CHAPTER FIVE

Next steps to developing a new system:

Towards a national plan for the development of the education and training system in the next decade.

In the final chapter, the main recommendations for the next decade are made. Key priorities for education and training provision are highlighted. Administrative and organisational options are also proposed as key levers for accelerating reform for successful development. Together with Chapter 4, Chapter 5 maps out areas for attention in the medium to long term for the achievement of the vision of the integrated, coherent education and training system envisaged in White Paper 1 of 1995.

For the end of the next decade, the vision is of one education and training system, which produces socially responsible individuals who take the initiative and who, on leaving the education and training system, are able to take advantage of social and economic opportunities. The education and training system itself will be characterised by the presence of institutionalised protocols, procedures and policies that make it possible for all people to fully exercise all the rights enshrined in the Constitution. Access to quality education for all and, in particular, for the poorest, will have been achieved and social cohesion will
have been strengthened. There will be a noticeably higher level of knowledge of and respect for the importance of diversity of culture, language and religious practice. Monitoring of the impact of key interventions will have been institutionalised in all line functions and administrative units, and systems will be resourced to ensure frequent and objective monitoring. Evaluation of the results of the monitoring exercise will inform managers to amend interventions, and the system will frequently monitor public opinion about aspects of service delivery. At provincial and local level, national priorities will rapidly and noticeably be translated into well-resourced implementation strategies, while more coherent development planning at local level will be a reality.

It is very clear that the emerging social and economic context will pose challenges for the achievement of this envisaged education and training system. Projections for global economic growth are being adjusted downward, while pressures in the flow of foreign investment and development assistance into developing countries are anticipated in the next decade. This poses challenges for resourcing reform and development globally, regionally and nationally, particularly within the education and training system.

The key feature of the next decade will be the need to prioritise those assets and services that make a difference in the lives of people and to apply effort and energy to making these things work for people. Officials, managers and teachers will need to step into the shoes of ordinary citizens in designing and assessing the success of interventions, in order to make education and training outcomes more relevant and successful. The next decade will involve difficult decisions and trade-offs within the system, as certain priorities are chosen over others. Education partners will have their responsibilities tested in strengthening quality provision, and officials and managers at all levels will be more accountable for their actions. The recently completed exercise of reviewing implementation of government programmes identified the lack of a hierarchy of priorities and the lack of a national development plan as key challenges for Government. Clearly, one of the Department of Education's vulnerabilities is the fact that it has not engaged in the formulation of long-range national plans that are informed by empirical analysis and are broadly owned by stakeholders. The result is that priorities shift too easily, often in reaction to factors that are relatively short-range in nature, such as newspaper reports and pressure from unions or pressure groups. The ad hoc nature of interventions will need to be managed so as not to sacrifice longer-term development trajectories and goals.

Government’s scenario planning suggests four options for South Africa in the next decade. The four options are summarised below:

i. S’gudi S’nas: An accommodating global context with a fragmented society with high levels of inequity, an uncompetitive and indecisive state, and high growth with little opportunity for dispersing the fruits of growth.

ii. Dulisanang: A hostile and insecure global context with an inclusive society with strong social delivery strategies but limited resources, an inclusive and caring society, undergoing low growth with high participation.

iii. Skedonk: A hostile world with a fragmented society, widespread unilateralism and global conflict, anarchy, poverty and low growth and high inequity.

iv. Shosholoza: An accommodating world, a diverse and inclusive society in a thriving multilateral global context, with high economic growth and participation.

It is clear that the Shosholoza scenario would be the most desirable, but the education and training system of the next decade will need to be flexible, efficient and effective enough to survive and develop, whichever path social and economic development takes. If the gaps and challenges identified in Chapter 4 are addressed, there will be...
an opportunity for such flexibility and a focus on aspects of the system, which can be used as development levers, whichever scenario develops in reality.

In summary, in addition to the areas outlined in Chapter 4 above, the main focus of the education and training system in the next decade will be in relation to the following:

1. National action plan for the development of the education and training system

It is imperative that a national implementation plan should be developed to guide developments, interventions, strategies and priorities for the education and training system in the next decade. The plan would need to be subject to a cost-benefit analysis in terms of human development gains, and it would then form the basis for communication, investment and resourcing decisions in the future.

2. Strengthening monitoring and evaluation to ensure implementation of the national action plan

This plan will form the basis of a national monitoring framework for education provision. During the next decade the focus will be on strengthening monitoring and evaluation for quality and effectiveness, especially of interventions that affect the human rights environment, management, institutional and organisational inputs and processes, and outputs and outcomes in education and training. The Action Plan referred to above will need clear impact and outcome indicators, along with systems for ensuring that monitoring and evaluation do take place. It is clear that this work cannot be relegated to one unit in the education and training system, but that it must be institutionalised and analytical. Monitoring and evaluation capacity will be developed in all line functions, with assistance from existing Education Management Information System units that have access to data and information infrastructure, and that have the opportunity to contribute to the development of a quality management information infrastructure.

Considerable resources will need to be committed to the establishment of a framework for monitoring and evaluation, and this will need to draw on existing activities that complement this framework in other organisations, departments and sectors. In the next decade, all line functions will have to put in considerable effort to develop and evaluate indicators of performance so that these can be internalised and used to evaluate the ultimate impact of their interventions and, therefore, the success of the said intervention.

This has implications for the role and function of cooperative governance structures, which will need to focus more acutely on an overview of the evolution of the education and training system and on the broader social development agenda. The role of accounting officers at provincial and national levels will be to continually improve accountability and strengthen service delivery in the years to come, and to assist in developing incentives and sanctions for (positive and negative) deviations from the education development path.

All existing internal departmental instruments of assessment, such as systemic evaluation for quality assurance, EMIS and assessment and examinations related to learner achievement, will need to be examined and strengthened to ensure that information and data on learner achievement and the context, processes and outcomes of teaching and learning are more easily linked to the broader development context. Furthermore, these internal instruments will need to consider, and engage with, external instruments that are used for monitoring and evaluation in the social context, for better development of decision support systems.

In monitoring and evaluating broader social development outcomes, the process of systemic assessment and evaluation, examinations, setting up a management information infrastructure and organisational systems cannot be unlinked from performance monitoring.
recently completed assessment of government interventions, it is clear that the distance perceived between these different internal monitoring and evaluation processes and instruments within and outside the education and training system will need to be successfully breached to make, and objectively demonstrate, a visible impact in the next decade. This means that the Department of Education will need to enable collaboration across line functions, engage pro-actively with provinces and partner organisations, and invest in and secure technical expertise to improve current instruments for improving the quality of existing monitoring and evaluation processes and instruments.

3. Strengthening public institutions

Improving performance and strengthening institutional reform in public educational institutions is an explicit goal for the education and training system. This goal will need to be pursued in all interactions with partners and other government agencies and departments alike, so that the goal of equitable quality education for all, particularly for the poor, can be achieved.

4. Reducing the costs associated with education and training

The needs of the poor and vulnerable need to be addressed by reducing the costs of education and training and the financial burden faced by the poorest learners and their households. These interventions would ensure that fees are abolished for 40 per cent of the school population. In addition, 40 per cent of learners in Grade R to Grade 9 would be targeted and fed through the School Nutrition Programme.

A school uniform policy would also be implemented to assist in better value choices of school uniforms. Improved targeting coverage and effectiveness of student financial aid for the poorest would be implemented and the expansion of student financial aid to cover Further Education and Training as well as Higher Education institutions would be implemented.

5. Development (and improved employability) of young people through skills development

Skills development focusing on young adults and the unemployed needs to be improved, especially the development of medium- to high-level skills through FET and HE interventions.

i. Youth development through FET reform. Improving the following outcomes of FET interventions would ensure youth development by the end of the decade: two in three 16- to 18-year-olds enrolled in FET colleges will participate in the vocational curriculum in scarce skills areas; the implementation of the National Strategy for Mathematics, Science and Technology is weighted in favour of African learners and will contribute to establishing skilled young people able to participate in learning programmes in these three critical areas; the development of Schools of Focused Learning will address curriculum redress and equitable resourcing, particularly for African learners.

In addition, a talent search and nurturing programme will be implemented to identify talented students and provide them with appropriate support throughout their education careers. FET colleges will also need to be more flexible in catering for the learning needs of learners by diversifying modes of delivery. For example, colleges may have to provide night classes or Saturday classes as well as evening classes supplemented by distance learning material, where necessary.

ii. Development of out-of-school young people through FET reform. The needs of out-of-school young people and adult learners need to be addressed. The needs of out-of-school young people would be addressed if one million people had access to FET colleges, if a
financial aid plan were developed, and if there were a comprehensive student support system in FET colleges and increased job placement and post-exit support from FET colleges.

iii. Intermediate skills development. The Department of Education is set to contribute to the realisation of the goals and targets of the National Skills Development Strategy (NSDS) and the Extended Public Works Programme (EPWP) by expanding the intake into Learnerships at FET and HE institutions, increasing support for the EPWP through increased participation in pre-Grade R educare provision and provision of formal skills programmes for the beneficiaries on exit, and eliminating graduate unemployment through the implementation of a vigorous internship programme in collaboration with the Department of Labour.

iv. High-level skills development. The Department of Education will consolidate the restructuring of the HE institutional landscape to ensure the stability, sustainability and responsiveness of the HE system, ensure improved access to and participation in Higher Education by black students in general, and, in particular, by African and coloured students, especially in scarce skills areas, and ensure an increase in the throughput rate in the order of 10 000 graduates per year.

6. Skills development through adult basic education and training

Recent gains in adult education are not the result of government intervention alone, and are a testament to the strength of partnership in the education enterprise. In the next decade, it would be necessary to narrow down the target population for ABET, which the Ministry of Education will address, out of the whole of the adult population in the country. This is aimed at designing outcomes of adult programmes that are best suited to the needs of the target population in terms of optimal effectiveness. Whatever targets are set, the number of adults (aged over 20 years) in the population with no schooling is set to decrease in the next decade as a result of education and
training interventions for adult learners. In the next decade, it will be necessary to define, measure and monitor levels of adult literacy and competency more effectively through competency tests adapted from international examples, such as the one developed by the UNESCO LAMP project. This would better indicate the areas for strengthening literacy and adult education programmes in the system.

7. Rural education

All too frequently, poor, rural communities bear the brunt of challenges, inefficiencies and low quality in the provision of education and training. It is important to focus on comprehensive solutions for the problems of rural learners, especially those that prevent access. In the next decade, the focus will be on identifying rural communities for development, quantifying the teaching and learning requirements at these rural schools, mobilising resources for satisfying these requirements, and setting up systems to ensure that learners in these communities are indeed provided with education and training opportunities of high quality.

8. Deepening the Nepad programme of action through education and training initiatives

Deepening international Nepad and other partnerships in education and training development needs to be strengthened to ensure the continued improvement and mobilisation of resources in the education and training sector, continentally and globally, for the developing world. The Department of Education would need to prioritise strategic levers for this mobilisation and engage with specialists in development finance and scenario planners, the better to understand likely resource flows in relation to developing countries in general, and South Africa in particular. In addition, the key Nepad programme of action points would need to be unpacked for prioritisation by different aspects of the education and training system. Work on a Regional Qualifications Framework is at an embryonic stage, but it would form a locus of collaborative activity in the Southern African region. Furthermore, if the work of the various units within Nepad is better aligned with the work of the SADC Human Resources Development Initiative and the African Union, it would provide a good opportunity for continental cooperation and success in education development.

9. Curriculum implementation and teacher development for all teachers

The next decade will focus on the improvement of service delivery interventions aimed at strengthening curriculum, teacher development and interventions to promote quality improvement. The first steps in this respect would involve the development of a comprehensive teacher development strategy that would cover aspects of upgrading, recruitment, incentives, and provisioning of teachers in both the general and further education and training bands for a modernised curriculum.

10. Strengthening the outcomes of HIV/AIDS interventions

The impact of HIV/AIDS interventions in the education and training system would need to be strengthened in the coming decade, to ensure the mitigation of the effects and impact of HIV and AIDS in the system in the medium to long term. Regrettably, the assessment of the impact of interventions has been limited to quantifying inputs, with very little effort in actually comprehensively monitoring the impact on the status of the population in the education and training system.
11. Improving provincial support, organisational development and cooperative governance

It is clear that the challenges faced by individual provinces influence the whole system. It is therefore imperative for the various provincial assistance interventions to be realigned and redesigned to ensure that technical assistance is provided where necessary, in addition to rigorous and extensive organisational development interventions. It may be necessary to develop a policy for emergency provincial assistance and engagement in cases where assistance is required or indicated to ensure uniformity of intervention, communication, approach and outcomes. This policy will need to be developed with organisational development specialists to ensure that a comprehensive strategy for emergency engagement is aligned with the development objectives of the Department of Education, in furthering the goals of the Constitution and White Paper 1 of 1996. It may also be necessary to strengthen current provincial assistance programmes so that they will be durable and transferable enough to assist with enhancing local service delivery in the medium to long term. This is a challenge for existing corporate service functions and may require a radical change in approach to the staffing and functioning of these units for a more systemic role in organisational evolution and development.
Conclusion:

The vision for 2014

Since 1994, Government has effectively carried out its mandate of improving human capital (and social) development through basic, further and higher education and training in South Africa. Some challenges will remain—particularly related to the enhancement of quality in the system through improved translation of inputs into outcomes, improvement in the equity of provision and particularly education outcomes, and efficiency improvements in the system. Overcoming these challenges would enable us in the next decade to consolidate the gains made since 1994 for future generations of South Africans.

Achieving the optimal educational outcomes in another decade will occur only if the education sector realizes that all possible means should be pursued to provide the nation with a sound basic education grounding and with specialist skills. The Department of Education will need to ensure that the public education system can deliver a desirable set of quality educational goods, especially to the poor. At the same time, Government will have to allow some expansion of and/or interaction with the private education system, partly because the demand for education will be so great and varied that it would not be possible to provide all services publicly. However, much of the middle class would remain in the public system.

Information exchange with key partners in the sector would ensure that the education sector will become highly accountable to the public and will reduce the influence that sectoral interest groups have which may at best, divert or at worst, subvert the education agenda. Participatory democracy and the level of accountability of teaching staff to the communities they serve must be strengthened so as to improve local-level participation in education reform and quality at local sites of teaching and learning.

If the recommendations made above are put into practice and the gaps and challenges stated earlier are addressed, it will indeed be possible to achieve the vision for 2014 of an education and training system that can be said to be a unitary democratic entity that provides all South Africa’s people with “…equal access to lifelong education and training opportunities, which will contribute toward improving their quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous, democratic society.”