



**Report of the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the
*National Curriculum Statement***

September 2009

**Presented to the Minister of Education,
Ms Angela Motshekga**

Pretoria

CONTENTS

Executive Summary	5
Overview of the brief	5
Key questions framing the findings and recommendations	5
Summary of Methods	6
High level recommendations	7
Chapter 1: Background and overview	11
Curriculum 2005	11
The review of curriculum 2005: finding the flaws	12
The Revised National Curriculum Statement for GET: The revision of <i>Curriculum 2005</i> and its challenges	13
The final revision: The FET National Curriculum Statement	14
The current review	15
Chapter 2: Curriculum policy and its delivery	17
Policy and guideline documents	17
Document proliferation	17
Provincial layering	19
Policy and guideline status	20
Delivery	21
Constant directives and changes	21
Support roles	21
Teacher understanding	22
Teacher planning	24
Recommendations	26
Chapter 3: Assessment	28
Overview	28
Current policy	29
Assessment practices - clarity and overload	30
Forms of Assessment	31
Reporting and recording	33
Promotion and Progression	34
The GETC	34
Continuous Assessment and Examinations	35
Recommendations	36
Chapter 4: Curriculum structure and design	37
Curriculum coherence	37
The articulation between GET and FET bands	38
The articulation between Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase	38
Intermediate phase learning area overload	39
Language policy	40
Curriculum specification, sequence and progression	41
Learning outcomes	41

Draft report

Assessment standards	42
Designing learning programmes	42
Content specification	43
Pedagogy	45
Recommendations	45
Chapter 5: Support for curriculum implementation – LTSM	47
Overview	47
Textbooks and LTSM	47
Screening and catalogues	48
Procurement methods	49
Section 20 and Section 21 schools	49
Recommendations	50
Chapter 6: Support for curriculum implementation – Training	51
Initial training in Higher Education institutions	51
Targeted training	51
Training of all curriculum stakeholders	51
Training for effective time use	52
Recommendations	52
Chapter 7: Teaching contexts	53
Management of curriculum	53
SMT support for curriculum implementation (role specification)	53
Staff Management	54
Staff rotation	54
Number of Learning Areas taught	54
Overcrowding	54
Multi-grade	55
LSEN	55
Chapter 8: Conclusion	56
Chapter 9: Recommendations	57
Five year plan	
Streamline and clarify policies	
Clarify the role of subject advisors	
Teacher workload and administrative burden	
Assessment	
Transition and overload in the Intermediate Phase	
LTSM	
Teachers and training	
References	62

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview of the brief

In July 2009, the Minister of Basic Education, Minister Motshekga, appointed a Panel of Experts to investigate the nature of the challenges and problems experienced in the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement* and to develop a set of recommendations designed to improve the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement*.

The Minister's brief was in response to wide-ranging comments in writing and verbally from a range of stakeholders such as teachers, parents, teacher unions, school management and academics, over several years, on the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement*. While there has been positive support for the new curriculum, there has also been considerable criticism of various aspects of its implementation, manifesting in teacher overload, confusion and stress and widespread learner underperformance in international and local assessments. Whilst several minor interventions had been made over time to address some of the challenges of implementing the curriculum, these changes had not had the desired effect.

The panel consequently set out to identify the challenges and pressure points particularly with reference to teachers and learning quality, to deliberate on how things could be improved and to develop a set of practical interventions.

This report of the panel presents an understanding of the context, nature and causes of these pressure points, and presents the Minister and the DOE with a five-year plan to improve teaching and learning via a set of short-term interventions aimed at providing immediate relief and focus for teachers; and medium and longer-term recommendations with the vision to achieve real improvement in student learning within a five year period.

Key questions framing the findings and recommendations

Working closely with the two Deputy Directors General for the General Education and Training (GET) and Further Education and Training (FET) branches from the Department of Education (DOE), the panel identified key areas for investigation based on the major complaints and challenges encountered since 2002, when the National Curriculum Statement was introduced for the first time. The key areas were identified as:

1. Curriculum policy and guideline documents
2. Transition between grades and phases
3. Assessment, particularly continuous assessment

Once the panel started the process of collecting information, including listening to teachers, it became apparent that the scope of the report and recommendations would have to include:

4. Learning and Teaching Support materials (particularly textbooks)
5. Teacher support and training (for curriculum implementation)

Policy and guideline documents

The panel focused specifically on the development and purpose, dissemination and support, use and availability, adequacy, clarity, accessibility and load with regard to policy and guideline documents for the National Curriculum Statement. The panel was clear that the scope of its brief did not include a review of the national curriculum.

Transition between grades and phases

Regarding transition between grades and phases, questions were posed around whether teachers and stakeholders thought there were problems; if so, where these problems occurred specifically; what the nature of the problems were; and what stakeholders thought should be done about them. Particular attention was given to the transition from Grade 3 to 4 and from Grade 9 to 10.

Assessment

Assessment has been the area where most criticism has been aimed at the national curriculum since C2005. The panel questioned what the problems were with the assessment policies, whether there was sufficient clarity and appropriate use of assessment policies and guidelines, and what stakeholders, particularly teachers, thought should be done to address the problems.

Learning and Teaching Support Material (LTSM) and Teacher support

LTSM and teacher support were two critical areas that were brought into the panel's deliberations given that they were two of the most commonly raised issues and play an important role in curriculum implementation.

Summary of methods

The methods employed in collecting comments, evidence and data included document review, interviews and hearings with teachers from all nine provinces as well as teacher unions, and electronic (through the DOE's Thutong website) and written submissions from the public.

Across the nine provinces, teachers were extremely clear about their views on the curriculum and its implementation, what the strengths and challenges were, and what could be done to address them. There was also remarkable consensus across different provinces and amongst teachers and unions about what the problems were. The panel had an overwhelming sense of the overall commitment of teachers across the country to try and improve learner performance, and this was very reassuring.

The recommendations that follow draw primarily on what teachers themselves recommended, as well as on what other stakeholders (such as parents, subject advisors, unions) identified as the barriers to successful implementation of the curriculum and solutions to these barriers.

High-level recommendations

1. Five year plan

An important finding of the review is that there is no clear, widely communicated plan for the implementation and support of the *National Curriculum Statement*. Many teachers and parents complained that they had no vision of the ‘bigger picture’ in terms of what education and the curriculum set out to do and achieve, specifically with regard to the learners of South Africa. Coupled with poor learner performance in local and international tests, this has led to pockets of distrust in the education system. The panel is of the view that this presents a unique opportunity for the new Minister to communicate transparently her plan for the future of basic education to all South Africans.

Recommendation: A coherent, clear, simple *Five Year Plan to Improve Teaching and Learning* across the schooling system needs to be developed and adhered to; it must be clearly and widely communicated to the nation. Offering support to teachers and the improvement of learner performance must be its central themes. **October 2009**

2. Streamline and clarify policies

There is a plethora of policies, guidelines and interpretations of policies and guidelines at all levels of the education system, from the DOE down to provincial, district and Subject Advisor level. Exacerbating the situation is the reality that many teachers, as well as some DOE and PDE staff, have not made the shift from C2005 to the revised *National Curriculum Statement*. This has resulted in widespread confusion about the status of curriculum and assessment policies. The current set of *National Curriculum Statement* documents should be rationalized into a set of single, coherent documents per subject or learning area per phase from Grade R to Grade 12. Discrepancies in and repetition of information in the different *National Curriculum Statement* documents (especially the *National Curriculum Statement; Learning Programme Guidelines; and Subject Assessment Guidelines*) must be resolved. These new documents need to be made available to *all* schools, district offices and to parents via print and digital media. In other words, *everyone* should have access to the national curriculum in the form of a comprehensive document. The documents should be prepared by September 2010, for implementation at the beginning of 2011. The Foundations for Learning documents, and the Subject Assessment Guidelines at FET will provide useful starting points for production of the new *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*.

Recommendation: Develop one *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* document for every learning area and subject (by phase) that will be the definitive support for all teachers and help address the complexities and confusion created by curriculum and assessment policy vagueness and

lack of specification, document proliferation and misinterpretation. **(October 2009 to September 2010, for implementation January 2011)**

3. Clarify the role of subject advisors

The current system is almost completely dependent on Subject Advisors (and district staff) to act as intermediaries between curriculum policy and implementation in the classroom. In every province, teachers mentioned that there were several challenges around the role of the district. This was reinforced by numerous electronic and written submissions. Firstly, the role of the subject advisor differs from province to province. Secondly, teachers see the role primarily as technician and demanding of unnecessary administrative tasks and 'box ticking'. Thirdly, there are too few subject advisors nationwide to do justice to thorough and qualitative in-class support for teachers. Many do not have sufficient knowledge and skills to offer teachers the support they require to improve learner performance. Finally, in the absence of role clarification and training for the subject advisors, many have resorted to developing tools to help interpret policies and guidelines that have contributed to the confusion and proliferation of documents and paperwork.

Recommendation: Clarify Subject Advisor roles nationally and specify the exact nature of in-classroom and school support they should provide to teachers. Subject advisor roles differ from province to province and district to district; and yet this role is the main intermediary between the curriculum policy and classroom interpretation. **(January 2010)**

4. Teacher workload and Administrative burden

Teachers across the country complained about onerous administration requirements and duplication of work. This has partially been addressed by the above recommendation about support roles in the districts and the subject advisory services. However, the planning requirements of teachers has become unnecessarily complicated and appear to make little contribution to improving teaching or learner attainment; on the contrary, the administrative burden around assessment and planning appear to impact negatively on teaching and contact time.

Recommendation: Reduce teachers' workload particularly with regard to administrative requirements and planning, to allow more time for teaching. **(January 2010)**

5. Assessment

Assessment has been a challenge for teachers ever since C2005, when an unnecessarily complicated approach to assessment was introduced. Further complicating the situation in the GET phase, a new assessment policy was never developed to support the *National Curriculum Statement*. As a result, teachers and parents are confused about several aspects of assessment, from progression requirements to performance descriptors. Furthermore, C2005 discouraged the use of marks and percentages, and introduced a number of complicated assessment requirements such as Common Tasks of Assessment, portfolios and research projects as well as related jargon. The country's repeated poor performance in local and international tests has

left parents and other stakeholders skeptical of the curriculum and related assessment practices.

Recommendation: Simplify and streamline assessment requirements and improve the quality and status of assessment by making the GET and FET phases consistent, conducting regular national systemic assessment at Grades 3 and 6, and replacing the Common Tasks of Assessment with annual National Testing for all Grade 9 learners in Mathematics, Home Language and English. The analyses of these systemic and national tests should be used to diagnose what to prioritise and target for teacher and learner improvement. **(2009 to 2011)**

6. Transition and overload in the Intermediate Phase

South African children have fared particularly poorly in local and international testing in Grade 3 and Grade 6. This was repeatedly mentioned in parental submissions and at the teacher hearings. Teachers pointed to several factors that contribute to this result. Firstly, there are too many subjects in the intermediate phase, where learners shift from three learning areas in grade 3 to nine in grade 4. Secondly, most provinces only introduce English as a subject in grade 3 and not in grade 1 as suggested in the *National Curriculum Statement* policy. In making the transition to grade 4, learners are faced with English as LOLT, and triple the number of learning areas. This makes for a very challenging transition for both learners and teachers and contributes somewhat to underperformance in the senior and FET phases.

Recommendation: The concern about transition from grade 3 to 4 must be addressed by reducing overload in the intermediate phase through reducing the number of Learning Areas to six, including two languages, and through emphasising the importance of learning English in the curriculum. **(2011)**

7. LTSM

The proper and comprehensive use of textbooks was discouraged and undermined by C2005, and teachers were encouraged to produce their own materials. Yet, both local and international research has shown that the textbook is the most effective tool to ensure consistency, coverage, appropriate pacing and better quality instruction in implementing a curriculum. During the hearings, teachers complained that they were expected to perform tasks, such as developing learning materials, which were best placed in the hands of experts. Having to be 'curriculum developers' eroded their time for teaching. Other LTSM related complaints were that some provinces had not provided sufficient textbooks for learners for years, and that some provincially developed catalogues contained LTSM of dubious quality.

Recommendation: The quality assurance and catalogue development for textbooks and other LTSM need to be centralized at the National level; the useful role and benefits of textbooks needs to be communicated at the highest level, and each learner from Grade 4 to Grade 12 should have a textbook for each learning area or subject. **(2010/2011)**

8. Teachers and training

The teacher hearings and submissions were unanimous in suggesting that current teacher development policies to support the curriculum were often too generic and superficial and did not provide the needed support to teachers. They made it clear that addressing the need to upgrade teachers' skills would not be appropriate with a 'one size fits all' approach. Teachers also complained that most tertiary institutions did not cover the *National Curriculum Statement* thoroughly enough and that many newly trained teachers were not competent to teach. It was almost unanimous, across all provinces, that any future training needs to be subject specific, and that support staff such as school management, subject advisors and district staff also need to be trained and clear on their roles and responsibilities.

Recommendation: The training of teachers to support curriculum implementation should be subject specific and targeted only where needed; and all support staff should also undergo training on the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*. **(September 2010 onwards)**

Chapter 1

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

A nation's national curriculum is at the heart of its education system. It is a primary source of support and direction for learning and teaching in the education system, and plays the role of equalizer in terms of educational standards. There is therefore an imperative on educational authorities to develop curriculum policy that is of a high quality and that communicates the curriculum message widely and with clarity.

A national curriculum should serve two overarching aims. On the one hand, it needs to satisfy the general aim of nation building and setting out the philosophy underpinning the education system. This aim should be based on national priorities and should encompass principles such as the Critical and Developmental Outcomes in the *National Curriculum Statement*. Let us refer to these as the General Aims. On the other hand, it also needs to address the specific aim of selecting socially valued knowledge (and its scope, sequence, depth, emphasis, skills and content) as well as overarching pedagogical principles, to provide clarity for teachers and other education stakeholders around the knowledge and teaching expectations of the curriculum. We will refer to these as the Specific Aims.

Ultimately, the target and beneficiary of any national curriculum is the pupil, learner or student, and any curriculum policy should start with its primary beneficiary in mind. In what follows, we look briefly at the processes of curriculum reform since the transition to democracy in 1994.

Curriculum 2005

In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, the notion of a national curriculum was a new concept that coincided with the birth of a new democracy. The new national curriculum had therefore to play a multitude of roles, responding to the new nation's needs. It had to:

- Promote the new constitution
- Rebuild a divided nation
- Establish and promote a sense of national identity in general but particularly for a troubled education sector (17, largely race-based, education departments with several different curricula)
- Be inclusive in the broad and narrow sense of the term
- Offer equal educational opportunity for all
- Inspire a constituency that had been oppressed by the very nature of the previous education dispensations and policies
- Establish the socially valued knowledge to be transmitted to following generations

The response to the above set of criteria was the enthusiastically, if hastily, developed *Curriculum 2005*, an outcomes-based curriculum for the General Education and Training band (up to Grade 9). *Curriculum 2005* was approved as policy by the Council of Education Ministers

on 29 September 1997. Understandably and predictably, the new nation's curriculum set out to offer a 'sea change', and the curriculum was rich in ideology, new terminology and of a radically different design to that of the past.

Curriculum 2005 was highly publicised and positively received, falling on fertile ground ripe for alternatives to the divisive apartheid curriculum. Teachers became 'facilitators' and 'educators', pupils and students became 'learners', teaching plans for a year became 'learning programmes', and old forms of traditional instruction were replaced with notions of facilitation, learning by discovery and group work. A significant part of the South African population put its weight behind the new, innovative, rights-based national curriculum, based on the principles of Outcomes Based Education (OBE).

The marketing of *Curriculum 2005*, the timing, and the compelling story it told, ensured its acceptance and primacy within a very short space of time. The key and clear messaging included a positive new beginning, the move away from Fundamental Pedagogy, a new emphasis on rights based education and the notion of learner centredness. Quite simply, the nation, particularly teachers and the media, embraced the story it told and the ideological turn it promised.

Despite questioning by some of the theoretical basis, the quality of the actual design, standards, scope, depth and content within the new curriculum, it was completed and implemented. The new curriculum was never researched or properly trialed, and there was inadequate preparation and consideration of whether teachers, pupils and the system in general were prepared for such a fundamental change over such a short space of time. If measured against the need for a national curriculum to cover the general and specific aims described above, *Curriculum 2005* emphasised the general to the detriment of the specific. To this day the legacy of lack of specificity in the curriculum remains, particularly in the GET phase.

The review of Curriculum 2005: Finding the Flaws

By early 2000, the inherent flaws in *Curriculum 2005* were becoming obvious, with specific complaints about children's inability to read, write and count at the appropriate grade levels, their lack of general knowledge and the shift away from explicit teaching and learning to facilitation and group work. Teachers did not know what to teach. Academics, and the media, took up a call for a review of the curriculum. The then Minister of Education, Professor K. Asmal, set up a Review Committee to investigate the criticisms and make recommendations. The *Curriculum 2005* Review Report (June 2000) recommended that:

- The design of the curriculum be simplified
- Curriculum overload be addressed, including the reduction in the number of Learning Areas in the Intermediate Phase
- The terminology and language of the curriculum should be simplified
- Assessment requirements should be clarified
- Content had to be brought into the curriculum, and specified

- A plan needed to be developed to address teacher training for the successful implementation of the new curriculum
- Textbooks and reading had to be reintroduced as a widely recognised means to bridge the gap between teacher readiness, curriculum policy and classroom implementation

In response, a team was put in place to conduct a thorough revision of *Curriculum 2005*, under the leadership of Professor Linda Chisholm, to begin work in January 2001. The Minister mandated the team to implement the recommendations of the *Curriculum 2005 Review*.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement for GET: The revision of Curriculum 2005 and its challenges

The so-called *Revised National Curriculum Statement* for GET simplified and clarified *Curriculum 2005*, as mandated. It explicitly attempted to shift the curriculum agenda from a local, primarily skills-based and context-dependent body of knowledge inappropriate for a schooling system, towards a more coherent, explicit and systematic body of knowledge more suitable for a national curriculum in the twenty first century and more able to take its place amongst other regional and international curricula. It specifically set out to develop a high knowledge, high skills curriculum, resulting in a fundamental but necessary departure from *Curriculum 2005*.

One of the tensions that played itself out in the process of the revision was that the Review renewed the commitment to an outcomes-based framework for the national curriculum. At the same time, the lack of knowledge stipulation in *Curriculum 2005* had to be addressed. Outcomes by definition focus on attitudes, dispositions and competencies, and as a consequence fail to give adequate specification of essential learning, by focusing on skills and background knowledge. The revision attempted to deal with this tension by introducing Assessment Standards and various forms of content frameworks, which would provide the content teachers were required to teach. The result, however, was an uneven specification across learning areas, subjects and grades, and the need to produce additional documentation where gaps existed.

An aspect of *Curriculum 2005* that remained and usefully framed the social or general aims of the curriculum were the well received and supported Critical and Developmental Outcomes. However, once again, the curriculum failed to provide the coherent, systematic content and knowledge to satisfy the specific aims of the curriculum.

The *Revised National Curriculum Statement* was completed in 2002, for implementation in January 2004. However, there were a number of shortcomings associated with its implementation that provide important context for the current review process. Firstly, there was no clear and detailed implementation plan for the *Revised National Curriculum Statement*. Unlike *Curriculum 2005*, there was no clear message and national communication plan on the benefits of the new curriculum. The *national* nature and importance of the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* was never emphasized and the message that supported the implementation of the Revised National Curriculum Statement was that it was NOT a new

curriculum. This opened up the space for teachers and district, provincial and national Department of Education officials to blend the *Revised National Curriculum Statement* into *Curriculum 2005*. The Department of Education, provinces, districts and other stakeholders developed their own interpretations and supporting documentation for the *Revised National Curriculum Statement*, leading to widespread confusion about what constituted official policy. This legacy and practice remains in the system to this day.

Secondly, assessment support and guidance was not detailed enough and no assessment policy was developed by the specialists who had written the curriculum. Initially, teachers were told to continue to use the old assessment policy, developed for *Curriculum 2005*. Over time, incremental changes were made to the assessment policy creating widespread confusion in respect of assessment practices.

Thirdly, curriculum supporting documents, such as *Learning Programme Guidelines*, specifically found to be unhelpful by the *Curriculum 2005* Review Committee, were subsequently developed within the DOE by different people to those who had developed the Statements. Some of these people retained allegiances to Curriculum 2005, or did not fully understand the purposes and aims of the revision. Contradictions across documentation thus resulted.

Fourthly, teacher training was superficial, and did not clarify the points of departure and newness of the *Revised National Curriculum Statement*. Nor did it address the cry for training in subject/learning area content.

Finally, the language policy, specified in the *Revised National Curriculum Statement*, was never communicated and never implemented. The language policy states that it is preferable for children to learn in their home language in the Foundation Phase but that they should get a solid foundation in the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) (in most cases English) as a subject from Grade 1. However, many schools across all provinces continue to only start teaching English in Grade 3, based on *Curriculum 2005* provincial policies, leaving children unready for the change to LOLT in Grade 4.

The final revision: The FET *National Curriculum Statement*

A new curriculum had not been developed for the FET band of schooling. In 2002 the National Curriculum Statement for the FET Phase was developed. It went through a separate and different process to that of the GET. It was developed several years after *Curriculum 2005* and just after the *National Curriculum Statement* was developed for GET. Subsequent to the development of the *National Curriculum Statement* for FET, supporting policies and guidelines were developed to support the curriculum in the name of *Subject Frameworks* and *Subject Assessment Guidelines*. In the case of FET, some of the same people who had developed the *National Curriculum Statement* subject statements then developed the *Subject Frameworks* and the *Assessment Guidelines*. Experts in the various subject fields put these documents through rigorous quality assurance processes.

Because it is very clear that the FET curriculum works towards the national Grade 12 exam, there has tended to be far less provincial reinterpretation of national documents, particularly pertaining to assessment. Greater clarity around content and assessment was provided in the policy at these levels.

The current review

The official curriculum is a statement of what a society considers the purposes of education to be. As such, it is an important site in any democracy, and as can be seen from the account above, will also be the subject of much debate and contestation. The social purposes of the curriculum have been made clear, and the values that underpin the curriculum are well specified. There has also been considerable advance made around the academic purposes of the curriculum, and what knowledge, concepts, and skills we want students to learn. In short, much progress has been made in offering to teachers a guide as to what they should be doing in the classroom. However, given the intensive curriculum reform processes over the past ten years, and the challenges in revising *Curriculum 2005* to produce the *National Curriculum Statement*, there is a level of uncertainty and confusion in the system, and a fair amount of criticism of curriculum delivery and implementation. This report addresses primarily the issue of implementation, and how this has raised certain limitations with respect to the clarity of the curriculum and the authority it bestows on teachers in confidently understanding their mandate in the classroom. We concur with Donnelly that the key criteria for considering curriculum is the extent to which they make available to teachers statements which are “clear, succinct, unambiguous, measurable, and based on essential learning as represented by subject disciplines” (2005:8).

Hindrances to achieving this are not found in the curriculum documents alone. Impediments to a good curriculum also arise from its implementation, that is, its delivery by governments to teachers, its resourcing, the support offered, and the contexts in which it is implemented.

All processes of curriculum reform are iterative. They involve a process of revision over time. The implementation of any curriculum is, however, dependent on the teachers who will implement it. How teachers make sense of the curriculum, what they oppose, what they regard as assisting them makes a difference. Consequently, in this process what teachers had to say was privileged. As Michael Fullan (2001) points out, attempting to introduce curriculum reform without thinking through the implications for teachers and their classroom practice is likely to collide with very different understandings and result in insecurity and instability in the system. Success of a curriculum initiative is largely determined by *what teachers think* about the intended changes. In essence, through this review, the DOE made a commitment to *listen* to teachers.

What emerged from the hearings and from submissions was a great deal of inequity in provision in the system. This inequity refers to the availability, use and mediation of curriculum policy. Three central arguments arise from the process of review. The first argument is that there needs to be strong leadership from the centre in order to address the very unequal levels

of provision in relation to curriculum implementation. The central role of the DOE in the development, dissemination and support of curriculum should be asserted.

The second key issue to emerge from the review process is that teachers are change weary, and their confidence in what they do (centrally, teach) has been compromised. The report argues that the authority of teachers *in the classroom* needs to be re-established. This has two implications. First, attention must be given to how much time and energy teachers have to teach. Second, teachers need absolute clarity on what they are required to teach. In this way, we argue, teachers will regain confidence in their practice, and authority as subject specialists in the classroom. Ultimately it is this that will improve both the academic and social chances made available to students through their schooling. We must without delay move towards realizing the goal as set out in the *National Curriculum Statement*: “the development of a high level of knowledge and skills for all (p.12 overview).

Thirdly, and crucially, the report argues for greater alignment in curriculum processes. Curriculum standards specify the intended knowledge for learning. Assessment Standards exemplify the level of cognitive demand and the progression of learning over time. LTSM and training provides support and the means by which these may be enacted in the classroom. It is crucial that these different elements of the curriculum process be tightly coupled, and that there is clear alignment between the requirements of each.

The report offers a five-year plan with three phases for improving curriculum implementation and the enhancement of teaching and learning in our schools.

1. The first phase (18 months) should focus on streamlining the policy available to teachers, clarifying what they should teach. Limitations should be placed on who has the authority to give directives regarding the what and how of teaching and learning.
2. The second period (18 months to three years) should focus on creating tighter links between the curriculum, training and LTSM. The production of excellent textbooks clearly aligned to the curriculum is a priority. Training should be targeted and address areas of particular need. Clarity around the roles and responsibilities of all those involved in the production and implementation of curriculum is required.
3. The two final years of the plan should focus on strengthening implementation and allowing the effects of the streamlining and strengthening initiatives to take hold in schools. This will culminate in wide-scale testing in 2014, which will offer some evidence of the progress made by the current administration to building a stable and streamlined curriculum process that addresses the current inequities.

The report gives a detailed account of the findings that emerged from the hearings, the submissions and the deliberations of the review team. Ultimately, as stated before, the goal was to provide support to teachers for improved learning of all students in South African schools.

Chapter 2

CURRICULUM POLICY AND ITS DELIVERY

Policy and guideline documents

Document proliferation

While the central policy document for teachers is the *National Curriculum Statement*, in practice numerous documents have been developed as guidelines to offer greater specificity and support to teachers in what to teach, how to plan for teaching, how to teach, and how to assess learning. The result is a set of lengthy documents for each learning area and subject. These documents in the different phases are reflected below:

Foundation Phase	Intermediate/senior phase	FET phase
National curriculum statement Teachers guide for the development of learning programmes – Foundation Phase	National curriculum statement Teachers guide for the development of learning programmes	National curriculum statement Learning programme guidelines
Assessment guidelines for Foundation Phase	Assessment guidelines	Subject assessment guidelines
A national protocol on reporting and recording	A national protocol on reporting and recording	A national protocol on reporting and recording
<i>National Curriculum Statement</i> Overview documents Foundations for Learning – assessment guidelines	<i>National Curriculum Statement</i> Overview documents	<i>National Curriculum Statement</i> Overview documents The National Senior Certificate: A Qualification at Level 4 on the National Qualifications Framework (NQF)
Foundations for Learning – Quarterly assessment guidelines National reading strategy		
White paper 6 Teaching reading in the early grades Grade R: Practical ideas 2008	White paper 6	White paper 6

This list does not include documentation that is produced at provincial and district level. The latter are commonly produced with the intention of providing teachers with guidance for their teaching and mediating national policy. They include provincial, district level and school level work schedules, lesson plans and assessment exemplars.

The curriculum requires that teachers structure and design their own programme of learning. This requires that teachers consult numerous documents, as well as appropriate LTSM, in planning what to teach. In the generic section of all the *Learning Programme Guidelines* for all learning area and subject documents, there is a diagram documenting the 'Relationship between the three stages of planning when developing a learning programme'. This diagram suggests that, when planning, a teacher should consider:

Philosophy and Policy

National Curriculum Statement Principles

Conceptual Progression within and across grades

Time allocation and weighting

Integration of learning outcomes and assessment standards

LTSMs

Inclusivity and Diversity

Assessment

Contexts and Content (and sequencing)

Learning and Teaching Methodology

(Department of Education 2007a, p. 6)

Allais (2006) argues that this assumes a considerable role for the teacher, and many of these decisions could be made for the teacher. There was strong resistance in the hearings and submissions to the notion of teachers as curriculum designers, with such statements as "curriculum development is not the core business of teachers"¹. A number of teachers and submissions emphasized the strength of the Foundations for Learning campaign as offering a clearer plan for teachers, freeing them to spend their time and energy constructing appropriate lesson plans and assessment tasks². In short, teachers felt the need to devote their energy to delivering quality instruction.

Multiple documents render the planning process time consuming. Several of the documents are repetitive, meaning that teachers work through the same information in different documents. For example, *Mathematics FET Subject Assessment Guidelines* repeat all of the learning outcomes and assessment standards from the Statement document, dividing them into core and optional assessment standards. Different versions of documents contain different aspects of the most up-to-date information, and this is confusing for teachers. A number of the documents also contradict one another, sometimes in terms of emphasis and at other times more directly. For example, whilst the *GET Languages National Curriculum Statement* document attempts to articulate a balanced approach to language learning, the Learning Programme Guideline takes an explicitly 'whole language' or communicative approach. Another example is that of Geography, where the *Subject Assessment Guidelines* are not aligned with the *National Curriculum Statement* (Umalusi, 2009:). At a more general level, integration as a

¹ Eastern Cape hearings

² Schroenn, MB (education consultant) submission

Draft report

curriculum design feature to inform planning is downplayed in the *National Curriculum Statement* documents, but is emphasized in the *Learning Programme Guidelines*.

None of this should imply that there is nothing of value in any of these documents. All of them contain some useful discussion and specification. But, they are much longer than they need to be, they are much more complex than they need to be (particularly because a number of documents need to be read together), and the information provided is at times contradictory and inconsistent across documents.

In summary, the current documents are not user friendly. Many are overly long and unwieldy, and at times verbose, and there is repetition across documents. Many of the documents also contain errors and contradictions. In some instances, there is a lack of alignment between assessment tasks and the curriculum statements.

The review team suggests that the current set of *National Curriculum Statement* documents should be rationalized into a set of single, coherent documents per subject or learning area per phase from Grade R to Grade 12. Discrepancies in, and repetition of, information in the different documents (especially the *National Curriculum Statement*; *Learning Programme Guidelines*; and *Subject Assessment Guidelines*) must be resolved.

The documents should be prepared in plain language, with a minimum number of design features. The focus of the documents should be on specifying the content, concept and skill requirements for the particular learning area or subject, the pace at which it should be taught (through time allocations), and the assessment requirements. The documents should be overseen by the same team of subject experts for Grade R to Grade 12 to ensure coherence across phases. An annual appendix for elective content can be issued to schools.

Provincial layering

Compounding the problem of multiple documentation is the issue of provincial layering. In many instances provinces re-interpret national policy and provide provincial versions of various curriculum policy and guideline documents. The processes are uneven across provinces, with some provinces producing mediated versions of every single policy or guideline issuing from the DOE, and other provinces providing nothing additional. Because the various provinces' interpretation of documentation has largely been on an *ad hoc* basis, expectations and support vary provincially.

Provincial production of documents raises a number of problems. Firstly, teachers are confused by the array of documents available, and struggle to determine the status of these documents³. It is not always clear that certain documents are produced with the intention of mediating or clarifying national policy (leaving aside the question of whether this in fact happens) rather than *replacing* it.

³ Teacher hearings in all provinces, Unions

Secondly, there are concerns with equity. There was a strong call from teachers in the hearings for an end to what they termed ‘federalism’ in curriculum provision⁴, as well as calls for a “national syllabus”⁵. A number of teachers, concerned with issues of equity, articulated the strong desire to be doing “the same thing as the school next door”⁶.

The problem of provincial and district layering often appears to be exacerbated when schools are identified as being ‘at risk’ (different terminology is used in different provinces) in terms of low student achievement. External examinations are supplied to schools, as are special work schedules and lesson plans, or rubrics for the moderation of work. Rather than assist these schools, the quality of the material provided is often questionable, and the additional documentation often causes further administrative work – both in deciphering new requirements and adhering to new recording and reporting processes.

This report argues for clearer specification from the centre so that the mandate of districts and provinces is clarified to offer support to schools in fulfilling *these* requirements, in implementing *this* national policy and offering additional moderation of work at school level rather than generating new documentation. A limit should be placed on the latter at provincial and district levels. It is clear from the above discussion that the provincial departments have involved themselves in a significant amount of curriculum mediation, including the production of reinterpretations of national policy. This is also true of some districts, in particular in the production of assessments tasks. There is currently a lack of clarity around the roles of national, provincial and district levels with respect to curriculum production and dissemination. We argue for the primary role of districts to be support for curriculum implementation, as well as the monitoring of curriculum implementation. There also needs to be greater coherence between the messages communicated in national documentation and directives and those generated at provincial level.

Policy and guideline status

The issue of the status of documents was alluded to above. It would appear that the notion of a ‘guideline’ has presented both national and provincial departments with the opportunity to issue new directives without necessarily having to proceed through official policy-making channels.

From evidence gathered for this Report, it is clear that there has been a dispersal of roles and responsibilities both between different directorates in the DOE, but also between the DOE, the provinces and district offices⁷. In summary, centralising the co-ordination and resourcing of curriculum in the DOE would help to ensure that the overall co-ordination of provision,

⁴ Gauteng hearings

⁵ Limpopo hearings

⁶ Limpopo and North West hearings

⁷ Union hearings

allocation and distribution of curriculum directives and resources is more coherent, consistent and efficient.

Delivery

Constant directives and changes

One of the central ways in which national, provincial and district levels of government communicate with schools is through the issuing of circulars. In this way, curriculum changes, amendments, clarifications and additions are regularly issued. These constant directives are reported to be at times contradictory and issued without sufficient consideration for their implications (especially with respect to time for implementation)⁸. Further, the lines of authority and the mandate to issue circulars have become very unclear. Schools are change-weary, and have lost confidence in the certainty of what it is they are supposed to do⁹. Stability needs to be restored by clarifying who has the authority to issue changes, how often, and by what point in the year, such that schools and teachers may prepare for their implementation.

Thus in the issuing of the new consolidated curriculum documents for teachers, a strong campaign should launch these documents in order to clarify the status and benefits of the documents in relation to other documentation available up to now. The documents should have the status of policy.

Support roles (district officer / subject advisor roles)

The issue of document proliferation in relation to district offices was alluded to above. There are also more general issues pertaining to the role that districts play in the implementation of the curriculum. This is a crucial and often neglected level of curriculum implementation, which requires urgent attention.

Many comments in the hearings and submissions alluded to the capacity of district offices to provide support in curriculum implementation¹⁰. These offices have been subject to the same degree of change as teachers, and in many cases, a superficial understanding around curriculum exists. Further, in several provinces there are a large number of recently appointed subject advisors, who have received less training on the curriculum than the teachers themselves, and have not had the experience of actually teaching the curriculum. Questions are therefore raised around the confidence of districts to mediate curriculum implementation in a way that is less bureaucratic and focuses more on issues of professional practice. It is clear that districts need to be empowered, both by gaining greater clarity around what their precise role is, but also by being given the skills to undertake that role and its associated responsibilities. Of course, there

⁸ Provincial and Union hearings

⁹ Provincial and Union hearings

¹⁰ Twist Ndlovu, BC (principal) submission; Parktown Girls High School submission

is great unevenness across districts, with some providing teachers with excellent levels of support.

Districts, and provinces more broadly, are also not clear on stated policy and the changes issuing from the national DOE. Several submissions commented on the tendency of districts to insist on their own interpretations being implemented¹¹. In the hearings, teachers reported being ‘held hostage’ by officials in terms of covering assessment standard requirements. In the submissions as well, a “bureaucratic mindset” was reported to dominate district level offices, where the focus was on fulfilling bureaucratic requirements.

Subject advisors have also suffered from a lack of clear role specification. They are responsible for the collection and delivery of exam papers in some provinces, for training in IQMS in others, and with a number of other tasks not directly related to curriculum and its delivery¹². In other words, their role in supporting, mentoring and supervising the curriculum in relation to particular subjects and learning areas has been undermined. School level moderation and cluster meeting processes dominate the moderation function, and the presence of subject advisors in the classroom has been weakened by policies such as the IQMS. In addition to this, subject advisors are reported to be over-stretched in terms of what they are required to do, with some districts lacking subject advisors in certain learning areas and too few subject advisors covering too many schools¹³.

There was support in a number of the submissions that the *district* assume the role of assessing teacher portfolios and documentation, as opposed to *other teachers* assessing each other, as currently occurs through cluster meeting and moderation processes¹⁴.

In short, initiatives need to focus on supplying sufficient subject advisors who can fulfill the functions of:

- Moderating teachers’ plans, assessments and learners’ work;
- Mediating the curriculum standards for particular learning areas / subjects;
- Clarifying the assessment and content/discipline requirements for particular learning areas / subjects; and
- Providing support for appropriate teaching methodologies in line with particular learning areas / subjects.

Teacher understanding

The curriculum implementation literature emphasizes the central role that teachers play in how a curriculum is realised in practice. Central to this are teachers’ understandings of policy. Some of the problems related to teacher understanding have been described above – in particular

¹¹ Naptosa submission; Schimper, D. (principal) submission

¹² Western Cape hearing

¹³ Singh, V. (Subject Advisor) submission

¹⁴ Western Cape, KwaZulu Natal and Free State hearings

multiple (and at times contradictory) documentation. Our recent curriculum history has been characterized by radical change within a relatively short period. The result has been a high level of confusion amongst teachers around what they are expected to do. These past changes have left tracks in teachers' current understandings and practice, particularly tracks of *Curriculum 2005*.

What emerged from the hearings was that given the rapid rate of curriculum reform, teachers hold certain understandings about the curriculum and its implementation not intended by the policy. Several of these understandings stem from previous reform efforts, especially *Curriculum 2005*. In one hearing, a group of teachers actually referred to a *Curriculum 2005* document in making their submission¹⁵. In other cases, contradictions and inaccuracies in current documents perpetuate these understandings. We highlight a number of the unintended understandings that teachers expressed in the hearings, although the list is far from comprehensive.

A notion of the importance and use of **themes**, a central organizing feature of the Curriculum 2005 integrated curriculum, still exists among teachers. Whilst the *National Curriculum Statement* moved towards what the *Curriculum 2005 Review Report* (DOE, 2000) termed "vertical integration", that is, relationships and conceptual progression *within* learning areas and subjects, "horizontal integration" is still an idea that is firmly in place. This is perhaps entrenched by the fact that the Common Tasks of Assessment (CTA's) developed by the Department of Education and sent to provinces every year for use at the end of Grade 9 are still theme-driven. The *Review Report* argued that integration realized through theme-driven learning compromised conceptual learning and progression within subjects. The problem is underscored by an emphasis on integration still found in the current *Learning Programme Guidelines*.

In some of the *National Curriculum Statement* documents, there is also an enduring emphasis on **learner construction** of knowledge, notably in the Life Sciences (Umalusi, 2009a: 54). This no doubt stems from the *Curriculum 2005* emphasis on constructivism as a learning theory. The intention of the *National Curriculum Statement* was to move towards greater emphasis on discipline-based subjects, the logic of which is derived from the subject discipline. Though all learners do engage in the construction of knowledge in terms of coming to understand certain concepts, skills and content, it has generally been accepted that these aspects inhere within the subject and not in the minds of learners in the first place.

A related issue that emerged from both the hearings and submissions were various understandings of privileged pedagogical approaches or teaching **methodologies**. Recent research (Ensor et al, 2008; Schollar, 2008) shows that various constructivist methodologies (such as a reliance on concrete methods for solving) and group work predominate in many classrooms. In the hearings, group work was identified as particularly problematic in the

¹⁵ Northern Cape hearings

transition from GET to FET¹⁶. In the GET, it seems that group work is privileged and in FET, individual work; teachers and learners as a result struggle to make the transition. Textbooks and curriculum policy documents need to be scrutinized for the messages that they give, and whether these are consistent with the messages that the DOE wants to transmit. For example, group work is emphasized in the IQMS, and in many textbook activities. Group work needs to be understood as one methodology amongst many, not suited to all classes, teachers or curriculum offerings¹⁷. Another methodological issue was a strong stand in opposition to rote learning, particularly in *Curriculum 2005*. The importance of memorization in learning needs to be disentangled from the negative connotations of rote learning.

An aversion to **textbooks** (Taylor, 2008) is another issue that stems from *Curriculum 2005*. The idea that a single (good) textbook can be followed from start to finish has become anathema to many teachers. Textbooks are crucial in supporting the implementation of curriculum. They aid curriculum coverage, and make available the conceptual logic of the subject in question as it progresses through the set field of knowledge to be taught and learnt. They offer a crucial resource for teachers in planning and in gaining access to the appropriate knowledge and skills to teach, at the appropriate level. A reassertion of the importance of (good) textbooks will assist teachers in implementing the curriculum.

In short, contradictions in documents and understandings that have become dated need to be identified, and clear directions given to teachers regarding the expectations of the current curriculum.

Teacher planning

While there was a considerable amount of simplification of the curriculum in the processes of review of *Curriculum 2005* and the development of the *National Curriculum Statement*, one aspect which has remained complex is that of planning. Along with certain assessment and moderation processes, it is planning that largely contributes to the high administrative workload of teachers, reported by research (Chisholm et al, 2005) and in the hearings and submissions to the review team¹⁸. Currently teachers are required to engage in three levels of planning, constructing

- a learning programme;
- a work schedule; and
- a lesson plan.

Alongside this, teachers are required to have:

- a related school assessment plan;
- a teacher assessment plan;

¹⁶ KwaZulu Natal teacher hearings

¹⁷ Venter submission

¹⁸ Especially Limpopo hearings; Rustenburg Junior School submission

Draft report

- a teacher portfolio;
- CASS marks and mark schedule; and
- learner portfolios.

There is a significant amount of overlap and duplication required in the different planning forms. One of the misunderstandings amongst schools and teachers is that not all of this planning should be done by individual teachers. Further, planning from one year can be carried over to the next. Another problem with planning is that provinces and/or districts often impose additional requirements. In other cases, schools devise their own requirements. Thus, although workload in relation to planning is created by national policy, in many cases it is exacerbated by misunderstandings of who must plan what and how often, and additional provincial and district demands. Teachers also complained that the feedback received on planning from district officials concerns bureaucratic compliance¹⁹. The NAPTOSA submission states the problem in this way: “These officials have a “check list” approach and make judgments about a particular teacher’s expertise based, in many instances, only on the completeness of documentation and degree of compliance”²⁰.

The idea behind the development of a learning programme stems from *Curriculum 2005*, where integration and deriving common themes across a phase was privileged in planning. In the greater stipulation provided by the *National Curriculum Statement*, learning programmes have become somewhat redundant. A number of submissions argued that the adoption of the idea of learning programmes has not been very successful. Teachers either do not understand the concept or do not see the necessity for them²¹. Given that they are grounded in the logic of *Curriculum 2005*, this is not surprising.

It is necessary to establish what the minimum number of documents would be necessary to ensure quality planning and preparation on the part of teachers. There were a number of suggestions that national work schedules be provided, leaving teachers to focus on the preparation of lesson plans²². As argued above, it is necessary that the DOE control the extent to which ‘layers’ are imposed at provincial and district levels.

The three levels of planning should be rationalized and duplication in the process must be addressed. To minimize their time spent on planning and to ensure curriculum coverage and pacing, teachers should be encouraged to use good quality textbooks for their planning and scheduling.

¹⁹ Western Cape, Gauteng hearings

²⁰ NAPTOSA submission

²¹ Sieborger submission

²² Sihlezana, S. (union) submission; van Niekerk, R. (teacher) submission

Recommendations

- The current set of *National Curriculum Statement* documents should be rationalized into a set of single, coherent documents per subject or learning area per phase from Grade R to Grade 12. Discrepancies in and repetition of information in the different *National Curriculum Statement* documents (especially the *National Curriculum Statement; Learning Programme Guidelines; and Subject Assessment Guidelines*) must be resolved. These new documents need to be made available to *all* schools, district offices and to parents via print and digital media. In other words, *everyone* should have access to the national curriculum in the form of a comprehensive document. The documents should be prepared for September 2010, for implementation at the beginning of 2011. The new document should be titled the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*.
 - Development of the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents should be overseen by the same persons from Grade R to Grade 12, to ensure **coherence** and smooth transition across phases, especially from Grade 3 to 4 and from the GET to FET phases. Experts in learning areas and subjects at the different levels should be designated to write the documents. The current Foundations for Learning campaign, popular and helpful for teachers, must be incorporated into the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*.
 - The documents should be thoroughly edited for **consistency, plain language** and ease of understanding and use. Presentation of what teachers are expected to teach must be standardized and easy to retrieve from the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* document.
 - Where appropriate teachers should be given guidance and support in the documents on how to teach specific content / concepts and skills, particularly in areas of difficulty. Clarity on the appropriateness of certain **methodologies**, such as group-work, should be provided.
 - An annual appendix for elective content must be issued to schools by September of the preceding year for which the content and assessment requirements is prescribed.
- Separate, special guideline documents for ELSEN and for multi-grade classes will be developed, aligned to the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents.
- A strong campaign should launch these new consolidated documents in order to clarify the status of the documents in relation to other documentation available up to now. The documents should have the status of **policy**. (October 2010 to March 2011)
- There must be clarification of the roles and responsibilities at national, provincial and district levels with respect to curriculum production, dissemination and monitoring and support of implementation to ensure that reinterpretation and layering of policy is avoided. (October 2010)
- Subject advisors' roles, as **school-based subject experts** must be affirmed. A job description and performance plan for subject advisors that focus their work on the delivery, implementation and moderation of the curriculum, and offering subject specific support to teachers must be tabled.

Draft report

- The role of subject advisors as school level moderators must be asserted. **Cluster meetings** for moderation purposes should be limited to an annual meeting for teachers, focused on sharing information and considering other schools' examination papers and marking memoranda.
- The three levels of **planning** must be rationalized and duplication in the process must be addressed. Each teacher should have a single *Teacher File* for this purpose. The Teacher File should consist of an annual work schedule; assessment plan; formal assessment tasks and memoranda; textbook to be used; and a record of each learner's marks per formal assessment task. Planning should indicate sequence, pace and coverage. Lesson plan development should be at the teacher's discretion and teachers should be encouraged to use good textbooks for planning purposes. At the school level, the teacher-developed year plans and assessment plans need to be consolidated to form a comprehensive year plan for the school. There must be no duplication of administrative work. A complete record of learners' marks that consolidates individual teachers' marks must be compiled at school level. (January 2010)
- Responsibility for oversight of the curriculum needs to be centralized within the DOE. As of September 2009, **circulars** related to any recommended changes to the national curriculum, its implementation or assessment should be made only once a year. No changes may be made after September for the following year. All changes need to be passed through the CMC and HEDCOM, and issued through a DG circular. (September 2009)

Chapter 3

ASSESSMENT

Overview

Assessment plays a number of crucial roles in relation to curriculum and learning. Firstly, school-based assessment allows teachers to measure learner progress and to diagnose areas of lack of progress to enable remediation and focused teaching. It also provides crucial feedback to learners and parents about academic progress. This form of assessment is currently referred to as 'Continuous Assessment', and involves formal tests, projects and assignments which constitute a year or 'CASS mark'. 'Systemic assessment' provides a different function. It allows government and society in general to measure the quality of the system; to assess the consistency of standards at school and national levels; and to hold schools and teachers accountable for student learning. It also provides signals for employers and higher education institutions about what knowledge future students or potential employees have acquired. The most standardized and regular form of systemic testing in South Africa has been the National Senior Certificate (previously 'Matric') examinations.

Crucial to both forms of assessment is that assessment should provide feedback on what learners know relative to what they should know. It follows that the intended content, concepts and skills to be taught in different subjects / learning areas need to be clear, and these need to be closely aligned to what is assessed. Further, forms of assessment need to be appropriate to the subject or learning area being tested, as well as to the level of learning. In short, assessment requirements spell out for teachers what they should teach, at what level and how they can ascertain whether the learning has been attained. It also offers government and society in general, parents and learners, information about the quality of schooling.

The introduction of *Curriculum 2005* was accompanied by the promotion of Outcomes-based Assessment (OBA). The *Curriculum 2005* documents required that teachers adopt 'a completely different approach to assessment', emphasizing the use of 'innovative' types of assessment such as projects, research, peer assessment and group work. While many of the principles of assessment promoted by *Curriculum 2005* documents make good education sense (a variety and multiple methods of assessment tasks to gather evidence of learner progress) they were widely interpreted to mean:

- tests or exams are not appropriate forms of assessment;
- marks and percentages should not be used, only codes and descriptions;
- learners should be provided multiple opportunities to achieve success or competence;

Tests and examinations especially, were de-emphasised, and regarded as less fair and useful forms of assessment in the educational system.

Current policy

The *Revised National Curriculum Statement* process in 2002 did not revise the assessment policy of 1998. The Chisholm and Lubisi submission to this review points out that the contest that could not be resolved was whether the school assessment system should reintroduce test and exam-based assessment, or whether there should continue to be more emphasis on other continuous forms of assessment, such as portfolio and project work, during the course of a year. In the absence of agreement, the existing policy prevailed.

Because the debates were not resolved, over the past seven years there have been numerous attempts to determine and clarify an assessment policy. This has resulted in assessment policy that is misunderstood and inconsistent throughout the system and that is extremely onerous for teachers in terms of its requirements.

At the FET level the production of the *Subject Assessment Guidelines* and the *National Protocol on Assessment* offered clearer guidance to teachers on what to assess, how and how often. However, different interpretations of the *National Curriculum Statement* documents abound and the requirements of provincial education departments, Umalusi, districts and schools often go well beyond the policy requirements set out in the *Subject Assessment Guidelines* and *National Protocol on Assessment*. At the GET level assessment still remains a problem, with the end of Grade 9 posing one of the most significant challenges to the system. Statements on assessment at this level are generic and often expressed in complex language. In general, across all levels, the highly theoretical nature of the assessment sections of the *National Curriculum Statement* documents give room for wide interpretation. For example, the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10 – 12 (General) chapter on assessment states that assessment should:

- a. Be understood by the learner and the broader public
- b. Be clearly focused
- c. Be integrated with teaching and learning
- d. Be based on the pre-set criteria of the assessment standards
- e. Allow for expanded opportunities for learners
- f. Be learner-paced and fair
- g. Be flexible
- h. Use a variety of instruments
- i. Use a variety of methods.

These requirements are interpreted in some quarters to mean that assessment should be reported against each assessment standard (d); that **variety** of assessment instruments and

methods trump subject and content **appropriate** assessment tasks (h. and i.); and that learners should be given multiple opportunities to improve their results (f. and g.)

In summary, interpretations of the *National Curriculum Statement* assessment documents have resulted in a great variety of assessment practices in schools, and teachers and parents experience assessment as a key obstacle to the successful implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement*. During the hearings, this point was made repeatedly in every province, and has led to widespread teacher frustration and dissatisfaction²³. In this section of the report, we identify the issues that arose most prominently in submissions in relation to assessment in particular. These include issues of clarity, overload, the number and nature of assessment tasks, recording and reporting requirements, promotion and progression, and the issue of the GETC and the exit examination for Grade 9 learners.

Assessment practices - clarity and overload

In general, teachers find the Assessment Standards too generic and unclear in terms of what is to be assessed and how it should be assessed. This has led to varied and inconsistent assessment practices between schools, districts and provinces. There are also multiple requirements for assessment.

The lack of **clarity** and common understanding around assessment has also led to widespread misunderstanding among provincial support staff and subject advisors and district officials. This has contributed to provincial and district interpretation and support for assessment, which has resulted in the policy layering referenced above. In the absence of clear guidelines, officials appear to have taken a highly bureaucratic approach to assessment, insisting on particular forms of recording. A tick list approach in many instances simply ascertains whether all assessment standards have been covered, rather than considering the quality of the assessment procedures and whether the appropriate content is being covered²⁴. Many teachers described the process as burdensome and technicist. With the increase in school-based assessment, there has also been a strong emphasis on moderation and cluster meetings in order to increase standardization of assessment across schools. Aside from eroding teaching time, teachers reported that the number of meetings, and the constraints imposed in terms of the requirements mean that the meetings become empty exercises without sufficient diagnostic support to improve learning²⁵. Almost every teacher in the provincial hearings raised the issue of the administrative burden with regard to assessment.

In the absence of a clear assessment policy, in practice in many contexts there is an insistence that assessment is to be done against *all* assessment standards in the curriculum. Whilst it is not clear whether this is the intention of the policy, what it results in is an extremely onerous administrative task of listing assessment standards and checking them off a list. Two issues

²³ Hearings in all provinces

²⁴ Singh, VP (Subject advisor) submission

²⁵ Mhlongo, J. (HOD) submission

compound this. The first is the lack of content specification in the curriculum. Because of the lack of specification of content in the assessment standards (see section below) especially in the GET phase, teachers reported finding it difficult to link assessment tasks to standards. In other words, there is also a problem in the alignment of assessment with intended learning as encapsulated in the *National Curriculum Statement* documents. The second issue is the large number of learning areas at Intermediate Phase. In the Northern Cape hearing, one submission explained that nine Learning Areas, each with 16 annual assessment requirements per annum, results in 144 pieces of assessment multiplied by the number of learners in a class. This could therefore require a teacher to score over 7000 assessments in one year. The issue of curriculum overload in the Intermediate Phase is dealt with in more detail below²⁶.

The *Subject Assessment Guidelines*, the *Protocol on Assessment* and the *Foundations for Learning (FFL)* documents set out the number of formal assessment tasks to be completed each year per Learning Area / Subject. There were very few submissions that commented on the number of tasks prescribed. Those submitted were in relation to the languages in Grades 10 - 12²⁷, and the Intermediate Phase. However, there were submissions that indicated that some district officials require that one prescribed task has three or more components, effectively increasing the number of tasks²⁸. This practice is particularly prevalent in the Intermediate and Senior Phases.

While it is very important that teachers are given clear guidance as to how many assessment tasks they should administer each year, this number should be reasonable, appropriate to the subject/learning area, and also to the level at which learning is taking place.

Forms of assessment

In terms of the usefulness and quality of assessment methods, parents²⁹ and teachers³⁰ widely cited the unnecessarily complex and unhelpful assessment demands on themselves and their children/learners, such as portfolios, research tasks and projects. Apart from the generally superficial nature and the lack of educational rigour of these tasks, the review team was concerned that they do not offer equal opportunities for learning across communities. Rural and economically disadvantaged learners do not have access to appropriate resources, nor do their parents understand the complexity of assessments such as research projects, resulting in futile activities.

Submissions to the Review described at least five different problems in relation to the nature of the *National Curriculum Statement* assessment tasks. The first is that, in the quest for a variety of assessment types, all Learning Areas and subjects have included one or more **project** or

²⁶ Northern Cape hearings

²⁷ Glen High Schools submission; Boksburg High School submission; Hoerskool Fochville submission

²⁸ Eastern Cape and Free State hearings

²⁹ For example, Oosthuizen, A. (parent) submission;

³⁰ Hearings in all provinces

assignment as part of the formal programme of assessment. While there were very positive responses to project work, where it was well supported and carefully scaffolded, a number of parents and teachers indicated that these projects are time-consuming, require resources such as libraries and the Internet and often result in either parents doing them or plagiarism³¹. In addition, projects are often poorly set and provide no scaffolding or guidance. Lynne Janse van Rensburg, a teacher and parent describes it this way: 'My child (in Grade 11) has just come with an assignment: Research the problems and solutions of wild dogs and elephant in the Kruger National Park (no other instructions / details are provided with respect to the topic. There is no information in the textbook or library.'³²

A second set of criticisms is leveled at the **Performance Assessment Tasks (PATs)** for Grades 10 -12. These tasks test the practical aspects of 16 *National Curriculum Statement* subjects. The following PATs were criticized for being expensive, overly demanding or inappropriate for the subject: Civil Technology, Mechanical Technology and Computer Applications Technology³³. A number of teachers also asked that the PATs be provided to schools by the end of September of the year before administration³⁴.

A third concern about the nature of assessment tasks is that formal assessment tasks are prescribed and set by the district. There are a number of problems identified with this practice.

- Many of the tasks do not match progress in the school's teaching programme (that is there a mismatch between assessment and curriculum coverage). This is a particular problem with the CTAs as the content is not specified³⁵.
- The tasks are of a poor standard and/or quality. Grade 10, 11 and 12 portfolio tasks set by the district were reported to have many mistakes in the tasks as well as the memos³⁶. The CTAs and SAT are roundly criticized for being riddled with errors. There were many calls for the CTAs to be scrapped or reviewed³⁷.

The fourth problem described in the submissions is that province and districts run common exams for grades 10, 11 and 12. This means that examinations run over four to five weeks to accommodate all 29 *National Curriculum Statement* subjects and considerable teaching time is lost in June and August³⁸. Many schools could run exams over two weeks for the subset of *National Curriculum Statement* subjects they offer if there was not a common timetable for exams.

³¹ Kwazulu Natal hearings

³² Janse van Rensburg, L (teacher, parent) submission

³³ Botha, L. (teacher) submission; Chandler, LL (teacher) submission; Sewry, D. (lecturer) submission

³⁴ Western Cape, Gauteng hearings

³⁵ Kwazulu natal, Western Cape, Gauteng hearings

³⁶ Boksburg High School

³⁷ Johan (teacher, Hoerskool Voortrekker) submission

³⁸ Eastern Cape and Free State hearings

Finally, guidelines for assessment, particularly in the GET phase are offered in generic terms, often not taking into account the nature of particular subjects/learning areas. This may be interpreted to mean that all forms of assessment should be applicable to all subjects/learning areas. Subject-specific assessment guidelines need to be developed in order to meet the demands of the particular knowledge in question.

To summarise, forms of assessment need to incorporate a range of assessment. Formal examinations and tests, as well as projects and research are required to develop and evaluate a range of skills that learners require for further learning. Whilst projects and research develop crucial skills of retrieving information, solving problems and thinking critically and creatively, students need to have a store of knowledge on which they base their thinking. The latter is developed through learning (including memorizing) content, concepts and skills for tests and examinations.

Reporting and recording

The majority of submissions received for this review complained about the excessive paperwork required by the *National Curriculum Statement*.³⁹ This paperwork is concerned with two aspects of the *National Curriculum Statement*: planning and assessment. In terms of assessment, the administrative burden appears to lie in three areas: ‘

- Recording and reporting learner performance against learning outcomes and assessment standards
- Learner portfolios
- Changing requirements

Recording and reporting learner performance against learning outcomes and assessment standards

As noted above, in the absence of clear policy many teachers are given directives to assess against each and every assessment standard. This is onerous in terms of a) ‘unpacking’ the assessment standards, especially when they are vaguely formulated and do not specify content or skills; b) covering a vast number of separately stipulated ‘bits’ of content; and c) demonstrating coverage through the numbering and recording of the learning outcomes and assessment standards.

Learner portfolios

The maintenance of learner portfolio files is seen by many as time-consuming, expensive and not adding any value to the learning experience⁴⁰. Much time is spent by teachers managing the portfolios in line with requirements set by subject advisers. One submission puts it this way:

³⁹ KwaZulu Natal, Gauteng, Eastern Cape and Western Cape hearings

⁴⁰ Western Cape, Gauteng and KwaZulu Natal hearings

'Portfolios dien geen doel behalwe om mooi te lyk. In vandag se ekonomiese omstandighede is dit onnodig. Los dit eerder en gaan terug na die verlede waar assessering somme in die skrifte of toetsboek geplak is.

One of the consequences of keeping learners' assessment evidence in a file is that learners do not receive their assessment tasks and so do not learn from the assessment experience. The Parktown Girls' High School submission suggests: 'Scrap the formality of Portfolios and all the bureaucratic checking processes associated with this. Learners must work in books or files which should be at school on the days they are needed.'⁴¹

Changing requirements

It was reported that subject advisers or facilitators change the requirements for reporting and recording of assessment constantly and this requires additional administrative work. The Avante Primary School submission states that facilitators constantly 'change the format of worksheets and assignments and paperwork gets worse by the day'.⁴²

Promotion and progression

There were numerous comments in the submissions and hearings regarding promotion and progression requirements⁴³. Many of these flowed from recent changes in requirements issued by the Department. The comments related to the timing of the announcement of the changes, coming as they did to many schools in March when reporting on student progress for the first term had already been finalized. Other comments referred more generally to the clarity of the requirements, and the criteria to be used. Many teachers in the GET phase pointed out the ambiguity of the wording of the requirements – for example 'adequate' referring to more than one grading level. There were strong calls for the same wording and grading to be used across both GET and FET phases⁴⁴. In this regard, teachers favoured the FET policy. In addition, several parents and teachers called for the use of percentages to support the narrative wording for assessment and reporting, as these are easily and widely understood by parents, and are in any case being used by many schools across the country⁴⁵. Promotion from Grade 9 to Grade 10 was highlighted as particularly problematic. This is addressed below.

The GETC

In the teacher hearings across the provinces, there was widespread concern that the lack of focus on measuring and improving progress through 'proper examinations' in the GET phase⁴⁶. Many submissions noted that the transition to the FET phase from Grade 9 is problematic, and

⁴¹ Parktown Girls' High School

⁴² Avante Primary School submission

⁴³ All nine provinces; Graaff, V. (teacher) submission

⁴⁴ Palse, B. (deputy principal) submission

⁴⁵ Sieborger submission

⁴⁶ Limpopo and KwaZulu Natal hearings

learners are unprepared for the final three years of schooling. 'Learners in the province get to Grade 10 without having written a single exam in the GET phase'⁴⁷. In an attempt to do justice to their learners, diligent schools run parallel assessment processes, contravening official policy, but achieving greater success in terms of using assessment for accountability and learner improvement.

One of the problems is that the role of assessment and the standards at which learners should perform for promotion purposes is not clear. For the GET exit level outcomes, CTAs are currently used, but as noted above the quality of these assessments is inconsistent and often questionable. In many instances, the content does not reflect what is taught in classrooms, a problem stemming from both curriculum coverage in the school and content stipulation in the curriculum⁴⁸. The CTAs are unsuccessful in offering a systemic measure of learning at this level, or evaluating readiness of learners for the FET phase. A number of alternatives were suggested in the hearings and submissions, including introducing external, systemic testing at this level in core knowledge (especially language and mathematics), and devolving the setting of CTAs to the school level⁴⁹.

It is likely that bringing greater specificity to the stipulation of the content, concepts and skills to be learnt, especially in the GET, will help to address a number of the problems with assessment recorded here. We deal with the issue of specification in detail in the next section.

Continuous assessment versus examinations

In the introduction to this section we flagged the issue of school based assessment, or continuous assessment versus examination-based, external assessment. This has been an enduring concern, which has remained largely unresolved since *Curriculum 2005*. Currently, the assessment emphasis in the GET band is internal and formative, using continuous assessment against a set of standards that are in many cases inadequately defined in the curriculum policy. External testing of the learning of students is subordinated to school-based judgments about the adequacy of students' performance. As the Curriculum 2005 Review report argued, however, externally set standards are the only credible method of "demonstrating either to parents or to the state whether learning is happening or not, or to what extent". The Report argues that clear norm-referenced assessment statements or standards are essential. This is further supported by recent research by Van der Berg (Umalusi, 2009b) which shows the discrepancy between the scores on continuous assessment tasks compared to those achieved by students in the final school leaving examination. Particularly in low performing schools, continuous assessment marks are vastly inflated.

⁴⁷ Leslie, G. (teacher) submission

⁴⁸ Hoerskool Wonderboom submission

⁴⁹ Sieborger submission

Clearly school-based, continuous assessment is important for the reasons given earlier. However, it is also clear that a finer balance needs to be struck between internal and external measures of students' learning.

Recommendations

- A consistent set of terminology and **grading descriptors** for Intermediate, Senior and FET phases must be used to ensure consistency and clarity in the system. The current set of Grade 7 to 12 percentages and codes should be used from grades 4 to 12. (January 2010)
- There should be regular, external, **systemic assessment** of Mathematics and Home Language and the testing must be extended to First Additional Language (English) for all learners in grades 3 and 6. (2011)
- CTAs should be replaced with annual **national testing** for *all* Grade 9 learners in Mathematics, Home Language and First Additional Language (English) to ensure successful transition to the FET phase. Progression from Grade 9 to 10 will be based on current policy, requiring a 40% pass mark in English; 40% pass mark in English First Additional Language, and a 50% pass mark in Mathematics. (2011)
- Promotion and progression requirements must be clarified and finalized for 2011, and be aligned with the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents. (September 2010)
- The number of **projects** as an assessment requirement must be reduced to one project per year per learning area. A range of potential projects should be issued by the DOE, and carefully scaffolded in order to assist teachers and learners in meeting the requirements. (January 2010)
- **Learner portfolios** as separate, formal compilations of student assessment tasks must be discontinued. All learners' work must be kept in their books or files, to be at school for moderation purposes when required. The administrative load associated with compiling assessment requirements for learner portfolios will thus be reduced. (January 2010)
- Clear, simple and subject-specific assessment guidelines should be included in the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* to replace complex and generic assessment requirements. (September 2010)
- The balance between year marks and exams should be 50% year mark and 50% examination mark for grades 4-9, and 25% year mark and 75% examination mark for grades 10 to 12. (January 2010)

Chapter 4

CURRICULUM STRUCTURE AND DESIGN

Large-scale, international studies of curriculum (such as TIMSS) indicate some of the features of the formal curriculum, which are associated with higher performing countries in internationally standardized tests. These include adopting a strong, discipline-based approach to school subjects; providing clear, specific, easily understood and measurable curriculum documents linked to textbooks; and providing curriculum statements that specify content at specific year levels, showing conceptual progression over time. The review of *Curriculum 2005* identified a number of these issues in criticizing *Curriculum 2005*, indicating the importance of conceptual coherence; content specification; and sequence and progression in the curriculum.

The *Curriculum 2005* Review report (DOE, 2000) made the strong argument that as a matter of accountability and equity, greater guidance and support was required, especially in content specification. In this section, we consider some of the gains that have been made in addressing these aspects of curriculum design, and some of the areas where further work may be done. Taking the criteria above, we consider the submissions and a documentary review of the National Curriculum Statement documents in relation to the following curriculum dimensions:

- Curriculum coherence – the overall sequence or order of the curriculum from one grade to the next, and whether internal disciplinary principles are evident in sequencing;
- Curriculum specification – whether the curriculum provides clear, specific, easily understood and measurable statements of learning, especially regarding content; and
- Sequence and progression – the extent to which the curriculum indicates progression (in terms of content, concepts and skills) across grades.

The brief of the review team was explicit in that it was not the curriculum that was under review but rather its implementation. In this section, we do, however, highlight a number of key issues pertaining to the structure and design of the curriculum as reflected in the curriculum policy and guideline documents. This is a result of the review team finding that there were several issues in relation to curriculum coherence, and in the specification of what is to be taught and assessed in different learning areas / subjects, that contributed to the difficulty of implementing the *National Curriculum Statement*.

In the hearings and submissions, there was overwhelming support for the curriculum, especially for its specification at the Foundation Phase and FET levels. The discussion below indicates some of the problem areas identified.

Curriculum coherence

The articulation between the GET and FET bands

Under the structuring of the NQF, formal schooling was split into two bands – Grade R to 9 which was to culminate in the General Education and Training Certificate (Band 4) and Grade 10 to 12 which formed part of the Further Education and Training band, and in the formal schooling sector culminated in the National Senior Certificate examination. These two bands fall under different directorates within the national Department of Education. It is clear from the curriculum, that there is a lack of co-ordination between these structures and that there is a lack of articulation between the GET and the FET curriculum. Transition between these bands is thus rendered difficult for both students and teachers. The lack of articulation pertains centrally to the shift from integrated learning areas in the GET, to discipline-based school subjects in the FET. This shift raises issues of the breadth and depth of coverage at the two levels.

There is far greater subject knowledge required for the beginning of Grade 10 than is currently provided at the end of Grade 9. This is more problematic in certain subjects. For example, teachers noted problems with the shift from EMS to Accountancy in Grade 10, with the basis for Accountancy not having been adequately covered in previous grades⁵⁰. Part of the problem is the shift from learning areas to subjects. Many teachers reported that when required to teach learning areas in the Senior Phase they generally concentrate on the subject that they know best. Consequently, learners are unevenly prepared in terms of the content when they reach Grade 10. Natural Science was raised as particularly problematic with teachers in the GET concentrating on the Life Sciences and on Matter and Materials, neglecting the more difficult concepts required for the introduction to Physical Science in Grade 10⁵¹.

There are also gaps in terms of approach and assessment. As noted above, assessment in FET is heavily biased towards examinations, and in GET towards continuous assessment. Also indicated earlier, the emphasis on group work in GET to individual work in FET presents a challenge for teachers and learners in making the transition. There is a need to consider the alignment between GET and FET. A starting point may be clearer articulation of the GET exit level requirements, and how these may be matched to the requirements for Grade 10. Attention also needs to be paid to cognate disciplines *within* learning areas, ensuring that key concepts for further progression in these disciplines are covered. This is addressed further below.

The articulation between Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase

The other problematic transition point compromising curriculum coherence is between the Foundation Phase and Intermediate Phase. Two fundamental issues present significant challenge to teachers in implementing the curriculum at these levels and require attention. The

⁵⁰ KwaZulu Natal and Gauteng hearings

⁵¹ Govender submission

first is the shift from three learning programmes in the Foundation Phase to eight learning areas in the Intermediate Phase (but actually nine, as all learners take two languages). The second is the change to English as a language of instruction in Grade 4, and learner preparedness for this.

Intermediate Phase learning area overload

Currently at Foundation Phase level, there are three learning programmes: Literacy, Numeracy and Life Orientation. Life Orientation incorporates elements from all eight learning areas. At Intermediate Phase, learners take nine learning areas, similar to those offered throughout the GET Phase. The hearings and submissions made it clear that the number of learning areas to be offered at Intermediate Phase level presents a significant challenge to teachers and learners⁵². In the actual curriculum policy and documentation, there is some contradiction around the number of learning areas to be taught in the Intermediate Phase. In the *National Curriculum Statement Overview* document, it states that, aside from Languages and Mathematics, “Schools may decide on the number and nature of other Learning Programmes based on the organizational imperatives of the school” (p. 15). In the *National Curriculum Statement* documents for these subjects, certain combinations are suggested (for example, combining Natural Science with Technology). However, no allowance is made for these kinds of combinations in the learning programmes, and in the assessment guidelines it clearly states that all assessment standards in all learning areas must be covered.

The teaching of a large number of learning areas creates a substantial administrative burden for teachers when attempting to show planning for all learning areas in relation to the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards. As noted above, the number of assessment tasks across the various learning areas also presents a challenge. Further, learners are reported to find the shift to nine different learning areas (and in many cases, different teachers and books) too demanding⁵³. Thirdly, it is quite clear that nine learning areas is too many to do justice to, if one wants to devote sufficient time to language and mathematics. In many of these learning areas there is a significant amount of repetition of content in the Senior Phase, and thus content can be caught up satisfactorily at this level⁵⁴. The question of teaching all four elements of Arts and Culture is also raised here, and whether teaching two or three depending on the expertise and resources in the school would result in more meaningful learning for students.

The key argument, however, is that reducing the number of learning areas would free up space in the curriculum for strengthening the key gateway subjects for further learning, especially mathematics and languages. This is particularly important in relation to learners who are learning English as a First Additional Language. The latter issue is taken up further below.

⁵² All nine provinces in all hearings; Molefe, N. (teacher) submission

⁵³ For example, Nthuli, S. (parent) submission; Agnew, A. (teacher) submission

⁵⁴ Sieborger submission

Language policy

The highest enrolment of any subject in the NSC is English as a First Additional Language. In 2007, 490 404 out of 564 775 Grade 12s (i.e. 87%) wrote this subject (DOE, 2007). We also know that the majority of our learners undergo the majority of their schooling learning and being assessed in English, as their second language. Crucial attention needs to be paid to issues of language, in particular the first additional language, English, which remains a strong predictor of student success at school.

The problems around language stem from the first years of schooling. Both reports of teachers⁵⁵ and research shows that many schools are delaying the introduction of English until Grade 3 – the year before learners are expected to learn through the medium of English (Prinsloo, 2009). Students' proficiency in English by the end of Grade 3 is not sufficient for them to make the transition to English as the Language of Learning and Teaching (LOLT) in Grade 4. The quality of both mother tongue and English instruction has been questioned in the early grades (de Klerk, 2000). Whilst policy states that English is to be taught alongside mother tongue from Grade 1, in practice there is confusion as to when English is to be introduced. Part of this can be attributed to the emphasis on mother tongue instruction (especially in the Language Policy). There is also confusion around how additive bilingualism, the official policy informing the way in which mother tongue and the LOLT is managed in instruction, is implemented in practice.

The Foundations for Learning campaign does not address this issue. Although clear outlines for the teaching of phonics is provided for English, it is not provided for all languages. There is a lack of clear steps and texts to be used in teaching reading and writing in mother tongue and English in parallel. Recent proposals encourage the teaching of mother tongue until Grade 6, whilst at the same time developing English in preparation for adopting it as the LOLT. However, clear curriculum guidance as to how this may be achieved is not provided, and the status of the directive remains unclear. Furthermore, there is not as yet sufficient and thorough research to prove that it is better to make the change to English as LOLT in Grade 6 rather than Grade 3; and without the existing language policy having been properly implemented, it would be premature to put the pressure on the system of such a significant change without due process and consideration. English, as a First Additional Language, needs greater specification in the curriculum, with attention paid to preparation for the use of English across the curriculum. Clarity is also required around the differences between home language instruction and the teaching of English as the FAL, providing precise criteria and pedagogical steps for this. It is important to recognize that second language learners have special requirements (Christie, 2005), and thus transposing English mother tongue instruction as a model onto the teaching of English as a FAL is inadequate.

In view of the discussion above, the issue of time allocation for the teaching of languages is key. If the medium of instruction and English as the LOLT are to be taught in parallel, weighting

⁵⁵ For example, Louw, D. (publisher) submission; Hearings in Gauteng, KwaZulu Natal

should be considered. Currently, the Intermediate Phase curriculum does not provide enough time to adequately address the language needs of most of our learners. More time needs to be made available in preparing learners for English medium of instruction, and the use of English across the curriculum. In short, official policy regarding the teaching of languages needs to be clarified and communicated to teachers and there needs to be clear support to implement this policy in curriculum documentation. Finally, more textbooks and texts in African mother tongue languages need to be made available to teachers.

Curriculum specification, sequence and progression

An overwhelming finding of the review process is that the specification of the curriculum is very uneven. Most of the problems raised in the hearings and submission regarding curriculum specification were at the Intermediate and Senior Phase levels⁵⁶. With the initiation of the Foundations for Learning campaign, a far greater level of clarity is available to teachers around what to teach and how to teach it at Foundation Phase level. Similarly, at the FET level, in particular in the *Subject Assessment Guidelines*, most teachers in most subjects reported being satisfied with the level of specification. It is clear that more careful work, along the lines of the *Foundations for Learning* and the *Subject Assessment Guidelines*, needs to be done at the Intermediate and Senior Phase levels. As was suggested in the section on assessment, this may start with specifying the exit requirements for the GET (aligning these to the FET level), and consequently working downwards to determine the precise requirements for each grade level in each learning area in the Intermediate and Senior Phases. In what follows, we argue that several of the problems around curriculum specification and clarity stem from the central design features of the *National Curriculum Statement*, namely Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards.

Learning Outcomes

For the last ten years, outcomes-based education has been under persistent attack in South Africa. A wide range of both local and international research argues that outcomes inhibit the clear specification of what content, concepts and skills need to be taught and learnt (Muller, 2000; Jansen, 1999; Allais and Taylor, 2007; Donnelly, 2005; Young, 2002;). The main criticisms of OBE argue that by focusing on attitudes, dispositions and competencies, outcomes fail to give adequate specification of essential learning. In addition, the research argues that there is a lack of a strong and clearly articulated educational justification for OBE, or research evidence to prove its success or worth (Donnelley, 2005:37). What results from an OBE based curriculum are curriculum and assessment descriptors that are often vague, ambiguous, difficult to measure and low in academic content (ibid.:38).

Although the National Curriculum Statement is still characterized as being based on OBE, it is clear in both official and public discourse, that OBE means very different things to different people. Since the review in 2000, the DOE has progressively moved away from OBE, at least in

⁵⁶ Punt, L. (DCES) submission

the various understandings of it under *Curriculum 2005*. The current process of review supports this move away from OBE. In particular, where it inhibits clear specification of what is to be learnt, it is suggested that outcomes be replaced with clear content, concept and skill standards and clear and concise assessment requirements. The current review also strongly recommends that clarity is communicated around some of the understandings from the past (indicated earlier) that are associated with OBE but no longer privileged in official thinking (such as the neglect of textbooks and the over-use of group work).

In the current curriculum, Learning Outcomes have become subordinated as the central curriculum organizers especially at FET and Foundation Phase levels. In the Intermediate and Senior Phase, however, they still constitute the central organizer along with assessment standards. The problem is that the specification of learning in learning outcomes, assessment standards and content standards is uneven across learning areas, subjects and levels. Some learning outcomes focus on processes (such as in Technology and Natural Science); others are content based, derived from sub-disciplines of the discipline (e.g. Mathematics), whilst others focus on skills (e.g. Language). Further, the learning outcomes are designed to apply across all grades from R to 12. This creates artificial similarities around what is learnt at different levels, and requires that the outcomes be specified in a general (and at times, vague) way. This also inhibits progression in some cases. We argue that it is not necessary to have the same learning outcomes across all levels, but that it would make more sense to select the skills, content and concepts most appropriate to learning at different levels, and specify these clearly.

Assessment Standards

Assessment Standards, the other central curriculum organizing device for the curriculum, are intended to indicate progression and demonstrate the ways in which the Learning Outcomes may be achieved. In the hearings and submissions, Assessment Standards were argued to be too numerous, at times vague, and limited in the extent to which they show progression⁵⁷. They also fail to specify the level at which students should be performing.

In short, specification in both the Learning Outcomes and the Assessment Standards is uneven, as are the ways in which these learning areas indicate progression (this is especially weak in Natural Science). In this way, the central design features have continued to constrain the specification of the curriculum. At present Learning Outcomes do provide a very broad general sense of what a subject or learning area is about, but we argue that they are ineffective in providing a means for 'designing down' what to teach.

Designing Learning Programmes

The logic underpinning OBE with regards to teachers' practice, is that they use the learning outcomes to organize their teaching, and in developing a learning programme, they 'cluster' relevant assessment standards and appropriate content to achieve this outcome. If the

⁵⁷ Roosevelt High School submission; Stemmet, C. (teacher) submission;

outcome is specified at a relatively generic or vague level, then what learning is measured at the end remains open. Many teachers in the hearings expressed confusion around the fact that they are required to match Learning Outcomes with Assessment Standards, and ‘cluster’ assessment standards at the GET level. They reported struggling to ‘unpack’ assessment standards and link these to specific assessment tasks. Often what results is a mechanical and bureaucratic process of listing learning outcomes and assessment standards to show that these are covered, without opening up for teachers the logic of what they are doing in the classroom. In addition, the process distracts from the teaching and learning of the subject. A submission from a Senior Education Specialist put it this way: “Teachers spend more time in trying to interpret and teach the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards through various activities rather than focusing on the teaching and application of concepts. Learners are more often exposed to a series of activities with no idea of the concept being addressed”⁵⁸.

Further, this bureaucratic approach to ‘covering’ assessment standards is underscored by moderation processes. Exam papers, portfolios and learning plans are often approved on the basis of whether they are covering specific Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards⁵⁹. This is particularly problematic when the moderator (usually a curriculum advisor) is not conversant with the Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards of the subject⁶⁰. In other words, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards are no guarantee that the key content, concepts and skills are being covered. This is particularly the case when Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards do not include content.

In short, rather than providing teachers with a clearer specification on what to teach, the outcomes and assessment standards are distracting and divert teachers’ energy from constructing meaningful lesson plans and assessment tasks.

Significant gains have been made in the clarity of what teachers are expected to teach in both the *Foundations for Learning* documents and in the *Subject Assessment Guidelines* at FET level. In the former, Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards are replaced with milestones which specify content under topic / skill headings. In the Subject Assessment Guidelines, assessment divisions indicate a finer grain of specification of concepts and content to be covered, *specific to the level being taught*.

Content specification

A key dimension related to the successful implementation of curriculum relates to the detail and clarity provided by policy in relation to what to teach. Recent research by UMALUSI (2009a), as well as hearings and submissions indicate that in certain key FET subjects (with the highest enrolments in the National Senior Certificate) the content and/ or skill topics to be covered is extremely clear in the *National Curriculum Statement* (Umalusi, 2009a:38). Guidance

⁵⁸ Singh submission

⁵⁹ Gauteng, Western Cape, KwaZulu and Free State hearings

⁶⁰ Western Cape, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu, Gauteng and Free State hearings

in other subjects and at other levels, however, is uneven. Most learning areas in the Intermediate and Senior Phases still lack clarity, and certain subjects in the FET require further content specification. Teachers in the hearings expressed enthusiasm for greater content specification in the subject assessment frameworks for the FET level, and in the Foundations for Learning⁶¹. Progression was also reported to be clear across grades for FET subjects. Submissions to the review did reveal, however, that teachers found it difficult to sift through content, especially at the Intermediate and Senior Phase levels, where content is found in different forms and in different documents and at different levels of specificity.

For example, in Geography, content is found in different forms in three different documents. In addition, it is underspecified. At the GET, Natural science is under-specified. In this Learning Area, Assessment standards tend to be worded fairly generally in the *National Curriculum Statement* documentation. The Learning Outcomes are expressed as broad investigation skills, devoid of content. Several comments focused on the fact that the “content is hard to see”⁶². In addition, and different from all the other Learning Areas, content is specified by phase not grade in GET Natural Science. This is particularly problematic in relation to the production and use of textbooks – which are written for *grades*, and presents problems when students move schools. Several submissions also focused on the integration of physics and chemistry, regarded as an artificial collapsing of knowledge domains. Although integrated in the Statements, they are assessed in two independent papers.

Finally, numerous submissions focused on the new subjects – Technology and EMS. In Technology, it was argued that the learning outcomes are so process-oriented that it is difficult to generate content. In practice, no particular qualifications are required to teach the learning area, even though it forms the basis for specialized subjects in the FET band. Students are consequently not receiving the appropriate foundation for specialization⁶³. Furthermore, learners who do not have access to appropriate, required resources for economic or geographical reasons, and are consequently severely disadvantaged in the Technology Learning Area in the GET phase⁶⁴.

The learning area EMS at Grade 8 and 9 levels covers Accounting, Business Studies and Economics. The content aims for breadth rather than depth, resulting in inadequate preparation for any future specialization in one of these subjects. For example, the transition to Accounting in Grade 10 is rendered particularly problematic, especially given that Financial Accounting serves as the point of departure for the Grade 10 curriculum, whilst this is not covered in any depth in the GET phase⁶⁵.

Currently content is specified in the *National Curriculum Statement* both to different degrees of specificity and in different forms. Considerations around the format of presentation of content

⁶¹ Hearings in all nine provinces; Hastings, L. (teacher) submission; Reid, M. & Smit, I (SMT team) submission;

⁶² Govender, D. (Subject Advisor) submission; Taylor, W. (HOD) submission

⁶³ Eastern Cape hearings

⁶⁴ Eastern Cape hearings; Claassen, NJ. (principal) submission

⁶⁵ National Examining Panel for Accounting submission

are crucial. Some formats are more likely than others to convey the logical development of subjects and their conceptual progression. What we are suggesting is a reformatting of the curriculum in terms of clear content standards, dealing with content gaps where they exist, making sure that progression is clear, and aligning assessment to curriculum statements. Now more than ever, when there is a great deal of uncertainty and instability in the system, we need to provide the clearest expression for teachers around what they are expected to cover.

Pedagogy

There was a strong call from teachers for guidance regarding how to realize the content: that more explicit direction regarding *how to teach* a particular subject is given. Umalusi (2009) reports that at the FET level, while the desired sequencing of content and skills is clear, this is not always the case for the means for achieving this progression (p. 41).

In relation to methodology, Umalusi reports that Physical Science, Life Sciences, and Geography provide more detail with respect to subject-specific teaching approaches and methodologies. In relation to Mathematics, both at GET and FET levels, problem-solving methods are advocated, but there is little guidance as to the mechanics of such an approach. In English FAL, there are detailed subject-specific approaches, centrally a *Text-based Approach* and *Communicative Language Teaching*. Suggestions and strategies, combined with examples, useful competency descriptors, assessment rubrics and other tools necessary for following guidelines in the classroom are provided (ibid. 42). As noted above, however, consistency across documents is required as contradictions regarding pedagogical approaches appear across different documents, especially between the *Learning Programme Guidelines* and the *National Curriculum Statement*. As also noted above, textbooks have a crucial role to play in exemplifying how to teach. It is important, however, that these are aligned with clear guidelines in official curriculum policy.

In reference to points raised earlier in the report, tracks of past curriculum reform, and pedagogical approaches no longer privileged in the current curriculum should be addressed and clarified for teachers. Because many of the misconceptions related to curriculum inhere in various notions of OBE, the review supports the DOE's move away from OBE and advocates that this move be clearly communicated to all. It is crucial that confusion and uncertainty in the system be addressed.

Recommendations

- The new *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents must consist of curriculum and assessment statements which are clear, succinct, unambiguous, measurable, and based on essential learning as represented by subject disciplines. Design features of OBE, especially learning outcomes and assessment standards, should not be featured in the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents, and should become part of the General Aims of the curriculum, similar to the Critical and Developmental Outcomes. The documents should be organized around the knowledge (**content, concepts and skills**) to be learnt, recommended **texts**,

recommended **pedagogical approaches** and **assessment requirements**. The latter will specify the level at which content, concepts and skills are to be taught, and how and when they should be assessed.

- The current curriculum has come in for severe criticism for knowledge gaps, especially in terms of the specification of content to be taught. These gaps must be addressed in the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents. In particular, the Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase curriculum needs content and assessment specification.
- The number of **learning areas in the Intermediate Phase** should be officially reduced to six, and should be reflected in the statements of learning and in the assessment requirements. We suggest the six learning areas in the Intermediate Phase to be: Home Language; First Additional Language; Mathematics; Natural Science (including Technology); Human and social science; Life orientation (including Arts and Culture). Time made available through the rationalizing of learning areas in the Intermediate Phase should be reallocated to the teaching of language and mathematics, and should be distributed in the following way:
 - Home Language: 20%
 - First Additional Language 20%
 - Mathematics 20%
 - Natural Science (including aspects of Technology) 13%
 - Human and Social Science 13%
 - Life Orientation (including aspects of Arts and Culture) 14%
- The teaching of **English as a First Additional Language** must be given priority, both in the provision of appropriate textbooks and reading material, and in clear specification for teaching mother tongue and English as the language of teaching and learning in parallel. English must be taught from Grade 1.

Chapter 5

SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: LTSM

Overview

The mandate of the panel did not specify that the two critical areas of support for curriculum implementation, Textbooks (and LTSM) and Teacher Training, should be investigated or reported on. The reasons given were that other processes within the DOE were considering these areas. At the first panel briefing, however, the panel was in agreement that good quality, content- and methodology-rich textbooks (and teaching guides) and teacher training were both fundamental to successful curriculum implementation, and so would be considered in the review. In all nine hearings with teachers across all provinces, this view was justified. The issues constantly emerged as obstacles to teachers' successful implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement*. Teacher training was reported to be too generic, of poor quality, and inadequate in providing real support for curriculum delivery. Textbooks were reported to be of uneven quality and insufficient to provide to all learners.

An important factor that the review team has deliberated on with regard to LTSM and teacher training is that for these two critical success factors for implementation to be successful, there is no 'one size fits all' solution. With almost 12 million learners and over 400 000 teachers in the system, needs and contexts vary considerably from school to school and from province to province. We therefore recommend that in future careful research and planning needs to underpin any teacher training that may be offered in support of the curriculum, and that teacher training needs to be targeted in terms of who is offered training and what the training focuses on. For LTSM, we recommend that there is sufficient choice and variety of quality LTSM to suit the wide range of learning contexts and teacher needs, and that a centrally controlled screening process provides quality assurance of textbooks.

Textbooks and LTSM

"A good textbook contains, in a single source, a comprehensive study programme for the year-it lays the curriculum out systematically providing expositions of the concepts, definitions of the terms and symbols of the subject in question, worked examples of standard and non-standard problems, lots of graded exercises, and answers". (Taylor 2008)

Both national and international research has repeatedly underscored the role of the textbook as one of the most effective tools through which to deliver the curriculum and support assessment. Not only can it ensure curriculum content and assessment coverage, but it can also offer appropriate pacing and weighting of content and assist teachers with lesson and year planning. This is especially important during periods of curriculum and assessment reform. In *Curriculum 2005*, the role of the textbook was subordinated to the idea that teachers should develop their own learning materials. Rather than working systematically through a single book,

teachers were encouraged to ‘dip in and out’ of textbooks, and to develop their own worksheets and other curriculum support materials. More recently, the National and Provincial DOEs have taken positive steps to encourage more use of textbooks, but teachers are still not sure whether textbooks can be used for their planning purposes. The idea that teachers should always develop their own learning materials needs to be addressed. Teachers in the hearings expressed frustration with the idea. In one hearing a teacher stated ‘we are not paid and do not have the time to develop the curriculum’. It also emerged that teacher loads have resulted in their own materials often being of poor quality. Thorough development of a full year of teaching resources that offer adequate pacing, varied and rich content and appropriate methodology, practice and exercises requires a vast investment in time, research and skill. This excessive planning erodes time that teachers should be spending teaching and marking.

Other forms of LTSM are also critical to educational success. In the formative years of learning mathematics and language, particularly in the Foundation Phase, children need to work with reading books, manipulatives and visual stimuli when introduced to new concepts. Providing a print rich environment, especially for children who come from homes that lack books and reading material, is critical to the development of the ability to read well.

In the teacher hearings, teachers in the FET Phase complained specifically that the constant policy change has resulted in the need for regular LTSM changes⁶⁶. Where provinces have not procured the textbooks for subjects that have had substantial changes (FET), teachers have complained that their textbooks do not cover the curriculum⁶⁷. As textbook procurement is a provincial competency, the DOE will need to work with provinces to coordinate such changes so as not to disadvantage learners in the FET Phase in any way.

The current systems for the vetting and procurement of textbooks are very complex, and differ from GET to FET and from province to province. The situation is further exacerbated by the categorization of schools into Section 20 and Section 21 schools. This complexity has the effect of causing inefficiency, quality unevenness and wastage in the system.

Screening and catalogues

The FET branch of the NDOE has centralized evaluation and cataloguing of approved books for the *National Curriculum Statement* for FET. This has resulted in a better quality, streamlined approved list from which schools in all provinces may choose their preferred textbooks, and has shown to work very well for several years. The centralized nature of the approval process has enabled the DOE to ensure that subject and assessment experts screen the submitted textbooks. In several cases these experts have been the same people who developed the curriculum and the subject content and assessment guidelines. In the teacher hearings, this system and this catalogue were often referred to as being effective.

⁶⁶ Free State, Eastern Cape and Mpumalanga hearings

⁶⁷ February, D. (teacher) submission

The LTSM process for GET has been completely different from the FET process. Provinces have screened LTSM and put together their own catalogues. As a result, there is inconsistency in the quality and breadth of these nine GET catalogues. While they do offer variety, textbooks are often of poor quality. In the teacher hearings, it was repeatedly pointed out that many textbooks in the GET catalogues were not very useful to teachers.

In 2009, there is a move towards screening and developing a national catalogue of LTSM for the GET phases, and this should be supported. The GET branch should ensure that in selecting screeners, they target subject experts who are familiar with the national curriculum. Textbooks included in the GET approved LTSM catalogues need to be strongly aligned with the newly developed Curriculum and Assessment policy.

Procurement methods

Across the nine provinces, there are more than nine different systems of procurement. While in recent years there have been significant improvements in LTSM delivery, there is on-going discord between the government imperative to develop local entrepreneurs and the need to get quality textbooks efficiently into learners' hands. Textbooks are an additional 30% more costly due to the complex supply chain that exists between the publisher and the DOE. Another challenge is one of legacy and the constitution, where provinces have historical methods of procurement, and are operating within the ambit of their constitutional mandate. A streamlining of systems into two or three options would bring more efficiency into the procurement of LTSM.

Section 20 and Section 21 Schools

The spirit underpinning the designation of schools as Section 21 schools is that these schools are ready and able to manage themselves effectively, without direct government intervention. However, in recent local and international systemic evaluations, many Section 21 schools performed as poorly as their Section 20 counterparts. Many of them are not following recommendations for setting aside a particular ring fenced portion of their funding allocation for the procurement of LTSM. Many Section 21 school children do not have the bare minimum of textbooks, even in schools where fees are relatively high. This is especially the case in provinces such as the Eastern Cape and Free State, where teachers complained bitterly in the hearings that they often had one textbook for 20 learners, even in the FET phase.

This begs the question as to how the monies given to these schools have been utilized. Such anomalies between these two types of schools are widespread and the DOE should review the mechanism used to determine the schools' status. There should be a firm set of principles put in place to achieve this status, including demonstrated financial management skills, learner performance in systemic testing, effective school systems and procedures, etcetera. Once schools achieve this status and are empowered to manage their own funding, regular audits need to take place to ensure that they are following the guidelines issued by the national and

provincial DOEs. In the interim, this review suggests that control of textbook acquisition and distribution for both Section 20 and Section 21 schools should be allocated to provinces.

Recommendations

- A **national LTSM catalogue** needs to be developed and the approved textbooks need to be aligned with the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*. Textbooks on the national catalogue need to be of excellent quality, and offer appropriate content and methodology, as well as assessment support. Subject experts should participate in the evaluation of textbooks. **(2010 onwards)**
- Mechanisms and guidelines need to be developed so that the DOE is able to manage textbook pricing effectively while offering teachers a range of high quality textbooks to suit their contexts and needs.
- The **useful role of textbooks** and other LTSM needs to be communicated to teachers. Teachers should be encouraged to use nationally approved textbooks and Teacher's Guides, for both planning and classroom teaching, to ensure that the curriculum is covered in the year (supporting appropriate content coverage, sequencing and pacing). **(January 2010)**
- Control of textbook acquisition and distribution for both Section 20 and Section 21 schools should be allocated to provinces. **(2010 onwards)**
- Each learner from Grade 4 to Grade 12 must have their own textbook for each learning area / subject. The DOE must issue guidelines to schools of formal procedures for **textbook retrieval**, based on current best practice. **(2011)**

Chapter 6

SUPPORT FOR CURRICULUM IMPLEMENTATION: TRAINING

Along with LTSM and especially textbooks, effective teacher training is crucial to the successful implementation of the curriculum. In this section, we highlight some of the central issues that emerged in the hearings related to teacher training. Fundamentally, the aim of training in the current period should be focused on re-asserting teachers' roles as subject experts and supporting them in their work in the classroom. This review limited its brief to teacher training in support of effective curriculum implementation. The DOE has other processes in place to address the needs and challenges around teacher education and training in general.

Initial training in Higher Education Institutions

Teachers and schools in the hearings and submissions reported that many newly qualified teachers have deficiencies in respect of their subject or Learning Area specialisations and it would appear that they often have not been adequately prepared in respect of appropriate methodologies. A more general observation is that new teachers (as well as more experienced teachers) are not confident about assessment. If new entrants to the profession were equipped with the necessary knowledge and skills with regard to the curriculum, then the need for ongoing training would be reduced over time.

Targeted training

Training for both Curriculum 2005 and the National Curriculum Statement was shown to be too superficial and too generic. It is increasingly clear from our history of curriculum training that a one-size-fits-all approach is not effective. There was a strong call in the hearings for subject content training and for subject-specific training. Other specialist areas, such as teaching LSEN and multi-grade classes were also raised. Because of different histories, different groups of teachers have very different needs. Broad categories of teachers, based on their specific needs, should to be identified and targeted for training.

Training of all curriculum stakeholders

One of the problems with prior training initiatives for the *Curriculum 2005* and *National Curriculum Statement* reforms was that many of the departmental officials (the trainers) themselves had a relatively poor understanding of the curriculum (and OBE in particular) and provided teachers with superficial information. In addition, they often contradicted the policies, which has resulted in confusion and uncertainty among teachers. Some of these "OBE myths" persist and are still perpetuated in training that is more recent. It appears to be difficult

to dislodge some of the myths, especially around the role of group work and the marginalizing of textbooks, “assessing outcomes” and recording learner performance against all Assessment Standards.

It also emerged in the hearings that there is confusion amongst district officials, including subject advisors, provincial officials and principals around understanding their role in relation to implementing the curriculum. It is important, therefore, that *all* of these stakeholders receive targeted training in any future revisions of curriculum. This should include clarity around roles, document and policy status, and what aspects of previous curricula are no longer applicable.

Training for effective time use

Research has shown that one of the crucial obstacles to effective teaching and learning is the loss of teaching time (Chisholm et al, 2005). All training therefore needs to focus on preparing teachers, both in terms of what they teach but also their professional orientation, towards teaching for a given number of hours a day. In this way, curriculum coverage and improved learning outcomes are likely to be supported.

Recommendations

- In-service teacher training should be **targeted** to where it is most needed. Training needs to be subject-specific.
- Principals, HODs, District and provincial support staff need in depth training on roles, curriculum content and assessment requirements to be able to support teachers effectively.
- HEIs should align their teacher training programmes with national curriculum policies.
- All training, in all contexts, must be underpinned by the principle that teachers should be actively teaching for a minimum number of hours a day, every day. This should be determined and enforced by the DOE as soon as possible.

Chapter 7

TEACHING CONTEXTS

Although beyond the strict mandate of the review, this section makes some brief observations on the contexts of teaching as reported in the hearings and submissions. The understanding behind this reporting is that the conditions under which teachers work is central to their ability to enact the curriculum. Further, if we are to remain faithful to the methodology of the review (to privilege teachers' experience of curriculum implementation), we would be remiss in not reporting on issues that emerged repeatedly in the hearings and submissions. Although we do not make recommendations, we maintain that the crucial issue of the material conditions in which teachers work needs to be taken into account when thinking about curriculum implementation. Without addressing some of these issues, it is both unlikely, and unfair, to expect teachers to be able to implement the curriculum as intended.

Management of curriculum

A crucial aspect impacting on the implementation of curriculum that emerged from the hearings was the school management's capacity to mediate the curriculum. This has two aspects. One is mediating the demands (especially for recording and reporting) and systematizing administrative procedures to lighten the burden for teachers. The other is in the mediation of the interpretation of curriculum documents for implementation in the classroom. Not all principals of schools are equally conversant with the curriculum, especially in schools where principals do little or no classroom teaching themselves. Furthermore, recent large-scale research has shown that principals do not regard the management of the curriculum as their primary responsibility.

SMT support for curriculum implementation (role specification)

There is lack of clarity around roles and responsibilities within school management teams for the mediation and implementation of the curriculum. This pertains to principals, but most crucially to HODs. It is not clear to what extent schools deploy phase or subject heads, and what their functions and responsibilities are. Another reality that emerged from the hearings was that while HODs are in a higher pay class, and are thus remunerated for their management functions, subject heads are not. Their additional administrative and supervisory roles are not compensated financially. The role of school management, including HODs becomes particularly important in the selection and ordering of LTSM. It would appear that expertise and responsibility for this crucial task is not clear in many schools.

Staff management

Staff rotation

It appears that in a number of schools teachers are regularly rotated, thus not being able to teach the same learning area / subject for more than a year. This leads to a number of problems, largely related to workload. Planning has to begin anew for new learning areas, and practices aren't regimented or routinised over time.

Number of Learning Areas taught

It was apparent that in some schools teachers taught a large number of different learning areas. This is particularly so in the Intermediate Phase, but pertained to teachers teaching across phases and in senior phase. The workload burden when teaching multiple learning areas increases substantially given the unique recording and reporting of assessment in each learning area.

Lack of Learning Area specialisation

There are also a number of teachers who are teaching outside of their area of specialization. In particular, a shortage of teachers for Computer Studies, Technology, Arts and Culture and EMS was regularly reported. As remarked in the section on training, teachers did not receive specialized training for the teaching of these new learning areas.

Overcrowding

There were an overwhelming number of comments regarding overcrowding, and the difficulty of implementing the curriculum in large classes. In particular, this made informal assessment difficult, and formal assessment extremely onerous for teachers. Although there is clear stated policy regarding the teacher: learner ratio for all schools, certain school level factors are impacting on the sizes of classes. These include:

- Shortages of classrooms;
- Management responsibilities of staff reducing their teaching load and increasing that of other teachers;
- Negative incentives for principals to take in additional learners; and
- Shortage of subject specialists.

The issue of overcrowding requires further investigation and amelioration.

Multi-grade

No specific training has been provided for teachers teaching multi-grade classes, and there is a lack of policy guidance for these teachers. Issues such as managing different content at different levels, and classroom management were particularly problematic for these teachers. Best practice for multi-grade classes exist regionally as well as internationally, particularly regarding classroom management and specific learning programme development. The panel was surprised and concerned at the number of multi-grade classes that exist in the schooling system, and further research and support is needed in this area, for educational quality as well as equity reasons.

LSEN

LSEN emerged strongly as an issue for teachers. On the one hand, there is a lack of guidance to teachers on how mainstreaming LSEN works in practice. On the other hand, there was widely reported neglect of these students by teachers. No additional support in terms of curriculum guidelines or LTSM is made available. The functioning of District Based Support Teams, which are meant to offer support regarding ELSEN learners, needs to be investigated and improved where necessary. Clear guidelines should be made available to teachers, and training where necessary.

Chapter 8 CONCLUSION

The report has considered the findings from a series of hearings with teachers across all nine provinces, and from submissions from a range of stakeholders, including teachers, school management, provincial officials, unions, parents, and academics, made to the review team tasked with considering the implementation of the *National Curriculum Statement*. The report considered a number of obstacles to successful implementation, and several pressure points in the system that require addressing in order to ensure quality learning and teaching in our schools. The report focused on specific aspects of implementation identified both before and during the period of investigation. These included: Policy and guideline documents and processes of curriculum delivery; assessment; curriculum design; and teacher support in the form of LTSM and training. The recommendations have focused on increasing support to teachers, providing greater guidance to them in documentation, and alleviating their workload where possible. A unique opportunity has presented itself for the new Ministry of education to consolidate the gains from previous curriculum reform and revision, and to provide teachers with curriculum support to ensure better learning for all South African students.

Chapter 9

RECOMMENDATIONS

In this section, we provide a synthesized version of the recommendations provided throughout the report, along with timelines for implementation

Five year plan

- A coherent, clear, simple *Five Year Plan to Improve Teaching and Learning* across the schooling system needs to be developed and adhered to; it must be clearly and widely communicated to the nation, and the improvement of learner performance must be its central theme. **October 2009**

Streamline and clarify policies

- The current set of *National Curriculum Statement* documents should be rationalized into a set of single, coherent documents per subject or learning area per phase from Grade R to Grade 12. Discrepancies in and repetition of information in the different *National Curriculum Statement* documents (especially the *National Curriculum Statement; Learning Programme Guidelines; and Subject Assessment Guidelines*) must be resolved. These new documents need to be made available to *all* schools, district offices and to parents via print and digital media. In other words, *everyone* should have access to the national curriculum in the form of a comprehensive document. The documents should be prepared for September 2010, for implementation at the beginning of 2011. The Foundations for Learning documents, and the Subject Assessment Guidelines at FET will provide useful starting points for production of the new *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*. **(October 2009 to September 2010, for implementation January 2011)**
 - The new document should be titled *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*. The documents should be prepared with a minimum number of design features.
 - The new *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents must consist of curriculum and assessment statements which are clear, succinct, unambiguous, measurable, and based on essential learning as represented by subject disciplines. Design features of OBE, especially learning outcomes and assessment standards, should not be featured in the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents, and should become part of the General Aims of the curriculum, similar to the Critical and Developmental Outcomes. The documents should be organized around the knowledge (**content, concepts and skills**) to be learnt, recommended **texts**, recommended **pedagogical approaches** and **assessment requirements**. The latter will specify the level at which content, concepts and skills are to be taught, and how and when they should be assessed.
 - Development of the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents should be overseen by the same persons from Grade R to Grade 12, to ensure **coherence** and smooth transition across phases, especially from Grade 3 to 4 and from the GET to

FET phases. Experts in learning areas and subjects at the different levels should be designated to write the documents. The current Foundations for Learning campaign, popular and helpful for teachers, must be incorporated into the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*.

- The current curriculum has come in for severe criticism for knowledge gaps, especially in terms of the specification of content to be taught. These gaps must be addressed in the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents. In particular, the Intermediate Phase and Senior Phase curriculum needs content and assessment specification.
 - The documents should be thoroughly edited for **consistency, plain language** and ease of understanding and use. Presentation of what teachers are expected to teach must be standardized and easy to retrieve from the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* document.
 - The **Foundations for Learning**, which has addressed many of the current problems with the *National Curriculum Statement* documents, must be implemented in all schools in **2010**.
 - Where appropriate teachers should be given guidance and support in the documents on how to teach specific content / concepts and skills, particularly in areas of difficulty. Clarity on the appropriateness of certain **methodologies**, such as group-work, should be provided.
 - An annual appendix for elective content must be issued to schools by September of the preceding year for which the content and assessment requirements is prescribed.
 - Separate, special guideline documents for ELSEN and for multi-grade classes will be developed, aligned to the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents.
- A strong campaign should launch these new consolidated documents in order to clarify the status of the documents in relation to other documentation available up to now. The documents should have the status of **policy. (October 2010 to March 2011)**
- There must be clarification of the roles and responsibilities at national, provincial and district levels with respect to curriculum production, dissemination and monitoring and support of implementation to ensure that reinterpretation and layering of policy is avoided. **(October 2010)**

Clarify the role of subject advisors

- Subject advisors' roles as **school-based subject experts** must be affirmed. A job description and performance plan for subject advisors that focus their work on the delivery, implementation and moderation of the curriculum, and offering subject specific support to teachers must be tabled. **(End 2009)**
- The role of subject advisors as school level moderators must be asserted. **Cluster meetings** for moderation purposes should be limited to an annual meeting for teachers,

Draft report

focused on sharing information and considering other schools' examination papers and marking memoranda. **(End 2009)**



Teacher workload and Administrative burden

- The three levels of **planning** must be rationalized and duplication in the process must be addressed. Each teacher should have a single *Teacher File* for this purpose. The Teacher file should consist of an annual work schedule; assessment plan; formal assessment tasks and memoranda; textbook to be used; and a record of each learner's marks per formal assessment task. Planning should indicate sequence, pace and coverage. Lesson plan development should be at the teacher's discretion and teachers should be encouraged to use good textbooks for planning purposes. At the school level, the teacher developed year plans and assessment plans need to be pulled together to form a comprehensive year plan for the school. There must be no duplication of administrative work. A consolidated record of learners' marks that pulls together individual teachers' marks must be compiled at school level. **(January 2010)**
- Responsibility for oversight of the curriculum needs to be centralized within the DOE. As of September 2009, **circulars** related to any recommended changes to the national curriculum, its implementation or assessment should be made only once a year. No changes may be made after September for the following year. All changes need to be passed through the CMC and HEDCOM, and issued through a DG circular. **(September 2009)**

Assessment

- A consistent set of terminology and **grading descriptors** for Intermediate, Senior and FET phases must be used to ensure consistency and clarity in the system. The current set of Grade 7 to 12 percentages and codes should be used from grades 4 to 12. **(January 2010)**
- In Grades 3 and 6 there should be regular, external, **systemic assessment** of Mathematics and Home Language and the testing must be extended to First Additional Language (English) for all learners in these grades.
- CTAs should be replaced with annual **national testing** for *all* Grade 9 learners in Mathematics, Home Language and First Additional Language (English) to ensure successful transition to the FET phase. Progression from Grade 9 to 10 will be based on current policy, requiring a 40% pass mark in Home Language; 40% pass mark in English First Additional Language, and a 50% pass mark in Mathematics. **(2011)**

Draft report

- Promotion and progression requirements must be clarified and **finalized (for 2011)**, and be aligned with the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* documents.
- The number of **projects** as an assessment requirement must be reduced to one project per year per learning area. A range of potential projects should be issued by the DOE, and carefully scaffolded in order to assist teachers and learners in meeting the requirements. **(January 2010)**
- **Learner portfolios** as separate, formal compilations of student assessment tasks must be discontinued. All learners' work must be kept in their books or files, to be at school for moderation purposes when required. The administrative load associated with compiling assessment requirements for learner portfolios will thus be reduced. **(January 2010)**
- Clear, simple and subject-specific assessment guidelines should be included in the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy* to replace complex and generic assessment requirements.
- The balance between year marks and exams should be 50% year mark and 50% examination mark for grades 4-9, and 25% year mark and 75% examination mark for grades 10 to 12.

Transition and overload in the Intermediate Phase

- The number of **learning areas in the Intermediate Phase** should be officially reduced to six, and should be reflected in the statements of learning and in the assessment requirements. We suggest the following:

- Home Language	20%	
- First Additional Language (English)	20%	
- Mathematics	20%	
- Natural Science (including aspects of Technology)		13%
- Human and Social Science	13%	
- Life Orientation (including aspects of Arts and Culture)		14%
- The teaching of **English as a First Additional Language** must be given priority, both in the provision of appropriate texts, and in clear specification for teaching mother tongue and English as the language of teaching and learning in parallel. English must be taught from Grade 1 and this should be policy. This will support a smoother transition from Grade 3 to 4. **(January 2010)**

LTSM

- A **national LTSM catalogue** needs to be developed and the approved textbooks need to be aligned with the *Curriculum and Assessment Policy*. Textbooks on the national catalogue need to be of excellent quality, and offer appropriate content and methodology, as well as assessment support.
- Mechanisms and guidelines need to be developed so that the DOE is able to manage textbook pricing effectively while offering teachers a range of high quality textbooks to suit their contexts and needs
- The **useful role of textbooks** and other LTSM needs to be communicated to teachers. Teachers should be encouraged to use nationally approved textbooks and teacher's guides, for both planning and classroom teaching, to ensure that the curriculum is covered in the year (supporting appropriate sequencing and pacing).
- Control of textbook acquisition and distribution for both Section 20 and Section 21 schools should be allocated to provinces.
- Each learner from Grade 4 to Grade 12 must have their own textbook for each learning area / subject. The DOE must issue guidelines to schools of formal procedures for **textbook retrieval**, based on current best practice.

Teachers and training

- In-service teacher training should be **targeted** to where it is most needed. Training needs to be subject-specific.
- Principals, HODs, District and provincial support staff need in depth training on curriculum content and assessment requirements to be able to support teachers effectively.
- HEIs should be required to align their teacher training programmes with the national curriculum policies.
- All training, in all contexts, must be underpinned by the principle that teachers should be actively teaching for a minimum number of hours a day, every day. This should be determined and enforced by the DOE as soon as possible.

REFERENCES

- Allais, S. (2006). Problems with qualification reform in senior secondary education in South Africa. In M. Young, & J. Gamble, *Knowledge, curriculum and qualifications for South African Further Education*. Cape Town: HSRC Press.
- Allais, S., & Taylor, N. (2007). A nation in denial. *Paper presented at the Kenton Education Conference*. Phumula, KZN.
- Chisholm, L., Hoadley, U., & wa Kivilu, M. (2005). *Educator Workload in South Africa. Final report prepared for the Education Labour Relations Council*. Cape Town: Human Sciences Research Council.
- Christie, F. (2005). *Language education in the primary years*. Sydney: UNSW Press.
- De Klerk, V. (2000). To be Xhosa or not to be Xhosa ... that is the question. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 21 (3), 206.
- Ensor, P., Hoadley, U. Jacklin, H., Kuhne, C., Schmitt, E., Lombard, A. (2009). Count one count all: Numeracy in the foundation phase. In S. Pendlebury, L. Lake & C. Smith (Eds.), *South African Child Gauge 2008/2009*. University of Cape Town: Children's Institute.
- Department of Education. (2000). *A South African curriculum for the twenty first century: report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*. Pretoria: DOE.
- Donnelly, K. (2005). *Benchmarking Australian Primary School Curricula*. Canberra: Australian Government: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- Fullan, M. (2001). *The new meaning of educational change* (3rd ed.). NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.
- Jansen, J. D. (1999). Why outcomes-based education will fail: An elaboration. In J. Jansen, & P. Christie, *Changing curriculum: Studies on outcomes-based education in South Africa*. Cape Town: Juta.
- Muller, J. (2000). *Reclaiming Knowledge: Social Theory, Curriculum and Education Policy*. London: RoutledgeFalmer.
- Prinsloo, C. (2009). Building a strong foundation: Learning to read; reading to learn. In S. Pendlebury, L. Lake & C. Smith (Eds.), *South African Child Gauge 2008/2009*. University of Cape Town: Children's Institute.

Draft report

Schollar, E. (2008). *Final report: The primary mathematics research project 2004-2007: Towards evidence-based educational development in South Africa.* .

Taylor, N. (2008, July). *Whats wrong with South African schools?* Retrieved from JET Education Services: www.jet.org.za

Umalusi. (2009a). *From NATED 550 to the new National Curriculum: maintaining standards in 2008.* Pretoria: Umalusi.

Umalusi (2009b). *Continuous assessment: Is it worth keeping?* Proceedings on the 'Improving Public Schooling Seminars' series. Pretoria: Umalusi.

Young, M. (2002). Educational reform in South Africa (1990-2000): An international perspective. In A. Kraak, & M. Young, *Education in Retrospect: Policy and Implementation Since 1990.* Pretoria: HSRC.