



PROFESSIONAL  
*magazine*  
2013  
1<sup>ST</sup> EDITION



**SACE**  
South African Council for Educators

*Towards Excellence in Education*

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# FOREWORD

## Forward with holistic development

It is with great pleasure that the South African Council for Educators (SACE) presents you with yet another edition of our professional magazine. Like past editions, this publication serves as a platform to inspire professional best practice and for sharing experiences. Through the magazine, you as readers are also given the opportunity to learn from others and are reminded that you are not alone in your efforts to build brilliant young minds and future leaders. After all, to use Albert Einstein's words: "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative expression and knowledge."

This edition covers experiences on CAPS (Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements) within the wider professional development environment. As you probably know by now, with the introduction of CAPS, every subject in each grade has a specific policy document which provides guidance on what educators have to teach and assess. The aim of this curriculum review is to lessen the administrative load on educators and also to provide for consistency in teaching. As you will see from the articles included in this edition, the experiences and feedback on CAPS indicate far-reaching implications for the daily responsibilities of teachers in the classroom.

Recently educators underwent training in CAPS, which enabled them to embark on this process with more confidence and knowledge.



One can, with certainty, state that this intervention continues to contribute towards their professional development as educators.

Speaking of professional development, an exciting future is in store for all educators and the sector as a whole. Most Principals and Deputy Principals might have already been introduced to what is called the Continuing Professional Teachers' Development (CPTD) system, which is officially going to be rolled out from 2014. The rationale behind the CPTD System is to encourage and acknowledge the efforts educators make towards keeping themselves in top form for effective and meaningful teaching through ongoing learning. SACE is responsible for managing the CPTD system as well as updating the professional training or learning credits for individual educators. Moreover, the CPTD system has the added benefit of protecting educators from fraudulent service providers who present professional development opportunities. Taking this into account, this edition also gives the CPTD system some coverage.

That said, I invite you to read through the magazine and go on a journey of association with educators and learning from their experiences. Be always assured of the fact that there are educators out there who know the challenges you are facing, but who also share in the joys of achieving great educational outcomes as a result of perseverance.

Always remember that "A teacher affects eternity; he can never tell where his influence stops" (Henry Adams).

"Most of us end up with no more than five or six people who remember us. Teachers have thousands of people who remember them for the rest of their lives" (Andy Rooney).

Yours for the Teaching Profession

**Rej Brijraj**  
CEO: The South African Council for Educators  
Nov 2013

# CAPS, FINAL WAY TO GO

Bongani Simelani of the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education recounts his experiences of the South African school curriculum's evolution from the old to the new.

Just like many of the generation educated either during or in the dying years of apartheid, I am mainly the product of the National Technical Diploma (NATED) 550. It is the curriculum I learnt while I was in Grades 11 and 12, or what were then called Standards 9 and 10 (National Senior Certificate). It was a curriculum that mirrored apartheid society in its racial inequalities and the inferior quality of education it offered to the majority of South Africans. Nonetheless, it is the curriculum I knew very well before entering the teaching profession. But thankfully the days of the apartheid curriculum were numbered as a wave of change swept through South Africa, leaving nothing, including the entire education system, unturned in its wake.

## From C2005 to NCS

The changes reached classrooms across the country soon enough, and classroom teaching practice followed suit with the introduction in 1998 of the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) Curriculum 2005 (C2005). At the time, I was both a teacher and a member of a District Training Team (DTT), with the pressing responsibility of learning for classroom teaching purposes as well as for help with the training of colleagues.

The ground was not yet settled before a need was identified for the review of C2005, owing to its complexity and multiple challenges in its implementation. The outcome of the review,

in 2001, was the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS), or the Nation Curriculum Statements (NCS).

The NCS was hugely successful in its revision of curriculum, largely by streamlining clutter and strengthening clarity of purpose. It cleaned up cumbersome concepts and terminology, thus clearly stating what needed to be taught and what assessment standards should be used. I was at the centre of these new changes in my capacity as a member of the Provincial Core Training Team (PCTT), which was tasked with introducing the new curriculum.

Despite bringing some relief from the burdens of C2005, the feedback received in interviews with teachers, and from hearings and submissions involving teacher unions and the public, indicated that there were still implementation challenges. These ranged from curriculum overload, confusion about the curriculum, and disparities in learner performance, as measured against both international and local benchmarks.

In early 2000, Professor Kader Asmal, who was at the time the Minister of Education, instituted a review of C2005. Based on their perspectives and experiences, members of the PCTT (along with a host of other stakeholders nationally) had an opportunity to make inputs to the Review Committee on C2005.



The subsequent report of the Review Committee on C2005 made a wide range of findings, which included the following persistent challenges:

- A skewed curriculum structure and design
- Lack of alignment between curriculum and assessment policy
- Inadequate orientation, training and development of teachers
- Learning support materials that are variable in quality, often unavailable and not used sufficiently in the classroom
- Policy overload and limited transfer of learning into classrooms
- Shortages of personnel and resources to implement and support C2005, and
- Inadequate recognition of curriculum as the core business of education departments.

The long and short implications of the review of C2005 was the need for further changes in the curriculum space, and their eventual development into the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS).

### Orientation of CAPS

Once again, I found myself in the thick of the changes that were sweeping through schools countrywide. This time around, however, it was in my capacity as a member of the National Task Team (NTT). We moved from province to province in our orientation as subject advisors to CAPS. The process began in earnest in 2011 and the four day-long orientation programme targeted the foundation phase and Grade 10 subject advisors. The rollout of CAPS thereafter covered Grade 11 and intermediate phases in 2012. Much of the work in 2013 was on publicising CAPS through Department of Basic Education (DBE) national road shows.



Feedback from the rollout of CAPS had been positive all around the schooling system, especially insofar as it clearly spells out in a single document what needs to be taught and assessed. Textbooks are aligned with the policy documents, which makes it easier for teachers to implement and understand what needs to be taught. That CAPS addresses issues of planning as well has been highly commended by advisors.

Changing curriculum has been a massive exercise from the beginning and yielded many lessons. Chief among these is the pressures of time versus the need for thoroughness. The NTT orientation was scheduled for four days of training, but this had to be squeezed into one or two days in many instances. Another issue that emerged was whether merely providing orientation was enough to help teachers in truly grasping the substance of CAPS practice, without supplementary workshops.

2013 is the final year for CAPS orientation and its successful implementation in the coming years depends not only on what education authorities dish out by way of support and resources. It depends just as much on the efforts of the teachers themselves to deepen their understanding of CAPS and its application in the classroom.



# CAPS FIT NICELY

The introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) lightened the burden in multi-grade teaching, writes Nadia Njotini.



Nadia Njotini

Teaching in a remote rural setting the word “scarcity” of resources is daily a reality. Doing without, or with little, is a defining feature of most aspects of life in the remote and sparsely populated village where I currently teach. In education, the shortage of schools, teachers and other resources is something we live with and sometimes overcome through sheer resourcefulness. For many years, this defined my reality and approach to teaching.

My own entry into the world of teaching in 1979 was without the expected niceties that are usually reserved for new and inexperienced teachers. I was thrown at the deep end of multi-grade Foundation Phase teaching and expected to swim against numerous currents towards the finishing line. I had successfully swum the course over and over. The initial trauma of teaching a crowd of restless children gave way to a love of teaching these little angels, which was at least what I thought at times.

Throughout my teaching career I have always regarded the issue of professional development with utmost seriousness. I enrolled in a number of In-Service Education and Training (INSET) courses that were regularly offered under the Department of Training before 1994. The INSET training was meant to improve teachers’ classroom practice and certainly helped break the isolation of developments in the teaching profession as well as easing burnout. While I was “making it” year after year since I started teaching, there was always a niggling feeling of something that was just not quite right.

## CAPS saves the day

When the CAPS orientation plan was rolled out, I was amongst the Cluster Leader teachers who were given an opportunity to attend orientation and receive first-hand information. I became a CAPS trainer of Foundation Phase teachers in my district. The CAPS orientation I attended in East London cleared the mist and I felt light hearted. I was prepared to train my fellow teachers on this streamlined curriculum policy called CAPS.

CAP is really a messiah in the class. The implementation of CAPS in Foundation Phase fostered the best practice ever. Believe me, as a teacher in the worst remote rural setting where multi-grade teaching is the norm, I could immediately sense that things were going to improve.

I was no longer burdened by too much paperwork for each of my classes. CAP offers a grade-by-grade structured and detailed content layout. I am no longer a “frustrated teacher who is not sure of the matter to deliver”. What’s most interesting is how questions of content, concept and skills are structured and set out in the CAPS, all within explicit instructional time. You don’t need to waste time drawing informal and formal tasks and daily activities - everything is prepared for you! I knew I had it by the tail. With sufficient flexibility granted by CAPS, I could be creative and plan my lessons freely and develop a spirit of satisfaction from my work.

Believe me, taking any of the CAPS policy documents - be it Mathematics, Home Language, First Additional Language or Life Skills - you’ll find practical classroom practices, effective methodologies and assessment activities per term. Is it not a bargain when teachers can start each term by accessing teaching tips, move on to assessment and get work covered throughout the whole term?

## Working the numbers

Who said that Maths lessons should be cumbersome? CAPS subject guidelines make it much easier to tackle any lessons with minimal preparation, organisation and resources. The learning areas for Maths cover Counting, Mental Maths, Number Sense Development for individual learners, while group teaching activities involve Concept Development and Problem Solving.

Rote learning is indispensable to the development of the ability to count numbers and estimation helps entrench the concept of numbers. Most of all, Foundation Phase learning must always be fun as these learners are at the concrete operational stage of their development. While CAPS documents list many teaching and learning materials, teachers should leave no stone unturned to truly making it comprehensive. The use

of the BACUS as a learning tool in my experience arouses learner interests and they love it to bits. I have also found the use of the five-strand U-CARE (namely, Understanding, Compute, Apply, Reason and Engage) very effective for developing a strong grasp of numbers.

## Literacy in early Grades

CAPS suggests a variety of topics for the teaching of language and again, it is with great comfort to note that CAPS subjects are structured in a way that teachers can effortlessly integrate them with each other without struggle. Life Skills topics, for instance, can easily complement Language and Mathematics instruction.

At my school, we offer isiXhosa as the Home Language and English as the First Additional Language. Certainly, because CAPS gives clear guidelines in dealing with language components, it is simple to engage learners in songs, rhymes, drama and simple stories. I have found several interlinked strategies that have been highly effective in building learners' speaking, reading and writing abilities and confidence. These include the use of mind maps, model writing and creating reading corners.





The culture of reading is encouraged when the classroom is print-rich, laced with all kinds of material that invite incidental reading. Because teaching in a rural setting is often deprived of all sorts of resources, a teacher learns to be creative. Without fancy libraries we develop our own and encourage learners to make personal dictionaries.

It is my experience that CAPS has provided me with the broadest array of solutions for tackling every conceivable challenge. CAPS fits every situation and provides the flexibility that ensures that the needs of all learners are met.

### Challenging observations

While much of what I have related on my experiences as a Foundation Phase teacher may seem to be rosy, there are several challenges relating to my classroom practice in particular and the implementation of CAPS in general:

- There is a dire lack of multi-grade content and teaching skills, especially with Grade R practitioners who are multi-grading.
- A great deal of time is spent on teaching learners a second language, especially in Grade 1
- Linking DBE Workbooks with planned daily activities in line with CAPS is sometimes difficult.

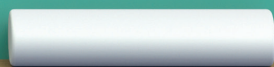
Successful Foundation Phase teaching requires us to dig deep into our physical and spiritual resources. This is because we are dealing with the most precious and delicate material, which is the developing mind of a learner. Total sensitivity is particularly crucial when teaching learners from less than ideal social backgrounds, such as those from child-headed households where parents or mature guardians to inculcate educational relationships with are absent.







"we are  
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# CAPS FOR LEARNERS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

*Although special needs learners fall under the same CAPS policy of learning areas as their mainstream counterparts, the end focus is different, explains Isabel Beckett.*

This is a simple rule of thumb that is useful to teaching special needs children, especially those learners with differentiated physical and psychological development. In the context of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) an important aspect to successfully cover all learning areas lies in the adaptation of the content in such a way as to make it manageable for a wide range of learners. This is akin to taking your learners through a different route than the one proposed and yet reaching the same destination.

## Fourteen lessons in one

Presently, my class is made up of a very diverse group of 14 children whose ages range from 7 to 15 years. They come from different family, social and cultural backgrounds. Twelve of the learners are Coloured and two White. The majority have Foetal Alcohol Syndrome (FAS), plus one learner with Down's syndrome, with mental disabilities which vary from mild to severe.

Although children with learning disabilities may all struggle to accomplish tasks such as reading, writing and calculating math problems, the barriers to reaching these learning outcomes are as varied as the number of individual learners in class. Instead of a group of learners, I effectively teach fourteen classes in one sitting. Since all children with learning disabilities are not alike and show different strengths and weaknesses, there is no instructional strategy that will work for all learners.

The Individual Educational Plan for each child gets adapted on a regular basis according to the development stage of each learner. Sensitivity to individual needs is crucial to ensuring that everyone progresses. Special needs teachers make use of the same CAPS policy of learning areas as their mainstream counterparts but with a different end in focus for learners with special needs.

## Developing life skills

A positive aspect of the CAPS is its division into separate terms that allow special needs learners the time they need to reach the end goals set by the policy. The aim is to develop each individual to his or her full potential so that they may be

better adapted and enabled to make a contribution according to their abilities.

Life skills development takes up about 50% of daily teaching time, with the rest devoted to Maths and Language. Life skills covers basic personal hygiene habits. Self-reliance is encouraged through weekly gardening and learning how to grow vegetables. Fun-filled weekly swimming lessons are aimed at helping learners overcome their vulnerability to water residing as they do in a coastal area. Horse riding therapy helps develop balance, improves concentration and has a general calming effect as well as boosting self-confidence. In addition, the learners' motor skills are toned through regular use of play facilities that include a jungle gym, trampoline and bicycles and ball games.

## Teaching the way they learn

The other 50% of daily teaching is taken up by those learning areas that tax the learners' limited concentration spans. These are usually delivered in short bursts. When learners lose their concentration, they are redirected to the task at hand through more calming activities like weaving or knitting which help them to focus again.

### Learning through play

Learners engage in a lot of pre-reading and pre-writing activities, which focus on what the child knows. Their reading comprehension is built on this foundation. The technique has its basis in play activities such as skipping, hopscotch, standing on one leg and climbing a ladder and so forth, which creates awareness of their bodies that in turn can improve mathematical and reading skills together with their concentration.

### Learning through the senses

Children with severe learning difficulties need extra visual, tactile and auditory input. Our weekly activities therefore include lots of exposure to different textures like water and sand play and finger-paints. Through experience, I've learned that learning comes easier through touch.

### Reading and writing

To get learners to the stage where they are able to write their



names, surnames, addresses and birth dates, they are taught in their home language, which should enable them to complete forms - an important developmental step towards their future and independence. The learners are also taken to the public library once a week where they can confidently choose and take out their own books “to read”.

Basic vocabulary for the special needs child is a key factor in the development of communication skills, which takes the form of action and images in the case of young children with severe disabilities rather than language and symbols. The PEGS system, which “hangs” memorisation by association, is effective in cases of children with no or very limited vocabulary. The more advanced children learn to deliver messages correctly through simulation of real life situations, by passing messages to other teachers for example.

#### Doing the numbers

In Maths we basically focus on number comprehension, at least from 1 to 10, depending on learners’ levels of ability. Most of the learners need to work with physical objects, such as small stones as counters before they are ready to work with abstract numbers. We also regularly provide opportunities for learners to do their own “shopping” as some exposure to working with money. Or they may bake cookies to “sell” by themselves as a practical lesson in handling money.

#### Demonstrable learning

As with differentiated instruction, the needs of learners are assessed on a case-by-case basis. Differentiated assessment enables learners of various abilities and with varied experience to best demonstrate what they know. The goal is to meet learners where they are and to help them progress to the next step in their learning.



At the beginning of the terms and upon arrival in the unit class, each child is assessed by an occupational therapist and a psychologist. This is followed by the development of the child’s Individual Education Plan (IEP), which is tailored to the learner’s needs and goals.

The assessment of a learner at the end of the term can be performance-based, which requires the child to demonstrate the use of a learned ability. Also, we keep a performance assessment portfolio to record progress continuously, including any notes on behavioural challenges. At the end of each term parents receive progress reports (as well as one from the therapists).

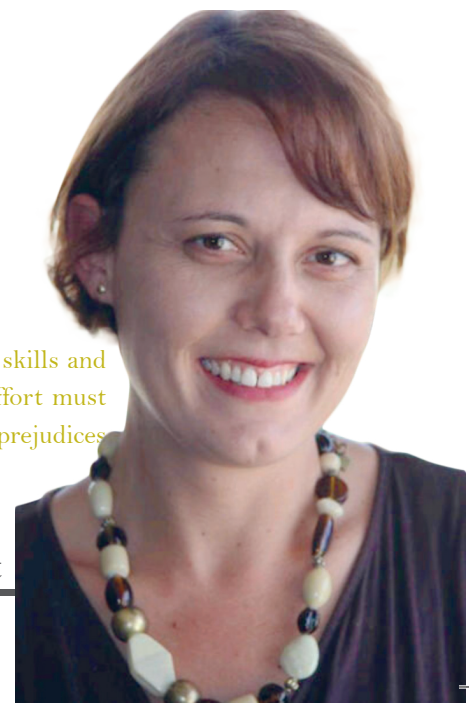
### Need for wider awareness

Severe disabilities like poor communication skills have obvious implications for social integration. More importantly, learners with special needs must be integrated with the very families and communities that are supposed to protect them.

Some of these children are often subjected to psychological or physical abuse. Most of these learners come from disadvantaged backgrounds and the only acceptance, love and attention they receive is in the class.

While the classroom provides special need learners with life skills and a sense of belonging, equal effort must be paid towards changing the prejudices of broader society.

Ms Isabel Beckett



# A LESSON IN CAPS

Pete Sharp, an education student at the University of Pretoria and a part-time teacher, shares his personal experiences and observations on the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS).

As I am still a student of education, I would like to begin by admitting upfront that my views on the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) may veer more to the theoretical side. However, it is my hope that what little practical experience gained as a part-time teacher at Althea Independent School will keep me from theoretical over-zealousness.

## Mixed lessons

Perhaps rightly so, universities were not immune to the changes that were sweeping across the educational landscape since 1994. Even after eighteen years, when it was my turn to study towards a teaching profession, the South African schools sector was still going through enormous changes. In 2011, schools were changing their curriculums from Outcomes-Based-Education (OBE) to conform to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The phasing-in of CAPS began with Grades 1 to 3 and 10 and aims to lessen the administrative burden placed on teachers as well as providing

to-subject teaching and assessment guidelines in the interest of consistency.

The arrival of CAPS was naturally welcomed with much enthusiasm.

After all, CAPS was to be the bible of the teaching profession on our entering schools as education graduates. But the CAPS ink was not yet dry when a new line of teaching was added to say that CAPS would be the next step rather than the replacement of OBE. To their credit, our lecturers demonstrated the differences between CAPS and OBE curriculums and how to teach from a CAPS curriculum. But to students who had never “seen” either of the two, well, it was all Greek to us! But we nonetheless took our notes in our first year (2011), hoping that the mass of new information would make sense when we entered classrooms to begin teaching some day.

## Ready to give CAPS a chance

After my first year at the University, I taught for a few months at Erasmus High School in 2012. This was a special treat, because I got a chance to witness and experience the transition from OBE to CAPS by Grades 1 to 3 and 10 learners throughout South Africa.

In this high school, I was teaching Grade 10. It was not a smooth change over, mostly due to fact that teachers had to rework their tried-and-tested lesson plans. Also the new textbooks and lesson outcomes were slightly different too. It seemed as though the experienced teachers were the most unimpressed with the new curriculum. Any curriculum would be a new curriculum to me – I was a teacher in training – and therefore ready to give CAPS a chance.

I taught grade tens Life Orientation. What I really enjoyed was that CAPS provides us as teachers with lesson plans, and a term/year plan. This made life very easy for us, especially if given textbooks. Unfortunately many schools we saw didn't get textbooks until very late in the year, which was obviously not the fault of CAPS. The school I taught at did get textbooks, but the wrong textbooks were ordered! Once again, this was not the fault of CAPS. Nonetheless, the troubles with textbooks made implementing and teaching of the CAPS curriculum more difficult.



About half way through the year, the senior teachers strongly considered completing the year by teaching from their old lesson plans and curriculums. But to my knowledge they eventually all decided to bite the bullet and push through and complete the year using CAPS.

### Glitches in CAPS

Another factor that made the launch of CAPS difficult was that only a few grades are changed over to CAPS every year. This may appear to be a logical approach. In theory at least, gradually changing schools over to the new curriculum, like getting slowly into a cold water to avoid shock or distress, makes perfect sense. Not only will emotional disruption be minimised; the costs involved will also be spread over a few years as well.

In practice, however, things don't go as smoothly. Very few teachers (especially in smaller schools) only teach one grade, as most teachers teach multiple subjects to different grades. As a result a teacher may end up teaching one subject to two different grades in two different curriculum styles. This is not like teaching in two totally different languages, but more like teaching in two different schools at the same time – every day! We were being thrown terribly off course by this constant chopping and changing.



Teachers also struggled tremendously to complete all the work planned for one year in the appointed time. It seems like there is too much planned for a year by the curriculum designers. All the experienced teachers I have spoken to so far have said there is definitely too much planned for the yearly curriculum, especially as there is no time allocated for those children who may be slow to understand the subject material.

Taking time to explain a difficult concept runs the risk of falling far behind an already tight schedule. On more than one occasion I had to tell a child, “Don’t question it, just accept what I say.” This is obviously a totally incorrect attitude, as we want children to understand the subjects taught, not just blindly follow. And the only way to understand is to question. It may be that the work was too much for the year; or that teaching different grades different curriculums, plus difficulties with the new textbooks, were all just too much for us teachers to keep up.

But as I said all the experienced teachers said that the work that we were trying to load onto the children was too much. Like a pack mule that was overloaded, either some of the load would fall off, or the mule would collapse. The teachers that I regard as my mentors complain that the people who designed the curriculums have never spent time teaching in a class.

### Too much, too soon

I have worked in many different industries since leaving school in 2000, and have found that in most industries I take about a month to settle, and three months to be proficient in that new post. But in my limited experience as a teacher, I perceive it might take a few years to get on top of one’s game as a teacher. My Head of Department (HoD) told me that it is only after three years of teaching one subject, that one gets to be confident at teaching that subject – and I believe her! So I believe that people who are employed as the curriculum designers should definitely have the studies and the classroom experience to back this big task. Five to ten years should be enough for someone to know what challenges teachers face, in all scenarios, so that they can be successful curriculum designers.

I am currently teaching at a school, and received a short introduction to CAPS training and we were shown the textbooks we would be using. The full training was held in the June/July holidays. Although I didn’t believe many teachers would be willing to sacrifice their holidays for this training, I do think they found the training to be most valuable. The preview I got of CAPS at the introduction training has gotten me extremely excited.

I love to teach but I do not like to work out lesson plans and don’t want to slog through the admin of planning the whole year’s lessons – in January! It’s very difficult for a new teacher to plan a year’s teaching when he or she doesn’t have any classroom experience. We need someone to tell us exactly what to teach for at least the first few years until we find our feet. From what I can see the curriculum and the textbooks complement each other.

This is exciting for me, having struggled over the last few months trying to teach a subject while trying to find time to plan what to teach, and simultaneously mounting the task of finding textbooks and teaching aids to help my roughly planned lessons. There are no textbooks available for the subject I teach, as CAPS implementation will only roll over to this grade next year, and there is no point in buying old curriculum textbooks with the new CAPS textbooks coming out in 2014. So while this year is a nightmare, I am looking forward to teaching next year.



# A VIEW FROM A MULTI-GRADE CLASS

Teaching children from two or more grade levels in a single classroom is a skill that requires the employment of particular methods and classroom administration, writes Elsie Ramatlakana.

**T**he dire shortage in the supply of teachers in schools across the country may be hard to believe. It has been estimated that the schooling system needs as many as 25,000 new teachers annually in order to satisfy the hunger for education. Teacher shortages are particularly severe in rural areas, where I have been teaching since 1979.

## Widening access

It is the same situation at my current school, Molelwane Primary, which is situated in Fafung village, some 60 kilometres north-east of Brits, in the North West province. Although the school offers the full cycle of primary education, from Grades R to 7, it only has a teaching staff complement of five. What this shortfall means is that three teachers, including myself, have to make up for the gap by combining classes, or multi-grading. In my case, it works out to teaching the combined Grades R and 1, or a class of 43 learners between the ages of 5 and 8 years.

With a total of 173 learners, Molelwane is a small school and serves children coming from the Fafung village and surrounding areas. The nearness of the school to these rural settlements has several advantages. The most important of these is the reduced distances to and from school (as well as the associated costs and safety issues) which make it more bearable for families to enrol their children in school.

Moreover, the time saved from travelling long distances makes it possible for children to continue performing chores that are central to family life or livelihoods.

Multi-grading is a practical response to the demand for primary education in these sparsely populated rural areas where the economies of scale make it costly to build schools. The provision of convenient access to schools (though carrying an added responsibility of simultaneously teaching more than one class) is the key to ensuring universal access to primary education.

If standing in front of dozens of learners is challenging in itself, teaching a multi-grade class is doubly so. Not just surviving, I have been able to achieve good results over the six years or so that I have been teaching the combined Grades R and 1. It is tough but not impossible if the educator responds to the peculiarities of multi-grade teaching.

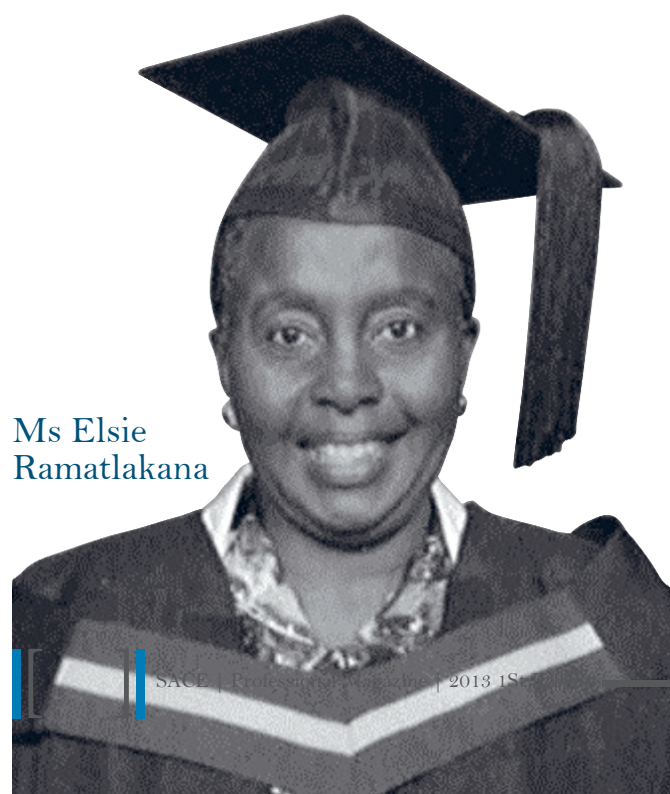
## Local conditions

Just because multi-grade teaching is associated with the shortage of teachers, the temptation to dump any “spare” teacher with the problem is often very high. In South Africa, many of the schools which cater for multi-grade classes are often located in poor areas, where even some of the most basic government services are not easily available.

A deeper understanding the context within which the school operates can help teachers to navigate some of the socially rooted challenges to classroom learning, while also making sure that multi-grade teachers become a resource beyond the classroom as well. It is therefore important to ensure that suitable trained and experienced teachers are appointed for multi-grade teaching, but that they also have a keen understanding of the social setting within which they operate.

## Versatile teaching

A multi-grade teacher should be versatile in order to successfully teach a classroom of learners with different personalities, ages and grades. By understanding the differences between pupils a multi-grade teacher is in a better



Ms Elsie  
Ramatlakana





position to motivate and guide learners irrespective of their aptitudes, grades and curriculum subjects. Versatility is crucial too, in adapting or developing appropriate strategies by asking the following questions:

- How can the enrolment rate be increased and the drop-out rate reduced?
- What types of games and sports should be played in the school?
- What useful extra-curricular activities can be arranged and when?
- Why are certain students not learning as well as might be expected?
- How can local resources, including students and monitors, be efficiently and effectively mobilised?
- What classroom strategies enhance learning for different activities?

### Planning, planning and more planning

The importance of planning for lessons cannot be over-emphasised in any classroom setting, be it for mono-grade or multi-grade classes. While inadequate or a complete lack of planning could be hazarded in a mono-grade setting, it is almost certainly a recipe for disaster in the context of multi-grade teaching, for reasons that have been already been alluded to in this article.

My planning begins with asking myself questions like: whom do I teach? What must I teach? How, when and why do I teach? The answers to these questions provide the basis for the development of an implementation plan. A suitably constructed timetable ties the different elements of the plan into an effective teaching and learning programme.

Finally, it would be remiss of me to share my experiences as a multi-grade teacher without reflecting on the impact of recent policy developments, namely, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). CAPS replaced the amended National Curriculum Statement Grades R to 12 (NCS) with effect from January 2012. It provides a single and comprehensive document for each subject which replaces the old subject statements. The biggest impact CAPS has had for

us as multi-grade teachers is in how it has radically reduced the amount of paperwork in the teaching process. This is particularly significant for an educator like me who has to teach the four foundation phase subjects across two grades.

Also introduced in 2012 was the Annual National Assessments (ANAs), which is driven by the Department of Basic Education (DBE). A lot of countries across the world use annual national standardised testing of learners' development and learning achievement in standardised tests to design and implement intervention programmes aimed at improving classroom learning and teaching. Similarly, in South Africa the ANAs can be viewed as the flipside of CAPS as they are an external instrument for gauging learner progress ahead of the final exams.

When ANAs were introduced last year, Grade R learners were not tested. Once in Grade 1, they did not perform well in terms of the 2013 ANAs due to the difficult transition from the playful Grade R to the more "serious" Grade 1. It is my view that the amount of paper and reading required for the assessment demanded a bit too much of their already short concentrations spans. They are after all still fresh from Grade R, and the complexity of the assessment should be reconsidered.



# GOING BACK TO THE BASICS OF TEACHING

Improving the quality of education outcomes depends on going back to the basics of teacher conduct, explains William Arthur Hornimann.

A lot of attention has been given to the professionalisation of South Africa's teaching corps in recent years. Initiatives like CAPS and those covered by the CPTD system are naturally welcomed as they contribute to the quality of educational outcomes of schools. But as much as external help is necessary, classroom success and that of the schooling system as a whole ultimately depends on the individual effort, dedication and continuous self-discipline of each educator.

In this article I briefly share some of the basics of effective schooling by restating the importance of acknowledging learner diversity, educator discipline and the ongoing evaluation of teacher practice.

South Africa is a country of rich diversity which is worth celebrating. The same applies to the country's schools, which are made up of socially and culturally unique learners. It is the primary objective of the schooling system to assist these many individual learners along their paths to responsible adulthood. The role of the educator in this noble objective is to help turn children into adults by sparking the desire, ability and will to learn, or what is known as the "want to learn, can learn and will learn" attitude.

## Embracing diversity

Making sure that a learner "wants to learn" begins with the recognition of each individual learner's right to receive one hundred percent attention, not in spite of who they are but because of who they are. This is because learners differ in their many backgrounds, which influence on their academic progress could be positive or negative.

## Cultural diversity

Recognition of learners' cultural differences is critical to teaching that is sensitive to diversity. Culturally biased learning activities, for example, can unwittingly undermine the performance of learners from "other" cultural backgrounds. Offering varied and diverse activities affords individual learners the opportunity to choose those topics in the curriculum that they feel at ease with. Classroom tasks

should therefore be structured in such a way that no learner feels excluded.

## Social and economic diversity

At the combined school where I am currently the principal, underdevelopment and poverty are the daily reality of most learners. In the context of widespread poverty, utmost sensitivity in planning and delivering learning outcomes becomes even more crucial in order to prevent pupils from feeling defeated in their scholastic activities. Conscientious teaching could, for example, ensure that the more "well-off" learners appreciate the lot of their classmates instead of regarding it as a source of ridicule.

All of the primary school learners of neighbouring villages who attend the High School of which I am the principal, come from multi-grade and even multi-phase backgrounds. So, the first few weeks (sometimes months) are devoted to orientation while keeping up with work schedules and pacesetters from the outset.

## Teaching by example

It is generally acknowledged that the performance of an educator is measured by their learners' academic results. However, certain lessons are best taught by setting an example, such as the importance of time keeping. Teaching the value of time is one of those values educators should teach by example. There's no better demonstration of the importance of time-keeping than being the first to arrive in the classroom.

An even bigger demand for timeliness is placed on the school principal, who traditionally unlocks the staffroom and turns on the lights at the beginning of each school day. The operative rule is that the principal must arrive before the teachers and in turn the teachers before learners.

## Classroom evaluation

Far too often a day in the classroom passes by without any sort of evaluation of whether a lesson had achieved the intended outcomes. The kind of evaluation I have in mind

here is not of the same complexity as the Integrated Quality Management System, but rather the simple habit by the principal of checking in and monitoring the following:

- Learners' response to the educator's lesson presentations;
- Interaction between educator and learners;
- Subject methodology, with possible rendering of assistance where needed and
- Observation of learners' workbooks.

This kind of monitoring and evaluation must not, however, be construed as policing by the principal. It should be regarded as a performance management tool which also provides opportunities for early intervention in case of challenges.

### Subject interventions, moderation and feedback

An essential component of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) is that it provides for the development of work schedules or pacesetters for each subject area. CAPS further allows for the institution of "catching up" interventions such as extra lessons after school hours or on weekends should learners fall behind in the curriculum for a particular term.

### Subject interventions

My experience rather indicates that these extra lessons often achieve little because of the lack of enthusiasm of learners to forego their "free time". Consequently, interventions need to be ideally applied within the parameters of school hours. Each educator should have completed his or her subject report by the end of the first term so that the identified corrective measure (if any) can be implemented without delay at the beginning of the next term. This all calls for proper subject planning and management.

A subject intervention plan should be evaluated by the principal and its implementation monitored on a weekly basis by the Head of Department or the principal, so that timely help can be provided where required. It is important though to keep in mind that such corrective subject interventions form part of the overall School Improvement Plan, which provides a picture of educators' progress in terms of their work schedules and whether these are in line with pacesetters.

### Moderation

Internal moderation (which is prepared by the principal and the senior management team) is one way to assess the effect of each lesson. It is useful for monitoring both the lesson's impact and whether the educator is going according to the subject schedule. The Formal Internal Moderation of each subject should at least be done on a monthly basis and the resultant reports are crucial to providing the following insights on the performance of the school:

- Are the subject lessons concluded in accordance with the CAPS guideline?
- Are the subject lessons of the required standards and quality for the grade?
- Do the School Based Assessments relate to the demands of projects?

### Feedback

The outcome of the above is a set of recommendations that is compiled by the moderation team for implementation by the concerned educator. The moderation report must be honest, critical but constructive, while allowing for one-to-one feedback sessions, in order to remedy any shortcomings.



# ACCIDENTAL TEACHER TURNS EVERYDAY HEROINE

As a teacher by default and a nurse at heart, Phuti Ragophala has combined her passion for health and education to tackle some of the toughest social and economic challenges in and around the rural school where she is currently the principal.

**T**he South African Council of Educators (SACE) has asked me to reflect on my experiences and best practices from efforts aimed at redefining the nature of primary schooling, especially in resource-poor areas. The intention of this input is meant to inspire and share practical experience of Pula Madibogo Primary, in Mankweng Circuit, Capricorn District, Limpopo Province.

My first encounter with schooling was in the 1960s when I began my primary education in Bochum. My secondary schooling was at Mokomene and Mohlakaneng High Schools, where I eventually matriculated. As the eldest of a family of five children growing up in a village, I looked up to and was inspired by my mother. There was no doubt in mind what professional career I would aspire to on completing high school as my mother was a professional nurse. However, I had to wait for about three years after high school to get a word from the nursing college about the success or otherwise of my training application. It was only on the fourth year awaiting my “nursing call” that I decided to “kill time” by training as a teacher. I am still waiting. And so, I became a teacher by default. But I love every moment of it, even after nearly three decades in the teaching profession.

## Can't learn on an empty stomach 2005

Despite numerous government initiatives, many schools from previously disadvantaged communities still face persistent challenges. Most notable of these is the impact of poverty on learning, which particularly struck me when I became the principal of Pula Madibogo Primary in 2005. The school is located in Mankweng Township, on the outskirts of Polokwane in the Limpopo province, and is marked by the following social and economic challenges:

- High levels of unemployment
- Many poor families and child-headed households
- Dependency on government social grants
- General ill-health due to malnutrition

The combined impact of the above on schooling was a general lack of interest in the affairs of the school on the part of parents and learners alike which worsened learner attendance

and absenteeism. Learners often came to school hungry, sickly and could hardly afford such basic necessities as school uniforms. It was with this context in mind that the school began exploring holistic solutions that would benefit both the community and learners. At the core of problem-solving was re-looking at the role of the school in the community. We felt that the school could be used as a service delivery hub with benefits that go beyond academic services. Thus this idea and its workings were developed into a model which takes the following perspectives into account:

### Environmental perspective

The school is an extension of the home environment and should therefore be safe, clean and inviting.

### Social perspective

Likewise the kind of families that learners come from (poor or wealthy) has a bearing on affordability. The school does what it can to help destitute learners who cannot afford uniforms, lunch and any other need.

### Spiritual perspective

The spectre of diseases including HIV/AIDS cannot be under-estimated as they leave untold trauma in their wake. In addition to regularly collecting monies for bereft families, the school also has structures in place for dealing with traumatised learners, especially orphans.

### Academic perspective

Successful learning is in a sense a sum total of the above three factors. The ideal situation is one in which learners get on with their schoolwork as soon as they get into class and don't have to worry about other issues.

This, we believe, is at the heart of academic achievement.

## Ms Phuti Ragophala



Redefining the role of the school in the community so that it serves as a nucleus of community development has yielded many benefits both within and without the schooling environment. What follows is a description of the multifaceted and innovative projects that we undertook using the model.

**Food security**

With the help of Food and Trees for Africa, a rubbish dump near the school was turned into a Permaculture garden of vegetables and fruit trees. The gardening project is tended by 25 volunteers from the community who get a small monthly stipend which is augmented by sales during harvesting. The produce feeds poor families and orphans. It also serves as a laboratory in which learners can augment their knowledge in action. What this project teaches us is that resources are everywhere, but it is up to us as educators to innovatively make use of them.

*Perma culture garden*



*Harvest and maths lessons*



*Destitute learners taking home*

**Indigenous medicine**

Another stream related to gardening is the cultivation of herbal plants and the processing thereof into medicinal products. The training in indigenous medicine, which is facilitated by Khanya Africa Development Services, has been highly beneficial to the treatment of a variety of ailments.



## Poultry Project

Last but not least is the poultry project that the school supports. Although keeping chickens in the school yard is not a norm in the history of the department of education, the school hosts a poultry project in the school yard as part of the empowerment of community members. Moreover, the project provides much needed exposure to the poultry business at an early age.



technology to enriching the educational experience cannot be over-estimated now or in the future. It is for this reason that we are “shooting” in the direction of those skills that are increasingly critical by nurturing information technology for the benefit of learners and the broader community.

A number of the educators are benefiting from the “teach the teachers” training project which is run by Coza Cares and Netday. In turn, the ICT-trained teachers share their skills with learners and interested community members. The introduction of the planned One Laptop Per Child (OLPC) initiative would greatly speed up the appropriation of technology for classroom use.

## Information Communication Technology (ICT)

Teaching is like hunting birds. You need to shoot where they are going because if you shoot where they are, you are likely to miss. The importance of adapting information



Learner researching herbal medicines



Administration in the Office of the Principal



Community members and educators harvesting the IT skill

### Lessons learnt

**T**he nature of teaching and the curriculum has undergone radical changes since I started out in the teaching profession. Outcomes Based Education (OBE) has given way to Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) as a reflection of a changing society and the changing needs of learners. The tried and tested chalk and board should give way to a classroom laden with gadgetry as we enter the digital age of e-learning.

Whatever the future holds, the soul of the teaching profession will forever remain relevant to changing lives. As Nikos Kazantzakis, a Greek philosopher, said: "Ideal teachers are those who use themselves as bridges over which they invite their students to cross, then having facilitated their crossing, joyfully collapse, encouraging them to create bridges of their own."

# TACKLING THE **NUMBERS** SUBJECT

Mathematics teacher Frans Chaka discusses the strategies and tactics of teaching mathematics

In his book, *Basic Math and Pre-Algebra for Dummies*, Mark Zegarelli is puzzled why we begin our schooling with much gusto and enthusiasm at the prospect of learning to count and yet emerge at the end of high school utterly intimidated by mathematics, or what is commonly described as “Math anxiety”.

## The big picture

The crippling effects of “Math anxiety” across the South African schooling system are well documented. A Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) ranked the performance of South African schools in mathematics as the lowest among the 21 middle-income countries that participated in the 2011 survey.

Although there are several valid explanations as to why mathematics continues to be such a frightening subject, the single biggest contributing factor appears to be the teachers of maths themselves. Educators who are as frightened of mathematics as their learners continue to wittingly (or otherwise) perpetuate common myths on the complexities of mathematics to hide their own deficiencies.

The scariest thing in the resultant vicious cycle of “Math anxiety” is that many educators believe they are not doing too badly, despite evidence to the contrary according to a 2013 report on Mathematics Outcomes in South African Schools by the Centre for Development and Enterprise (CDE). Despite the alarming 2011 TIMSS results, 89% of Grade 9 mathematics teachers indicated that they felt “very confident” in teaching the subject, more so than their counterparts in other countries that were surveyed.

## For the love of numbers

As gloomy a picture as this apparently is, it would be totally incorrect to paint all mathematics educators with the same brush. Nor would it be fair to assume an absence of initiatives both at the level of curriculum and in the classroom aimed at improving the quality of mathematics teaching and learning in South Africa. As great a mathematician and physicist as he was, Sir Isaac Newton is said to have humbly confessed that he could “see further” because he “stood on the shoulders of giants”. I wholly share Newton’s sentiment (though the same claim cannot be extended to his genius).





A teacher can make you love or hate a subject. Fortunately in my case, a love for mathematics was inspired by the teachers who taught me. Their teaching and encouragement helped me develop a life-long love for mathematics, from being a learner in school to specialising as a mathematics teacher.

While the world of teaching has gone through radical changes over the past several decades, the essence of good teaching remains the same. It is the exemplary attitude and approach to the profession of my former teachers that I try to emulate as head of department and maths/science teacher to Grades 11 and 12.

One of the secrets of good teaching is the ability to focus on the needs of learners, who number 131 in all of my classes. It is an awfully big number of learners for any teacher to handle, let alone attending to the needs of individual learners. A teacher has to be versatile, differentiate the method of teaching as the need arises. Many times the teacher has to go an extra mile to make sure that the learning goals of each and every learner are met, through, for example, extra classes.

### Welcome changes

Changes in curriculum have brought a lot of relief to those teachers who are forced to handle large classes. The old division of learners into standard and higher grades was

an administrative and teaching burden to have lifted off our shoulders. The previous National Curriculum Statements (NCS) were a departure from apartheid syllabi but did little to ease educators' administrative workloads so that they could focus on teaching.

Under the NCS, for example, an educator had to deal with a set of four documents per learner and per subject, which would have translated to a volume of 500 pages for my current classes. The phasing out of NCS was met with much cheering on the part of the teaching profession as a result. The advent of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) has tilted the scale in favour of classroom teaching time. Under CAPS, there is one document per subject, which not only clearly outlines the areas covered by the curriculum, but also provides a timetable of work per school term.

CAPS also significantly assumes that all learners have the same potential for mathematics, irrespective of aptitude or performance. This means that high performing learners are encouraged through extra work and those who are struggling are supported through one-on-one tutelage and group work. Teaching has always been a profession that demands the versatility of listening to one's learners. CAPS finally recognises it.



# ONGOING TEACHER DEVELOPMENT IS AN IMPERATIVE

*Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) ultimately benefits educators and learners alike, as professionalism invariably results in higher levels of competence and efficiency. Dr Barber Mbangwa Mafuwane reflects on his own experiences of the CPTD system and its impact on his work as a practising principal.*

The Greek educator, Heraclitus, is credited with saying that “the only constant in life is change”. Although coined in ancient Greece, the saying still rings true across the bounds of time, place and context. The desire to do things differently so as to derive the most impact is the single most important driver of social, political and economic advancement.

Change permeates the nooks and crannies of society, and is most desirable when its impact is positive. The continual push for higher levels of expertise and efficiencies drives changes in professional practice (including education). The acquisition of new skills and the upgrading of knowledge through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) not only adds measurable benefits to professional practice. CPD also ultimately benefits consumers or targeted service beneficiaries since commitment to professionalism invariably results in higher levels of competence and efficiency.

## Opportunity to learn

It is within the above context that the South African Council for Educators (SACE) is in a process of rolling out the Continuous Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system. CPTD seeks to introduce a culture of and commitment to the professionalisation of teaching by regulating and crediting skills acquisition. In other words, those schools that sign up for and commit to the implementation of the CPTD system would effectively institutionalise opportunities for both formal and informal learning.

The formal aspect of the CPTD system is structured in such a way that an educator meets clear objectives and outcomes at the end. A professional development course

(which could take the form of online training) includes assessments by external subject experts.

A good example of formal CPTD is the Advanced Certificate in Education for school leaders (ACE: SL), which was introduced in 2007. The ACE: SL programme sought to ensure that school leaders are properly prepared for their practice. It was based on the premise that ‘good leadership makes a difference’ and that “schools cannot improve without good leadership”. In other words, there is a co-relationship between the kind of school leadership that focuses on the core business of teaching and learning and a positive impact on learner outcomes. Because good teachers may not be good leaders, the ACE: SL programme sought to develop teachers in line with the leadership requirements of their practice. ACE: SL is one of several other examples of formal CPTD activities in education but this example will suffice for the purpose of this article.

CPTD can be described as informal when a teacher engages in any self-managed learning that has relevance or is related to one’s professional role. Informal CPTD can include activities such as private study, on-the-job training, and participation in informal seminars or events where the focus is on information or knowledge sharing. However, the relevance of the content is important, in both the formal and informal cases. The learning activities must have a clear learning objective that relates to one’s professional role and specialisation. Otherwise such activities cannot be considered as appropriate and/or relevant CPTD.



Dr Barber Mbangwa Mafuwane

A teacher, for example, who reads for an Advanced Diploma in Municipal Management becomes irrelevant in the context of the teaching profession but will be more relevant to the local government sector instead.

## A personal experience

I would like to use my own personal experience to illustrate the relevance of the CPTD system, with reference to both its formal and informal aspects. My formal registration for the ACE: SL programme was in 2010. It covered the period when I was acting as a deputy principal and my subsequent appointment to the position of principal, which coincided with my completion of the programme in 2011.

### How the Ace: SL programme helped me modules

- 
  - **Leadership & Management**
  - **Lead and Manage People**
  - **Managing the Curriculum**

Assisted me and the entire team to improve the school holistically. Together we managed to adopt a common vision and we are moving together to realise the vision
- 
  - **Managing Educational & Financial Resources**

Accountability in the use of finances and using the finances to improve the schools infrastructure. The school is now the envy of the circuit.
- 
  - **Education Law of Governance**

Understanding where i stand in relation to the law of my role to empower the SGB & the staff on matters related to the law that governs education.
- 
  - **Research Project**

Taught me that the most important people in driving school improvement are not the circuit and/or district officers but the teachers and other leaders in the school. (Action research

Needless to say the programme came in handy and was spot-on in terms of its relevance to facing up to the demands of being a newly appointed principal, especially one without the benefit of formal induction and support. The programme helped fill up the vacuum between my lack of experience and the hard realities of leading and managing a school.

In addition to expert guidance of an experienced mentor, the benefit of lessons from the various modules of the ACE: SL programme made it easier to tackle such tasks as curriculum management and building the management capacity of the Senior Management Team (SMT) on their mentorship role in the school. The graphic representations that are captured below show some of the modules in the ACE: SL programme that contributed to making my work easy as a principal:

## Not a comfort zone

There are, however, unintended consequences with the formal aspects of the CPTD system, in particular with regard to the ACE:SL. Its down-side is not so much due to the fault of the system as such, but is rather due to the “human factor”. As the CPTD system currently stands, it appears as though many of the participating teachers tend to see the attainment of the ACE:SL qualification as an end in itself and thus a comfort zone for the graduates.

A possible mitigation strategy for preventing such diversion into post-graduation comfort zones is the institution of mandatory and continual learning requirements that would keep the graduate on their toes. The absence of a process or processes that call for mandatory compliance with certain CPTD requirements, is an area that requires urgent attention by the Department of Education. Processes need to be initiated that will keep the graduates working on their professional development and there must be evidence of this submitted to the employer every year.

I suggest that all principals and/or deputy principals who have been through this programme, should participate in a recognised revalidation process in which they demonstrate their commitment to continued competent performance in a framework that is fair, relevant and formative.

In the informal CPTD sense, I was able to complete a PhD degree in Education Management, Law and Policy which I did concurrently with the ACE: SL programme. A combination of the formal and informal CPTD activities indicated above make my work as a principal easier. I am able to conduct my own research within the school (action research) to enable me and the staff to deal with challenges in the school.

It has personally been a great privilege to be among the pioneer group of school principals in the initiation phase of the CPTD system.

# HEADMASTERS PUT SHOULDER TO CPTD WHEEL

*The South African Principal's Association's (SAPA) near two decades of experience is an invaluable asset in the implementation of the CPTD system, writes SAPA Deputy President for the Gauteng Province, Daya Chetty.*

As a nation breaking with the legacies of the past, we have been mindful of the amount of effort needed in order to bring about transformation. The energies expended in building a better society continue to be a feature of many sectors and South Africa is thankfully a much better place than it was before 1994.

## More still to be done

The schooling sector has taken a more positive hue as a result of the realignment of policies, institutions and financial resources to ensure equitable access to education. Yet despite the best of efforts, much of the past still remains with us in the education system. The massive budget allocated to education and numerous other interventions have undoubtedly made a huge difference in the schooling system, but these have unfortunately not broken the mould of the old structure of the education system. In the section dealing with education of the National Development Plan (NDP), the National Planning Commission laments the persistence of old schooling practices.

Although nominally transformed, the public schools which serve the majority of children from historically disadvantaged communities are marred by severe under-performance compared to their White counterparts, largely in private schools. A large portion (if not all) of the 80% of under-performing schools (or some 20,000 schools) are located in the public schooling domain, according to the NDP.

What are the underlying causes of the stubborn disparities within the schooling system that continue to undermine massive investment in education over the past two decades? What are the missing ingredients in the assortment of interventions which limit the performance of South Africa's education system?

## Not only a matter of resources

Stephen Taylor from the Department of Economics at the University of Stellenbosch suggests that effective school

management (or lack thereof) is a fundamental missing link to heightened performance. In the National Effectiveness Study, Despite the well-documented resourcing and support for schools, Taylor concludes that piling up resources to remedy the problem of under-performing schools is not a panacea. What appears to be the missing ingredient, he argues, is "the ability to convert resources into [positive performance] outcomes". In other words, while schools naturally welcome resources and support in their varied forms, it is the ability of schools' day-to-day management of such inputs that has a huge bearing on performance.

## Advancing effective school management

Founded in 1995, the South African Principal's Association (SAPA) is the single largest body that is representative of school leadership and management interests countrywide. SAPA operates on the basis of a set of principles that presume the link between effective school management and exceptional performance. The association's activities are aimed at advancing the professional interests of member principals and deputy principals by enhancing educational leadership and effective school management teams.

With the benefit of nearly 20 years of experience in professional development, SAPA deploys its collective knowledge resources through a variety of platforms, including mini-conferences, local breakfast meetings and provincial and national conferences. The association also has the benefit of learning and sharing the experiences of its members through links with the International Confederation of Principals, of which SAPA is an affiliate. Many of our members regularly participate in and make inputs on international platforms relating to education matters or have their view and experiences published in journals abroad.

Apart from professional development, SAPA creates an advocacy platform through which school principals can air their views on matters of policy with education authorities, teacher unions and other stakeholders in the education sector.

HEADMASTERS PUT SHOULDER TO  
CPTD WHEEL



The most recent engagement with the Department of Basic Education (DBE) discussed SAPA's mentorship, induction and coaching programme for principals and deputy principals. That the intent of the programme was accepted, not only by the DBE but key stakeholders like the South African Council of Education (SACE), indicates SAPA's standing in the schooling sector.

Both the sensitivities and dynamics in the schooling sector make it imperative for any intervention to be undertaken in collaboration with or the support of a number of players, and not just the school principal. Securing the buy-in across the education hierarchy opens up opportunities to tackling challenges in a systematic rather than a piecemeal manner.

### The SAPA model: coaching and mentoring

SAPA provides support and development at various levels of the education system to improve performance through initiatives that are directed at schools or indirectly through districts. These cover such areas as effective leadership, management, teaching and learning using a combination of 1) coaching, 2) mentoring, and 3) training modelling to effect improved performance.

Years of interventions and trial and error have taught us as SAPA a thing or two on how to go about implementing mentorship and coaching programmes. The lessons learnt are encapsulated by a deductive process which seeks to answer the following question: a) Who should do the mentoring or coaching, b) how it should be done and 3) what steps should be undertaken, as illustrated below:

### Mode of delivery

In either case, the mode of support through mentoring or coaching is not a one-size-fits-all model but varies depending on levels of intervention. It is best suited when it allows for open channels of communication, which could be a combination of face-to-face interaction or the use of technology. Effective mentoring and coaching are also underpinned by early induction (for outlining issues of methodologies, expectations and the clarification of roles) as well as long-term commitment to the relationship through, for example, twinning.

### Proper matching

SAPA represents a considerable network of experienced principals (including retired principals and teachers) and specialists in various fields of education who are at the ready to provide coaching or mentoring support to those colleagues who are in need of support. The Whole School Evaluation tool is considered best practice for assessing the needs of potential mentorship or coaching beneficiaries before any support relationship is entered into. The needs assessment helps determine a workable match between mentors and coaches with their protégés. The assessment process is critical to setting clear expectations and establishing the boundaries of the mentorship or coaching relationship.



Ms A van Heerden





## Content issues

The primary reason for mentorship and coaching is to strengthen the management capacities of school principals and the quality of learning outcomes that result. Whether the relationship leans more on the basics of school or curriculum management is largely a matter of behavioural change as much as it is about skilling. The experience of those principals who have undertaken the programme indicates that in cases where the mentoring and coaching has effected radical behavioural changes (such as better communication and embracing “ubuntu” or humanness) unnecessary conflicts are minimised and learning thrives.

SAPA is a reservoir of knowledge and technical resources. Its extensive network of expertise puts SAPA in a position to get a better sense of what challenges exist at the coalface of the schooling sector and what remedies have been undertaken (if any). The implementation of the SACE CPTD system starting in 2014 is an opportunity to strengthen the existing relationship with the council and the DBE.

SAPA is ready to put a shoulder to the wheel when the first cohort of principals and deputy principals enlist with the CPTD system by providing training, mentoring and coaching to ensure that this intervention to improve the quality of educator outcomes in school succeeds. We are also optimistic that this programme will encourage educators to be more involved in personal and professional development so that our schools benefit and improve in accordance with good practice of the leadership in the schools.

Our best wishes to the South African Council for Educators in making this programme a reality. Its success is entirely dependent on the participants of the programme and their interest in and enthusiasm for it.



Mr Chetty

# TEACHING IS A LIFE-LONG LEARNING PROFESSION

*The Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) process is aimed at addressing gaps in the teacher development landscape, explains SACE CPTD Coordinator, Theo Toolo*

Among the harsh realities facing the education sector at the dawn of the new South Africa in 1994 was the challenge of building a new education system from the country's highly fragmented and race-based teaching profession and classrooms. In the years before the introduction of the National Education Policy Act 27 of 1996 there were 19 departments representing each racial group and Bantustan.

Along with disparities in the allocation of resources, class sizes and teacher to learner ratios, the quality of teaching staff as measured by the number of qualified teachers and opportunities for professional development was similarly unequal. Not unexpectedly, the hardest hit by this combined onslaught on quality schooling were those teachers from historically non-white areas.

As a mirror image of apartheid society, the plethora of professional teaching qualifications reflected the hierarchy of racial privileges that were rooted in the population register, which had Whites at the apex and Blacks at the base of the benefits structure. Teachers' qualification for Blacks involved two-year Primary Teachers Certificate (PTC) training with Junior Certificate (J.C), which had a Standard eight as an entry requirement. There was also a Junior Senior Teachers Certificate (JSTC) and three-year qualification diplomas that followed later.

Yet despite the inherent challenges, there were what could be described as pockets of excellence within the constraints of training and development for Black teachers, as in the field of in-service training of educators (INSET). Teachers were transported from all over the country to attend a week-long course in Pretoria through the then Soshanguve in-service training centre.

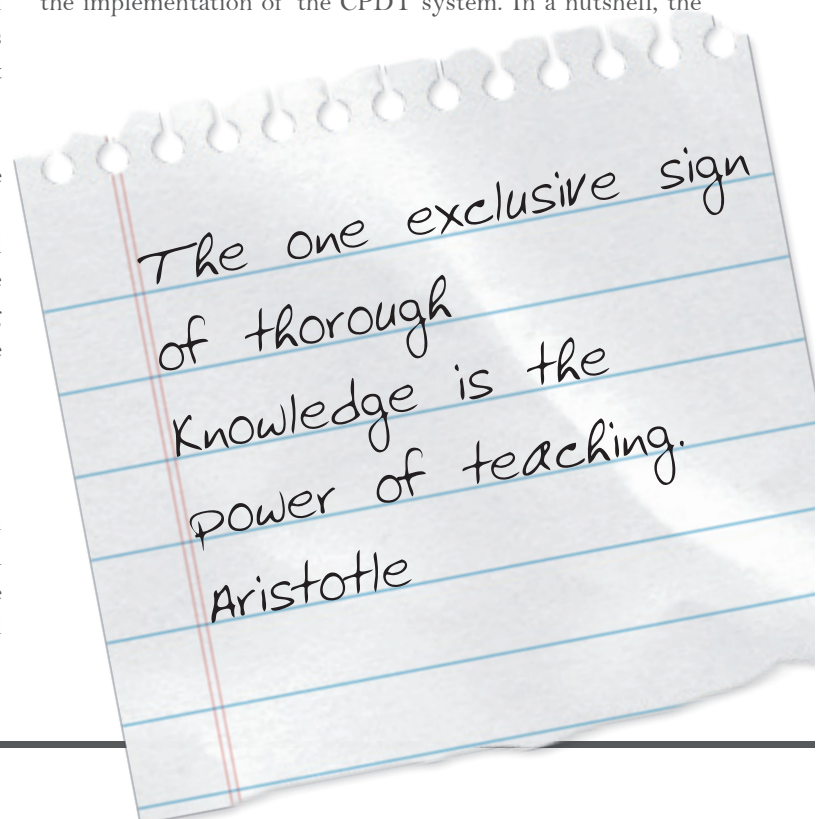
## New policy directions

As in other areas of life in South Africa, the advent of democracy in 1994 ushered in new hope for changes in the teaching profession. The introduction of the National Education Policy Act 27 in 1996 and subsequent laws laid the ground for a review and eventual overhaul of the apartheid

education departments. It paved the way for the rationalisation into a single education department regime. The changes in the education system expressed the government's commitment to redressing the many past inequalities and resultant backlogs in order to build the kind of school environment that would benefit the majority of South Africans.

Among a plethora of legislation that was introduced during the first decade of the democracy was the promulgation of the National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development (NPFTED) 2007. The framework, which was introduced under the stewardship of the then Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, was intended to address gaps in the teacher development landscape. The introduction of the CPTD Management System in 2007 was one of the most significant outcomes of the NPFTED framework and subsequent consultation with stakeholders in the schooling sector, including labour, teachers, schools, service providers, evaluators and education authorities.

SACE, as the regulatory body of the teaching profession and as mandated by the Basic Education Laws Amendment Act of 2011, is responsible for setting up and managing the implementation of the CPDT system. In a nutshell, the





CPTD Management System requires SACE to keep records of educators' engagement in formal or informal professional development courses. Through the CPTD Information System, the credit points that individual teachers accumulate from professional and skills upgrade activities are then captured on the system by SACE as a way of tracking the development of each registered teacher.

A lot of progress has been made in preparing for the rolling out and full implementation of the system, which include the following milestones:

- SACE established dedicated Members and Provinces and Providers and Endorsement CPTD sub-units, which operate under the leadership of the Senior Manager for Professional Development and Research.
- The National Policy Framework for Teacher Education and Development was gazetted, followed by work towards the development of the CPTD System Design and its eventual approval by SACE and the Council of Education Ministers (CEM).
- A Draft CPTD Endorsement Handbook has been developed in an effort to clarify issues around what constitutes relevant professional development and how credit points are to be allocated.
- In 2008 SACE conducted a research study in three provinces, namely, the Free State, Western Cape and KwaZulu-Natal provinces. The results informed the piloting of the CPTD system across South Africa's nine provinces with the participation of 145 school, 13 education districts and 3969 educators.
- Through the pilot we found out that the CPTD System Version 13A and the Endorsement Handbook were cumbersome and difficult to understand. SACE through the CPTD Task Team revised the design document and the Endorsement Handbook in an effort to simplify them for all users, giving rise to the CPTD System Handbook.
- The watershed Teacher Development Summit of 2009 afforded all relevant stakeholders the opportunity to engage on what the future for CPTD will look like. The summit decided that the CPTD System be incorporated as an integral part of the final Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011-2025. Officially launched in 2011, this overarching framework was officially endorsed by the two ministers of education, Education Deans Forum of higher education institutions, the SACE, the Education, Training and Development Practices Skills Education Training Authority and all national teacher unions.

## Way forward for the CPTD system

The section which tabulated the milestone of the CPTD system alluded to the pilot projects that were undertaken between 2008 and 2011 in preparation for the roll-out of the system. Evaluation research of the pilot was commissioned to the Centre for Education and Policy Development (CEPD). The findings were shared with representatives from SACE, the National and Provincial Departments of Basic Education who sit in the CPTD System Task Team. Most of the recommendations from the research report have been endorsed by all stakeholders, thus paving a way forward for the phasing-in of the CPTD system beginning in January 2014 in line with the following identified groupings:

- 1ST COHORT of Principals and Deputy Principals starting January 2014 to December 2016.
- 2nd COHORT of Head of Departments starting January 2015 to December 2017.
- 3rd COHORT of Teachers starting January 2016 to December 2018.
- Each of the above cohorts re-enter the CPTD system through a three-year professional development cycle.

During each year preceding the beginning of the initial three year cycle the specific cohort that will be starting with their first year of the three years will be signed-up and orientated on the CPTD Management System


Certainly, the road towards full implementation of CPTD has been full of challenging twists and turns. In preparing for the CPTD system, the team has had many opportunities for engaging with diverse stakeholders including heads of the department in the length and breadth of the country. In many instances the engagements on the CPDT system have been robust but constructive, which reflected the extent to which the issue of teacher professional development is in everyone's hearts.

Likewise, the interaction with teachers and office-based educators became opportunities for going back to the basics of the teaching profession. It made it possible for educators to reaffirm their roles as espoused in the Norms and Standards of 2000, which among others describes teachers as "life-long learners". It is only by going back to the basics and re-embracing the culture of lifelong professional development that the objectives of the CPTD Management System can be realised.



# IT IS ALL SYSTEMS GO FOR THE CPTD

*SACE's Provinces and Members Sub-division assistant manager, Sekgametsi Sebotsa, reports on progress in the implementation of the CPTD system.*



**T**he year 2014 marks an important milestone in professional teacher development as the cohort of principals and their deputy principals begin the inaugural cycle of the Continuing Professional Teacher Development (CPTD) system. It has taken roughly seven years to reach this point in the implementation of the CPDT system. The journey of the CPTD system has undoubtedly not been without obstacles. Nonetheless the strides we made along the way have gotten us to this milestone in the quest for quality education.

## Broad support

The South African Council of Educators (SACE) is the guardian of the CPDT system, but shares this responsibility with the Department of Basic Education (DBE). The nature of SACE's work and the added task of running the CPTD system are derived from broad, multi-stakeholder processes of the education sector. The 2007 gazetting of the National Policy Framework on Teacher Education and Development (NPFTEd) and the watershed Teacher Development Summit of 2009 were notable events in its evolution. The resolutions of the Teacher Summit endorsed the role of SACE in facilitating and systematising the professional development of the country's teaching corps, primarily through the information component of the system, or the Continuing Professional Teacher Development Information System (CPTD – IS).

## Groundwork

Much of the groundwork for the implementation of the CPTD system has been led by SACE's Professional Development and Research Division and its Provinces and Members Sub-Division in particular. The work of the Provinces and Members Sub-Division, which is made up of four staff members, has focused on building the relationship infrastructure for the sustainable implementation of the CPTD system on the ground.

At the initiation stage of the CPTD system, SACE's Provinces and Members Sub-Division held numerous awareness-raising and mobilisation activities with a range of stakeholders. These included school principals, teachers, labour, school governing bodies and national and provincial education officials, who all serve as an important source and medium of information on the CPTD system implementation plan. Moreover, the network of stakeholders has been most crucial in testing the efficacy of the system ahead of the national roll-out.

The preparatory work in which our many stakeholders have made significant contributions include the coordination and support of the CPTD pilot in 13 districts and 145 schools, across South Africa's nine provinces. They played a critical role in the pilot endorsement of professional development services, which sought to evaluate their availability, quality and ability to support the CPTD system. Both pilots have yielded useful insights on future approaches to the roll-out of all aspects of the system. In a nutshell, the implementation of the CPTD system will involve the following activities, in no order of priority:

- The approval of quality and credible professional development service providers
- The endorsement of relevant and good professional development activities and programmes
- Allocating professional development points (PDs) to those educators who have gone through SACE-endorsed professional development activities
- Finally, crediting each teacher's CPTD account with the points earned from professional development.

## CPTD Phase-in

As per the recommendation of the CPTD status report of 2012, it was agreed that the CPTD system be phased-in according to the targeted three cohorts of principals and their deputies, heads of department and teachers in three-year cycles. The first cohort, namely principals and their deputies, begins in 2014, followed by heads of department and finally teachers in years 2015 and 2016 respectively.

At the time of writing this article, we have successfully signed up 20 399 out of the targeted 40 747 principals and deputy principals on the CPTD System in the 2012/13

financial year. Most instructive is the fact that the majority of the sign-ups were done manually and the balance through the CPTD Information System's interfaces, such as the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) sub-system. Furthermore, the success of the manual sign-ups had capitalised on a number of conferences, including those organised by the National Professional Teachers Association (NAPTOSA) and the National Association of Teachers Union (NATU), the CAPS conference in North West, NATU Principals conference in KZN and the SANESE Principals conference in Limpopo.

While signing up the first cohort of principals and their deputies is an utmost priority as their CPTD cycle begins earnestly in 2014, activities relating to the other cohorts are ongoing. Schools are also signing up nationally to the CPTD Information System, and the coverage is set to increase to more than 27 000 schools.

SACE's capacity to roll-out the CPTD system has been greatly enhanced with the establishment of the National Orientation and Sign-up team and the training of officials at provincial and district levels. We have moreover reduced some of the burdens which made the signing in cumbersome by specifically adopting the following:

- Face-to-face workshop sessions;
- Slotting into existing principals' meetings, road shows and dialogues, as well as stakeholder conferences/workshops/meetings;
- Publishing orientation and sign-up information on the SACE website and Facebook;
- Posting the sign-up packs, especially to Limpopo and Eastern Cape;
- Emailing and hand-delivering the sign-up packs;
- Developing the SACE Sign-Up Centre for walk-ins; and
- Establishing the CPTD.mobi-site for sign-ups through cellphones.

While systems are now in place for a roll-out of the CPTD system, a lot more ultimately hinges on the numbers of educators that we are able to sign up. After all, it is teachers themselves who are at the heart of the CPTD, which ultimately aims at systematically enhancing the quality of practising educators. For this reason, no platform is left unused in efforts to increase the numbers of educators who receive orientation on the CPTD and mostly importantly sign into the system.

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The production of this publication affords the South African Council for Educators (SACE)  
with a special opportunity to thank all the contributors:

Mr P. Sharp  
Ms E. Ramatlakana  
Mr W. A. Hornimann  
Ms N. Njotini  
Ms I. Beckett  
Mr B. Simelani  
Ms P. Ragophala  
Dr B. M. Mafuwane  
Mr F. Chaka  
Mr D. Chetty  
Mr T. Toolo  
Ms S. Sebotsa

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Produced by the SACE Policy and Research Division

ISBN: 978-0-621-42448-5