

The issue of incorporating provincial literacy campaigns and projects

The Report and Operational Plan envisaged four levels of operations:

- National Literacy Secretariat (which in the current context would include its outsourced functions such as database management and payroll)
- Provincial Secretariats
- District Literacy Coordination Units (and Special Literacy Coordination Units) where the Coordinator would be based and to whom the Supervisors would report).
- Sites of teaching by facilitators (which might be an individual class or a set of classes at a large church, or in a government Department or in an NGO and which would be assisted by varying numbers of supervisors).

Information flow of data (registrations, attendances, assessment results, stipend claims, etc.) would have mainly gone from the site to the District Office and from there to the National Office.

This model has two benefits:

1. It keeps the place the tutor sends data to relatively close to the tutor.
2. It keeps the number of steps from initial data recording to the head office to a minimum.

The Provincial secretariats were recommended for two reasons:

1. Political – given South Africa’s current provincial configuration, it was important that the various provincial interests would see themselves as stakeholders in the campaign and that all the various provincially active government departments would be on board. Note that the Provincial Secretariats were not to be Department of Education structures, but inter-ministerial and other stakeholders ones. The task of the Provincial Secretariat was this “political” coordination and to make decisions about incorporating provincial campaigns into the national one.
2. There would be a need to have literacy advisor and trainers available on an ongoing basis for the province and posts were budgeted for these staff.

How can provincial campaigns be incorporated?

The original ministerial committee report was adamant that the campaign was not to be run as a part of normal Department of Education operations. It was, in effect to be a separate system, and one needed for rather obvious reasons.

How then could campaigns and projects being run by the Department of Education be incorporated?

The most obvious way was that a planned but swift transition would occur in which the on the ground tutors (or whatever terms was used for the actual teachers of literacy classes) would move over to being paid a stipend by the national campaign after suitable training on the use of the national campaign materials and methods. Where the province had permanent staff they would be offered the choices of moving over as paid employees of the national campaign (as coordinators or provincial literacy advisors or provincial trainers) or be seconded from their home departments to these posts.

Where a provincial campaign was of some substance (such as the Masifunde campaign in KwaZulu-Natal) the transition might take a lengthier period with various more complicated transitional arrangements, but in essence the process would be the same.

There are problems associated with these transitions.

- The data flow would have to be to the National Literacy Secretariat directly, not via the labyrinthine corridors of provincial education departments.
- The problem of poorly paid ABET system tutors either abandoning their classes en masse because of the better and more efficiently paid national campaign stipends or of trying to double dip by getting paid from two sources for the same students.
- Vested interests, either staff or providers of materials and other resources, who would see the national campaign as a threat and competition.

The Special Literacy Coordination Unit policy

This policy, originally drafted by Professor Aitchison, and now published in a small booklet titled, *A guide to partnerships in the Kha ri gude literacy campaign*, may well provide some guidelines that could also apply to the incorporation of the provincial literacy projects.

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