

# Renewal of Education in South Africa: The Problem of Implementation



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## Abstract

In striving to improve the current state of education in South Africa, learning from the way in which previous curricula were implemented could help to ensure that the new curriculum is managed efficiently. As far as the earlier interventions in education are concerned, first the role of the corporate sector, politics and the unions in the establishment of the Education Roadmap will be discussed. Secondly, the article examines the promises made by the State President Jacob Zuma as well as the government's good intentions to strive for excellence in education as documented in its Medium-Term Strategic Framework for the period 2009–2014. In the third place, the importance of managing change properly is underlined, linking with the statement by the education policy analyst, Graeme Bloch, that success is inextricably linked to the way in which the process is managed and translated into classroom practice. Finally, the implications of financial mismanagement in the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape Province are discussed, raising the question: how is it possible that education cannot succeed if a fifth of the national budget is allocated to education? By making various kinds of connections with the field of music, this article argues that cooperation between the Department of Education and experienced music teachers is essential in the drawing up and implementation of a new curriculum.

## Opsomming

In 'n poging om die huidige stand van onderwys in Suid-Afrika te verbeter, kan ondervinding van vorige implementerings van kurrikula help om te verseker dat die nuwe kurrikulum effektief bestuur word. Met verwysing na vroeër ingrypings in die onderwys word, eerstens, die rol van die korporatiewe sektor, die politiek en die vakbonde by die opstelling van die *Education Roadmap* bespreek. Tweedens betrek die artikel Staatspresident Jacob Zuma se beloftes en die regering se goeie bedoelings in die strewe na uitnemende onderwys soos wat dit opgeteken is in die *Medium-Term Strategic Framework for the period 2009–2014*. In die derde plek word die belangrikheid van behoorlike bestuur van verandering beklemtoon en word hier aangesluit by die ontleder van onderwysbeleid, Graeme Bloch, wat beweer dat sukses onlosmaaklik verbonde is aan die manier waarop die proses bestuur word en hoe dit in klaskamerpraktyk neerslag vind. Ten slotte word die implikasies van finansiële wanbestuur in die Oos-Kaapse Onderwysdepartement bespreek en word uiteindelik gevra: hoe is dit moontlik dat onderwys sulke swak resultate oplewer as dit 'n vyfde van die nasionale begroting ontvang? Deur op verskeie maniere by musiek aan te sluit, word hier geargumenteer dat samewerking tussen die Onderwysdepartement en ervare musiekonderwysers noodsaaklik is wanneer 'n kurrikulum opgestel en geïmplementeer word.

## Renewal of Education in South Africa: The Problem of Implementation<sup>1</sup>

Education in South Africa seems to have been in a constant state of renewal since the first democratic elections in 1994. Following early reforms, the implementation of Curriculum 2005 in 1998 was the first major change to the education curriculum (Jansen 1998).

Shortcomings in this curriculum were pointed out by the Curriculum 2005 Review Committee, which announced in June 2000 that a 'national curriculum statement is expected to be in place by June 2001 to remedy the flaws in Curriculum 2005' (Parliamentary Monitoring Group [PMG] 2004). However, the National Curriculum

Statement (NCS) was implemented only in 2002. In March 2008 the previous Minister of Education, Naledi Pandor, announced *The Foundations for Learning Campaign* in order to address the 'unacceptably low levels of literacy and numeracy' (PMG 2009).

Dissatisfaction with outcomes-based education (referring to Curriculum 2005) was again raised by the Education Roadmap of 2008 (discussed below). In June 2009 the newly elected Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, asked for comments on the National Curriculum Statement (Kriel 2009), which had been posted on the Department of Education's Information Portal of its website (Thutong). A revision of the National Curriculum Statement was eventually posted on the website in September 2010 (Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, abbreviated

as CAPS). The document gives January 2011 as the date of implementation (CAPS 2010: 2).

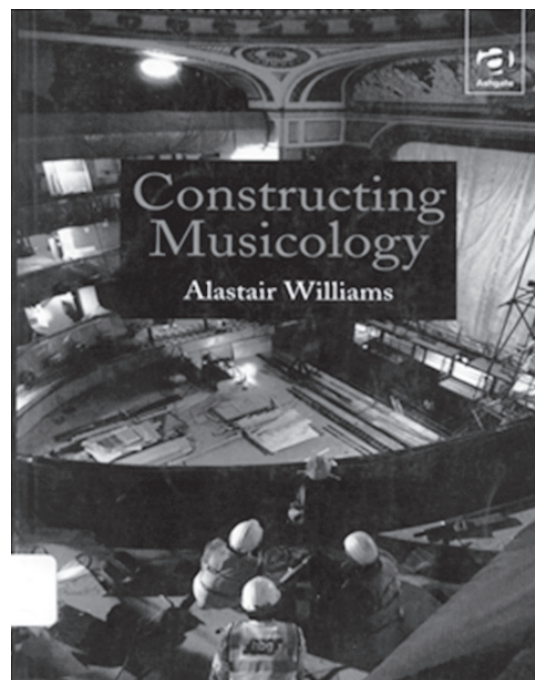
However, this document was revised again after problems had been pointed out. The new CAPS 2 document which came out in March 2011 was not made available to the profession for comments. In spite of problems which two chief examiners for music in Gauteng have pointed out, it will be implemented in 2012 (Bosman & Van der Watt 2011). One cannot help wondering 'how often can the education system expect to keep up with the changing demands?' (Bertram 2011: 39). Another serious question is: Were experienced teachers at all involved in the drawing up of the curriculum?

When education policy analyst, Graeme Bloch, delivered the keynote address at the opening of the Pan-African Conference on Early Childhood Development at the Sandton Convention Centre on 21 July 2009, he pointed out that South African children are not sufficiently equipped 'to compete and lead in a fiercely competitive and harsh international climate. ... Our results are amongst the worst in Africa – only some 30% of children in Grades 3 or 6 perform at the level required for literacy or numeracy' (Bloch 2009a). In the same week Barbara Creecy, MEC of Education Gauteng, addressing 1 000 principals of Gauteng-North and Tshwane district, said that it is of great concern that South Africa is losing its position of leader in Africa to countries such as Egypt, Nigeria and Angola, countries that are performing better and better (Rademeyer 2009a: 11).

In his State of the Nation address of February 2010 President Jacob Zuma announced that numeracy and literacy in Grades 3, 6 and 9 would be assessed on a national scale (Gordhan 2010). Pupils wrote these tests in the second week of February 2011. But anticipating the outcome, the Minister of Basic Education already predicted unsatisfactory results (Rademeyer 2011a: 5).

In this article I shall argue that the problem of education in this country can be solved if all stakeholders work together, or rather if they are *allowed* to work together. Considering the question of working together, I would like to make a metaphorical link with the picture on the cover of Alastair Williams's *Constructing Musicology* in which he discusses the forces at work in current musicology (2001: xi). The picture shows the restoration of the auditorium of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden as work in progress.

If this picture of a site under construction is viewed metaphorically, it can help to investigate the renewal of education in South Africa. I believe that the future of more specifically music education can best be served if it is seen as part of the bigger picture, whether it is of life in general, of the Department of Education that determines philosophy and policy, of the general school environment, of the academic world, of those who make music, and of the crowd of music lovers who love listening to music, whether in the form of CDs, concerts or live entertainment.



Restoration of the auditorium of the Royal Opera House, Covent Garden

This picture on the front cover of Williams's *Constructing Musicology* may represent various ideas.

- Workers are adequately equipped for their various tasks; they are skilled to do their jobs because this is a special building. Although these workers have different skills, they all have the same goal. In various ways we all work towards promoting music and music education in this country. But we cannot do this on our own – we have to work together. In 2010 the importance of co-operation was stressed by President Zuma in his inauguration speech. In Afrikaans he said: 'Laat ons mekaar se hande vat, en saam oplossings vind in die gees van 'n Suid-Afrikaanse gemeenskap. Die tyd het gekom om harder te werk.'<sup>2</sup>
- The crash helmets suggest that the labour may involve danger. The road towards mastering our various sub-disciplines of music is not an easy one.
- A lot of planning was necessary before the renovation of the Opera House could start. But there would have been no new Opera House without properly trained workers on site. Education in this country will only succeed with dedicated and well-trained teachers in the classrooms.
- In this picture there are no comfortable chairs or thick carpets. In our careers tough questions have to be faced and difficult problems solved, the most difficult being perhaps critically investigating our own strategies, methods, theories and preconceived ideas.
- We must also *do* something because thinking and doing go hand in hand, especially in the field of

music. The 'tools of the trade' suggest that it is not sufficient only to think and to plan.

This article therefore focuses on one way in which thinking is translated into doing, namely the implementation of school curricula. Without the doing, referring to the metaphor of the Opera House, the whole exercise is incomplete or even futile. It is impossible to cover all aspects of the implementation of school curricula within the limited scope of an article. Therefore only a few conspicuous issues will be dealt with here: first, the involvement of the corporate sector, politics and the unions; secondly, the government as custodian of education; thirdly, managing change; and finally, the implications of financial mismanagement.

## 1. The corporate sector, politics and the unions

After the ANC held its National Conference in 2007 the 'conference declared education as one of its major priorities for social transformation, and subsequently approached the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to convene a stakeholder process to examine problems in schooling and to develop possible solutions' (Kenny 2010: 1). In 2009 this bank 'played a central facilitating role on behalf of government in drawing up an Education Roadmap for the new incoming government of South Africa.' Graeme Bloch, education specialist at the DBSA, believes that '[e]ducation must go beyond being a concern of the education department, but become the concern of government as a whole' (2009b: 1, 3).

The process of drawing up the Education Roadmap proceeded as follows. During June 2008 the chairperson of the DBSA, Jay Naidoo, brought together the then Education Minister, Naledi Pandor, and the chair of the ANC education subcommittee, Dr Zweli Mkhize, to discuss the drawing up of an Education Roadmap. The DBSA agreed to initiate a stakeholder process to examine problems in schooling and to develop possible solutions. The participants in the project represented a range of ANC-aligned and non-ANC-aligned institutions, the unions, government and NGOs, while academics, including education specialists (but no school teachers) and other commentators appear at the bottom of the list. (See Appendix for the names of all the participants.) The Education Roadmap was adopted on 7 November 2008 (Bloch 2009b: 4-5). At the end of the final document entitled *Education Roadmap – Focus on schooling system* a 10-point summary is presented, also referred to as the 10-point plan.

Amongst several recommendations, the Education Roadmap asks for a revision of outcomes-based education: '[The NCS is] a fine vision, but in the reality of the average South African school, it does not hold true.' The Roadmap also stresses that the '[q]uality of teaching is central to the crisis' and that many skilled teachers left the profession after 1996. With regard to teachers, the document states that the '[s]ubject knowledge problem is a more serious issue than under-qualifications'. In this regard the following question

is raised: 'What is the subject knowledge of a teacher (of at least 15 children) who awards an average CASS (continuous assessment) mark for HG Maths of almost 80%, and whose class then performs at below 30% level?' (2008: 33, 26, 23). During November 2008 media reports referred to the crisis in education and the expected major changes, but focused mainly on the Roadmap's proposal to scrap outcomes-based education. In Graeme Bloch's words: 'I think we failed as a nation to prioritise education. There is no common vision and set of priorities so we can all pull together and contribute *in different ways* to make things work. It is not just up to government but a case of '*all hands on deck*' to solve the education crisis' (Niewoudt 2008: my italics).

This appeal for co-operation and inclusivity is laudable. However, what happened to the Roadmap, especially after the new government came into office? Did the government and politicians take note of the recommendations? Did they listen to education specialists, to the people who must implement the proposals, the officials in the Department and the teachers (not to mention the lecturers at tertiary level who have to train teachers and other lecturers who have to deal with the 'outcomes' of the National Curriculum Statement)? Earlier events in the history of educational reform do not suggest a positive answer. Referring to the launch of Curriculum 2005 in Cape Town on 24 March 1997, Jonathan Jansen, at that time attached to the Faculty of Education, University of Durban Westville, currently Vice-Chancellor of the University of the Free State, wrote as follows:

Leading up to this event, schools and their allies had been repeatedly warned by the National Department of Education that January 1998 was an 'absolutely non-negotiable' date for the implementation of what has only recently become known as OBE. ... Not a single official interviewed in the Department of National Education believed that OBE should be introduced so soon, yet they all work feverishly towards implementation at all costs (Jansen 1998).

Jansen gave ten reasons why OBE 'is destined to fail' in what was first read as a paper delivered during March 1997 and eventually as a published article in the following year. One of the reasons he gave was that the language of the curriculum is 'simply too complex and inaccessible for most teachers' to realize the new policies in the classroom (Jansen 1998). 'Having been there from the beginning, i.e. when COSATU first proposed competency-based education in the early 1990s, ... I still find the maze of jargon and tortured definitions intimidating.'

Teachers play a crucial role in the implementation of a new curriculum. Nevertheless, according to Jansen, Curriculum 2005 and OBE were implemented in 1998 'regardless of the calls of teachers for more time and training'. Two years later a plea to provide support for teachers was again made by the Curriculum 2005 Review Committee. In June 2000 this report did not call for an outright rejection of the curriculum,

but asked for its structural design flaws to be re-examined in order to bring about an implementable, streamlined curriculum for the 21st century, which was labelled Curriculum 21. Prof. Linda Chisholm, the chairperson of the committee, said the majority of teachers are committed to OBE principles, but seek clarity, simplicity and substantive professional support (PMG 2004). What is the prospect for the successful implementation of a curriculum if the corporate sector, politicians and teachers unions do not involve and listen to teachers, those stakeholders who, in the final instance, have to implement new ideas?

## 2. The government as custodian of education

Although certain strategies referred to by President Zuma and government officials can be linked to the Education Roadmap, it seems as if there was a kind of reluctance on the side of the government to implement the Education Roadmap. After the acceptance of the Roadmap in November 2008, the Director General of the national Department of Education refused to comment on it when he was approached by the staff reporter of the *Cape Argus* and referred the matter to the ANC (2008). *The Star* reported that the next step ‘was for the ANC’s NEC to sign off the Roadmap so that its interventions could begin next year’, that is, in 2009. While most educational sources who were approached by reporter Angelique Serroa did not want to comment on the record about the Roadmap (because they felt it would be premature to do so), the new president of the teachers’ union NAPTOSA, Ezra Ramasehla, said that the implementation of the Roadmap would result in major changes to the education system (Serrao 2008: 1).

In the light of the reluctance of governmental officials to comment, one may well ask whether the course of education in this country is dictated by politicians and the unions? The stranglehold of the unions on education is widely criticised. Two years ago Mamphela Ramphela, previously a Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, reports that ‘[w]e have the highest level of teacher unionisation in the world – but their focus is on rights, not responsibilities. It’s on employment, not professionalism. And the rights only pertain to the teachers, not the pupils.’ She also mentions the ‘countless principals who have been promoted who are Sadtu members and who are known to have misrepresented their qualifications and their experience. When the inspectors say no, Sadtu simply goes to the Education Department in the Eastern Cape and says: ‘We have deployed you to this position, you shall promote this person’.’ (2009: 18). Trevor Manuel, Minister in the Presidency, blames the unions ‘for some of the problems that are dogging the country’s education system’ (Govender 2011: 4) and Jonathan Jansen was enthusiastically applauded when he said at the 2011 Franschhoek Literary Festival that ‘[s]elf-serving ‘political’ organisations like the SA Democratic Teachers’ Union needed to be driven from schools if the standard of the country’s education is to improve’. He added that ‘school heads needed the authority

and the will to break the hold of the unions over the day-to-day affairs of their institutions’ (Donaldson 2011).

Addressing 1 500 school principals from all over the country in Durban in 2009, State President Zuma said that education is the number one priority of the government, as he has said on other occasions as well (Zuma 2009 & *Business Day* 2009). Although he used the first sentence of the Education Roadmap’s 10-point plan, ‘Teachers to be in class, on time, teaching’ (Roadmap 2008: 48) as the opening words of the well-advertised slogan from his inauguration speech of 2009, he does not specifically refer to the Roadmap by name (Zuma 2009). It is also not mentioned by the government’s Medium-Term Strategic Framework (MTSF) of 2009, nor does this Strategic Framework, entitled *Together doing more and better*, list education as one of its six strategic priorities. The government accepted this Strategic Framework ‘to guide Government’s programme in the electoral mandate period (2009–2014)’ on 1 July 2009 (MTSF 2009). The six strategic priorities are:

- 1 Speeding up growth and transforming the economy to create decent work and sustainable livelihoods
- 2 Massive programme to build economic and social infrastructure
- 3 Comprehensive rural development strategy linked to land and agrarian reform and food security
- 4 Strengthen the skills and human resource base
- 5 Improve the health profile of all South Africans
- 6 Intensify the fight against crime and corruption

The role of quality education is discussed under priority number 4, stating that ‘progress has not been optimal and the achievements have not taken place at the required scale. ... [T]he objective is to focus our skills and education system towards the delivery of quality outcomes.’ Point 39.6 mentions one of the goals in developing quality education as ‘[i]mproving teachers’ content knowledge through training in targeted subject areas’ (my italics). However, nothing is said about improving pupils’ knowledge. The document states that the ‘challenge is to identify knowledge-intensive activities that build on South Africa’s strengths as the basis for long-run prosperity’ (MTSF 2009: 22, 25, 11–12). At the level of higher education the expectations with regard to the potential of applied knowledge are specifically mentioned under point 39.8:

Higher education should contribute to the economic and social well being of the country and the wider global community. It should endeavour to transfer knowledge into practical applications; through contributing to international, national, regional and local policy formulation; and through social engagement in teaching and research agendas (MTSF 2009: 26).

The emphasis on an instrumentalist view of knowledge – that is, using knowledge as a means to an end – is most probably a reaction to the overvaluation of knowledge as an end in itself, of memorized subject content and parrot-learning in the pre-1994 curriculum. Although postmodern society relies heavily on an instrumentalist approach, how can one apply knowledge if there is no knowledge? Furthermore, the development of skills also relies on knowledge. Jean-Francois Lyotard, the French philosopher writes as follows about the importance of knowledge in *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (first published in 1979):

It is widely accepted that knowledge has become the principal force of production over the last few decades; this has already had a noticeable effect on the composition of the work force of the most highly developed countries and constitutes the major bottleneck for the developing countries. In the postindustrial and postmodern age, science will maintain and no doubt strengthen its preeminence in the arsenal of productive capacities of the nation-states. Indeed, this situation is one of the reasons leading to the conclusion that the gap between developed and developing countries will grow ever wider in the future (1993).

Ramphela uses the ‘tiny little country’, Rwanda, to demonstrate the importance of knowledge (2009: 18): ‘Its Vision 2020 is not just articulated in a document, it’s lived by President Paul Kagame. Its vision is to be a country that wins, because it is a centre of excellence and knowledge. It’s saying: we have the people, we have the commitment to become a knowledge-based society.’ With the advantage of hindsight, one may well ask whether the shifting of a focus from subject knowledge to applied knowledge, and from the teacher’s task of teaching to acting as a facilitator, has produced the desired results?

Under the heading ‘Rushing curriculum reform again’, Carol Bertram of the faculty of education at the University of KwaZulu-Natal also uses a building as metaphor when she refers to the time it takes to build a cathedral: ‘We need to take a ‘cathedral mentality’ to transforming our education system and slow it down so that we can do it properly.’ She writes: ‘Although CAPS is not officially a new curriculum, the changes are sufficient to require new textbooks – again. Textbook writers and illustrators are desperately working to meet the June deadline for the textbooks to be submitted to the national department of basic education for approval.’ (2011: 39).

### 3. Managing change

Managing change efficiently and effectively is essential when implementing new strategies. My view is confirmed by the following comment from Graeme Bloch: ‘Research shows that more money or increased physical infrastructure has a surprisingly little impact on the poorer schools. Their failures are due more to how the education process is being ordered, managed and translated into classroom practice’ (2006: 1). The school principal is the on-site manager of

education. What is the chance of success when there are so many vacant positions for school principals? At the end of January 2009 there were 4 829 vacancies for school principals in this country (Rademeyer 2009b: 4).

In my view effective communication between top management and those stakeholders who are supposed to implement renewal is a first priority. When I had to prepare for a conference about the musical arts in South Africa in 2009, I wondered whether those people who are supposed to implement new educational strategies (the teachers in the classrooms) actually *knew* what was happening (again a matter of knowledge). As I could not pick up any news in the media about the future of the Roadmap, I thought that, surely, stakeholders working for the Department of Education would *know* the way forward. Therefore I did a quick spot survey by telephone. During July 2009 I phoned 22 stakeholders in education from six provinces and asked them if they knew about the Education Roadmap. Only two had heard about it. These stakeholders include 6 lecturers from 5 tertiary institutions, 8 teachers from 7 schools, 3 school principals, 1 vice-principal, 1 author of a book on OBE for Music, 3 officials from the Department of Education.

The new minister for Basic Education, Angie Motshekga asked for public comments on the National Curriculum Statement (June 2009) in order to strengthen its implementation. The following message was posted on the website of the Department of Education’s Information Portal, which provides information, curricula and support materials to the South African school and FET College community (2009b). ‘The National Department of Education wishes to invite all teachers, Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), Higher Education experts, parents and members of the public to participate in a public comment process to refine and strengthen the implementation of the curriculum.’ She specifically addressed the teachers:

The Department of Basic Education invites you to share your experiences on implementation challenges associated with the NCS in public schools. This process is intended to obtain first-hand information on the pressure points and to find solutions that will improve the efficiency of curriculum delivery in the classroom. MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD!!

The deadline for comments was 4 August 2009. Of the 22 people whom I phoned, 7 knew about the Department’s call for public comment. Three of them had heard about the call for comments only two or three days before the deadline. The question is: how many comments from the stakeholders who are directly involved with teaching did the Minister receive?

When the Task Team for the Review of the Implementation of the National Curriculum Statement issued its final report in October 2009, it acknowledged that the changes to earlier curriculum statements ‘had not had the desired

effect' and that the 'current curriculum has come in for severe criticism for *knowledge gaps*, especially in terms of the specification of *content* to be taught' (my italics). Apart from the scrapping of outcomes-based education, the report recommends increasing support to teachers, lightening their workload and simplifying terminology (2009: 5, 61, 63). Minister Motshekga accepted the report on 29 December 2009 and in February 2010, she appointed three Ministerial Teams to help implement the recommendations. Although the implementation date of the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement is January 2011 (CAPS 2010: 2), it has not been implemented to date. At the time of writing it is unclear when this curriculum will be implemented.

Further questions come to mind. How effective is the internet as a medium for communication with educators? How many teachers have access to the internet and, if they have access, do they indeed look for news from the Department on a regular basis? Will the Department consider teachers' proposals? (When one teacher made a proposal to an education specialist, the latter said that 'higher up they don't listen' to him.) Does the line of communication which links teachers, principals, districts, chief education specialists, the provincial and the national Department of Education function effectively? The impression I got from my quick spot survey was that it does not. Teachers do not get their documents in time, and often they do not receive instructions at all. My tentative opinion was confirmed by 'Mr Z Makhubele (ANC)' who 'reported that when doing oversight visits he found that documentation had not been given to curriculum advisors and other school officials in some districts' (PMG 2009). In the following year (2010) at an international symposium on the reformation of education, representatives also referred to inefficient and ineffective officials on almost all levels of the provincial Education Departments (Rademeyer 2010: 21). One may also ask how does the splitting up of education into two separate ministries, one for basic education and one for higher education – with Further Education and Training (Grade 11 and Grade 12) being grouped with tertiary education – affects communication?

#### 4. Financial management

Delivering on President Zuma's promise to prioritise education in South Africa, the Minister of Finance, Pravin Gordhan listed 'improving the quality of basic education' first in his list of spending priorities in his budget speech for 2010.

[E]ducation spending remains our largest item of spending, giving meaning to our commitment that it is our number one priority. The total budget for education next year is R165 billion. To roll out workbooks in all 11 official languages to help raise our literacy and numeracy levels and to test all learners in grades 3, 6 and 9, a further R2.7 billion is allocated to the Department of Basic Education (Gordhan 2010).

In 2011 the government raised the amount allocated to education to R189,5 billion, 'making it the biggest single state expense, or 21% of non-interest expenditure. ... Gordhan referred to education as 'the most important programme of investment in future growth and redistribution'. But analysts say that the country is not getting value for the money spent on education'; furthermore, according to John Kane-Berman, CEO of the SA Institute of Race Relations, 'the outcomes of the education system are among the worst in the world' (Vollgraaf 2011: 5). In 2008 around 21 percent of the national budget had also been allocated to education (Nieuwoudt 2008).

How is it possible that this huge financial support, which constitutes a fifth of the national budget, has not produced results? Apart from relatively less serious incidents of the questionable application of funds (for example, a training session for teachers in the North-West Province which was held in a health spa over a weekend), a crisis has developed in the Eastern Cape Education Department as a result of financial mismanagement and corruption. The Department had over-spent on salaries by R625 million (Govender 2011: 4). Because of a lack of funds, the Department could not appoint the more than 6 000 temporary teachers for 2011. Some schools were forced to close down and the number of children per class increased to unmanageable levels – for example, up to 105 children in a class as in the case of Sanctor High School in Port Elizabeth (Hendriks 2011a & b: 5)

The Federation of Governing Bodies of South African Schools (FedSas) and the South African Teachers' Union lodged an urgent appeal at the high court in Bhisho to force the Eastern Cape Education Department to appoint the 6 282 temporary teachers in the province (Rademeyer 2011b: 12). In shifting the blame, the MEC for Education, Mr Mandla Makapula, explained that the lack of funds was the result of 5 000 incidents that resulted in the suspension of teachers. As these teachers had been suspended with full salary, the Department does not have the funds to appoint the 6 282 temporary teachers (Venter & Otto 2011: 1). On 22 February the high court ruled that all 6 282 vacant teaching posts in the Eastern Province must be filled by 2 March (Venter 2011: 1). Although the Department of Education has appealed against the court order, the appeal was rejected and the Department was instructed to appoint these temporary teachers on 11 March 2011 (Skiti & Kimberley 2011)

On 17 February 2011 President Zuma announced in Parliament that he is considering appropriate intervention in the Department of Education in the Eastern Cape. Amongst the problems which the President mentioned were the termination of temporary teachers' contracts, the cancellation of the school feeding system as well as bus transport to schools. Curriculum problems become inconsequential when there are no teachers in class, when some schools had to close down and when hungry children have to walk 10 kilometres only to arrive at a school with no food parcels and no teachers (Venter 2011: 1). This crisis

in the education system of the Eastern Cape would not have occurred if funds were managed in an ethical and proper manner.

Another project with massive financial implications is the Teacher Laptop Initiative (TLI). In order to improve support for teachers the Department of Education planned to invest in Information and Communications Technology (ICT), a strategy also recommended under point 7 of the Education Roadmap's 10-point plan. In a media statement of 7 May 2009 the Minister of Education at that time, Naledi Pandor, announced the Teacher Laptop Initiative, which was to be implemented by 1 July 2009 and phased in over two years. According to Firoz Patel, the Education Department's Deputy Director General of System Planning and Monitoring,

[t]he department wants to give teachers the tools to make the revised outcomes-based education (OBE) system work, he said. Many teachers have been inadequately trained for OBE and some do not understand the *content* they are expected to teach. (Gower & Hoffmann 2009, my italics).

This is certainly a laudable idea, but again the implementation seems to be a problem: 'No face-to-face training is envisaged, but the use of software to assist with training is being investigated' (Gower & Hoffmann 2009). The fact that the Department of Education writes in its document entitled *Teacher Laptop Initiative* that 'participants who access the allowance related to the initiative' will have to sign a code of conduct in order to 'ensure that the tool is utilized as prescribed' shows that they realize that the laptops may be used for purposes other than teaching (2009a).

It took a whole year after the planned implementation date of 1 July 2009 for the Teacher Laptop Initiative (TLI) to be launched by the Department of Basic Education (2010). In the interim period the media reported many contradictory statements regarding the controversial policy of outcomes-based education, the promotion of which the initiative was apparently aimed at. In fact, on 16 July 2010 the *International Business Times* reported the launch of TLI: 'Following a five-year delay, the Teacher Laptop Initiative (TLI) was officially rolled out by deputy minister of basic education Enver Surty yesterday, only a week after the Department of Basic Education abandoned outcomes-based education' (2010, my italics).

*ITNewsAfrica* reports that the aim of the project is 'to equip the approximately 360 000 teachers in South Africa with laptops of their own' and that the government will be responsible for partial subsidy of every laptop (2010). The laptop package includes school administration materials, the national curriculum, internet connectivity and insurance. The monthly payment for a choice of packages ranges from R250 to R390 a month. Qualifying teachers will receive a monthly subsidy of R130.00 (taxable) and are required to fund the difference between the allowance (R130.00) and the monthly repayments of the package. The payments will be spread over five years (Worst 2010).

In 2009 the TLI would have cost the Department R550 million per annum over five years, totalling almost 3 billion rand (Gower & Hoffmann 2009). The price of the laptop with minimum specifications at the time was quoted as being R11 750 (Moore 2009: 23). However, according to Heins Worst of the Education Labour Relations Council, the 'laptops would end up costing in the region of R15 000 if taken over the five-year period' (2010). According to the initial estimate in 2009, teachers' contribution would have been R66 per month for five years. However, according to the 2010 stipulations which are set out in the previous paragraph, their monthly payment then rose to between R120 and R260 per month, depending on the package which the teacher chose. Over five years a teacher would then have paid R3 960 for the 2009 contract and between R7 200 and R15 600 based on the estimates for 2010.

Surely the Department cannot consider letting teachers pay for departmental and administrative material which will be loaded onto the computers (by the suppliers?). If the TLI had originally been envisaged to help promote outcomes-based education, why is the project still relevant if OBE has been abandoned and if the new curriculum has been simplified? A more important question is: Is it ethically responsible to spend such a huge amount of money on a project if the outcome is uncertain? Appointing teachers, bringing back the feeding scheme and transport to schools, supplying textbooks, repairing vandalized schools are urgent matters that should be attended to first. It is a question of priorities. Also, on the whole, teachers are more in need of training on how to implement the new curriculum than of being trained to use a laptop. As it is, preparation time for lessons has already been negatively affected by the huge amount of administrative work. After having had to cope with the implementation of one curriculum after another, will teachers now be allowed to settle down and do what they are supposed to do, namely to teach?

## 5. To conclude

It is not as if the South African government and the Department of Education do not take education seriously. There have been many promises to improve education in South Africa, and there have also been many meetings, discussions, *indabas*, workshops, *lekgotlas*, think tanks, *imbizos*, training sessions, summits, media sessions, etc. to demonstrate their good intentions. However, a wonderful idea remains an abstract concept in the air, so to speak, until it has been implemented successfully. One way in which the viability of ideas or the feasibility of a new curriculum can be ensured, is to involve those stakeholders (experienced teachers) who must implement the ideas. Bertram is certainly justified to be cynical about the Department's ability to understand the importance of feasibility: '[O]nce there is a new curriculum, the job of the bureaucrats is to ensure that an implementation plan is in place. It does not seem to matter if the implementation plan is actually feasible' (2011: 39).

So many experiments with South African children, the future of our country, did not produce the desired outcomes. When the Department of Education plans to introduce the new curriculum, will the government, the politicians and the unions communicate with education specialists and teachers, not to mention the lecturers who must train the teachers on how to implement the new curriculum as well as the huge number of experienced teachers who have left the profession? Also, what is the possibility of the government outsourcing the management of education? It will then have more time to improve service delivery and to alleviate the plight of the hungry, the homeless and the poor.

Keeping in mind the interference of SADTU in the appointment of school principals in the Eastern Cape, one wonders whether correct procedures are being followed to appoint the right person for the right job. Has the management of human resources in the Department of Education ever been audited? Experienced financial managers who approach their profession in an ethical manner can also help to make optimal use of the 21% of the South African budget allocated to education. Also, less politics and more education will bring back the higher standards which the government is striving for, that is, a standard not simplistically expressed in the single percentage of a Grade 12 pass rate. In fact, Bertram believes that ‘the politics of education reform’ is the main reason for rushing curriculum reform (2011: 39).

In his book on the postmodern condition Lyotard is outspoken about the role of the state as far as education is concerned:

The notion that learning falls within the purview of the State, as the brain or mind of society, will become more and more outdated with the increasing strength of the opposing principle, according to which society exists and progresses only if the messages circulating within it are rich in information and easy to decode (1993).

In 1999 I read a paper on ‘Multiple learning strategies and the potential of music to realize them in a multicultural South Africa’ at a conference in Vermont, USA. The conference was arranged by the North Eastern Workshop on Southern Africa, based in America. The society involves scholars from various disciplines who are working on Southern Africa (including Angola, Botswana, Lesotho, Madagascar, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, Swaziland, Zambia and Zimbabwe). In my presentation I focused on, amongst other things, various kinds of knowing and various kinds of knowledge, also non-cognitive learning strategies and the potential of music to realize generic transferable skills. I also discussed the advantages of a fusion of Western and African learning strategies (Spies 1999).

During question time somebody asked my opinion about education in the new, democratic South Africa. I replied that on the whole I felt very positive about the proposed ideas of the new government, but that I had reservations about their capacity to implement the new policy. Now, more than

ten years later, and after the implementations of so many more new ideas, I feel that we are still in the same position. However, I am sure that the Department has learnt from the experience of previous implementations. What is more, an intelligent person knows when to ‘phone a friend’. There are many ‘friends’ in this country, that is highly qualified teachers who have experience of the changing profile of the learners and the music that they study. Are they allowed to take part in the drawing up of the curriculum and writing handbooks which move away from outcomes-based education towards a teaching which is focused on content? ‘In the past textbooks were evaluated by the education department primarily on whether they reflected the learning outcomes and the assessment standards specified in the curriculum, *not necessarily on the depth and coherence of knowledge*’ (Bertram 2011: 39, my italics).

One of the characteristics of an intelligent person is intellectual curiosity, an ideal which is also encouraged by the Government’s *Medium-Term Strategic Framework* (2009).<sup>3</sup> Being intellectual does not mean having many degrees. Wilhelm Jordaan, a former vice-dean of the Faculty of Arts, Unisa, and presently attached to the University of Pretoria, writes as follows in one of his news paper columns (2009).<sup>4</sup>

The true intellectual is one for whom it is a basic rule of life to think rationally about important issues, to judge fairly, to denounce anything with hesitation and view his or her personal opinions with a bit more self-criticism. Learned people do not often do this and sometimes create the impression of being fanatical ideologues – totally convinced that their own opinions are correct, complete and unassailable. They experience no tinge of holy disquiet about their own assumptions.

An intellectual attitude entails being critical about what and how one thinks, talks and acts. This requires an openness to reviewing and renewing one’s opinions and teaching strategies. And, finally, it takes courage to change one’s mind or teaching strategy. But here are two examples of respected people who have changed their minds.

Mzilikazi Khumalo said that ‘if you see a mistake you have to correct it, unless you are a fool’ (Mugovhani 2008: 160, 167). He was referring to the changes that he had made in *uShaka* his epic opera. The Canadian music semiologist Jean-Jacques Nattiez also changed his approach to the semiotics of music in his *Music and Discourse: toward a semiology of music* (1990). He summarized this change as follows: ‘In my first writings I claimed linguistic rigor as an absolute panacea, I would no longer make that claim today’ (Cook 1996: 107).

I shall never forget the words of Lawrence Kramer (author of, amongst others, *Classical Music and Postmodern Knowledge* and *Why Classical Music Still Matters*), when we sat next to each other at a conference in London. He told me that, working in his office at the prestigious Fordham

University in New York, he can see the world famous Juilliard School of Music through his window, and he added: 'But we never talk to each other'. This may work for America but can we afford this luxury in Africa, more specifically South Africa? I think we need each other.

## Notes

- 1 This article is a reworking of a paper delivered at a conference entitled *Musical Arts in South Africa: Resources and Applications* presented by the School of Music, North-West University (August 2009). I want to thank Emeritus Dean of the Faculty of Education at Vista University, Prof. Frank H. Swart, and Dr Liesl van der Merwe, Lecturer in Music Education at the North-West University for their valuable comments.
- 2 [www.dla.gov.za](http://www.dla.gov.za), 3 June 2009. Let us take hands and seek for solutions in the spirit of a South African society. The time has come to work harder.
- 3 Point 39.8 under strategic priority 4, p. 26.
- 4 Die ware intellektueel is die mens vir wie dit 'n lewensreël is om oor belangrike sake redelik te dink, billik te oordeel, aarselend te veroordeel en die eie mening met 'n bietjie meer selfkritiek te beskou. Geleerde mense doen dit dikwels nie en wek soms die indruk van fanatiese ideoloë – rotsvas oortuig dat die eie mening korrek, volledig en onaantasbaar is. Hulle hét nie 'n heilige onrus oor hul eie veronderstellings nie.

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## Appendix

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EPU (Wits Education Policy Unit)

Idasa

Historic Schools Restoration Project

JET Education Services

LEAP School

CDE (Centre for Development and Enterprise)

NBI (National Business Institute)

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