NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL ASSESSMENTS IN SA: SUPPORTING LITERACY AND NUMERACY

PRESENTATION AT THE EDUCATION RESEARCH INDABA
DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY

A focus on the curriculum
(in its broad definition)
OVERVIEW OF THE PRESENTATION

1. What is quality? A working definition for curriculum interventions
2. What is the locus for quality improvement?
3. Improving quality of the system factors that impact on teaching and learning
4. Improving accountability to improve learner performance
5. Conclusion
WHAT IS QUALITY ... The “words”

Policy environment
process
input
evidence
outcomes
output
measuring
Beneficiaries / client
Total quality system
Teachers
monitoring
External environment
Impact
Learners

basic education
Department: Basic Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA
• Quality is expressed in common words / phrases but very little is said about the assumptions about how quality is understood, experienced, influenced by in loco situ; etc
• Quality is influenced by experiences prevalent or created in the classroom or framed by the nature of the interventions
• Quality is targeted, and expressed qualitatively and quantitatively
DECIDING ON QUALITY TARGETS

• To be **sure** of hitting the target, shoot first and, whatever you hit, call it the target!
TARGETS FOR 2013

GET BAND - 55% (of learners will get above 50%)

1. Mathematics
2. Languages

This provides for:

- Performance targets
- Achievement targets
A framework for understanding education quality (UNESCO)
LOCUS OF IMPROVEMENT OF QUALITY
WHAT IS THAT ENVIRONMENT

• NATIONAL: Policy formulation, monitoring of implementation and support, system management;

• PROVINCIAL: policy implementation, monitoring of learner performance against national targets and (customised) support;

• DISTRICT implementation improvement and specific support; monitoring school performance against targets

• SCHOOL-based implementation, reflection and improvement; monitoring classroom performance against learner targets; learner support
Figure 3. Dynamic of policy making

Adapted from Jerry Lee, 2004

WHAT ARE THE DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY

- FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF LEARNING OUTCOMES
Systemic factors for improving the quality of teaching & learning (UNESCO), 2006
IMPROVING QUALITY OF INPUTS
INFRA-STRUCTURE

WORK

BOOKS

ANA

CAPS

Specified

K:&S ;

Assessment
Utilising ANA data - item analysis to strengthen learning outcomes across the system;

Implementing Early Grade Reading Assessment (EGRA) in Grades 1 to 3;

School-based assessment; reading report cards;

**KNOWLEDGE STRUCTURE**

- Improving teacher content knowledge and methodology;
- Orientation to CAPS;
- Strengthening Language teaching - EFAL;
- Ensuring quality teacher development and support;

**CONDUCTIVE CLASSROOM ENVIRONMENT**

- Appropriate provision of reading resources and monitored;
- Conducive learning spaces created in all schools;
- Emphasises learners’ access to libraries
Provincial reading programmes in all schools;

Provincial programmes for mental math;

Investigating different strategies like the use of Reading Coach and Teacher Assistant training to support teachers;

Evaluate impact of Reading programmes offered by service providers;

Structured monitoring of reading programmes

Specific teaching of writing skills, like through Ithuba Writing Project for Grades 4-9;
• **EXPECTED OUTCOMES:** “standard” across the system

• **CAPACITY:** Improved capacity of district officials and teachers;

• **STRENGTHEN MANAGEMENT:** principals, SMTs, classroom, and at macro level;

• **DEFINE AND DIFFERENTIATE SUPPORT:** who does what, when, to what end, and how is support managed
• In the classroom: focus on meaningful learning, effective teaching; good assessment; good use of resources – the minimum in CAPS
• Roles and responsibilities of key role players in the system spelt out; key posts filled;
• managed by reporting and accountability measures; feedback – NSLA a comprehensive framework for reporting
• Accommodates extended learning opportunities – reading support; coaches; extra reading time;
IMPROVING QUALITY OF OUTCOME

• Resultant learner performance against learning outcomes - **LEARNER SCORES IN LITNUM**;

• Reliable measuring; authentic data and in-depth analyses - **ANA, common tests, external tests, SBA**;

• Remediation and support but targeting the learner - **update of workbooks**;

• **SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLANS** developed and managed and monitored for impact;

• About **IMPACT** (what you find consistently with what you do);
INFLUENCES ON LEARNER PERFORMANCE AND LEARNING OUTCOMES
Major disparities in literacy levels within countries are often linked with poverty and other forms of disadvantage. In seven sub-Saharan African countries with low overall adult literacy rates, the literacy gap between the poorest and wealthiest households is more than forty percentage points.

(EFA Report, 2009)
Student background, the organization of the education system and the school environment explain learning disparities within each country. Many essential resources taken for granted in developed countries remain scarce in developing countries – including basic infrastructure such as electricity, seats and textbooks.
RAISE QUALITY ...

• while expanding access by focusing on smooth progression through school and better learning outcomes,
• increasing textbook supply and quality,
• strengthening teacher training and support, and
• ensuring that class sizes are conducive to learning.
Delivery of good-quality education is ultimately contingent on what happens in the classroom, and teachers are in the front line of service. To improve student outcomes, having enough teachers and reasonable pupil/teacher ratios (PTRs) is not sufficient: the teachers need to be well trained and motivated. The profile of teachers, and the governance systems through which they are recruited, trained and deployed, have a critical bearing on learning outcomes and on equity.
IMPROVING SUPPORT TO THE CLASSROOM
Resourcing
- Workbooks
- Textbooks
- Basic requirements

Equality in instructional time
- Curriculum coverage
- Monitoring time allocation
- Reading across the curriculum

Equal assessment opportunities
- Improved school-based assessments
- Differentiated assessments
- Regular external assessments
IMPROVING ACCOUNTABILITY
• Links to teacher planning;
• Monitoring as an integrated focus in all interventions and processes
• Feed – through into improving practice and process
• Reporting to key deliverables against the same indicators
In conclusion

- We have factors that influence quality in the system
- We have system elements that, when strengthened, will improve quality
- Dimensions? Not until we spell out clear standards indicators, will we improve total quality (and) management