

## **Report of the Working Group on Values in Education**

The Minister of Education, Professor Kader Asmal MP, requested in February 2000 the formation of a working group on values in education and, after a process of research and debate, the presentation of a formal report of findings and recommendations. Herewith the report. It is presented as a starting point in what ought to become a national debate on the appropriate values South Africa ought to embrace in its primary and secondary educational institutions. It has implications too for the shaping more broadly of the quality of national character to which we as a people in a democracy wish to aspire.

*Professor Wilmot James (Chairperson)*

*Mr Franz Auerbach*

*Ms Zubeida Desai*

*Dr Hermann Giliomee*

*Dr Z. Pallo Jordan MP*

*Ms Antjie Krog*

*Mr Tembile Kulati*

*Mr Khetsi Lehoko*

*Ms Brenda Leibowitz*

*Ms Pansy Tlakula*

Tuesday, 09 May 2000

### **TABLE OF CONTENTS**

#### **Executive Summary**

#### **1 Introduction**

#### **2 Equity**

#### **3 Tolerance**

#### **4 Multilingualism**

#### **5 Openness**

#### **6 Accountability**

#### **7 Honour**

#### **Notes**

## Executive Summary

In this report we make an argument for the promotion of the values of equity, tolerance, multilingualism, openness, accountability and social honour at our schools. We believe that these values are important for the personal development of our school-going population. They also define the moral aspirations of South African democracy as defined in our *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*. The definition we give to values today is an avenue to imagining the future character of the South African people. These values are therefore the moral aspirations which South Africans should regard as desirable.

This choice of values is framed by three considerations of educational philosophy. Firstly, it is to develop the intellectual abilities and critical faculties of learners in our schools. Secondly, the approach is to include the rich variety and diversity in culture, language and mores of our citizenry. Thirdly, it should equip learners with the skills to deal with the many challenges of the cycle of life.

The following recommendations are made:

1. The adoption of a social contract between educators, administrators, parents, trade unions and professional associations based on the values defined in this document.
2. Pre-service and in-service training of teachers in,
  - educational inequality and the need for equity,
  - an African language,
  - the performing arts.
3. The appointment of a panel of historians, archaeologists and human biologists, who would make recommendations regarding,
  - the strengthening of history teaching at schools,
  - the quality of teacher training in history and human biology.
4. The introduction of a school based artist-in-residence programme as a first step towards introducing performing arts programmes at schools.
5. The adoption of a tougher policy against illegitimate and harmful discrimination in schools.
6. The introduction of schools-based debating societies.
7. The introduction of a national grid of adult learning opportunities.
8. The promotion of social honour and an embrace of South African national symbols.
9. Research on the nature and scale of the diversity of our schools' learners and educators.

## 1 Introduction

It is necessary to repeat the proposition that a successful nation is more than likely an educated one. An education system of value allows the talent of the nation's youth in all its diversity to thrive and flourish. In a democracy, public education is one of the major vehicles by which the values of a people are acquired by the children and young adults who make up our schools' population. It goes without saying that today's children and young adults are tomorrow's adults and leaders.

By values we mean desirable qualities of character such as honesty, integrity, tolerance, diligence, responsibility, compassion, altruism, justice, respect, and so on. We would like our young adults to possess these values and therefore for our schooling system to actively promote them. The promotion of values is important not only for the sake of personal development but also for the evolution of a South African national character. The definition we give to values today is also an avenue to imagining the future character of the South African nation.

A 'values-in-schools-initiative' does not occur in a vacuum. In 1994 a democracy replaced decades of apartheid and centuries of one or the other form of racial rule. The principles of that heritage were a corruption of the very values we wish to promote, for they denied the humanity of the majority of our population. A democratic *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights* were accepted in 1995, which defined the inalienable rights of all South Africans to be exercised in democratically responsive institutions, among a population of considerable economic, racial and cultural diversity. Our educational institutions must reflect these rights, for they provide the frame of reference for an educational philosophy of a democracy.

There are at least three key elements to an educational philosophy. The first is to develop the intellectual abilities and critical faculties among all of the children and young adults in our schools. This is no small task for the philosophical emphasis of apartheid was conformity, obedience to rules and the suspension of intelligence. A democratic society flourishes when citizens are informed by a grasp of their history and of current affairs, where nothing is beyond question, where ideas are explored to their fullest extent possible and when there is an obligation on teachers to provide intelligent answers to questions. Our schooling system must therefore provide the basis of having informed and thinking citizens.

Secondly, the educational philosophy of our democracy should emphasise inclusiveness. It is necessary but certainly not enough to discourage or outlaw harmful and illegitimate discrimination. It is equally important to develop a culture and ethos in our schools that actively include all learners no matter their background in the formal and informal aspects of a school's life. This requires an enhanced degree of linguistic and cultural dexterity, tolerance and appreciation of difference on the part of teachers and administrators. Perhaps it is a quality that is difficult to define with any precision. Nevertheless, we desire that our schools be places where learning occurs in zones of comfort, safety and where learners feel that they belong to a community.

Thirdly, our educational philosophy should provide learners with the tools to solve the many problems that come with being human throughout the life cycle. We believe that these tools are the same as the tools of science, broadly understood, which are to bring all knowledge, however tentative and imperfect, of a problem, to bear on finding its rational solution. It is to treat problems as challenges to be solved through knowledge and understanding, rather than as unbearable burdens to be endured without solution. The will and courage to approach life in this manner does not simply reside in science, but in the spirituality of humanity that defines our attitude to life.

These considerations about the role of education in a democratic and open society frame the arguments and recommendations that follow. They are presented as a starting point in what ought to become a national debate on the appropriate values and mores South Africa ought to embrace for its primary and high schools. They also have implications more broadly for how we envision the quality of national character to which we as a people in a democracy wish to aspire.

## **2 Equity**

In a racial order such as ours it is not surprising that education and training favoured whites. Compulsory schooling for whites to secondary level education had been introduced in the 1920s, whereas the same step for Africans was taken only in the 1990s, after the first democratic elections. Intervening in this period was *Bantu Education*, introduced by the Apartheid government in the 1950s, having had the intention of subjecting all black African children of school going age to an education that trained them only to be unskilled and servile labour. Apartheid regulations made it very difficult for mission and private schools for black Africans, from whence the educated elite of Nelson Mandela's generation came, to function. Mixed schools were not an option. Mathematics and science, when they were offered, was by exception under unusual circumstance.

A racial hierarchy of schooling emerged, with whites the recipients of the best education South Africa could offer equivalent to first world standards, followed by Indians, coloured people and black Africans last, at less than even third world standards. Each group had their education administered separately, teachers trained at their respective racially organised colleges and universities, financed by Apartheid's wicked formula of providing the best for those who already had and the worst for those who had little. In 1994, the pre-democratic government was still spending R5 403 per white learner compared, for example, to R1 053 for every black African learner in the Transkei. The cumulative consequence of this unequal system was a desperately under-educated black African population.

Table 1

***Education Levels of People over 20: 1995***

**African Coloured Indian White TOTAL**

|                |            |           |         |           |            |
|----------------|------------|-----------|---------|-----------|------------|
| No Education   | 2 640 000  | 182 000   | 34 000  | 8 000     | 2 864 000  |
| Some Primary   | 4 495 000  | 690 000   | 84 000  | 35 000    | 5 304 000  |
| Some Secondary | 7 413 000  | 1 001 000 | 448 000 | 2 632 000 | 11 494 000 |
| Some tertiary  | 822 000    | 102 000   | 74 000  | 952 000   | 1 950 000  |
| TOTAL          | 15 370 000 | 1 975 000 | 640 000 | 3 627 000 | 21 612 000 |

Source: *CSS October Household Survey (1995)*.

The figures are as unsurprising as they are alarming. Black Africans make up 92, coloureds 6, Indians 1 and whites 0,2 per cent of adults who have no formal education at all. Of those who have formal schooling, the level of functional illiteracy is also alarmingly high. Most of our undereducated population are to be found in the more rural and poorer provinces of the Eastern Cape, Mpumalanga, the North West and Northern Province. The majority – 61 per cent – are women.

There is no question that matters have improved greatly. Access to schooling for black African children have jumped beyond expectations. Since 1994, 2 500 schools have been renovated and 1 000 new ones built. *Curriculum 2005* lays the groundwork for improved content, new materials and revised teacher training. The entry of black African matriculants at colleges and universities are significant. A single educational administration now exists, though the old bureaucracies and their staff have not entirely disappeared.

However, a report of *the President's Education Initiative Research Project* shows that good ideas and initiatives are trapped in a system that often fails to work properly, compromising quality on a large scale. The growth in sheer numbers should not conceal the fact that the schooling system nevertheless struggles to enrol all eligible pupils, fails to retain the majority of them to secondary school level and offers them a quality of schooling which varies from the good to the abysmal. The rapid expansion of tertiary educational involvement by black Africans has meant their enrolment in the less technical directions, since most schools for such learners fail to qualify them in mathematics and science.

It should be clear that the overriding imperative of public policy is to remedy inferior schooling. There is little question that this is a massive undertaking and that success will be long term. Its historical importance lies in the fact that the investment in the young talent of all South Africans is important for the individual growth of every person and will also bring returns in growth, prosperity and well being for the nation. We do not

believe that the South African public adequately grasps this point. Enhanced investment in our poorly resourced schools is in everybody's interest.

A *Council of Higher Education* report cites the results of a survey among 273 major employers where 76 per cent of them reported a shortage of professional employees. The same survey predicted that in the period 1998 to 2003 job opportunities at the professional level would grow between 16 to 18 per cent while those for unskilled employees would decline by 35 per cent. The demands for professional skills in the market can in part be met by an upgrading of quality schooling for the entire and particularly the black population.

An education system does not exist to simply serve a market, important as that may be for economic growth and material prosperity. Its primary purpose must be to enrich the individual. The achievement of these educational goals requires a more equitable distribution of resources, opportunities and enhanced social honour for the people who run our educational system. The need for equality of opportunity is a perspective that educators must bring to bear on the learning environment and must therefore be a central part of the pre-service and in-service training of administrators and teachers and the curriculum offered to learners. It is a perspective that all sectors of society – business, government and civil society – must support in how they allocate resources, set priorities and define an ethos.

### **3 Tolerance**

It is not surprising that South African schools are still largely segregated. Many schools, though, are enrolling learners from increasingly diverse backgrounds. The scale of this phenomenon is empirically not known. Indeed, one of our recommendations is that a study of the demographic composition of learners and teachers alike be conducted at the earliest possible convenience. Even without that knowledge, it is clear that an approach to how diverse school populations are to be managed and supported, in and outside the classroom, ought to be developed. We believe that that approach must be anchored in the value of tolerance.

By tolerance we do not mean the shallow notion of putting up with people who are different, but a deeper and more meaningful concept of mutual understanding, reciprocal altruism and the active appreciation of the value of human difference. To reach that state of human consciousness requires not only a truthfulness about the failures and successes of the human past but the active and deliberate incorporation of differences in traditions, arts, culture, religions and sporting activity in the ethos and life of a school.

We are persuaded that the teaching of history is central to the promotion of all human values, including that of tolerance. History is one of the many memory systems that shape our values and morality, for it studies, records and diffuses knowledge of human failure and achievement over the millennia. There is good and bad history, parochial, national, continental and global history, and so on. History is a wide subject and there are many choices to be made as to what kind of history ought to be offered at schools. We are interested in a history that excels in the truth about human failures and achievements, in at least three crucial respects.

Firstly, we do not believe that the history of human evolution is properly understood and taught in our schools. One consequence of this is the perpetuation of myths about the permanence and meaning of so-called racial difference. It is conventional wisdom in the scientific community that human beings constitute a single species having evolved and survived by the successful and constant adaptation to the threats of the environment. One instrument of our successful survival as a species is our diversity. Our human biological differences are our survival apparatus and diversity is therefore good for us, a source of our perpetuation not our decline.

There is a large literature on the subject, but the essential points are the same. Our outward appearance has nothing to do with our abilities; physical appearance is determined by less than 1 per cent of our genetic structure; appearance cannot be scientifically grouped into types, or races or sub-species; differences in appearance were handed down from generation to generation because they help us survive; and the last two hundred years or so of human history have done more by virtue of unprecedented human mobility than any other period, to blur and reshape the distinctions of physical appearance.

Secondly, a general and comprehensive history of all the people who happen to reside in South Africa, who in turn are connected to the people of Africa, Asia and Europe, can encourage open-ness, an understanding of our diverse past and a mutual grasp of and respect for cultural origin. More than any other discipline, good history put to good use taught by imaginative teachers can promote reconciliation and reciprocal respect of a meaningful kind, because it encourages a knowledge of the other, the unknown and the different.

Thirdly, a history of past abuses of human rights does not by itself prevent but can serve as a powerful reminder of the folly of repetition. About this matter we must not be naive. Human beings have the remarkable capacity to repeat the mistakes of the past. It is the combination of memory and democratic politics that minimise the risk of repeating past mistakes. But the memory base must be there. This is why it is so important to recognise the importance of the record left by the work of the *Truth and Reconciliation Commission*. This is why knowledge of genocide in the 20<sup>th</sup> century is so important and why resistance to holocaust denial must be fierce.

We recommend that the *Department of Education* appoints a panel consisting of expert historians, archaeologists and human biologists to examine the teaching of history at schools, teacher training in the historical and human biological disciplines and to make recommendations as to how to strengthen the teaching of history in schools. Academic history, archaeology and human biology are well developed, published and innovative fields in South Africa today and there is no reason at all why they cannot be the bases of more powerful interventions in the quality of history at schools.

We are also persuaded that more should be done to equip and provide support to teachers to communicate with and encourage learners from diverse cultural backgrounds. A key aspect of this is multi-lingual competence and we devote the next section of the report to this matter. The curriculum, educational materials, support aids and the attitude of teachers must be sensitive to and appreciative of difference, in an environment where an ethos of nurturing, encouragement and confidence building prevails.

Outside of the classroom, a diversity of extra-mural activities ought to be encouraged and supported, to reinforce what happens in the classroom. The power of the performing arts, in music, dance, theatre and other disciplines, as an active celebration of diversity, should not be underestimated. They are physical and artistic practises that invite great youthful enjoyment, promote the regularity of creative discipline and integrate individuals on the basis of talent. The performing arts at school are therefore not only part of an exciting learning experience, but they are also potentially powerful instruments of promoting tolerance through diversity.

Sporting practise is another area. Some people argue that sports can be seen as ritualised aggression for boys and benign passivity for girls. That might be so. The good thing about sports is their rule-based character, being a legitimate vehicle by which physicality finds expression within an accepted regime of norms and rules. In team-based sports, success requires individual talent married with co-operation. In a sense, sports, like art, can and should imitate life.

A multi-cultural approach to the performing arts – in dance, drama and music – ought to be actively developed. It is desirable if provincial departments of education interacted with arts and culture bodies to develop diversity programmes in these areas; develop partnerships with local governments to secure funding for innovative programmes in schools-based performing arts; and with performing arts divisions at technikons, colleges and universities for in-service and pre-service training of performing arts teachers. A modest but important start would be an artist-in-residence programme at schools.

We are finally convinced that the value of tolerance is best promoted if a tougher line is taken on discriminatory practices. It is profoundly undesirable to have practices that undermine the sense of worth of any individual. Discrimination against learners that have the intended or unintended consequence of excluding them from certain types of knowledge or social activities, breed alienation and fragmentation. We take it as given that the *Department of Education* will act against any overt form of illegitimate discrimination, whether on the grounds of visible difference, gender, language preference, disability or any other social characteristic, both because these are antithetical to constitutional principles and harmful to learning.

More difficult to deal with are discriminatory practices that might masquerade under the pretensions of culture. One such practice that we are aware of is initiation rites or ceremonies, better known by the Afrikaans colloquialism, *ontgroening* (to, literally, de-green). *Ontgroening* appears to be a long-standing practice at some schools, where new learners are expected to suffer deprivations and tolerate humiliating behaviour as part of their socialisation into the authoritarian discipline of the school.

In this regard we would like to uphold a distinction between orientation and initiation. Orientation is a desirable and voluntary early exposure to the manner in which a school is governed and functions. Initiation is an undesirable and coercive subjection of new learners to authoritarian discipline. The latter is clearly contrary to an ethos of tolerance and ought, therefore, to be discouraged.

In the well known case of Vryburg, a lack of will and vision resulted in the explosive internal segregation of the school, where whites learnt through Afrikaans and black Africans through English. Behind this division lined up political forces that resulted in confrontation, the disruption of the school and severe damage to human relations in the town. The question we ask is how to enable black children access to the physical and human resources of the formerly whites-only schools while ensuring that Afrikaans (or English) speaking children are not denied the opportunity of learning through their mother tongue.

There is naturally a suspicion about separating learners along linguistic grounds, particularly when language and ethnicity tend to coincide. However, the context in South Africa is very different today and parallel medium classes are a distinct possibility to be considered. The choice is not between English and Afrikaans only. It could theoretically include any of the official languages, depending on the linguistic demography of the area and the resources available. Schools and activities can be planned in such a way that mother-tongue education facilitates learning for our children, without 'ghettoising' them into ethnic groups or leading to linguistic apartheid.

#### **4 Multilingualism**

Apartheid attempted to divide the South African population by casting an ethnic frame over the black population and uniting an ethnically diverse population into a single, so-called white-race, group. In language terms, this effort translated into the furthering of African languages as tribal oral languages and English and Afrikaans as official, state supported, languages of communication, record and business.

English is a global language of communication, literature, science and diplomacy. Through much effort, Afrikaans evolved from an oral language to a developed literary and scientific language supported by sizeable white economic power. Unlike English, it is spoken in South Africa and Namibia only, though it is possible to communicate conversationally with Dutch and Flemish speakers. African languages have no such literary, scientific, business or in the case of English, diplomatic heritage.

The *Constitution* of 1996 grants equal status to 11 official languages. In practice, English has in democratic South Africa become the national language of politics and record. It remains the language of diplomacy and international commerce. Afrikaans is one of the albeit unofficial languages of politics in the Western Cape, Northern Cape and the Free State. African languages are often used in a variety of public fora including government and political ones, and they have a place in the public broadcaster, the *South African Broadcasting Corporation*.

The question, of course, is what must happen in language terms at our schools. The language-in-education policy of the *Department of Education* recommended in 1997 that learners should study by way of either their home language or English *and* their home language. In this way it should be possible for all learners to learn by way of their most familiar language. This a right enjoyed in practice today by English and Afrikaans speakers alone. The implementation of this policy requires provincial-level action, to which end we would like to provide some guidelines.

There are two main values we wish to promote in the area of language, which are, firstly, the importance of studying through the language one knows best, or as it is popularly referred to as *mother-tongue* education, and secondly, the fostering of multi-lingualism. We do believe that an initial grounding in mother-tongue learning is a pedagogically sound approach to learning. We also believe that multi-cultural communication requires clear governmental support and direction.

It is often assumed that by using English as a medium of instruction, learners will gain access to opportunities in the world of work and leisure. There is no question that English does play such a role in South Africa today. However, we are not convinced that studying by way of English alone will necessarily provide opportunities for those learners who are not native English speakers. Indeed, the sole use of English can inhibit access to many forms of knowledge and information, and could hinder access to opportunities outside of school.

Known parental preferences suggest that a dual medium approach is likely to be more acceptable to parents and learners compared to the use of the mother tongue as the medium of instruction. At the same time, the teaching of English as a subject is in need of dramatic improvement if we demand learners to acquire it. It would obviously help no end if teachers who are proficient in English teach learners. The quality of English offered to teachers in pre-service and in-service training courses and to learners as part of *Curriculum 2005* require significant improvement.

When it comes to communication, the onus historically has been on African language speakers to master English and Afrikaans. There has been very little pressure on English and Afrikaans speakers to acquire an African language. South Africa is a multi-lingual country with 11 official languages. In order to be a good South African citizen one needs to be at least bilingual, but preferably trilingual. It would therefore not be unreasonable to expect English and Afrikaans speakers to acquire at least one African language as part of their linguistic repertoire.

Our recommendation would therefore be that all learners acquire at least one African language as a subject throughout their school years. Which language this is likely to be ought to be determined at a provincial level. Such a step would add considerably to reconciliation processes and the promotion of a common South African citizenship. It is also likely to lead to pressure on the relevant government authorities to make learning and teaching resources available in African languages, which are essential ingredients in the development of African languages.

The implications of these recommendations are, firstly, the reorganisation of teacher training to accommodate the new language policy; secondly, the introduction appropriate short-courses in African languages as in-service learning opportunities at universities and technikons; thirdly, the improvement in the training of language teachers; fourthly, the enhancement of the resources and partnerships available to develop African languages, in relation particularly to the *Pan South African Language Board* (PANSALB), the publishers, lexicographers, terminologists and materials' developers; and fifthly, the development of quality and appropriate reading materials.

A language-in-education policy must perforce be supported by initiatives in wider society. We believe therefore that multilingual proficiency must be rewarded in other institutions. The public sector as a major employer needs to give preference to citizens who are at least trilingual. Promotion in the civil service should in part depend on mastering accredited courses in at least one African language appropriate to a province or region. Similarly, private sector companies who are multi-lingual in their practices need to be affirmed, in the same way that companies that employ women and black people, are given preferential treatment when it comes to government contracts. Educational, training and non-governmental institutions in the training of employees and potential employees in the service sector should require that they be able to communicate at the very least in an African language.

## **5 Openness**

Well-rounded educational development requires the advancement of the intellect and emotional maturation of the individual. A strong foundation in both prepares children and young adults with the changing

demands of modern life. Our schooling system therefore has the responsibility of refining the intellectual development of every learner in an environment that is stimulating and emotionally supportive. It also has the responsibility of providing an approach to the solving of problems that will be useful throughout the life cycle.

*Curriculum 2005* provides a grid that defines the substantive areas of knowledge a learner must master. It is up to the teacher, though, to make the experience for learners a quality one, to link areas of speciality and mould these into a well-rounded process of educational development. In our environment there is a special responsibility to promote numeracy and literacy in the scientific, humanities' and social science divisions of *Curriculum 2005* in our poorer and most disadvantaged schools.

We would like to emphasise the value of numeracy and the scientific approach to problem-solving, as essential life-skills. The ability of count, that is, to be arithmetically capable, is necessary for any person to function properly as a social being. Elementary numeracy is needed to maintain household accounts, to negotiate daily transactional business and to communicate with the ever-changing circle of individuals in the daily routine of life. The ability of parents to have numerically informed communication with children is critical.

A command over elementary science adds value. A grasp of environment patterns, the basic physics of the cosmology, human biology and the engineering logic of the built environment enhance the ability of the individual to function and to exercise a mastery over his or her fate. Many individuals by virtue of native intelligence and intuition can achieve success in life without the benefit of science, but most of us simply get by.

We do not live by numbers and science alone. We expect South Africans to know their history, culture, literature, economy, law and society. We desire to have a population that is both numerate and literate. We therefore believe strongly in the development of a national grid of adult learning opportunities, using our existing resources and infrastructure of universities, technikons and colleges and schools, to enhance the numeracy and literacy of our largely undereducated adult population.

The issue runs deeper, though. We are bereft of a strong reading culture. Comparatively speaking, newspaper circulation in South Africa is relatively small. Libraries are not as well used as they could be. Books are out of the economic reach of the average person. The absence of tax concessions for imported reading materials make it increasingly difficult for our national institutions to have adequate holdings of books and journals. The use of the internet is restricted to those who can afford a personal computer and to what is known as connectivity.

It is not simply a matter of resources, though, but of attitude, interest and culture. Poorer countries like India or Nigeria have well-developed reading cultures. We are also bereft of a strong debating culture. It probably is rooted in our apartheid past, where rote learning and the slavish repetition of information were rewarded by a bureaucratic examination system; where the probing asking of questions was discouraged; and where an authoritarian attitude to learning and social conduct were expected of educators. Debate occurred at unusual and exceptional schools and in the many spaces prised open by democratic politics, but a culture of questioning and debate has yet to become a norm in the life of our schools today.

We would therefore like to emphasise the importance and power of debate in advancing the intellectual development of the individual. The ability of ask penetrating questions is a skill that has to be encouraged and developed. To conduct good research on a topic of interest, using library materials, the internet and personal interviews, is a skill of lifelong value and benefit. The ability to conduct an informed and productive debate adds value to the quality of public understanding and the public discourse, as it does to arrive at a good decision, whether it is in the household, the school, the company, the government, and so on.

It is one of the most difficult qualities to define, but the issue principally has to do with the value of being open and receptive to new ideas; to developing the ability to ask good and penetrating questions; to insist on good evidence for arguments; and to be willing to debate ideas in order to arrive at quality decisions. We recommend that schools introduce debating societies and that the *Department of Education* supports these with a system of national awards to encourage and recognise ability and talent in this area.

## 6 Accountability

Public perception of schooling is often taken to be negative. Much of this is based on individual and anecdotal examples and by some academic studies of dysfunctional schools. Strikes and the threat of strikes by teachers in their unions underline a public perception that some educators have lost a sense of vocation when it comes to the teaching of the nation's youth. The habit of blaming the teacher as some generic culprit for the ills of schooling has undermined the spirit of those who do devote their lives to education and training.

The truth of it is that the public perception of schooling and degree of dysfunctionality of schools have not been tested. Systematic research on the problems of education is a poorly developed and resourced field. The result is generalities in observation and uninformed, counter-productive and damaging criticism, putting the good teachers with the bad and the effective with the ineffective principals. Good teachers, principals and administrators require affirmation in support of the notion of education as vocation and its associated norms and values as a public and national service.

A vocation is a mission in life and not just another job. When the vocation is the education of the young, the responsibility of guiding the development of the emotion and the intellect to our unusual human ability is awesome. The exercise of that responsibility requires a strong sense of commitment to some core norms of behaviour and conduct. Like politics, the reduction of education to the market and jobs, important as that may be in some respects, commodifies education. Schooling is for individual growth, not the market.

Every parent knows that children grow and develop best when they feel secure, are part of a routine and experience of social life that is predictable. Instability is not good for growth. It is important therefore to uphold and insist on structure, and for educators and learners alike to value structure. Punctuality is a sign of respect for one another. Absenteeism without demonstrably legitimate medical or other reason is a dereliction of duty. The monitoring and scrutiny of homework set regularly are an estimable recognition of the worth of the learner. Every teacher knows that to do this properly takes effort after hours.

Teachers and administrators must be leaders and set the example. Children learn by example, consciously or unconsciously. What a parent or teacher does is much more important than what he or she say they do. If teachers do not want learners to be absent they must not be absent. If teachers expect homework to be completed they must complete their homework. As the dedicated teacher well knows, a relationship of trust and fellowship develops when educators and learners become partners in the vocation of schooling.

The positive conduct of teachers must be reinforced by the conduct of parents. School governing bodies created by legislation are the vehicles by which the synergies between teachers and parents are established. There is concern about how well school governing boards are working. Parents serving on boards do not always understand their role, and teachers all too frequently see governing boards as nuisances to be tolerated rather than as useful accountability structures. The *Department of Education* is to be commended for injecting new energy into the powerfully democratic ideals that lie behind school governing bodies.

The challenge is to make school governing boards a legitimate and working institution of civil society. In becoming this, they need to be supported by the more long-standing institutions of associational life, by the churches and mosques, temples and synagogues, sports clubs and leisure bodies, civic associations and political parties, non-governmental organisations and local authorities. Sharing in the experiences and problems of governance and accountability in a transitional society like ours will enrich the quality of parental support work in education.

We would like to emphasise the importance of institutionalising lines of accountability. Children and young adults are the responsibility of parents and teachers, who in turn are accountable to school governing bodies and the educational authorities, who in turn are accountable to the citizens of the democratic society. Ours is a transitional society on the move from an authoritarian heritage, where the rules of punitive sanction are replaced by the rules of democratic accountability. Adjustments in social conduct by learners, educators, parents and the citizenry are required to lend stability to recently established democratic rules.

Numerous efforts have been made in schools and tertiary institutions to negotiate codes of conduct which all educators and learners will accept as fair and binding. For the most part, such efforts have floundered in acrimonious, politicised negotiations or simply through pervasive non-compliance. We recommend that the *Department of Education* develop a binding social contract that is consistent with the philosophical underpinnings of *Tirasano*, between educators, administrators, parents, trade unions and professional associations, as to the normative presumptions central to the notion of education as vocation operating in an environment of democratic accountability and good governance. This document can be the basis of such a social contract.

## 7 Honour

The primary purpose of a school is to provide an environment where teaching and learning takes place. Part of the learning experience involves an anticipation of the responsibilities of adulthood, including those of citizenship in a democracy. A good citizen is an informed citizen, someone versed in the values and principles of the *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights*, the history of South Africa and what it means to exercise democratic freedom with the restraints of personal moral character. The well-rounded South African of the future is someone with a historical consciousness, an open and inquiring mind, is trilingual, and has a healthy respect for the obligations of citizenship.

We come as a people from a divided past and divided loyalties. Before 1994 there was by definition no common loyalty to the state or to national symbols. The state and its symbols were partial to a white minority and seen and contested as such. Since 1994 we have sought to build universal state legitimacy by democratic rules and motivate the public to find a common allegiance to national symbols. The effort is projected as one of nation building, led in the first phase of it by former President Nelson Mandela.

The pursuit of narrow and xenophobic nationalism and patriotism have left many scars on the recent history of humankind and all too frequent recurrences of genocide blights the history of Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. In many countries the pursuit of narrow nationalism has destroyed educational systems, by making schools the instruments of state ideology and the wishes of political leaders. It is for these reasons that schools are often caricatured as mere instruments of the ideological apparatus of state.

Because of this history, we have developed a cautious and tentative approach to nation building in the political sphere. The effort has been more to reconcile and find common ground between all of our citizens than to aggressively assert our South African-ness against outsiders and the 'other'. Leadership has been much more cautious in their approach compared to some members of the public, judging by xenophobic responses to immigration. We do believe the caution and circumspect are appropriate in dealing with potentially explosive and emotive matters like nationalism and patriotism.

For the average person, the limits of one's immediate culture are the limits of employability, social acceptance, dignity, social honour and citizenship. Beyond these immediate limits of community, the average person can be handicapped. It is personal investment in education that gives us access to all else, beyond the limits our immediate community. Education in the culture beyond the immediate neighbourhood, or city, or area, or country, or continent, means increased freedom and liberty from local handicap.

Democracy in South Africa is an effort to increasingly make available the opportunities of the national community to the individual living in their local settings. It has not been an effort to suppress the local or parochial, but to link it through common citizenship to the national. President Thabo Mbeki articulates a vision that locates citizenship in a common South African ancestry and links our future to that of the regeneration of the continent of Africa. It is an effort therefore of extending the limits of the imagination to a widening sense of community beyond one's immediate circumstance.

The effort includes our sense of honour and identity as South Africans. The majority of South Africans already embrace the symbols of a national identity, such as the flag, the national anthem and the recently unveiled coat of arms. We have invested a great deal of pride in our national sporting teams and see their successes and failures as our own. Our political institutions are national ones and not designed to serve the

interests of any one group. Our schools are also a national resource, not belonging to any one group of people but to all.

It is therefore appropriate that the symbols of national identity and a South African social honour be celebrated at our schools. In this respect we recommend that the national anthem be taught and sung at schools, at dignified occasions best defined by schools themselves. We suggest, though, a minimum requirement, which is at the opening of the first and last school assemblies of every school term. We also recommend that the national flag be displayed in a prominent place, such as the entrance lobby of a school or above the stage frame in the assembly hall. Such symbolic rituals should be supported by the teaching of a civic history of the democratic South Africa, with a focus on the *Constitution* and *Bill of Rights* of 1996.

We also believe that the ritual of declaring a pledge of allegiance or vow at weekly school assemblies will serve as a reminder of the fundamental values to which South Africans in a democracy aspire. We offer the following text as illustration of the spirit that we believe ought to be conveyed and would invite responses as to its suitability in various contexts:

*I promise to be loyal to my country, South Africa, and to do my best to promote its welfare and the well-being of all of its citizens. I promise to respect all of my fellow citizens and all of our various traditions. Let us work for peace, friendship and reconciliation and heal the scars left by past conflicts, and let us build a common destiny together.*