Circulars were sent out in March 2000 barring teachers from attending political meetings during school hours. Teachers are expected to spend seven hours a day at school from Monday to Friday.

Now, the benchmark of provincial performance is ensuring improved attendance by DOE employees. This requires checking late-comers and early leavers, monitoring attendance levels and firing those employees that are chronically absent from the classroom and their offices. Many officials are also guilty of absenteeism and therefore need to establish themselves as better role models.

Poor matric results: the public's test

A new set of matric examinations approaches in October 2000 and the public's test of provincial DOE performance will be an improvement over 1999 when 49% of the aspiring matriculants failed their examinations. This was only a 1% improvement over 1998 when fully half failed.

Throughout this year the KZN DOE has responded to this problem based on the diagnosis that shoddy results owed to poor

school management coupled with poor attitudes. Of course, more emphasis could have been put on the quality of educators but in any case, the remedy placed an emphasis on higher standards, performance agreements and strict discipline. There was also talk of punitive measures for poorly performing schools including closing some of them (which was done and created a furore in certain communities).

While resource factors can handicap performance (e.g., no text books), the matric results showed numerous examples where hard-working dedicated professionals with hardly any resources produced a high pass rate. Therefore the emphasis on performance by educators is probably 'on the mark'. Perhaps the immediate reaction in January 2000 of closing poorly performing schools was unrealistic. It led to over-crowding did cause negative press for the Department.

One way of cracking the provincial whip, has been a form of detention for entire schools. Schools that performed less than a 50% pass rate were asked to start school one hour earlier than the others and provide additional tuition during school holidays. Most of that hour was to be spent on reading skills, a major factor in the poor pass rate. There has been no monitoring and evaluation of this so how do we even know if the educators are capable of managing this change? Can the educators all pass the exams that they are preparing the learners for, particularly in maths and science?

Minister KaNkosi-Shandu announced to the Legislature this year, following discussion on the low pass rate, that one pro-active measure from provincial level would be the formation of a 'crack unit' of about 200 highly trained and motivated teachers to monitor performance in the under-achieving schools and give them advice. Where are they? Who are they? The IPT cannot locate educators who are familiar with this group.

At the same meeting, the former education minister asked the 80 members of the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Legislature to 'adopt' a poorly performing school. This means monitoring the schools and making sensible recommendations to improve their performance. In following up on this, DP member Mr Roger Burrows found that two schools back-to-back in KwaMashu that were sharing a fence and learners from the same neighbourhoods had very different pass rates, one 80% and one 20%. Mr Burrows recommended that the schools be combined and placed under the management of the better performing school.

Mr Burrow's example also shows the need to remove poorly performing principals and teachers. If this was done, the problem of rationalisation might also be resolved (we may even have a shortage of good personnel) and the matric pass rate would very likely rise. We must now watch the provincial DOE to ensure that it makes educators abide by their performance agreements and removes those who are not up to the task.

School Governing Bodies (SGBs)

The performance of school governing bodies is less often in the news but it is discussed in provincial parliament. Very few of these 5,600 statutory bodies appear to operate well. Perhaps 500 operate well. Most seem to lack capacity or do not work co-operatively with school management. Sometimes able, qualified and experienced people are not appointed to the SGBs in favour of friends or people perceived to belong to the 'appropriate' political party, teacher union, religion, or favoured social grouping.

Even though parental members of SGBs are not paid, they are in important public service positions. There must be strong and democratic co-operation between the school management team and the SGB if this system

is to succeed. The Schools Act, Act No. 84 of 1996 specifies that "all stakeholders should get involved in education". Given the limited resources in the education, partnerships are vital for success.

For the most part, SGBs have been left to their own devices with very little support from provincial or national. A unit set up at provincial level to provide training, actually provided very little and there has hardly been any expenditure on SGBs. In some of the eight provincial education regions, no training has taken place in the last four years.

To improve SGBs, the provincial and national education officials should work together to develop some minimum skills and competencies that are required for success (financial skills, conflict management, building maintenance). A system for monitoring the activities and actions of SGBs would compliment these measures. The former would be a national competency and the latter a provincial one. Another key problem is the conflict between the roles of the school's professional management and its SGB. Often one wants to run the other.

Conclusion on Education Management

Underlying many management problems is the incapacity to cope with and manage change. While problems of competency and professional dedication have been cited, we also must consider authoritarian management styles which have changed little and do not seem to fit post-1994 circumstances. A document that is now four years old and was produced by the national Education Department called "Changing Management to Manage Change in Education" was written by a diverse task team and supported by numerous international agencies. There it was identified that new education management was the key to transformation in education.

The vision of the task team was to construct participatory and holistic approaches to management at school level. Examining the current management structure, one can see this is not being done.

One example is the underutilised role of the Superintendents of Education Management (SEMs). They do not have job descriptions, have never had any training sessions or workshops defining their role. Yet they are the management structure closest to schools. Instead, they end up as field-based clerks to senior officials and spend an inordinate amount of time passing circulars and reports back and forth along the chain of command. As the tier of management closest to the schools, this is a disturbing misuse of highly trained professional people.

Co-operative management must replace the chain of command and professional managers must be allowed to work closely with schools. The studies are in, the information available, and support from parents, business churches, NGOs, community based organisations and others are waiting in the wings.

What remains to be done?

Senior bureaucrats, hardened from an authoritarian past, must reconstruct old ways of thinking and embrace a transition that is now four years old in terms of education and more than six years old in terms of the country. New styles of management must be apparent in the language, actions and programmes of the KZN DOE.

Some reading and understanding of their own documents, especially "Changing Management to Manage Change in Education" would help. This publication, like many others, was easily accessed through the National Department of Education. They must also implement,

monitor and offer quality assurances through training, meetings, and workshops that use this document and others to generate professional management.

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Published by The Independent Projects Trust,
1802, 18th floor Old Mutual Centre,
303 West Street, Durban, KwaZulu Natal, SA
Tel. 27 31 3058422, Fax 27 31 3058420
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Visit our web site : <http://www.ipt.co.za>
This issue was prepared with financial assistance
from the Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust.
