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WORLD TEACHERS' DAY 2013

By Bernice Loxton



South Africa's oldest teacher, Ms Nontsikelelo Qwelane, at the World Teachers' Day celebration

The ELRC World Teachers' Day celebration in Durban on 5th October 2013 was a great success and exceeded expectations. The day commemorated teachers all over the world and recognized the essential role of teachers in advancing society, through quality teaching. This year's theme was, "A call for teachers."

Prominent speakers at this year's celebration included the Deputy Minister of Basic Education, leaders of unions and the Vice-President of Education International, Ms Duncan-Adanusa.

The Deputy Minister of Basic Education, Hon. Mr Enver Surty, paid homage to teachers and thanked them for the sterling work that they do.

He said that World Teachers Day signifies the awareness, understanding, appreciation and acknowledgement of the vital role of teachers in education and development and that the day should help us draw attention to the urgent need to raise the status of the profession. This, he said, we must do not only for the benefit of teachers but also for whole societies, to entrench respect for the role of teachers in socialisation.

The Deputy Minister said that working together we can uproot all practices that militate against the projection of a positive image of teaching and of the teacher in particular. Among these burning issues that we must combat together, are incidents of violence against learners and teachers in schools, corporal punishment, bullying, abuse, rape, and all other forms of harassment.

SADTU's General Secretary, Mr Maluleke thanked teachers for their passion, commitment and daily sacrifices to building a prosperous nation. He reiterated that teachers are worthy to be celebrated, as they are not only teachers but also social workers, nurses, doctors and everything to the children in their

care. Mr Maluleke said “*A call for teachers*” acknowledges the critical role of teachers and education in the development of society.

He emphasized the specific demands that the call makes, these include:

- Commitment by the government to improve the salaries of teachers;
- A commitment by government to invest in the recruitment of high calibre students as candidates for teaching;
- A commitment by all to create safe and conducive learning and teaching environments;
- A commitment by government and business to invest in the provision of the necessary financial resources to improve schools infrastructure;
- A commitment by government to improve the working conditions for teachers through collective bargaining; and
- A commitment to deal decisively with ill discipline in schools.

NAPTOSA’s General Secretary, Mr Hendricks delivered a message of support on behalf of the combined teacher union in the ELRC, CTU-ATU. He said that “*A call for teachers*” was a call for quality education for all. In acknowledging the role of teachers he said that they go to great lengths to fulfil the crucial mandate that they have been given, the education and welfare of the most precious and vulnerable members of our society, our children. Mr Hendricks referred to teachers as a national treasure and said that the best way of rewarding teachers and recognising their worth, as a national treasure is to improve the conditions under which they work. This includes overcrowded classrooms, inadequate facilities and lack of resources, and lack of support from district offices.

Mr Hendricks said that there is a serious need for the salaries of teachers to be reviewed; and that in this regard parties are waiting with great anticipation for the recommendations of

the Presidential remuneration review commission.

The Vice-President of Education International, Ms Duncan-Adanusa brought a global perspective on teaching. She said that our vision of quality education is not only defined in terms of learning outcomes, but also in terms of the full development of the individual and their contribution to society.

She addressed the theme for World Teachers’ Day and said that “*A call for teachers*” speaks to the shortage of qualified teachers, which is a serious concern, as well as the need to elevate the professional role of teachers.

Ms Duncan Adanusa provided a global view of teachers and their contributions to education. She said the world’s teachers especially are taking seriously Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states that “*Everyone has the right to education,*” all levels of education, including early childhood, primary, lower and upper secondary education, vocational education and training, higher and adult education.

She emphasized the importance of quality education and said that quality education is not simply a public good, but a basic human right.

“Quality education contributes to human development. It provides people with the critical knowledge, abilities and skills that are needed to question, conceptualise and solve problems that occur both locally and globally, and actively contribute to the sustainable and democratic development of society. Hence, quality education is fundamental to the achievement of all other development goals, including gender equality, health, nutrition and environmental sustainability. A standalone goal on education will help galvanise international and local efforts to invest in education”, said Ms Duncan Adanusa.

Ms Duncan Adanusa said in conclusion that in order to change the reality for millions of students, we must have impact on perceptions around the world.

The presence of South Africa's oldest teacher, Ms Nontisikelelo Qwelane who still teaches at age 92, brought a human face to education and the tenacity of a true teacher. She boldly stated that she only needs a class and a blackboard to teach. She reminded all present why teaching is labeled a noble profession. As the passion for instruction, overrides the rewards or lack of resources. She has been a teacher for 73 years.

The annual celebration of World Teachers' Day sheds light on the importance of the teaching profession and our societal role to celebrate teachers and their remarkable contribution to our country's transformation. Change is effected in classroom and translates in an enabled youth who is geared with the armour of knowledge and passion to develop and transform society.

NATIONAL COLLECTIVE BARGAINING

From the desk of the ELRC General Secretary, Ms NO Foca

The ELRC recorded significant achievements during the second quarter of the 2013/14 financial year. These include the following:

The Education Management Service (EMS) for Office-based educators task team was established in the second quarter to finalise the EMS and job descriptions of office based educators.

The Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Technical task team, with the assistance of other stakeholders such as the Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET), the South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA), the Education, Training and Development Practices Sector Education and

Training Authority (ETDP-SETA) and the South African Council for Educators (SACE) held fruitful engagements where in principle it was agreed that the criteria to be used for consideration for RPL were those educators with 6-10 years' experience. The SAQA would assist in putting together a detailed proposal for providing RPL to educators, which the task team would engage on for recommendation to Council. Council would have to make a pronouncement on the purpose for providing RPL to educators i.e. whether educators obtain credits to access formal education or obtain credits for promotion purposes. It is anticipated that RPL is one of the aspects that would be finalised as the funding would be from ETDP-SETA and is stakeholder driven.

The ELRC convened a workshop on Early Childhood Development (ECD), which was presented by the National Planning Commission Secretariat. It was recommended that another workshop be convened with presentations from stakeholders such as the Department of Basic Education, Department of Social Development, Department of Health (DoH) and the Department of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA).

A workshop was convened on the Incremental Introduction of African Languages (IIAL) in Schools draft policy to update the ELRC on the IIAL policy and the state of provincial readiness to implement the IIAL pilot in Grade 1 in 2014.

The ELRC commissioned the Legal Sub Committee to look at the impact that the LRA Amendment Bill, the Basic Conditions of Employment Act (BCEA) Amendment Bill, the Employment Equity Act (EEA) Amendment Bill would have on the Council.

FETC Amendment Act

The FETC Amendment Act 3 of 2012, makes provision for lecturers who were transferred in terms of the FETC ACT 16 of 2006 from the State to the Colleges, to be migrated to the

employ of State in terms of the Public Service Act 103 of 1994, which subsequently implies that their conditions of service will be dealt with in another Bargaining Council (GPSSBC).

With the migration of FETC lecturers in terms of the new Act, the FETC bargaining unit will cease to exist in the ELRC and the role of the Council is uncertain. However, discussions on the matter have ensued to reach finality on the Council's position.

Research

The Council is aware of the pertinent challenges facing education personnel, particularly educators and in a bid to address these challenges; the Council has identified three areas for research in the 2014/15 financial year. These areas are: survey on HIV and TB; violence in schools and a study on the regularisation of the conditions of service of Grade R Practitioners.

Educators HIV and TB Survey II

The ELRC, in collaboration with other stakeholders in education will commission the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) to conduct a study in the 2014/15 financial year to assess the progress that the education sector is making in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic and to evaluate the impact of the PCTA and PPCT-OVC projects.

The ELRC commissioned the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 2005 to undertake the first-ever comprehensive study on factors determining educator supply and demand in South African public schools. The survey determined that there was a 12.7% HIV prevalence rate among educators, high AIDS morbidity and increased absenteeism due to HIV related illnesses.

The repeat survey in the 2014/15 financial year will determine the progress the education sector is making in its response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic, especially as it

impacts the educators who are the foundation of our society. The study will also estimate the prevalence and incident of HIV and TB amongst educators, school support staff and officials in South Africa.

Study on violence in schools

The Council will conduct research in the 2014/15 financial year on the prevalence of violence in schools with a specific focus on educators and how the increase of violence in schools impacts learning and teaching. Recent media reports have highlighted the severity of violence in schools and how this element is fast becoming a threat to the attainment of quality education in public schools.

Early Childhood Development (ECD)

The Council will undertake research in the 2014/15 financial year to address the challenges faced in South Africa relating to ECD. These include the regularisation of the conditions of service of Grade R Practitioners.

BEING A TEACHER

Professional challenges and choices



We frequently read in the media today that the role of teachers is crucial to the reconstruction of education, and even to South Africa's survival in a competitive global economy. Yet teachers who take their role

seriously encounter many contradictions. Frequent public calls are made for professionalism, but many teachers are called on to work in conditions that hardly encourage them to see themselves as professionals.

Many teachers in recent years have faced the choice of redeployment or retrenchment; many have been designated 'temporary' for years while performing the same duties as other teachers.

Though some teachers have seen reductions in the size of their classes, the experience of others has been the opposite. Many still do not have the most basic facilities – a classroom with a roof, walls or working surfaces for the learners. Progress has been made in reducing inequality in state spending on education, but many South African teachers still have to make do in seriously under-resourced classrooms and schools.

On the other hand, for many committed teachers who try to carry out their duties professionally in spite of these difficulties, a major obstacle they face is the lack of support they receive from colleagues who fail to grasp the importance of professional standards.

Teachers in South Africa today face considerable challenges. They also find themselves in a climate of uncertainty, not only because they face less job security than in the past, but because they have to:

- Maintain discipline and authority in a *democratic* school environment;
- Adapt to new roles and major shifts in the curriculum; and
- Meet the demands of more informed and assertive parents.

Contextual challenges that teachers face

There are so many contextual factors, over which we may seem to have little control, that from time to time we need to 'step back' from everyday routines. This is the beginning of a 'reflective practice', an approach that is

increasingly being expected of teachers. The first step is to try to clearly identify contextual factors, giving them generalized names and grouping them in categories.

These are:

- *Unpredictable events*: In the everyday reality of schooling with its practical challenges and problems, things are never completely under control. This is considered normal in almost any school in any country. Unexpected problems can be annoying, yet many teachers thrive on the element of surprise – up to a point.
- *Community factors*: The socio-economic and cultural structures that shape the lives of various communities can deeply influence teaching. In one community it could be the influence of gangs, parental poverty, ill health and taxi wars. In another community, it could be values of individual competition for higher grades, sports prestige and status possessions. These factors create different senses of entitlement in young people, which may work against their making an active contribution to their own education.
- *Political and social transition*: The consequences of apartheid education, its legacy of inequality and resistance, have led to a continuing breakdown in the culture of learning and teaching. The fact that some schools are completely isolated from such problems simply points to continuing inequality in the schooling system.
- *Educational reform policies*: The new policies, initiatives, and regulations that come thick and fast from education authorities, every one of them requiring responses (and sometimes major shifts) from teachers, are another contextual challenge. Curriculum 2005, teacher appraisal, and the abolition of

corporal punishment are mixed blessings for many teachers. The fact that reforms sometimes seem to contradict one another may create a sense of confusion and uncertainty.

- *Race, class, language, gender and location*: The fact that teacher identities were essentially constructed by groups of people meant that teachers were able to contest and redefine their identities. This raises the possibility that teachers might be able to make a difference in the other contexts we outline above – all of which have been constructed by human beings.
- *Global change*: Another contextual factor is the fact that teachers in all countries, including South Africa, are experiencing pressure from government, employers and parents to prepare children for competitive employment in a global economy

The contextual factors outlined here confront teachers in South Africa with considerable challenges and are bound to affect the way they experience teaching and the way they teach.

Challenging contexts can create a sense of *powerlessness* in many teachers. For teachers who are *intrinsically* motivated, a vocation may carry them far in the face of difficulties and threats. But for teachers who are *extrinsically* motivated, these difficulties are unlikely to be perceived as challenges that require strategies. A lack of intrinsic motivation tends to leave them open to demoralization when the difficulties mount up.

For this reason some teachers become *fatalistic* and simply give up, becoming part of the problem. Some adopt a bureaucratic 'mask' or image and begin to lead a 'double life'. Maxine Green, an American philosopher of education, has written of a '*divided consciousness*', in which teachers aim merely at efficiency, content for their students to

achieve surface learning rather than 'deep' learning that endures, is adaptable, and helps the student to develop intellectually (1987: 180).

This divided consciousness also leads to *detachment* – teachers relating to students only in terms of their roles as 'learners', rather than in a full awareness of, and in response to, their differences of background and their individuality as people. These teachers lose sight of the goal or purpose of their actions.

Inaction in the face of disorder is another typical reaction of teachers to difficult teaching contexts, as Andrew Patterson and Aslam Fataar observe in their article 'Teachers, moral agency, and the reconstruction of schooling in South Africa'

Patterson and Fataar's study focuses on how teachers in difficult schools experience teaching, how they see themselves, and how this influences their practice. These writers explore the *institutional* environment by contrasting functional and dysfunctional schools.

The functional school environment is associated with order, consensus and clear lines of responsibility. A well-organized and supportive work environment ensures that difficulties are shared. The dysfunctional school is associated with disorder and community problems that distract teachers and staff from using the school as a learning institution.

A common teacher response in dysfunctional schools is to assume a victim position and feel powerless to improve the situation. The state is seen as the only institution powerful enough to have an impact. As a result, many teachers do not take any moral responsibility for what happens around them. This is what the writers label 'moral minimizing'.

The institutional response in dysfunctional schools manifests typically in a loss of moral authority on the part of the principals. They

feel that they can do little more than keep the peace between conflicting factions in the school community and feel unable to act as leaders, inspiring a collective vision for the school. Their energies are scattered and diffused. This is what the writers label 'moral diffusion'.

The three types of teachers identified by Patterson and Fataar are:

- Those who appropriate vital functions such as fundraising to make themselves indispensable, and who acquire considerable power in the process;
- Those who disengage from any sense of responsibility for their environment and who experience a relatively low self-esteem in proportion to their low output; and
- Those who take on more and more responsibilities and eventually either burn out or leave the teaching profession.

Teachers with intrinsic motivation are more likely to be found in the third group, yet they can also be found in the first two groups. This is because Patterson and Fataar perceive these responses to contextual challenges as *adaptations* to a bad environment rather than the mark of bad teachers as such.

So while intrinsic motivation is an important driving force for teachers, especially in difficult environments, it is unlikely to be enough on its own. Something else is needed, not only to *sustain* teachers through difficult times, but to ensure that they teach well and maintain a positive self-identity.

Making sense of professionalism

Eric Hoyle and Peter John are two writer-researchers who have thought hard about the concepts of a profession and professionalism. In their 1995 analysis, '*Professional Knowledge and Professional Practice*', they summarize the thinking of a number of writers

on the subject of teaching as a profession.

Drawing on their description, a profession is associated with the following qualities:

1. A crucial social function

A profession is an occupation that performs a crucial social function or service requiring a considerable degree of skill and competence.

2. Specialized knowledge

Professionals draw on a well-established, well-tested body of specialized knowledge, for instance medicine or the law. Acquiring this body of knowledge and skill requires a lengthy period of higher education.

3. Professional competence

This competence is exercised in situations that are not wholly routine, but which present new problems and require more than *recipe-type knowledge* or simple, 'right or wrong' judgements. For example, doctors may well face situations in which the best course of action is not clear, or in which two *right* courses of action are in direct conflict with each other. In contrast, electricians often make relatively straightforward decisions, even though they draw on a variety of solutions that involve technical knowledge.

4. Professional responsibility

The long period of education required by professions entails socialization into professional *values*, which focus on serving the client's interests rather than deriving economic profit. In other words, society expects professionals to make decisions that involve considerable risk, and to take a high level of *responsibility* for these decisions in the interests of their clients, for example a doctor diagnosing and treating a patient's illness correctly. These professional values are set down in an ethical code of conduct, to which all registered and licensed members of the profession are bound to adhere.

5. Professional autonomy

Professionals require considerable freedom or autonomy to make judgements, because

they have to draw on knowledge-based skills and values-based decision-making in non-routine situations that are often complex and risky. This involves relative freedom from very restrictive bureaucratic control by the government or from public interference.

6. Professional accountability

In exchange for professional autonomy, the controlling body of the profession assures society that its members are competent, responsible, and accountable. It also ensures professional control over their *credentials* and their entry into the profession; and it ensures a high degree of accountability through published codes of conduct, disciplinary committees, and *audits*. However, this autonomy is not a 'reward' bestowed on a profession by a grateful public, but a hard-won right acquired over a long period of time, which is always open to challenge from members of society.

Teaching as a profession

1. Performs a crucial social function?

Most people agree this is true, but their actions fail to support their opinion.

Some people think that if someone is available to control children's behaviour and see to their safety, computers and well-crafted learning materials could provide an adequate means of learning. Another important reservation we have is that *some* South African teachers do not seem to regard their function as crucial. They give out this message through their absenteeism, lateness, and lack of preparation.

2. Specialized knowledge?

Society is unlikely to place a convinced tick in this block. Although a great deal has been written about teaching, there is considerable disagreement as to how reliable it is, compared with other professions. There is also considerable disagreement within educational circles about the various theories of learning and teaching.

3. Skilled in non-routine, complex situations?

We unhesitatingly ticked this block when we thought of what is required of teachers every day in the classroom. But we doubted that the majority of the public expected this of teachers, especially if they had themselves experienced poor teaching. And then there are educational administrators and researchers who seem to think (incorrectly) that teaching can be reduced to a limited number of 'formulae', making it essentially a technical activity.

4. A lengthy period of higher education?

Interestingly enough, a tick here becomes more and more appropriate, as time goes by. A few years ago, the majority of South African teachers would not have qualified, but now, more and more teachers have higher education diplomas and degrees. In fact, it is increasingly difficult to gain a promotion post without a post-graduate degree.

5. A focus on client interests?

We had no problem ticking this one, if we looked at the majority of teachers. Though there would be many differences of opinion as to who teachers' clients are (learners or parents) and what their best interests might be.

6. A high level of responsibility?

The responsibility for the safety and good education of learners is *shared* among many teachers (over a number of years, and, in secondary education, among several teachers in the same year). So the public is only likely to regard teachers as highly responsible in the case of a crisis, such as when a child fails, or when there is a dispute about discipline. It is more likely to be impressed by the weight of individual responsibility.

7. *An ethical code of conduct?*

This is a recent development for all teachers in South Africa. The South African Council of Educators' Code of Conduct became legally binding only in 1998. Before that, only the Teachers' Federal Council (for white teachers) was allowed to develop its own code of conduct during the 1980s. Again, this is evidence that teachers are moving increasingly in the direction of a full profession.

8. *Considerable professional autonomy?*

The South African Council of Educators (SACE) has created a certain amount of autonomy for the collective body of teachers. Yet its powers are mainly *regulatory* (registering and disciplining) and *developmental*.

Control still rests to a great extent with the provincial departments of education as employers and bodies responsible for schooling. Increasing control has passed to the school governing bodies since the Schools Act of 1996, as schools employ more teachers in additional 'governing body' posts. However, even when teachers are relatively tightly controlled, they enjoy a degree of practical autonomy *in their own classrooms*.

9. *Controlled by a professional body?*

SACE controls registration and licensing. This is an example of *professional accountability*. However, the teachers themselves share responsibility for control of their conduct with the provincial education authorities. The teacher unions negotiate responsibilities and conditions of service (including salaries) with the state as employer at the Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC). In South Africa, teachers are held to account through the regulations and requirements of the provincial education departments and through an ELRC appraisal system.

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Communications Department

Editor: Ms NO Foca
Tel: 012 663 0432
FAX: 012 663 9604
E-mail: CindyFoca@elrc.co.za

Editor: Mr F Moloisi
Tel: 012 663 0440
FAX: 012 663 9604
E-mail: smcbs@elrc.co.za

Editor, Layout and Design: Bernice Loxton
Tel: (012) 663 0442
Fax: (012) 663 9604
E-mail: media.pro@elrc.co.za