

EDUCATION THROUGH ACTION



edu-peg

13
years

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Dear Comrades & Friends

Education has been much in the limelight over the past 6 weeks, but not necessarily always reflected in a positive light. In late May, our national Education Minister, Naledi Pandor delivered her budget speech, themed “Affirming Excellence and Challenging Mediocrity”. “We have appeared far too tolerant of mediocrity in its many guises and extremely neglectful of that which works and of those who are doing what must be done”, she said. “We tolerate too much that it unprofessional. We tolerate late-coming, little and sometimes no teaching, constant under performance and poor academic success”, she goes on to say “We tolerate mediocrity in teaching....”

Closely following this speech, came the Western Cape 2006 Numeracy and Literacy results of the Grade 3's. In October and November of 2006, 82 789 pupils from 1086 primary schools took part in this study. Previous studies took place in 2002 and 2004. The objective was to look at the extent to which pupils meet the requirements of the national curriculum for Literacy and Numeracy, in Grade 3. The literacy rate has improved; from 39.5 % (in 2004), to 47.7 % (in 2006), an increase of 8.2 %. This still leaves more than 50 % of learners unable to read at Grade 3 level. The numeracy rate however has declined from 37.3 % in the previous study, to 31 %, a decline of 6.3 %. Mr. Ron Swartz, Western Cape head of education said: “It seems clear that the drop in numeracy can be attributed to teachers’ knowledge of the Learning Area, as well as the various and appropriate methodologies to teach numeracy more effectively”.

“An area of concern in the schools is the lack of group work and differentiation that we see in the classes. Of the more skilled teachers, some could be attempting this but they need strong encouragement and support for risking this.” Quoted by one of our trainers, Ms. Shirley du Plessis in her report on training into the Uitenhage schools, Eastern Cape.

Teacher training and re-training programmes were areas identified by Robert Prince, director of UCT’s numeracy centre, as essential routes to improve teachers’ knowledge. However, the practice of teaching this knowledge was also highlighted. Inadequate resources are frequently cited as an obstacle for quality teaching.

“Education delivery is dependent on structures like school buildings and bureaucracies, but the structures themselves do not educate. So in the end it is really about people”, says Dr. Lydia Able, the director of The Schools Development Unit at UCT. At Edupeg, we continue to focus on this personal aspect, and the building, and on-going maintenance, of relationships. During the recent industrial action in schools, we were still welcome and able to interact with a large portion of our (Western Cape) schools’ personnel. (We cancelled our Eastern Cape and Kwa-Zulu Natal training for the rest of the term). Intimate and personal discussions took place with educators who were at schools and teachers were appreciative of our trainers’ support and input.

Planning is a key component of the new curriculum, at all levels, and this is an area with which many educators battle. Teachers need to be supported to understand that “planning before, during and after a process, means being able to identify issues and develop planning strategies that are SMART (Sustainable,



Once teachers get to know all of the resources which they have been given, they will be better be able to integrate them and use them judiciously, making use of their different strengths for various functions and in different contexts, to best fulfil the outcomes of their lesson. (At present, often NO planning takes place)! Once the resources have been integrated into their (the educators) planning, teachers should begin to see the benefit and positive outcomes of planning (more successful lessons) and repeat this activity (planning).



utilisation of Edupeg in lesson planning is valuable, where the programme activities can be used for the introduction of a topic/concept, for exposition and explanation, for consolidation, for revision and for assessment.



“Learners benefited a great deal from learning to read the rubrics and becoming accustomed to dealing with a number of different instructions and mathematical language, which assisted the learners when dealing with external evaluation and tests”. Observation from a principal.



Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, and Time-bound)"- Dr. Lydia Able. Through using the model of planning lessons with the educators, having them teach the lesson and then discussing the strengths and weaknesses of the lesson, we are trying to assist teachers to see the value of this practice and to utilise planning daily, for all Learning Areas.

This is a far cry from where many educators are presently, as many teachers do little or no planning at all. We also try to foster phase and grade planning, where strengths and weaknesses can be shared. We also try to engender the fostering of communication between schools in a cluster. Through this interaction, we hope to support the development of interpersonal relationships (between educators) as well as the development of confidence and self-esteem, as teachers grow in competence.

June has been a very challenging month in education and at Edupeg, 16 June 2007, marked the 31st anniversary of the uprising of school children, in Soweto and in other parts of South Africa, where the unfair, inferior, inadequate and racially divided education system was rejected. "Still today, equalising education provision and opportunity remains a complete and demanding challenge in a still deeply divided society". – Shireen Motala, director of Education Policy Unit, Witwatersrand University. Education is now compulsory for all children of school going age. The dispensing of an un-biased curriculum to children in overcrowded classrooms, continues to be addressed and education practice and policy has undergone a radical transformation and restructuring has been great. The significant structural and systemic changes have focussed on transformation of redress, access and quality education for all. Poverty and inequality continue to be highlighted, as well as their impact on learners. Pro-poor education, no fee-paying schools, school feeding and transport and funding policies at both national and provincial level to favour poor provinces, continues to be pursued. The way forward includes ensuring that all of South Africa's children have *meaningful* access to *quality* learning. To achieve this, we must ensure that teachers have better knowledge and skills to transmit the curriculum and that pupils are supported, enabled and motivated to progress through a system where basic skills are acquired and these are built upon, until higher level skills are attained. At Edupeg, we seek to be part of this process.

"Using a resource well and with confidence is a skill that in most cases has to be learned. We often over-estimate the capacity of the educators that we are dealing with and presume on skills that are not there. The handling, sharing and care of a resource, independently getting to know what is in the resource, seeing the possibilities for its use in one's teaching, incorporating it into one's planning and preparation, doing thorough preparation for lessons, having the confidence to adjust the way one uses something as one observes what happens when it is used, are all skills which we expect educators to have. However, as we move through the schools and become more trusted as we build relationships with educators, we see more and more that many of these skills and attitudes are simply not there. Our work becomes far more than showing one particular resource to the educators but is largely concerned with teaching these underlying skills and above all, with building the self-confidence and a sense of responsibility of these educators. Progress often seems depressingly slow but as we continue, we become more and more aware of the scale of the task". Quoted by one of our trainers, Ms. Shirley du Plessis in her report on training into the Uitenhage schools, Eastern Cape.

Our relationship with our donors is of immense importance to us. We would like to thank all of our donors, whose generosity sustains our project and whose confidence (in us) and support (of us) we sincerely appreciate. *Thank you!*

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An excerpt from Worth-e, the newsletter of The Shuttleworth Foundation. This is the educational environment into which we work.

A MESSAGE FROM THE TEAM

"A bleak picture is painted by our Education Trends this month. Problems that have dogged the Global South, despite record investment, are increasing. HIV/AIDS, poor teacher treatment and malnutrition are preventing children reaching their potential and ensuring that Africa remains dependant upon philanthropy, rather than a sustainable economy.

According to a new study, poor pay is a key factor in the decision of many South African teachers to seek work in the United Kingdom. The as-yet-unpublished study by Oxford research fellow Dr K Ochs, surveyed 192 teachers recruited from other Commonwealth countries to jobs in the UK. 90 % of the South Africans who responded said they did not consider financial packages at home attractive enough, compared to a figure of just 60% in Australia.

One thousand teachers in the Western Cape were absent during the first two months of 2007 due to, amongst other reasons, stress. Teachers feel alone, unsupported and disillusioned."



Written activities promote methodical work, and methods and understanding can be evaluated.

THE WILD FOUNDATION



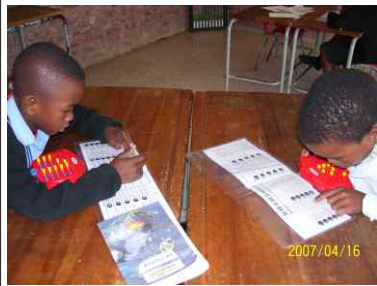
Our Journeys Change People's Lives



WESTERN CAPE GALLERY



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KWA-ZULU GALLERY



BOTSWANA GALLERY

