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THE EDUCATION ROADMAP IN SOUTH AFRICA

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A response to the precarious state of the public education system in South Africa, the Education Roadmap and its 10 Point Programme is a multi-layered policy intervention intended to galvanise educational policymakers and practitioners into action, get schools the support they need, get teachers teaching and learners learning, and ultimately produce a functioning and good quality system of education.

1. Introduction

This policy brief examines the recently formulated Education Roadmap in South Africa. The Education Roadmap is a multi-stakeholder document of education priorities that aims to influence government thinking and intervention under the new Zuma administration. It has significantly influenced the ANC's 2009 election campaign and subsequent pronouncements by President Zuma on education.

The CREATE Country Analytic Review (Motala et al 2007) highlighted the fact that though the majority of children have physical access to schooling in South Africa, much of that access is in circumstances where learning is severely compromised by poor quality teaching, irregular attendance, over age enrolment, social dislocations, and the many consequences of poverty and inequality which have their origins in the past. Subsequent research is confirming the need to develop extended visions of access that couple physical access to adequate learning facilities, enrolment and progression at the appropriate age, improved levels of achievement, higher levels of time on task, improved health and nutritional status of children, and better targeting of pro-poor subsidies.

The Education Roadmap was developed as a result of growing concern about the condition and effectiveness of the public education system in South Africa. A process of policy dialogue between different stakeholders has led to the development of a common strategy to prioritise actions designed to address problems. This semi-formal stakeholder agreement is known as the 10 Point Programme.

The Education Roadmap has been distributed to teacher unions, government officials and academics, and the public has also been engaged through media articles and a series of public 'Education Conversations', as well as through more direct discussion with policy makers, including parliament and members of provincial governments responsible for education.

One purpose of the Education Roadmap is to open up new spaces for policy deliberations in South Africa. This is important. With a new administration in place there are opportunities to revisit institutional, political and social realities and to address key issues of equitable access, quality, and effectiveness. A major concern is to find ways to ensure that the concerns of the Education Roadmap are integrated into new education policy and result in the implementation of programmes that have an impact.

This policy brief identifies some of the key issues for educational development in South Africa, describes the process by which the Education Roadmap was drawn up, details the strategic focus of the Roadmap, and highlights how the 10 Point Programme identifies a way forward.

2. Education in South Africa

Fifteen years after apartheid, education in South Africa could be said to be in crisis (Bloch 2009). While there have been significant improvements and achievements since 1994, it remains clear that the quality of education and its outcomes are substandard. Learners' levels of achievement are mostly very poor. With regard to average scores for literacy, mathematics and science, as measured by international learning achievement assessments, South Africa routinely comes last even in comparison with less developed and less-resourced African countries. A scarcity of skills within the South African economy has its roots in an inadequate baseline of achievement within the schooling system from the very earliest grades.

Conditions and outcomes are generally worse for children attending rural and township schools, where learner populations remain overwhelmingly black. It is reported that around 80% of schools are dysfunctional, especially in terms of the poor outcomes produced. Large numbers of learners fail to reach levels of achievement consistent with the norms for their grade. Many learners are negatively affected by gangsterism, poverty, hunger and HIV/AIDS. The teaching corps is demoralized and under-performing; and many teachers still practice corporal punishment. The rights of both students and teachers are regularly compromised. The Ministerial Report on Learner Retention (DoE 2008) noted that while enrolment rates are generally high, some groups remain disadvantaged, and inequalities of access persist in what is effectively a two-tier schooling system, one for the poor and the other, usually consisting of former whites-only schools, catering for the elite.

3. Background to the Education Roadmap

Concern about the public school system and its shortcomings have been widely and publicly expressed, and acknowledged by the education authorities. The ANC's Annual Conference in 2007 (where Jacob Zuma was elected as ANC president) highlighted concerns in education. Calls were made for more attention to be paid to the impact of poverty on schooling and to increasing meaningful access for the poor at all

levels of education, through expanding nutrition schemes and increasing the number of 'no fee' schools (from 40% to 60% of all schools). An appeal was made to 'restore teaching to the noble profession' it once was, with teachers expected to be 'in class, on time, teaching'. It was also felt that education should be the concern not only of the Department of Education, but of government as a whole.

The ANC Subcommittee on Education was charged with giving substance to such formulations and also to feed them into the party's election manifesto. In this context, and on the initiative of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), a meeting was convened on 25 July 2008 which led to a process by which the Education Roadmap was produced. Participants included Jay Naidoo (Chair of DBSA), Naledi Pandor (then Minister of Education, and Zweli Mkhize (Chair of the ANC Subcommittee on Education). A series of subsequent strategy, technical and stakeholder meetings involved various institutions, unions, government officials, academics and NGOs. The Education Roadmap and its 10 Point Programme was produced as a document and finally adopted on 7 November 2008 by the stakeholders involved.

4. The Education Roadmap: key issues

The Education Roadmap highlights key issues that subvert education in South Africa. These include:

- **Social disadvantage:** many parents/guardians are un- or under-educated, relatively powerless and lack access to information. Such social disadvantage is often reproduced across generations.
- **Teachers:** Teachers often have poor subject knowledge and weak pedagogical practice. In addition, too few people are training to be teachers, and performance evaluation systems are inadequate.
- **Dysfunctional schools:** Most schools do not achieve acceptable outcomes, are badly managed and poorly supported.
- **Resources:** There is a lack of libraries, science laboratories and computers in schools.
- **Responsibility and accountability:** Stronger national intervention is difficult despite inefficiencies in the manner in which provinces deliver policy. District support systems and

management in particular fail to give impetus to school level improvement.

5. The 10 Point Programme

The Education Roadmap identifies three levels for focused analysis and intervention. Drawing on the work of Martin Carnoy (Bloch et al 2008), the first and most important is the 'in school' level, which focuses on what happens between educators and learners in the classroom. The second level is the 'support to school' level, where principals and departmental district officials must ensure that schools are not only functioning but also well-managed and well-resourced. Lastly, the 'societal' level concerns wider issues which impact on the readiness of learners to learn, including poverty and the infrastructural and material backlogs bequeathed by apartheid.

The **10 Point Programme** is structured in terms of these three levels, which are intended to be identified and tackled simultaneously. It is reproduced below.

A. In school

1. Teachers are to be in class, on time, teaching and making use of textbooks.
2. The quality of early childhood education and of primary schools must be improved, and this is what the Department of Education's 'Foundations for Learning' campaign, emphasizing reading and numeracy, is intended to address.
3. External tests are to be conducted for all Grade 3 and Grade 6 learners every year, and the results are to be provided to parents.
4. All teachers are to be effectively evaluated based on the extent to which learner performances *improve*, with the results influencing teachers' occupationally specific dispensation pay.
5. Quality teachers are to be recruited and teacher development strengthened, by offering bursaries to attract quality students into teacher training institutions and by offering student loan repayments in order to encourage young graduates to become teachers. Pre-service and in-service teacher training is to be better coordinated and resourced, and teacher unions are to be given a formal and funded role in teacher development.

B. Support to school

6. District and school management is to be strengthened by bringing in management capacity from the private sector and civil society as well as from elsewhere in the public sector. A process of measurable improvements is to be phased in, by targeting selected education districts and dysfunctional schools. Infrastructure budgets are to be used as an incentive for schools that deliver improved teaching and learning.
7. The use of ICT is to be increased, including using audiovisual teaching materials in the classroom so as to supplement teaching and to demonstrate quality teaching to learners and educators.
8. National-provincial alignment and the efficiency of education expenditure are to be improved, through the national procurement of textbooks and the allocation of additional resources to improve district capacity. The use of conditional grants is seen as an important tool to ensure alignment.

C. Societal

9. A social compact for quality education is to be developed. This will include a National Consultative Forum dedicated to clarifying and monitoring the 'non-negotiables' and performance targets for key stakeholders. Communities should be mobilised, informed and encouraged to participate in education issues. These can range from corporate social investment through campaigns to clean up schools and support food gardens, to encouraging graduates to enter teaching or assist their former schools.
10. In order to improve the environment for learning and teaching, measures to combat poverty such as nutrition programmes, basic school infrastructure and social support for children, are to be implemented.

6. Conclusion

The Education Roadmap provides conceptual and programmatic guidance for the reform of the education system, and opens up discussion of the need for a social compact among key

education stakeholders that could, through common purpose and collective action, achieve a much more effective education system and better education outcomes.

The Education Roadmap's diagnosis of the strategic challenges facing the South African education system is only a starting-point. However, the importance of the process through which it came into being should not be underestimated. This process, which was characterised by multiple and simultaneous interventions by key stakeholders – in this case, government, the ruling party and the private sector – in conjunction with inputs from civil society, trade unions, NGOs, academics and the public at large, has helped to focus discussion around core education problems and solutions.

Participants in the process found that, while a range of data is available (for example, statistics on education outcomes, employability and teachers), many questions cannot be properly answered due to the poor quality, and sometimes a complete lack, of relevant data. Nevertheless, sufficient adequate data is available to make it clear that important contributors to South Africa's poor education outcomes include institutional weaknesses within the public education system, problems of 'delivery' by education departments and officials, and a range of problems faced by learners and teachers. Effective and efficient teacher development must be coupled with increased support for, and the accountability of, the teaching corps, and a recent Teacher Development Summit, driven by the teacher unions, has begun to address such concerns.

The Education Roadmap is currently open for public debate. It remains to be seen whether the concurrence of situation and circumstance, the positioning of role-players, and the assumptions underlying the implicit model of policy development and intervention developed during the Roadmap process, will impact upon other policy implementation spaces in the future.

There have been some positive indicators: parts of the 10 Point Programme have been taken up already in new provincial planning processes; a standoff with striking teachers in Soweto saw a line drawn under teacher obligations; and public debate has been enhanced and encouraged.

One thing is certain, however: if policy makers fail to recognise or make provision for the process of implementing the 10 Point Programme, if civil servants fail to support schools and teachers, if teachers don't teach and learners continue to under-achieve, and if the public at large fails to

see that the country has no future without a good quality system of education, the opportunities made possible by the Education Roadmap will be squandered, the spaces that it has opened up for transformation will close down, and education in South Africa will slip back into its previous state.

The CREATE research programme provides a useful analytical framework for addressing some of the problems identified in the ten point plan. In particular its focus on access to meaningful learning, equity and grade progression is important. CREATE team members participated in the Education Roadmap process of look forward to making an ongoing contribution to this important activity.

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This policy brief was developed by: Graeme Bloch, Development Bank of Southern Africa, Johannesburg, South Africa.