



# New Unity Movement

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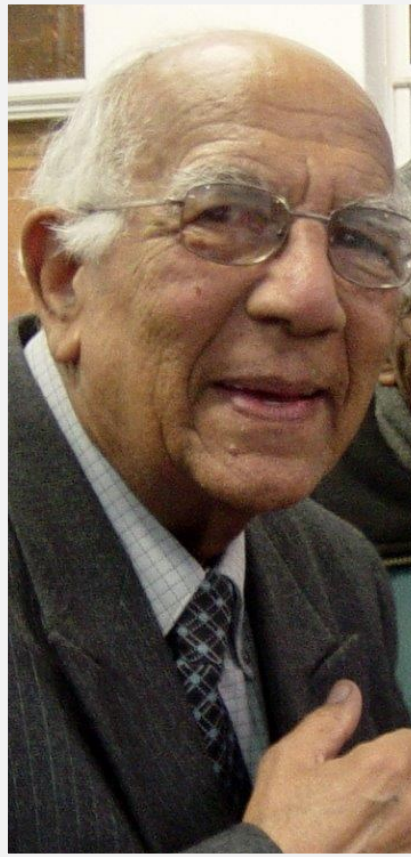
## IN MEMORIUM: DR RO DUDLEY

The 15<sup>TH</sup> April is the centenary of the birth of Richard Owen Dudley. Popularly known as “RO” or “Dick” he died on 31 May 2009 at the age of 85 years.

We believe that the centenary of his birth needs to be commemorated to honour him as a most remarkable son of the soil of this country. We need to honour his singular contribution to the history of political struggle against national oppression and economic exploitation and his role as an educationalist of note.

We published a compilation of many of the tributes paid to him at the time of his death in 2009. These tributes written by former students, colleagues, comrades family and friends all reflect the impact that he made on so many people and upon the many dimensions of his life’s work.

From these tributes one gathers that RO was widely known and greatly respected as a man of integrity, a man of principle, a man of culture and great erudition, a political activist, and simply a man who loved children and nurturing young minds but one who also exhibited a keen sense of humour and one who would treat even sworn enemies with human



dignity.

The Honorary Doctorate in Education which was bestowed upon him by UCT on 7 April 2009 was therefore richly deserved.

However, let it be said that given the character of the man, and the principles and policies by which he lived his life, he had to be persuaded by his comrades to accept the award because he feared that by doing so he might compromise himself or the organisations he belonged to. And as a man of great humility, he first had to be convinced that, while he saw himself as part of a collective, he stood out as the first amongst equals and that as such he deserved to be recognised for the contributions he had made in the educational and political spheres. A further reservation he had had about accepting this honorary doctorate was a fear of being lumped together with

certain dubious individuals who had also been so honoured by UCT in the past.

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In bestowing this honorary doctorate on RO Dudley the university acknowledged the work of a remarkable individual and by so doing, giving belated recognition to the work of a generation of teachers who as members of the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) and the Cape African Teachers Association (CATA), made an incalculable contribution to what is best described as *Education for Liberation*.

It would be true to say that for many of us in the NUM, that, whatever understanding we have acquired about the workings of the world that we live in has been as the result of our exposure to him as a teacher, political mentor and friend.

Apart from his undoubted stature and eminence as a school teacher and leading member of the Teachers League of South Africa (TLSA) which he served as general secretary for many years since 1959, he was in equal measure a man of great political renown. He was a founder member and leader of the National Anti-CAD and the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM) which were formed in 1943. Working together with giants like IB Tabata, BM Kies, Goolam Gool, Saul Jayiya and Allie Fataar in the NEW Era Fellowship (NEF) and the Workers Party of South Africa (WPSA) he was instrumental in helping to formulate the Ten Point Programme, the policy of Non Collaboration and the policy of Non racialism. In his own words he and his comrades were “trained revolutionary socialists with the Trotskyist Internationalist Worker outlook” and as such they were exponents of the use of the methods of historical materialism and dialectical materialism in analysing economic and socio-political developments in the world.

Despite suffering banning under the Suppression of Communism Act (1962-1966) he nevertheless continued to promote the programme and policies of the NEUM and

was eventually instrumental in bringing the New Unity Movement (NUM) into being in 1985, becoming our first President. He tirelessly served our organisation in that capacity until his enforced retirement due to ill health in 1998.

He was subsequently elected as our honorary Life President in recognition of the great and important role he had played in the life of our organisation.

Despite his retirement and the poor health of his dear wife Iris, not to mention his own deteriorating health he had continued to take a keen interest in events and continued to give advice and guidance to us.

He has left behind a treasure trove of his writings. These are to be found in the Torch Newspaper which was the official mouthpiece of the NEUM (1946-1963) and in the Educational Journal of the TLSA. All of these had to be written anonymously because of security constraints under Apartheid.

In addition, the clarity of his insights and his breadth of vision may be gleaned from reading the NUM annual presidential addresses he delivered from 1983 to 1998..

His memory will live on in the hearts and minds of all those who were privileged to encounter him during his lifetime.

In a tribute written by the late June Udemans, former Joint secretary of the NUM, and the late Tom Hanmer, a leading member of the TLSA, they conclude by stating:

*“Dick always reminded us that he was part of a collective, part of a team. But as we contemplate the life of this great man, we in the Unity Movement cannot but wonder, as in the words of William Shakespeare: **“When cometh another?”**”*



**Dr. RO Dudley (the President), Reg Feldman (V/President) and Mda Mda**

## ELECTIONS 2024: THEATRE OF THE ABSURD

**There will be a total of 52 parties contesting for seats in the upcoming general election. In 2019 the 400 seats in the National Assembly were split among 14 parties, meaning an average of 29 seats per party. (Of these the ANC had garnered 230 – a majority of 58%). Hypothetically, in 2024 the average seats per party would be 8. Ridiculous.**

What accounts for this sudden, mass upsurge in interest for seats in parliament? For one, it is widely expected that the ANC will be shedding some of those 230 seats, which means space for others at the feeding trough. For the past thirty years, the ANC has had virtual monopoly-access to the lion's share of government tenders, running into many, many billions of rands to be distributed among their lackeys and hangers-on. Opportunistic tongues will be drooling at the prospect of money-for-nothing which a seat in Parliament offers.

Of course, there is also the prospect of power to make, break and change any laws which you don't like. So, if you hate it that refugees (what are otherwise known as "illegal immigrants") are crossing into and befouling our beloved country, you can legislate for the dogs of law-and-order to be set loose on them.

The preferred strategy of the numerous miniscule groupings contesting these elections is to form larger groupings – after all, *eendrag maak mag*. Thus, the chaos of splitting the benefits of power is a likely scenario in the theatre of the absurd that is parliamentary politics in South Africa. Already we are hearing that the EFF will enter into a coalition with whoever it helps to gain a majority, on condition that its Floyd Shivambu is appointed finance minister.

Of particular interest and concern to the Left should be the growing emergence of fascist elements in our body politic. For instance, there is the Patriotic Alliance which makes no bones about their agenda – "God must be back in our schools, "and all illegal foreigners must go." Unsurprisingly, they are also avid supporters of Zionist Israel.

Then there is the MK Party, with Jacob Zuma at its centre. Victory at the polls for the MK Party will be a victory for "Radical Economic Transformation." This could see a new coalescence of players, all committed to the same ideal of redistributing the wealth of the country in their own favour.

If in the heady days of the early 1990s we were deceived into believing that post-apartheid South Africa would be a democratic country, we are now well-and-truly disabused of that fiction. The constitution for the new South Africa was crafted in such a way that the interests of imperialist and local Big Capital and their servants in parliament would be paramount. The primary role of the people would, every five years, be to decide on who their

oppressors would be. This is the nature of electoral democracy. Ours is very far from being a genuine democracy "of the people, for the people, and by the people." Sceptics are close to the truth when they say that if real democracy obtained, the ruling class would quickly attempt to bury it.

The fatal flaw in our current dispensation is that the working class which was so instrumental in sweeping away the apartheid regime, was demobilised by the bourgeois elements who placed themselves at the leadership of the anti-apartheid movement in the 1990s. This enabled the latter to introduce liberal reforms but leave the structures of oppression largely in place. In short, there was no revolutionary change. In place of apartheid, we got neoliberalism. A cardinal tragedy is that, today, there is no significant working class organisation to challenge bourgeois hegemony. For as long as this remains the case, nothing fundamental will change. In fact, the prospect of a worsening of social life is very much on the cards.

Would it help if the Left gained one or more seats in Parliament? What if the Left even gained a majority? Experience has shown that if the Left is going to be effective and successful (on behalf of the working class) in Parliament, then it first needs to be effective and successful outside Parliament. That is, there needs to be a strong working class movement and structures in society, and these should be the basis upon which an assault on the bastions of Parliament can be made. It would be appropriate for us to quote a paragraph from our December 2023 Worker (Issue number 109):

The challenge for the non-Stalinist Left in this country is to catalyse a transformation. As Vivek Chibber notes in his illuminating book, *Confronting Capital: How the World Works and How to Change it*, success at the ballot box will not be sufficient to ensure the rulers adopt a worker-friendly agenda ". . . unless the electoral successes (achieved by the working class) are used to deepen and expand the base in workplaces and neighbourhoods, state by state, region by region. Without the organizational strength of the labour movement, electoral success will not yield the success the Left seeks."

A measure of the weakness of the working class in South Africa is reflected in the brazenness with which



Interestingly, they go on to say “We are not in a position to call for a vote for any of the parties standing. *Nor do we call for a boycott of the elections.*” (Our emphasis).

We believe a more decisive leadership approach is called for. Irrespective of the Left’s current organisational weakness to contest for parliamentary seats, our role should not be an indifference as to whether or not working people should participate in the farce of elections. We should clearly signal our rejection of the system and its processes. We should go out of our way to highlight how parliamentary politics are a tool of the ruling class, and we should mobilise widely among working people to rally for socialism.

reactionaries are coming out and openly declaring their colours. We have already referred to those who are anti-“illegal immigrants” and who support Zionist Israel. We can add to their numbers those who would agitate for an independent Western Cape.

Some on the Left argue that the bourgeois Parliament should be considered “an arena of struggle,” and that, therefore, we should participate in the contest for seats, however flawed Parliament and the whole parliamentary process is. Apart from this serving to legitimise Parliament, Vivek Chibber’s viewpoint cited above, pretty much invalidates such an approach.

Zabalaza, a newly-emergent formation on the Left, acknowledges that “while Parliament is a “critical site of struggle,”

. . . the left and popular movements need to rebuild democratic grassroots and workplace organisations to effectively participate in elections. We therefore resolved not to rush into a process which requires extensive preparation, organisation and resources.

The mainstream media has been particularly culpable in promoting the view that our country’s problems will be solved by putting the “right people” in power, and that the most effective way of dealing with malfeasance on the part of political and state functionaries is through the courts. In this way attention is taken away from the nascent power for change which exists within the organised power of the masses.

There will be “no easy road to freedom.”

Trotsky’s invocation to wage “permanent revolution” holds two important messages for us. One: the struggle continues until socialism (that is, class rule by the working class) is achieved, and two: socialism is only achieved when the workers of the world attain power – there is no such thing as “socialism in one country.”

While we have to engage in revolutionary struggle, we need to incorporate valid non-transformational goals and forms of struggle, such as mobilising against the numerous ills which plague our society. These include challenges on all socio-economic fronts. And it includes exposing the parliamentary system for the sham that it is.



**THE CURRENT THEATRE**

## ISRAEL: A “KAPO” STATE

**An aspect of the Holocaust which is seldom foregrounded in the public imaginary is that of the infamous “Kapos.” A “Kapo” was an inmate in a Nazi concentration camp who was assigned the duty of prison-guard over his fellow prisoners. Kapos were known for their brutality, beating, denouncing and even killing fellow inmates. Physical and sexual abuse were also commonplace on the part of the notorious Kapos.**

It would appear that this feature of the Holocaust (let's call it *Kapoism*), suppressed though it might be in the public awareness space, nevertheless was retained and carried in the cultural baggage of the settler colonialists who stole Palestinian land in 1948, and have been waging a murderous Nakba non-stop since then.

How else to account for the extreme levels of brutality, not only of the Israeli Occupation forces, but also of the settlers in the West Bank, the Netanyahu regime, and the citizens of Israel in general, who, it must be remembered, overwhelmingly support the genocidal war in Gaza to be continued?

It would then be fair to characterise Israel as an *illegal Zionist settler-colonial Kapo state*. *Kapoism* has always been an integral part of the Israeli psyche, as necessary to it as mothers' milk.

The evils that Israel is committing in the name of “self-defence” defy the imagination. “Seeing is believing.” Thanks to media outlets such as Aljazeera, the world is seeing a merciless genocide in progress, one that targets anybody and everybody, including children. Genocide, Ethnic Cleansing, Extermination – these clearly, are the aims of the Zionists and their Western handlers.

In the well-stocked Israeli arsenal, starvation is a weapon of war, alongside all the sophisticated killing technology it has developed and/or acquired, thanks to the support of America and various European governments, notably, the UK, Germany and France. With their active connivance, Israel has normalised barbarity.

It is feasible to ask whether, from the start, Israel's assault on Gaza was not part of a wider imperialist strategy to inflame latent tensions in the Middle East. At the time of writing, this theory gains credence against the background of Israel's unprovoked bombing of Iran's consular office in Syria, which resulted in the killing of several high-ranking Iranian officials. This was followed by a media frenzy informing us that Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei vowed to “punish” Israel, and that, in turn America's Biden had vowed “ironclad support” for Israel, in the event of such punishment.

No doubt, part of this “ironclad support” accounts for the US building of a “temporary port” on Gaza's coast. We

are given the laughable excuse that its purpose is to ferry in humanitarian aid, when it is clear as daylight that its actual purpose is to create a bridgehead for American troops into the Middle East. With hindsight, Israel's preventing of aid trucks from entering Gaza was actually to create the pretext which America needed. It all fits together.

Why do the axis of Western imperialist rulers crack down so heavily on pro-Palestinian protesters? In all the major Western countries, including Australia, even the mildest show of support or sympathy for Palestine, as well as appeals for a ceasefire have been met with hostility on the part of the political authorities. Clearly, this shows how valuable to them the Zionist state of Israel is, which is also confirmed by the extreme impunity of the Israeli leaders.

Many times, the question “why is Israel so valuable?” has arisen. Some of the answers have been as follows:

- “Festering sore” analogy – sowing discord among regional states, maintaining geo-political hegemony, safeguarding control of Big Capitalism's assets in the Region.
- Exploitation of Palestine's resources, including the opportunity to build an alternative to Suez – one under Israeli control. Thus, the myth of Israel being a “European nation” is promoted.
- Fear of a mass refugee problem for Europe. (It is conceivable that if the illegal state of Israel faces defeat in warfare, there would be a flood of Israeli refugees attempting to flee to Europe).
- Israel's useful role in developing weapons of war and testing them on behalf of the Imperialist West.
- Highly profitable outlet for US arms and other goods.

*Kapoism* has not cowed the Palestinian resistance. On the contrary, after more than 200 days of mass slaughter, the Zionist military machine, for all its much-vaunted genocidal technology, has come up against the brick wall of an unwavering anti-imperialist struggle. Yet it continues its murderous annihilation of Gaza, in defiance of global condemnation.

But the global resistance continues to grow. Millions of people across the globe – most notably in the countries whose governments are Zionism’s strongest supporters – are among the most vociferous opponents of the genocide. Currently, vast numbers of university students across America are demonstrating their support for an immediate, unconditional ceasefire in Gaza. They are demanding disinvestment from Israel and treating it as the pariah state it is. Despite heavy-handed action by the security forces, bordering on fascistic tactics, the students are undeterred – and their numbers are growing.



A *kapo* leader at the [Salaspils concentration camp](#) in [Latvia](#), wearing a [yellow badge](#) and a *Lagerpolizist* (camp police officer) armband

#### WORTH QUOTING

The following quote is extracted from Arun Kundnani’s 2023 book, *What is Anti-racism? And why it means Anticapitalism*. The “Jones” whose ideas Kundnani is discussing is Claudia Jones (1915-1964), a “communist political activist, feminist and Black nationalist.”

Jones focused her thinking upon the hidden connections between fascism and imperialism. She thought it was wrong to think there was a fundamental antagonism between US liberal democracy and European fascism. Rather, the “main danger of fascism to the world,” she argued after World War II, “comes from the most colossal imperialist forces which are concentrated within the United States.” The oppression of Black people in the US, she held, was a reservoir from which fascism could be channeled to the rest of the US system. Increases in the frequency of lynching, white racist riots, and police murders of Black people were the warning signs of a fascist upsurge. The agencies of national security that had been expanded in the US after World War II and granted new powers of surveillance, criminalization, and deportation were, for Jones, ways that fascist impulses acquired an institutional presence in the existing structures of government. Jones conceived of fascism not as a sudden coup that appears from the extremist fringes, but as a gradual process in which law enforcement, immigration control, military, and intelligence agencies acquire steadily more capacities for repression and violence, in an ideological atmosphere of racism and sexism. To Jones, European fascism was a cousin to the structural racism she experienced in the US.

(Arun Kundnani. (2023). *What Is Antiracism? And Why It Means Anticapitalism*. Kindle Locations 1731-1742. Verso, UK.

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#### IN SOUTH AFRICA, IS FASCISM CREEPING UP ON US?

## EDUCATION IN THE EASTERN CAPE 2024

### INTRODUCTION

**Education is the single most important factor capable of improving and sustaining the general well-being of a country. This is particularly relevant to South Africa, where for centuries, more than 80% of its population did not have access to good education or any education at all.**

It is the poorest province in South Africa with the two poorest municipalities in the province also being the two poorest in the country – Alfred Nzo and Amathole. From the 10 poorest municipalities in South Africa, five are in the Eastern Cape. The province has the fourth largest population (7.2m people) after Gauteng, KZN and Western Cape.

The inability of government, over the last thirty years, to make a dent in the endemic poverty of the Eastern Cape, can partly be ascribed to the structural nature of the problem.

- The old Transkei homeland accounts for more than 50% of the population of the Eastern Cape.
- Pre 1994, most of the men of the province worked on the mines and industries in the north of the country. Currently this migratory trend has shifted to the Western Cape with 1 134 674 people moving there as opposed to 495 494 people moving to Gauteng.
- The largest concentration of population in the province is in the **rural** O.R Tambo District, with 1 501 702 people followed by the **urban** Nelson Mandela Bay with 1 190 496 people.
- Sixty five percent (65%) of the population lives in non-rural areas
- A total of 1,722 children under the age of five in the province were newly diagnosed with severe acute malnutrition between August 2022 and September 2023. Of these, 114 died – 101 of severe acute malnutrition and 13 of moderate malnutrition.

### EDUCATIONAL PERFORMANCE

#### Infrastructure

It is true that one can learn anywhere, even under a tree. But, the provision of adequate, safe infrastructure is a key indicator of the quality of the education system.

The website of Equal Education, an activist organisation in education in South Africa, says the following about education in the Eastern Cape:

*The dire state of educational services in the province are an indication of the devastating impact of austerity measures imposed upon learners. Defunding education in this time of crisis will only lead to worse conditions for learn-*

*ers, violating their right to basic education as enshrined in the Constitution.*

On 9 April 2024 Equal Education hosted a round table in King William's Town on the impact of education budget on school infrastructure.

Equal Education says that despite overwhelming infrastructure shortages, the Eastern Cape provincial government spent less than R380 million on new infrastructure assets since the 2020/21 financial year. If one looks at the 2023 Education Infrastructure Grant and the School Infrastructure Backlogs Grant of R2.3 billion, one is struck by the inability of the Department to plan and/or spend this much-needed money.

#### *Pit Latrines*

Nowhere is the impact of poor infrastructure more horrendous than a child drowning in a pit toilet. The Eastern Cape features regularly as a culprit in this shameful statistic:

2018 – five year old Lumka Mkethwa drowns in a pit toilet at Luna Primary School in Bizana

2023 – an unnamed 4 year old girl dies in a school pit toilet in Glen Grey

The education department also revealed, during a recent investigation by the Public Protector into complaints about education provision in the Eastern Cape, that of the 196 schools which lack sanitation flush toilets, only 30 schools were embarking on a sanitation flush programme and the tender for this project had closed on 12 July 2023.

#### *Overcrowding*

The Legal Resource Centre (LRC) has been fighting a legal battle since 2018 to get the ECDoE to attend to the lack of infrastructure at four schools in the former Transkei – Attwell Madala SS in Mthatha, Enduku JS in Ngqobo, Dudumayo SS in Mqanduli and Mnceba SS in Ntabankulu. These schools have on average 80 learners in a class.

The LRC got the court to compel the department to compile a list of overcrowded schools and in June 2023 they received a 94-page list of schools. According to the list 242 of these schools had at least one classroom of 60 or more learners and 92 schools have five or more severe-

ly overcrowded classrooms with one classroom having 100 learners.

### *Vandalism*

Township schools are routinely vandalized during school holidays and weekends. A recent trend has seen the targeting of Technical Secondary schools with Alphendale in East London and St Thomas in Gqeberha severely damaged to the tune of several million rands. Machinery was stripped of copper wires, electrical fittings were ripped out of ceilings and walls, copper pipes in ablution blocks were ripped out, leaving the schools without water or electricity.

The Department says it does not have money to employ security guards over holidays, yet it now has to foot a multi-million rand repair bill.

### *Mud Schools*

In the former Transkei homeland desperate communities built schools with mud walls to accommodate their children who would otherwise have been unable to receive schooling. These poor communities did not have the wherewithal to build adequate structures and made use of the only material they could afford – mud, clay and sticks. The apartheid government had dumped people in the homelands after forcefully removing them from the “black spots” in designated “white areas”. The homeland “governments” were expected to look after the needs of the people thus dumped there. After 1994, the homelands were dismantled and the new government had to build schools to replace these inferior school structures. This they were not able to do in many cases, and the problem still persists today.

The province, according to the Department of Education, has 1 412 schools built of inappropriate materials including mud, asbestos, planks, corrugated iron and sticks. The provincial education department needs more than R70 billion to deal with the backlog in infrastructure.

### **Educators**

The Eastern Cape, at 40%, has the highest number of unemployed educators in the country. However, annually, many schools begin the new year with classes without teachers. This is a direct result of austerity measures being in place.

More worrying is the knowledge that 45% of public school educators in South Africa will be retiring in the next ten years. This concerning news is communicated in the 2030 Reading Panel report. Furthermore, “based on the report’s study on the evolution of mathematics knowledge in the B.Ed programme for aspiring teachers,

the report indicated that younger teachers showed poor levels of subject understanding, following the average score of 52% for a primary school mathematics test, and 54% for final-year B.Ed students on the same test”

The Funza Lushaka bursary programme of the Dept. of Education has been running since 2005 and the first qualifying educators were placed in 2008. What is strange about the placement of these newly qualified educators is that only 82% could find placement in schools. This then begs the question: Why are all the qualifying educators not placed or does the DoE not know how many posts should be available at public schools on a year by year basis? A problem that parents who fund their own children to do teacher training is that they very seldom find posts in public schools because Funza Lushaka bursary holders get first preference. In the Eastern Cape, out of 6,608 Funza Lushaka trained teachers, 4,869 have been successfully placed, representing a placement rate of 74%. However, 1,739 remain unplaced.

### *Educator qualifications*

The Eastern Cape is the province in South Africa with the largest number of unqualified (only a Matric) and under-qualified (do not have three years post Matric qualification) educators. There is a total of 29 unqualified and 132 under-qualified educators in the province.

### *Educator absenteeism*

In the DoE’s last School Monitoring Survey (2017/18) the following statistics emerge:

- Teacher absenteeism is increasing. As many as one in 10 teachers are AWOL on any given day this despite vacancies filling up.
- According to the survey results, cases of teacher absenteeism have increased from under 8% in 2011, to over 10% in 2017/18.
- On average South African educators are absent from school for 20-24 days annually.
- In the Eastern Cape 48% of schools, especially secondary schools, report a teacher absence of 10% or more and the greatest absenteeism is recorded on Mondays and Fridays.

Undoubtedly, this absenteeism impacts negatively on learner performance and school functionality.

### **Learner Performance**

It is difficult to find accurate statistics for learner performance in the lower grades as the education department focuses on the Matric results mostly. The data



is available, but not widely published, and paints an optimistic picture because of changes brought about to the system.

A learner is not allowed to repeat more than one grade in a phase. There are four such phases – Foundation Phase (Gr R-3), Intermediate Phase (Gr 4-6), Senior Phase (Gr 7-9) and FET Phase (Gr 10-12). This means that a learner will be promoted to the next phase if she has failed any of the three grades in the phase. This is true for all the provinces. It is thus possible that a learner could enter Matric without having passed a single grade.

Some of the Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for learner achievement is Repetition, Drop-Out and Flow Rate. Learner Retention measures how long the learner remains in the system without dropping out – a proxy for the quality of the system. All these indicators can no longer be accurately measured.

The Eastern Cape has been propping up the bottom of the table when it comes to the Matric pass rate. For the first time since 1994 it was not last in the provincial standings when it came second last in 2023 with a Matric pass rate of 81.4%. This pass rate must be evaluated against a back-drop of gate-keeping: where a learner who is not performing well (but still passing) and may negatively impact the future Matric result is encouraged to leave the school, register as a private candidate or repeat a grade. This is a deliberate weeding out process designed to improve the Matric results.

The Matric pass rate measures the number of learners who registered for the exams against the number who pass at the end of the year. A much better indicator would be the Throughput Rate which measures the rate at which learners proceed from Gr 1 to Gr 12. For a perfect Throughput Rate all the learners who started off together in Gr 1 would all still be together in Grade 12. The Throughput Rate is affected by drop-outs and repetition and is a more efficient measure of systemic performance.

At least 25% of learners starting in Gr 1 drop out of school before they reach Gr 12. However, if one looks at the quality of the Matriculants, much work is necessary in the lower grades and across the entire schooling system to improve the quality and number of learners preparing for further study or the world of work.

### **Learner Transport**

The subsidized transport of learners to schools in the Eastern Cape is a perennial problem. Each year one reads and hears about learners having to walk more than 10 kilometres to and from schools. A number of girls have been raped and many learners are robbed while walking, sometimes through the bush, to get to school. In most, if not all these cases, the Department of Transport cites a budgetary constraint as the reason for not providing learner transport.

The Eastern Cape Departments of Transport and Education are being taken to court for failing to provide scholar transport for thousands of children.

In court papers, Khula Community Development Project, the first applicant, estimates 50,000 learners in the province are without transport for school.

The transport department says it has insufficient funds.

### **Conclusion**

Poor management, poor communication and poor planning are at the root of the problem. Structural problems cannot be blamed solely for this continuing non-delivery by the Department of Education. Over the years, once parents or NGO's take a department to court, a way is found to provide a solution. Why does it have to be like that? Why cannot these departments proactively find solutions before a problem becomes a crisis. That, after all, is their reason for being – to serve the public.

In a functional democracy it is incumbent on parents and members of the community to always keep government accountable. Politicians and departmental officials can't be left to their own devices as they have shown time and again that they cannot be trusted to do the right thing. They choose to ignore the very policies they developed. It is our job to remind them of their duty and if necessary, find ways to force them to do the right thing.

**THIS WORKER WAS PRODUCED BY THE PUBLICATIONS COLLECTIVE OF THE NEW UNITY MOVEMENT**

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