

PART B

Action Plan to 2014

Towards the realisation of Schooling 2025

Draft for discussion dated 1 June 2010

This version of the plan does not include an initial summary, partly because a summarised and more 'people-oriented' version of the plan exists as a separate document (the 'shorter version').

Introduction

1. In 2009 the Presidency released a Green Paper on national strategic planning, as well as a guiding document titled *Improving Government Performance: Our approach*. These documents capture important shifts that are occurring in the way Government plans and implements policy. Above all, there is a shift towards better use of information to monitor successes and problems and to guide planning, there is greater emphasis on clarifying where we are heading in the long term, and there is a recognition that effective planning will require the right mix of central planning and empowerment of local entities (such as education districts and schools).
2. The current document describes what should be achieved by 2014 to improve schooling in South Africa. The focus is to a large extent on a set of goals, indicators and targets, and the activities that are required by the education departments but also people in schools and in civil society to achieve the goals. The plan to 2014 is located within a longer range vision, known as *Schooling 2025*, which includes long term targets for South Africa's schooling system. What we want to achieve by 2014 is therefore seen within the bigger picture of what we want to achieve a quarter of the way through this century. The current document represents the basic education sector's response to the challenge of a more innovative and effective delivery of services across Government as a whole. The *Action Plan to 2014*, in other words this document, will be further revised until the Minister for Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, is satisfied that there has been sufficient consultation with stakeholders and experts.
3. Many of these goals in this plan are not new. They have been expressed previously in the President's State of the Nation Address, various documents released by The Presidency, in particular the 2009 Medium Term Strategic Framework, and in the speeches and documents of the Ministry of Basic Education. Many goals are already widely supported, for instance through the multi-stakeholder Quality Teaching and Learning Campaign, launched in 2008. The full set of goals and indicators in this report are supported by the members of the Council of Education Ministers (CEM) and take cognisance of inputs from Parliament's Portfolio Committee on Basic Education and teacher unions, following presentations by the national department to these structures. In the case of some goals, there is already considerable agreement amongst the experts how their attainment should be measured. However, all the goals put forward in this document should at this stage be considered as being open to debate. The purpose with this document is in fact to stimulate vigorous debate around the plan.
4. There are two documents that accompany this one. One, titled *Goals, indicators and targets for Action Plan to 2014 and Schooling 2025*, provides details on targets by province, as well as a proposed list of goals and indicators relating to the inputs and processes aimed at realising the output goals put forward in the current document. The second document, called the 'shorter version' of this plan, puts together the *Action Plan*

for 2014 and *Schooling 2025* information that parents, teachers and school principals would have a direct interest in.

5. Details on how to make inputs on the process appear at the end of this document. One option is to make inputs through the Department's website, which now includes a facility for stakeholder organisations and individuals to post comments and to view the comments of others. **THIS WEB FACILITY IS IN THE PROCESS OF BEING SET UP.**

Purpose of the *Action Plan to 2014 and Schooling 2025*

6. **Must contribute towards an improved schooling system.** The overriding purpose of the Action Plan and *Schooling 2025* is to contribute in concrete ways to the realisation of a better schooling system, one which adequately prepares young South Africans for the challenges of a rapidly changing society. The schooling system should above all ensure that our youth have acquired the basic skills and knowledge they require for life and instil the values needed for a united and democratic nation. It is widely recognised that achieving these overriding goals is vital if society-wide scourges such as poverty and crime are to be eradicated and South Africa is to prosper and develop.
7. **The need for long-term planning.** *Schooling 2025*, within which the Action Plan is located, represents South Africa's first ever long-term vision for schools. The reasons why a country like South Africa needs long-term planning are explained in the Green Paper on national strategic planning in relation to the envisaged country plan *South Africa Vision 2025*. *Schooling 2025* in fact embodies the schooling sector's participation in the larger *South Africa Vision 2025* process. Essentially a long-term planning approach for schooling is required to discourage ad hoc and fragmented planning, to encourage everyone to think of the long-term implications of decisions taken, or not taken, now, and to provide inspiration in our current work by means of a clear picture of where we want to take South Africa's schools.
8. **Practical uses of the Action Plan.** On a practical level, the Action Plan must be able to explain in clear terms what the existing best evidence says about improving schools so that education managers can be better informed in this area, bearing in mind that how to improve schools is not a straightforward matter and the evidence can be conflicting. The Action Plan must also provide guidance to schools, districts, provinces and non-government stakeholders on what key issues to include in their plans. It should be remembered that improvements in schooling are dependent on the effectiveness of literally thousands of plans that are formulated on an annual basis throughout the system. The national plan should also offer The Presidency and a range of government and non-government monitoring bodies with a clearly stated set of goals against which to hold the leadership and management in the schooling sector accountable. The plan must moreover instil confidence amongst South Africa's trading and investment partners across the world that we are committed towards ongoing improvements in the country's human resource base.
9. **A dynamic plan that is not cast in stone.** The Action Plan cannot be cast in stone. Clearly there will be a need for periodic reviews. In this sense, the Action Plan and *Schooling 2025* provide a framework for organising the national debates on how to improve schooling. In fact, the plan should encourage these debates, not stifle them. The Action Plan will support fully the planning philosophy put forward in the Green Paper whereby planning must embody a right mix of bottom-up activities, in which the national department takes cognisance of planning and best practices at the provincial, district and school levels, and top-down activities, whereby the national department and the Minister provide sufficient direction and leadership for the sector. In fact a major

component of the Action Plan is monitoring and action on the part of the national department to ensure that provincial departments adhere to their own annual and medium-term plans in a more consistent manner.

10. **Moving forward on the basis of existing building blocks.** It is not the purpose of the Action Plan to re-invent the policies of the schooling system. Fundamental changes will need to occur in future, but it is acknowledged that many important building blocks have been laid since the advent of democracy in 1994. A school governance system that enjoys wide support, even if it is need of better levels of participation, exists. A system of pro-poor public financing of schools that is largely in line with best practices elsewhere has been established. Monitoring of the learning outcomes in schools below the Grade 12 level through standardised national assessments was started in 2001, and has become more widespread in the last couple of years. This too follows best practices elsewhere. All the education programmes that exist are in need of at least some change, and in a few cases there is a need for fundamental change. Certain details in this regard as explained in this document. However, the Action Plan needs to focus largely on re-aligning what exists, rather than on re-inventing the education policy landscape completely.
11. **Promotion of more rigorous monitoring.** One purpose of the Action Plan is to bring greater rigour into the monitoring of the schooling system, and promote better research into the challenges faced by the sector. The Green Paper of The Presidency states clearly that for government action to succeed, it must be based on good data and sound research. The monitoring of schools, in particular the monitoring of issues such as the quality of learning, time use in schools, the professional needs of teachers and grade repetition amongst learners, runs into a variety of problems, not just in South Africa but across the developing world. The measurable targets put forward in this document need to be carefully researched on an ongoing basis to ensure that they are realistic and indeed measurable. Moreover, the monitoring reports that must flow from the Action Plan should be seen as accurate and reliable. The approach towards education statistics needs to be a critical and professional one, and wherever feasible the latest methodological improvement advocated by UNESCO and other key organisations should be followed.
12. **Communicating the plan to the nation.** The Action Plan must be clear enough to be understandable to the great majority of our parents. Two versions of the plan should exist. A more comprehensive one will include all the technical details that managers, including school principals, and researchers need to know (currently this document and the *Goals, indicators and targets* document comprise the comprehensive version of the plan). A summarised version of the Action Plan has also been produced to communicate to the nation as a whole, and in particular to parents, what improvements can be expected and what ordinary citizens can do to contribute towards better schooling.
13. **The e-Education strategy.** As part of the Department of Basic Education's e-Education strategy, the web presence of the Action Plan and *Schooling 2025* will be strong.

Goals, indicators, targets and activities – how these terms are used

14. **A variety of goals.** At the heart of the Action Plan is a set of long-term goals. A number of these goals are described in this document. There are three types of goals. **Output goals** focus either on what the quality of learning outcomes should be, in measurable terms, or how grade attainment indicators should be improved. Output goals are the pre-eminent goals in the plan as they refer to improvements that society

will benefit from directly. All other goals in the plan are designed to support the output goals. This does not mean the other goals are unimportant. Clearly, if the desired quality of learning outcomes is to be achieved, the schooling system as a whole must function well. **Foreground goals** refer to improvements that are not output goals, but which parents and learners can observe directly, such as smaller classes or better school lunches. Finally, **background goals** refer to important improvements that may not concern parents and learners directly, such as improvements to administration systems of schools. The Action Plan currently includes 27 goals. Of these 13 are output goals. It is easy to formulate more goals than this, but best practice in this kind of planning indicates that exceeding this number of goals can confuse people and result in a loss of focus.

15. **Indicators and targets.** Most goals have one indicator that can be measured, ideally, on an annual basis. A few goals have two such indicators. Technical documentation that will accompany the Action Plan will state very clearly how each indicator should be measured, and what alternative approaches may be used if the expected data are not forthcoming, or are not sufficiently reliable. There should be no room for confusion over what indicators are actually telling us. Baseline and target values, at the national and provincial levels, have been specified for the 13 output indicators, and will be specified for every indicator in the near future.
16. **Activities.** As far as possible, the Action Plan indicates for each stakeholder in the system what activities they should be engaged in to realise each goal in the plan.

The desired educational quality outputs

17. **The importance of tackling poor learning outcomes.** There has been a critical shift in educational policy in recent years in response to a key realisation, namely that far too few learners are achieving even a basic minimum set of competencies at school. The country's own Systemic Evaluation programme has indicated that the majority of primary school learners it has assessed have not mastered the basic skills applicable to their grade. International assessment programmes such as SACMEQ and TIMSS that the Department has participated in have shown that South Africa's schools perform poorly compared to those in countries at a similar level of development. A critical problem is the under-performance of a high percentage of African and coloured learners, reflecting the pervasiveness of the apartheid legacy of poverty in the homes of learners, under-trained teachers and poor school infrastructure. Yet it is noteworthy that improvements are required across the whole spectrum of the system. Even South Africa's best performing learners do not perform well when compared to the best in other similar countries. The poor performance of the schooling system as a whole has been brought to the fore each year in unsatisfactory Grade 12 examination results which reflect a serious under-representation of, in particular, African and coloured learners, especially in subjects such as mathematics and physical science which are linked to critical career opportunities. Improving learning outcomes in schools is a key priority for Government as a whole. Allowing the present situation to continue will not just compromise the lives of millions individuals leaving schools with insufficient capabilities, it creates a huge stumbling block for the economic and social development of the country as a whole.
18. **A two-pronged focus on learning outcomes.** Long-term planning in basic education must focus on increasing the percentage of learners who have achieved the minimum set of competencies for their grade. However, it must also focus on improving the performance of every learner, and increasing the number of learners, particularly those from historically disadvantaged backgrounds, who excel. This explains why the output goals dealing with educational quality in the Action Plan deal both with the percentage

of learners achieving minimum outcomes, and the overall average level of performance of each grade. Goals 1 to 6 in the following table deal with the former, and goals 7 to 9 in a subsequent table deal with the latter. It should be kept in mind that the exact wording of these goals, and the indicators, is still under review, as well as the determination of 2009 baseline values. Moreover, detailed specifications for each indicator must be developed.

OUTPUT GOALS FOCUSING ON THE ATTAINMENT OF MINIMUM QUALITY STANDARDS			
	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline and targets</i>
► 1	Increase the number of learners in <u>Grade 3</u> who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum <u>language</u> and <u>numeracy</u> competencies for Grade 3.	Percentage of Grade 3 learners performing at the required level according to the country's Annual National Assessments (two indicators, one for each learning area).	2009 (baseline): Around 48% (literacy) and 43% (numeracy) 2014: 60% for both subjects 2019: 75% for both subjects 2024: 90% for both subjects
► 2	Increase the number of learners in <u>Grade 6</u> who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum <u>language</u> and <u>mathematics</u> competencies for Grade 6.	Percentage of Grade 6 learners performing at the required level according to the country's Annual National Assessments (two indicators, one for each learning area).	2009 (baseline): Around 37% (literacy) and 19% (mathematics) 2014: 60% for both subjects 2019: 75% for both subjects 2024: 90% for both subjects
► 3	Increase the number of learners in <u>Grade 9</u> who by the end of the year have mastered the minimum <u>language</u> and <u>mathematics</u> competencies for Grade 9.	Percentage of Grade 9 learners performing at the required level according to the country's Annual National Assessments (two indicators, one for each learning area).	<i>Baseline and targets to be determined after the 2010 Annual National Assessments.</i>
► 4	Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme at a university.	Number of Grade 12 learners who become eligible for a Bachelors programme in the public national examinations.	2009 (baseline): Around 110 000 2014: 175 000 2019: 250 000 2024: 300 000
► 5	Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass mathematics	Number of Grade 12 learners passing mathematics (the subject mathematical literacy is not counted within this indicator).	2009 (baseline): Around 125 000 2014: 180 000 2019: 270 000 2024: 350 000
► 6	Increase the number of Grade 12 learners who pass physical science	Number of Grade 12 learners passing physical science.	2009 (baseline): Around 120 000 (2008 figure) 2014: 170,000 2019: 250,000 2024: 320,000

19. **Ambitious but feasible primary school improvement targets.** The Grades 3 and 6 target values referred to in the above table represent substantial improvements over the baseline situation. However, the desired level of improvement is based on what has

been achieved in other ambitious countries that were suffering from low educational performance. The improvements are thus ambitious, but feasible.

20. **Annual National Assessments (ANA).** The Department's Annual National Assessments programme, started in 2008, will be critical for monitoring improvements in learning outcomes below the Grade 12 level. In 2009, this programme involved sending national tests for Grades 1 to 6 plus marking memoranda to all schools offering these grades. Schools were asked to administer the tests following certain quality control criteria and to submit results to the provincial department. In addition, the national department contracted a service provider to re-mark the tests from a sample of around 600 schools in order to verify the quality of the schools-based marking that had occurred. Two important new elements will be introduced to ANA in 2011. Firstly, Grade 9 tests will also be distributed (this is being piloted in 2010). Secondly, the actual administration of tests will be externally managed by a nationally appointed agency within the verification sample. In the coming years, a key priority of the Department will be to fine-tune ANA as new lessons are learnt, and on the basis of best practice in other countries.
21. **How monitoring will influence performance.** A key challenge not just for South Africa but also other countries that have initiated assessment programmes similar to ANA is to ensure that the quality monitoring process and the use of results leads to tangible improvements in learning outcomes. It must be emphasised that ANA has not been used nor will it be used to shame schools that do not perform well, nor will it be used as a basis for providing physical or monetary rewards to schools that perform well. Rather, ANA must be used as a means for knowing where to direct special efforts to improve schooling, and what schools may be demonstrating the right approaches to teaching and learning. ANA is expected to influence performance in schools in four ways: (1) It is expected to improve the experience of teachers in applying appropriate assessment standards. (2) It is expected to improve the ability of districts and the provincial department to direct human and physical resources where it is most needed. (3) It is expected to provide an incentive for schools to do well, not because they receive monetary rewards, but because teachers want to belong to a school that performs well according to objective criteria. (4) It is expected to improve the focus on learning outcomes in the school governance process.
22. **Better assessment practices in schools.** Anecdotal evidence from ANA suggests the programme has allowed teachers to become more aware of how the outcomes expressed in the curriculum statements should be assessed. The past practice of allowing schools to design assessments largely on their own has clearly not been optimal. An external evaluation of the impact of ANA thus far is about to commence and this will provide a clearer idea of how ANA can be used to strengthen good assessment practices, and hence better learning, in schools.
23. **Better targeted support by districts.** ANA results will be used as a basis for determining targets at the level of the school. As explained below, these targets will be sensitive to the socio-economic status of the community around the school. Schools which do not attain their targets will be examined closely by districts to establish what the reasons for the under-performance may be. Capacity problems amongst teachers will be dealt with through ensuring that teachers receive the right in-service training. Where poor management by the school principal is clearly an important factor, special attention will go towards capacitating the principal or, if necessary, taking disciplinary steps in accordance with regulations governing the contract between the principal and the provincial department. Where a lack of teachers, or learning materials, or physical infrastructure such as classrooms or toilets is seen to be a contributing factor, these problems will be dealt with through the existing resourcing policies. For instance,

special efforts may go towards recruiting a teacher to fill a vacant post. It is important that schools should be treated fairly. A situation should not arise where schools benefit materially from deliberately performing poorly in the ANA assessments. Rather, the focus should be on making the existing pro-poor resourcing policies work properly so that all schools have, as a minimum, the basic package of human and physical resources needed to deliver the curriculum.

24. **Encouraging all schools to do better.** As mentioned earlier, the educational quality problem in the schooling system is not limited to the worst performing schools. There is considerable room for all schools to do better. The number of individual learners and whole schools which excel must be increased if South Africa is to tackle the host of scientific, social and cultural challenges facing the nation, and if we want to make a greater impact on the betterment of the African continent and the world. ANA provides new opportunities to recognise and celebrate schools, and perhaps even individual learners, who perform exceptionally well, or bring about exceptional improvements in their performance over time. In this regard, it is important to recognise that the most powerful factor underlying learner performance is the home background of the learner. Learners with better educated parents and with more physical resources in the home to facilitate learning, are at a distinct advantage. There are of course many exceptions, but research from around the world indicates that socio-economic status, and poverty, are decisive factors. Any system to recognise good performance must take into account the obstacles faced by schools serving poorer communities. Solutions applied in other countries include recognising best performing schools, and the largest improvements, within each poverty quintile, so that schools are compared to other schools that face similar obstacles. Such an approach seems appropriate for South Africa.
25. **Raising the profile of learning outcomes in the school governance process.** As stated in the President's 2010 State of the Nation address, the results of nationally standardised assessments in schools should be shared with parents. To some extent, this has already been the practice with respect to ANA. This programme provides new opportunities for parents to become involved in the debates within the school on how to improve learning outcomes, and for schools to emphasise to parents how parents can provide support to learners in the home. Each school will receive the average results for the district, broken down by socio-economic quintile, partly so that the school governing body can gauge how well the school performs relative to other surrounding schools. Averages for the province, and the country, also broken down by quintile, will be received by each school. The average results per province and district will moreover be made public through reports by the national department.
26. **Encouraging improvements in Grade 12.** To some extent the above approaches described in relation to ANA are already being pursued at the Grade 12 level, using National Senior Certificate examination results. There is room for these Grade 12 quality improvement activities to improve. There are two areas of special importance. One is ensuring that all schools and learners receive relevant support materials, such as exemplar examination papers and study guides, through the official channels but also through newspapers. The other is providing guidance to learners in Grades 10 to 12 on what subject combinations are best for them, partly through media such as the radio. There is evidence that poor Grade 12 results come about partly because learners are unable to make the right subject choices.
27. **Learning outcomes, grade repetition and dropping out.** Experience shows that focussing on learning outcomes in isolation from grade repetition and dropping out can have very damaging effects. Ambitions to improve a school's learning outcomes in standardised assessments must not lead to the exclusion or unnecessary holding back of learners who do not perform well. A number of different approaches are pursued

around the world to reconcile pressure to improve learning outcomes with the imperative of providing all learners with the opportunity to learn. In a following section, goals and indicators relating to the grade promotion and retention of learners are described, as well as ways in which these goals will affect schools. Obviously reliable measures of grade repetition and dropping out will be necessary in the long term monitoring process. Such measures are expected to improve in the coming years as a result of additional questions in the General Household Survey and data on individual learners flowing from the Learner Unit Record Information and Tracking System (LURITS) developed by the national department in recent years and currently being rolled out across all schools.

28. **Improvements in the international context.** The following table expresses goals for improving the average level of performance for two key grades in the schooling system. The indicators rely on internationally standardised assessment programmes, given the importance of viewing our educational quality in a global context. South Africa will continue to participate in the regional SACMEQ programme (the mean scores for Grade 6 below indicate values on the SACMEQ scale). South Africa has moreover registered for the 2011 wave of Grade 8 TIMSS and targets for Grade 8 are expressed on the TIMSS scale. The future timetable of these international programmes is not entirely predictable, meaning that there is a chance that the timing of targets in the following table would need to change. The important thing is that improvement trends more or less in line with what is illustrated in the table should be seen in the coming years. The desired improvements are ambitious, but achievable. A few other developing countries have seen improvements of this magnitude previously. One international assessment programme which is important, though it is not linked to any indicator in the next table, is PIRLS. South Africa is preparing to participate in this programme, which focuses on reading in primary schools, in 2011 and will continue to do so thereafter.

OUTPUT GOALS FOCUSING ON THE AVERAGE LEVEL OF EDUCATIONAL QUALITY			
	<i>Goal</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Baseline and targets</i>
► 7	Improve the average performance in <u>languages of Grade 6</u> learners.	Average Grade 6 languages result obtained in SACMEQ.	2009 (baseline): 495 2012: Current level of countries such as Mozambique (± 520) 2017: Current level of countries such as Kenya and Tanzania (± 550) 2022: Current level of countries such as Mexico and above the best performing country in SACMEQ 2007 (Seychelles) (± 600)
► 8	Improve the average performance in <u>mathematics of Grade 6</u> learners.	Average Grade 6 mathematics result obtained in SACMEQ.	2009 (baseline): 495 2012: Current level of countries such as Botswana and Tanzania (± 520) 2017: Current level of countries such as Seychelles and Algeria (± 550) 2022: Current level of countries such as Mexico and above the best performing country in SACMEQ 2007 (Mauritius) (± 600)
► 9	Improve the average performance in <u>mathematics of Grade 8</u> learners.	Average Grade 8 mathematics result obtained in TIMSS.	2009 (baseline): 264 2011: Current level of countries such as Ghana and Qatar (± 300) 2015: Current level of countries such as El Salvador (and just under the current level of Botswana) (± 340) 2019: Current level of countries such as Chile and Morocco (and above the current level of Botswana) (± 380) 2023: Current level of countries such as Uruguay and Tunisia (± 420)

29. The following three tables illustrate where South Africa stands currently, and where we would like the country to go in the coming years. Though different groups of countries participate in different assessment programmes, a combined picture is obtainable by making use of the figures from countries that participate in more than one programme. In the first two tables, apart from the SACMEQ scores, scales that are the equivalents of the PIRLS Grade 4 reading scale and the TIMSS Grade 4 mathematics scale are provided.

Illustration of the desired improvements in Grade 6 languages			
<i>Desired movement</i>	<i>PIRLS-like</i>	<i>SACMEQ</i>	<i>Selected countries at about this level</i>
	560		Russia, Singapore, Italy
	540		Netherlands, United States, United Kingdom, Cuba
	520		France, Poland, Spain
	500		Norway
	480		Costa Rica, Georgia
	460		Chile, Uruguay
2022	440		Mexico, Trinidad and Tobago
	420	580	Seychelles, Brazil, Iran, Colombia
	400		Argentina, Indonesia
2017	380	550	Kenya, Tanzania
	360	530	Mauritius, Swaziland, Botswana, Peru, Qatar
2012	340	520	Mozambique, Paraguay
	320		Ecuador, Morocco
2007	300	480	Uganda, <u>South Africa</u>
	280		Dominican Republic
	260	450	Lesotho, Namibia, Zambia
	240	430	Malawi

Illustration of the desired improvements in Grade 6 mathematics			
<i>Desired movement</i>	<i>TIMSS-like</i>	<i>SACMEQ</i>	<i>Selected countries at about this level</i>
	600		Hong Kong, Singapore
	580		Taiwan
	560		Japan
	540		Cuba, Kazakhstan, Russia, United Kingdom
	520		United States, Germany, Australia
	500		Italy, Canada, Sweden
	480		Czech Republic, Uruguay, Norway
	460		Ukraine, Costa Rica
2022	440		Mexico, Georgia
	420	580	Mauritius, Chile, Argentina
	400	560	Kenya, Iran, Brazil
2017	380	550	Seychelles, Peru, Algeria
	360	530	Paraguay, Mozambique, Colombia, Nicaragua
2012	340	520	Tanzania, Swaziland, Botswana, Panama, Morocco
	320	510	Uganda, Tunisia, Kuwait
2007	300	490	<u>South Africa</u> , Dominican Republic, Qatar
	280		
	260	440	Lesotho
	240	430	Zambia, Malawi, Namibia
	220		Yemen
	200		

Illustration of the desired improvements in Grade 8 mathematics		
<i>Desired movement</i>	<i>TIMSS-like</i>	
	600	Korea, Singapore
	580	Finland, Japan
	560	Switzerland
	540	Belgium, Netherlands
	520	Germany, United Kingdom, Russia
	500	United States, Australia
	480	Italy, Portugal
	460	Norway, Bulgaria
	440	Thailand, Turkey
2023	420	Uruguay, Tunisia
2019	400	Iran, Indonesia, Mexico, Egypt
	380	Chile, Morocco, Philippines
2015	360	Argentina, Botswana, Brazil
	340	El Salvador
	320	Saudi Arabia
2011	300	Ghana, Qatar
	280	Kyrgyzstan
2007	260	South Africa

The desired grade attainment outputs

30. The next table proposes output goals relating to grade attainment and enrolment levels.

OUTPUT GOALS FOCUSING ON GRADE ATTAINMENT			
	Goal	Indicator	Baseline and targets
► 10	Ensure that all children remain effectively enrolled in school up to the year in which they turn 15.	Enrolment ratio of 7 to 15 year olds according to Stats SA household data.	2008 (baseline): 97.4% 2014: 99% 2019 (and thereafter): 100%
► 11	Improve the access of children to quality early childhood development (ECD) below Grade 1.	(1) The percentage of Grade 1 learners who have received formal Grade R. (2) The enrolment ratio of children aged 0 to 5.	<u>Indicator 1</u> 2008 (baseline): 51% 2014: 80% (but 100% if non-formal ECD is included) 2019 (and thereafter): 100% (only formal) <u>Indicator 2</u> 2008 (baseline): 25% 2014: 37% 2019: 44% 2024: 50%
► 12	Improve the grade promotion of learners through the Grades 1 to 9 phases of school.	(1) The percentage of children aged 9 at the start of the year who have completed Grade 3. (2) The percentage of children aged 12 at the start of the year who have completed Grade 6.	<u>Indicator 1</u> 2008 (baseline): 59% 2014: 65% 2019: 75% 2024: 85% <u>Indicator 2</u> 2008 (baseline): 46% 2014: 52% 2019: 60% 2024: 75%
► 13	Improve the access of youth to Further Education and Training beyond Grade 9	(1) The percentage of youths who obtain a National Senior Certificate from a school. (2) The percentage of youths who obtain any FET qualification. (This is an indicator of concern to both education Ministries.)	<u>Indicator 1</u> 2008 (baseline): 40% 2014: 50% 2019: 60% 2024: 70% <u>Indicator 2</u> 2008 (baseline): 41% 2014: 65% 2019 (and thereafter): 100%

31. **Fulfilment of our statutory obligations regarding compulsory schooling.** The South African Schools Act obliges the state and parents to ensure that all children are enrolled in school from the year in which they turn seven to the year in which they turn fifteen. This requirement covers South Africa's commitment within UNESCO's global Education for All (EFA) campaign to attain universal primary schooling by 2015. Currently the enrolment rate for this age range is high, at over 97%. Yet the figure implies that there are still around 250 000 children who are not participating in compulsory schooling. Many of these children are vulnerable and require special needs schooling, so a part of the challenge is to strengthen the implementation of the inclusive education policy and provide more access to special schools for the poor. In addition, there are children of compulsory school-going age who are formally enrolled at school, but whose day-to-day attendance is very poor. Assisting these learners must be an integral part of our efforts to realise compulsory basic schooling.
32. **More quality early childhood development.** The enrolment figures for early childhood development (ECD) have displayed major improvements in recent years. For example, the percentage of Grade 1 learners who had access to some form of pre-

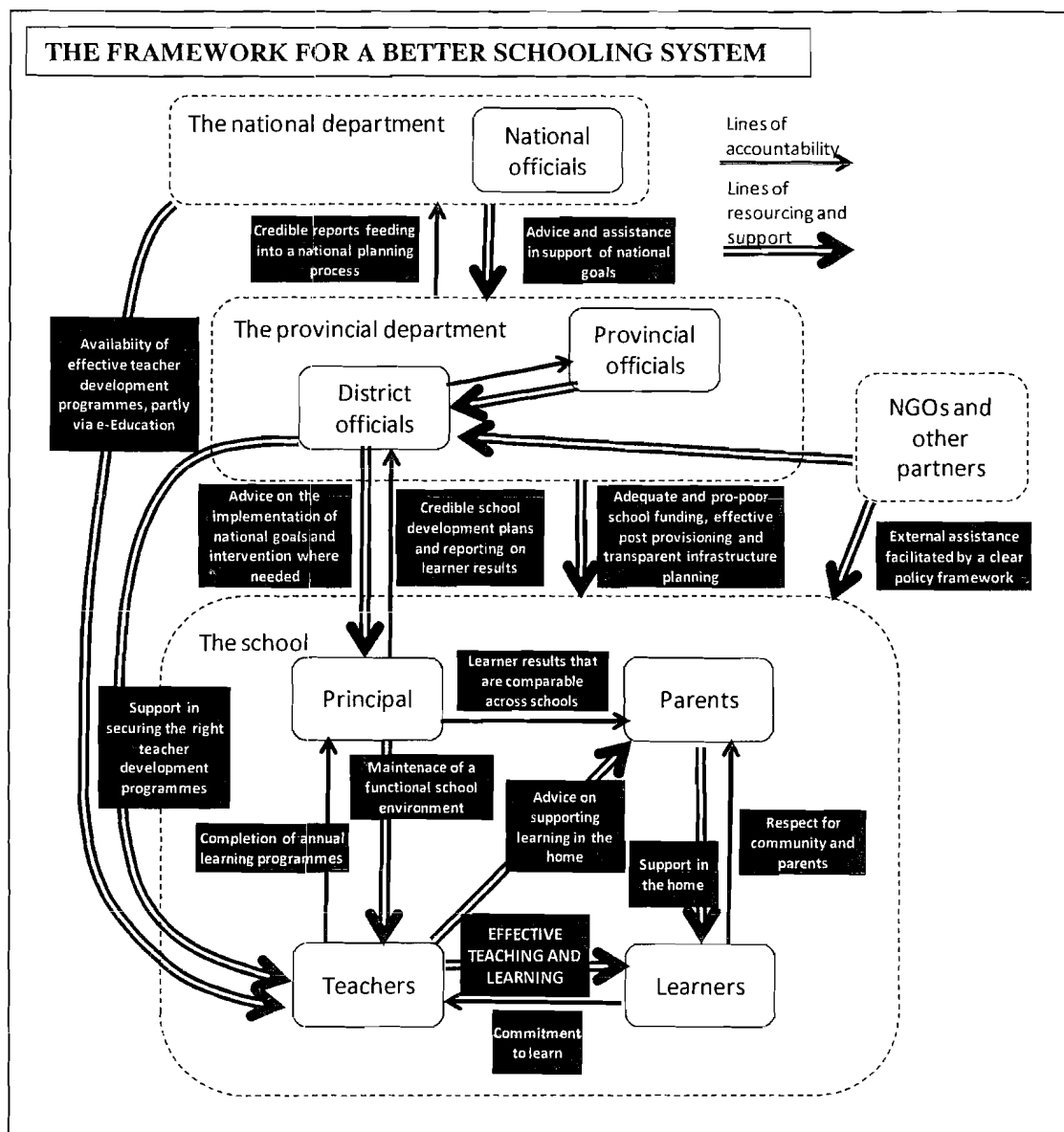
primary education increased from 60% to over 80% in the last five years, largely due to improved public spending on Grade R and pre-Grade R ECD. However, just as there are concerns around the quality of primary schooling, there are concerns around the educational quality of Grade R and other forms of ECD. One measure of quality is whether the pre-Grade 1 education received by learners was formal or informal. Annual survey data indicate that by 2008 51% of Grade 1 learners had participated in formal Grade R. It is Government's aim to increase this figure to 80% by 2014, but also ensure that 100% of Grade 1 learners have received some form of ECD, whether formal or informal, by this year. By 2019 all Grade 1 learners should have participated in formal Grade R. The 2001 White Paper on ECD had envisaged a gross enrolment ratio of just under 30% for the ages 0 to 5 by 2010. By 2008 a level of 32% had already been reached. This figure is comparable to those in other middle income countries. It is envisaged that the enrolment ratio for ages 0 to 5 should increase to 50% by 2024, which would correspond to an average of three years of ECD per child. In addition, Government will need to focus on improving the quality of all types of ECD as it is not enrolment in ECD as such, but rather enrolment in good quality ECD that contributes towards better learning outcomes in primary schools.

33. **Age and grade.** Currently repeater rates in schools are high, at almost 20% in Grade 1 and between 15% and 5% in Grades 2 to 11. Putting a greater emphasis on learning outcomes, as is done in the Action Plan, increases the risk that schools will hold back learners in lower grades to an even greater degree in order to improve their average ANA results. In order to counteract this, it is important for schools and departments to pay careful attention to trends in the repeater and drop-out rates. More generally, there is a need to reduce repetition in order, for instance, to reduce class sizes. This should be achieved not through automatic promotion but through better teaching and learning that reduces the need for grade repetition in the first place. Two indicators are proposed to monitor improvements in the flow of learners through their grades: (1) The percentage of children aged 9 at the start of the year who have completed Grade 3. (2) The percentage of children aged 12 at the start of the year who have completed Grade 6. A gradual movement towards 85% and 75% for the two indicators respectively by 2024 is envisaged. These target levels allow for a repeater rate of around 5% per grade, in other words a situation is envisaged in which grade repetition would still exist, but at a substantially lower level than is currently the case. In the coming years, when districts monitor improvements in learning outcomes, they will also pay attention to equivalent grade attainment indicators at the school level, partly to ensure that learners are not unnecessarily being forced to repeat.
34. **Further Education and Training and the transition out of school.** Much needs to be done to make the Grades 10 to 12 Further Education and Training (FET) band in schools more responsive to the labour market and life challenges faced by youth. Clearly, planning in this area must occur in a way that takes into account trends in public FET colleges and private FET institutions. Currently, around 40% of youths successfully complete Grade 12 and obtain a National Senior Certificate. The percentage of youths who obtain any FET qualification is only around 41%, meaning that general schooling accounts a very high proportion of all FET, and that around 60% of youths are left without a formal qualification other than a certificate issued by the school. The picture has been changing, with public FET college enrolments having increased sharply in the last five years. Yet we are still far from the point at which we can say we are providing adequate FET to sufficient numbers of youths. The target for schools is to substantially increase the percentage of youths who obtain a National Senior Certificate, reaching 70% by 2024, and to contribute towards a joint target, shared by the two education Ministries, of having 100% of youths obtain a qualification at the FET level by 2019. These targets would place South Africa in a very favourable position relative to the situation in other middle income countries. Even rich countries

have currently not reached universal completion of secondary schooling. In the United States the figure is just under 80% and in the United Kingdom it is 90%. Moreover, South Africa's current enrolment ratio for upper secondary schooling, at around 92%, is relatively good compared to those of Botswana (58%), Mexico (61%), Cuba (91%), Malaysia (53%) and Turkey (72%). The challenge in South Africa at the FET level is partly to increase the current enrolment levels, but the challenge is also largely about creating more variety and better learning outcomes. The Action Plan and *Schooling 2025* must chart a clear way forward for FET schools, based on a holistic view of FET generally. For this, further consultation and thinking is required.

Our framework for improving schools

35. Mobilising the basic education system in order to achieve the output goals described above is a complex task involving sufficient alignment between many different actors and processes, yet alignment that does not over-bureaucratise the system or stifle innovation. The following diagram provides a basic and inevitably incomplete picture of the public schooling system as we would like it to function. The diagram will be referred to in the discussion that follows on what action to take to improve the system, and in particular to improve learning outcomes.



Interventions to improve schools and goals to guide action going forward

36. A summary of current medium term challenges relating to improving schools are explained below, as well as likely goals (and in some cases indicators) to guide action over the longer term. Goals and especially indicators are explained in less detail here than was the case for the output goals described above. How action for better schooling is organised over the coming years in support of the sector's output goals requires much consultation and careful technical work. There is no shortage of plans at the national and provincial levels currently to deal with the improvement of schools, at least in the medium term. The challenge will be to assess carefully how to streamline existing plans, some of which are excellent and well-focussed, into this Action Plan. Assessment is not discussed below as this has already been discussed above (see paragraphs 20 to 26).

37. **The curriculum.** The curriculum lies at the heart of the schooling process. It specifies what should be taught and how, and how learning in the classroom should proceed. A 2009 curriculum review led to a set of recommendations for changes that would make the school curricula easier to implement. Some recommendations have already been followed through. For instance, the requirement that teachers maintain individual learner portfolios was dropped given that records can be kept in a more consolidated fashion by teachers. The recommendation that more specific learning programmes be developed to guide teachers has resulted in the establishment of teams to develop such programmes, drafts of which will be released in 2010. It is important that we should not lose sight of over-arching principles that must guide curriculum development as we move forward. The curriculum must be educationally sound and based on appropriate pedagogic theory. It must be practical, easily understandable and implementable in the context of South African schools. As this context changes, the curriculum must be modified if necessary. The 2003 e-Education strategy for the education sector offers new opportunities and challenges in this regard. The curriculum should also strike the right balance between prescription and opportunities for teacher innovation in the classroom. The current shift towards clearer prescriptions is necessary, but this should not stifle genuine innovation and creativity by teachers. The ongoing struggle for a better treatment of language of teaching and learning in the curriculum must continue. We need more research into how the use of language in the classroom can reinforce the learning process. The Constitution's imperative that the status of our nine indigenous languages be elevated should be taken seriously. Capacity within the country to assess and develop school curricula is not what it should be. Such capacity is currently being strengthened within the national department, which should clearly play a key role in this area.
38. **Teachers.** Teachers are primarily responsible for implementing the curriculum. In many ways the future economic and social development of the country depends on the capabilities, commitment and well-being of the approximately 365 000 teachers who teach in the classrooms of South Africa's public schools. Current challenges with respect to teachers can be broken down into the following four policy areas.
- **An adequate supply of young and inspired teacher recruits.** Effective long term government planning is crucial in ensuring that there is a sufficient supply of suitable young teachers entering the schooling system for the first time every year. For many years this supply has been below what it should be and consequently the average age of teachers has been gradually increasing. Fortunately this trend has slowed down in recent years due to efforts to increase enrolments in teacher training (partly through the Funza Lushaka bursary scheme), and to make teacher remuneration more attractive relative to that in competing professions. However, it will take some years before the situation is fully normalised. Monitoring this trend, as well as the trend in the retention of teachers, is an important matter that must receive more attention in future. In determining the right policy interventions, there must be a greater dependence on information from teachers themselves regarding what kinds of incentives, whether monetary or non-monetary, they prefer, and what the critical factors are that make teaching unsatisfactory. Promoting teacher satisfaction must be a central concern for Government, teacher unions and school principals. The teaching profession must be seen as an attractive one that committed and able South Africans can be proud of belonging to.
 - **An optimal distribution of teachers across the country.** The total number of teachers in South Africa is below what it should be if one makes an international comparison. However, we also experience problems with respect to the distribution of existing teachers across schools. The problem of large classes is in part a result of a skewed distribution of teachers. Around half of South Africa's

public school learners are in classes with more than 40 learners. This is a problem which must be tackled. The solution partly lies in improving the implementation of incentives aimed at filling unfilled posts in rural and difficult urban areas. Such incentives were introduced in 2007. The policy that distributes teaching posts across schools ensures an equitable distribution of posts, yet it could be better designed to reduce over-sized classes, for instance through better alignment with rules governing time usage in schools. There is moreover a need to monitor the extent of unfilled posts, and the reasons why posts are left unfilled, in a more proactive manner. Research has indicated that large classes, apart from being a result of unfilled posts, also arise as a result of inadequate infrastructure and poor time management within schools, matters which are discussed below. The fact that South Africa has a high learner/educator ratio is partly linked to the fact that compared to countries with a similar level of economic development, South Africa's teacher salaries are generous. We would like them to be more generous, yet we cannot deny that by international standards, they are already above the average. This limits the degree to which the learner/educator ratio can be reduced at present. Limiting the ratio by a few points, from its current level of around 33, is something that can be considered in the medium term. However, taking it down to, for instance, the level enjoyed in Botswana of around 22 would require a very significant redirection of resources in the country over the longer term. Undoubtedly, as the economy grows new opportunities for tackling the high learner/educator ratio will present themselves.

- **Effective in-service teacher development.** For many years to come, the majority of South Africa's teachers will be teachers who received their pre-service training during the apartheid era. Considerable effort over the last fifteen years has gone into providing in-service training to induct teachers into the new curriculum and more effective teaching methodologies. However, these efforts have been inadequate and recent developments have pointed to the need for a much better coordinated and massive in-service training strategy. Assessments of teacher knowledge and skills within a number of research projects have confirmed that not only are many teachers lacking with respect to effective teaching methodologies, their subject knowledge too is seriously lacking. The 2009 Teacher Development Summit led to a shared statement by teachers, teacher training institutions and the Government on how to move forward. There needs to be a better diagnosis of teacher development needs. In this regard, districts have a vital role to play. Moreover, e-Education presents exciting opportunities for teachers to diagnose their needs themselves and access appropriate teacher development programmes and materials. Programmes such as the laptops for teachers initiative, launched in 2009, can greatly facilitate this. There is a need to evaluate carefully what teacher development programmes currently exist, to identify what the key gaps are, and to fill these gaps with new and well-focussed programmes. The principle should be upheld of basing the evaluation of existing programmes to a large degree on what participating teachers themselves say. There needs to be a recognition that some needs are widespread amongst teachers, whilst others are very specific to grades, subjects and the individual teacher. One of the lessons learnt from the past years is that there needs to be better monitoring of how much teacher development occurs, what its current focus is, and on what gains there are from the development in terms of teaching and learning improvements in the classroom. Teacher development is provided by a wide range of organisations, including universities and NGOs, in a wide variety of formats. This diversity is in many ways an advantage, but there is a need to continually update the overall picture through a process of consolidated national monitoring.

- **Support and accountability.** Even for well trained teachers, teaching is often a difficult job that places a strain on the individual. Support to teachers should take the form of not just professional development, but also psycho-social support. At the same time, there must be sufficient teacher accountability. Teachers need to prepare for class, spend at least the required amount of time engaged in active teaching in the classroom, maintain the necessary assessment records (which were simplified in 2009) and ensure that they manage their time in such a way that teaching programmes are completed within the school year. The evidence suggests that too many teachers are not taking these responsibilities seriously enough. Time spent in the classroom has been found to be too low and in many cases programmes are not completed within the year, partly because there is too little accountability within the school and to the Department in this regard. The overarching framework governing support to teachers and teacher accountability must be a social contract between teacher organisations and the employer. Maintaining such a social contract has been found to be critical in many countries. South Africa has seen key successes in this area in recent years. The Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC) brought together key stakeholders, including education departments and teacher organisations, around a core set of principles underpinning the improvement of schools. At a more operational level, there needs to be a set of transparent and fair procedures to incentivise good teaching, in monetary but also non-monetary terms, and to deal with under-performance, both through support and, where necessary, discipline. The Integrated Quality Management System (IQMS) is not a perfect system, but it provides a basis from which to move forward in this area. Key challenges in future will include finding better ways of incentivising whole schools to do better, recognising that improving results requires a team effort, and to base policy and practices more closely on what teachers themselves like and dislike. Monitoring improvements in the quantity of time spent teaching and in the completion of annual learning programmes should be a key concern.
39. **Textbooks and workbooks.** To quote from the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign, effective schooling requires 'teachers, textbooks and time'. Research from around the world indicates that sufficient access to good textbooks amongst learners improves learning outcomes and provides an impetus for exploration and additional learning beyond the classroom. Currently access to textbooks is insufficiently monitored. There is a need to formulate better indicators in this regard and track improvements over time. The ultimate aim should be that every learner has access to at least one textbook per learning area (or subject) that he or she can take home after school, even if at the end of the year the book must be returned to the school. A new development has been the introduction of nationally standardised workbooks for learners in Grades 1 to 9. These workbooks, which will be used in schools from the beginning of the 2011 school year, are designed to ensure that learners perform a sufficient number of the right practical exercises during the year. The right balance between textbooks, workbooks and materials developed independently by the teacher must be maintained in the coming years. Ensuring that each school has the right number of textbooks, the right amount of learner stationery and (in the coming years) a sufficient number of workbooks at the beginning of the year will continue to be a priority. Success in this area is strongly dependent on the actions of two stakeholders, the provincial department and the school principal. Departments need to ensure that deliveries of materials are correct, based on verified numbers provided by the school. At the same time school principals should actively promote the re-use of textbooks, which are often costly, from one year to the next. The principle implied by the school funding norms, that schools which are good at re-using textbooks should reap the financial benefits of this, must be upheld. The unit cost of textbooks, which according

to some reports is high by international standards, should be monitored carefully. The national department should continue to pursue ways of reducing this cost.

40. **School governance and management.** Many of the problems seen in schools and described in this document come about as a result of inappropriate action, or perhaps more commonly, lack of action by the school principal. Amongst the country's more than 25 000 school principals there are many exemplary principals. Yet many principals lack the management skills and sometimes the commitment to execute their responsibilities. A part of the problem is that normal lines of accountability between the principal and the Department are not always functioning as they should. Clearly, a school principal who does not comply with basic requirements such as the regular submission of a credible school development plan to the Department is unlikely to be maintaining proper lines of accountability within the school. Research points clearly towards the critical role of a good school principal in making a school functional. Over the coming years the professional ethos and identity of school principals will need to be strengthened. Steps in the right direction have been taken in recent years, for instance with the introduction of the middle management service (MMS) tier in the conditions of service regulations. Like teacher development, the capacity development of school principals needs to become more massive, more focussed on results and better monitored. The national department has a key role to play in promoting existing training programmes that clearly add value and in improving the institutional arrangements whereby principals access development programmes. Practicing principals with a proven track record should play a more direct role in the design of materials and the training itself. Moreover, ways should be found of tapping into the management expertise of NGOs and the private sector. School functionality is defined in several policies, in particular in the policies governing the Whose School Evaluation (WSE) programme. There should be better tracking of indicators that reflect school functionality. Many of the indicators already discussed in this document fall into this category. With regard to school governance, the evidence suggests that the current system of SGB elections and procedures provide a good basis for moving forward. The challenge will be to improve the levels of parent participation, in particular in more disadvantaged communities, and bring about a better focus on improving learning outcomes (as discussed earlier). Not only should improving results through more focussed action within the school become a central concern of the SGB, parents should be encouraged to play a stronger role in supporting learners in the home and insisting that learners attend school on time.
41. **School funding.** A 2009 study into the school funding system produced some encouraging findings. Schools have indeed reaped the benefit of increased levels of funding over the years and the introduction of formal national spending targets in 2006. Satisfaction with the no fee schools policy amongst principals and parents is high. Importantly, the study found that principals and schools are happy to take on the financial management responsibilities specified by the funding policy so that resourcing is more responsive to the needs of individual schools. Challenges in the coming years include ensuring that all schools receive financial transfers that are in line with the national targets and that bureaucratic controls by the provincial department that impede effective school management and run contrary to the policy are removed. It is also necessary to find better ways of identifying poor schools in need of preferential school funding. The national funding targets will need to be revisited in the light of the e-Education strategy to ensure that amounts are sufficient to cover the envisaged use of new technologies for improving learning. Currently around 65% of schools use computers for administrative purposes (there has been a vast improvement in recent years in this regard), but only around 25% use computers for teaching, partly due to funding constraints in the majority of schools. This situation must improve.

42. **School infrastructure.** Spending on infrastructure development in schools increased by 39% in real terms between 2005 and 2009, and indicators on school facilities have reflected significant gains. Yet the infrastructure backlogs challenge is so great that a long term view is necessary. Extreme water and sanitation shortfalls are now low enough to be resolved in the medium term. Currently 1 700 schools are without a water supply and 700 do not have any toilets. Moreover, 400 schools are still built entirely of mud. However, the estimated shortfall of 63 000 classrooms and the fact that 15 000 schools still have no library call for action that goes beyond the medium term. Considerable effort has gone into improving the processes for tackling infrastructure backlogs. National norms, released in 2008, provide criteria for classifying schools as being at a minimum or optimum level of functionality with respect to safety, functionality and effectiveness. This makes it easier to target schools for infrastructure development in a fair and transparent fashion. The Department is working jointly with the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA) to explore innovative financing models that can fast track infrastructure development in the schooling system. Annual targets have been set for bringing schools up to an optimal level of functionality, and these will be released during 2010.
43. **Learner well-being.** Whilst the current shift towards a better focus on learning outcomes is important, this should not detract from the need to consider the overall wellness of learners. With regard to the national nutrition programme, Government's aim currently is to increase the percentage of learners benefitting from this programme on a daily basis to 90% in the medium term. The success of this must be monitored, as well as the coverage of the School Health Survey Programme, which aims to use schools as a means for providing children with access to basic health services, including glasses for children with impaired vision. To encourage sports the national and provincial departments are currently focussing on the establishment of district-level leagues in certain sporting codes.
44. **Inclusive education.** Education White Paper 6 on special needs education, released in 2001, provided a long term view for this policy area stretching up to 2021. We already halfway through the period considered by the White Paper and many challenges remain, including a few basic policy formulation challenges such as the finalisation of equitable national criteria for funding special schools and funding the new needs brought about by inclusive education in ordinary schools. We should reaffirm the principles of the White Paper, in particular the need for greater access amongst the poor to special needs services and the need for a fundamental mindset shift in the way the schooling system regards special needs and disability. Issues that must be tracked over the long term include the extension of the network of special and full service schools (there are currently 20 of the latter whilst one for each of the 92 districts is envisaged), the capacity of districts to support ordinary schools with respect to specialist services and the loan of costly equipment, and the extent to which ordinary schools refer learners to special or full-service schools for full- or part-time attention.
45. **Support by district offices.** Many of the changes required to improve schools and discussed above involve better organised action on the part of district officials and better resourcing and capacity building at this tier of the system. Districts must essentially support schools, and hold schools accountable, within all policy areas. The introduction of the school-specific targets for learning outcomes discussed above imply new information and management challenges for districts. Recent figures indicate that over 90% of schools are visited by district officials at least once in a year, and that 35% of schools are visited four or more times. Key questions include the degree to which this level of direct interaction must be increased, and what things district officials should prioritise when they support schools. Clearer national criteria that are informed by recent and coming policy developments are needed in this regard. District support is

costly and it is important that it should have an impact. Evaluations of district support should partly be based on ratings of this support given by schools and teachers. District officials themselves often complain that districts are treated as 'post offices' and that administrative work squeezes out professional support duties. This tendency must be opposed, partly by streamlining administrative processes and using e-Education to facilitate this work.

46. **The role of the national department.** The national Minister, supported by the national department, will drive the implementation of the Action Plan. In addition, the national level has a key role to play in promoting the right school interventions within a coherent national framework. Gauging the success of the national department in fulfilling this responsibility should be dealt with within the annual monitoring reports flowing from the Action Plan. It is important that public and school perceptions of the whole range of national policies should be monitored from time to time. The extent to which information provided through the national department's websites is accessed should also be considered a critical indicator of the department's success, in particular as far as promoting e-Education is concerned.