



# Two Elephants in the Room

Why is our School System so  
inefficient?

**GTAC Winter School 2019**



## SA spends 30X more than Uganda



| Country              | Popln (mil) (2018) | GDP per capita | Spend on ed as % of GDP | Spend on ed as % total spend | Govt spend per Prim student | Primary Net enrolment (%) |
|----------------------|--------------------|----------------|-------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| South Africa         | 56.0               | 5284.6         | 5.9                     | 18.1                         | 1218.2                      | 80.0                      |
| Uganda               | 44.2               | 580.4          | 2.2                     | 10.9                         | 38.7                        | 90.0                      |
| SSA average          |                    |                | 4.1                     | 16.9                         |                             |                           |
| Low income countries |                    |                | 3.7                     | 17.0                         |                             |                           |

| SACMEQ<br>Grade 6   | Reading Score |            |            | Mathematics Score |            |            |
|---------------------|---------------|------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
|                     | 2000          | 2007       | 2013       | 2000              | 2007       | 2013       |
| Mauritius           | 536           | 574        | 597        | 585               | 623        | 694        |
| Kenya               | 547           | 543        | 601        | 563               | 557        | 651        |
| Seychelles          | 582           | 575        | 602        | 554               | 551        | 630        |
| Swaziland           | 530           | 549        | 590        | 517               | 541        | 601        |
| Botswana            | 521           | 535        | 582        | 513               | 521        | 598        |
| <b>South Africa</b> | <b>492</b>    | <b>495</b> | <b>558</b> | <b>486</b>        | <b>495</b> | <b>587</b> |
| <b>Uganda</b>       | <b>482</b>    | <b>479</b> | <b>554</b> | <b>506</b>        | <b>482</b> | <b>580</b> |
| Zimbabwe            | 505           | 508        | 528**      |                   | 520        | 566        |
| Lesotho             | 451           | 468        | 531        | 447               | 477        | 559        |
| Namibia             | 449           | 497        | 599        | 431               | 471        | 558        |
| Mozambique          | 517           | 476        | 519        | 530               | 484        | 558        |
| Zambia              | 440           | 434        | 494        | 435               | 435        | 522        |
| Tanzania            | 546           | 578        |            | 522               | 553        |            |
| Zanzibar            | 478           | 540        |            | 478               | 486        |            |
| Malawi              | 429           | 434        | 494        | 433               | 447        | 522        |



# Elephant 1: Universities not preparing new teachers to teach the curriculum

Around half of first year BEd student teachers tested could not achieve 50% on a primary school maths test

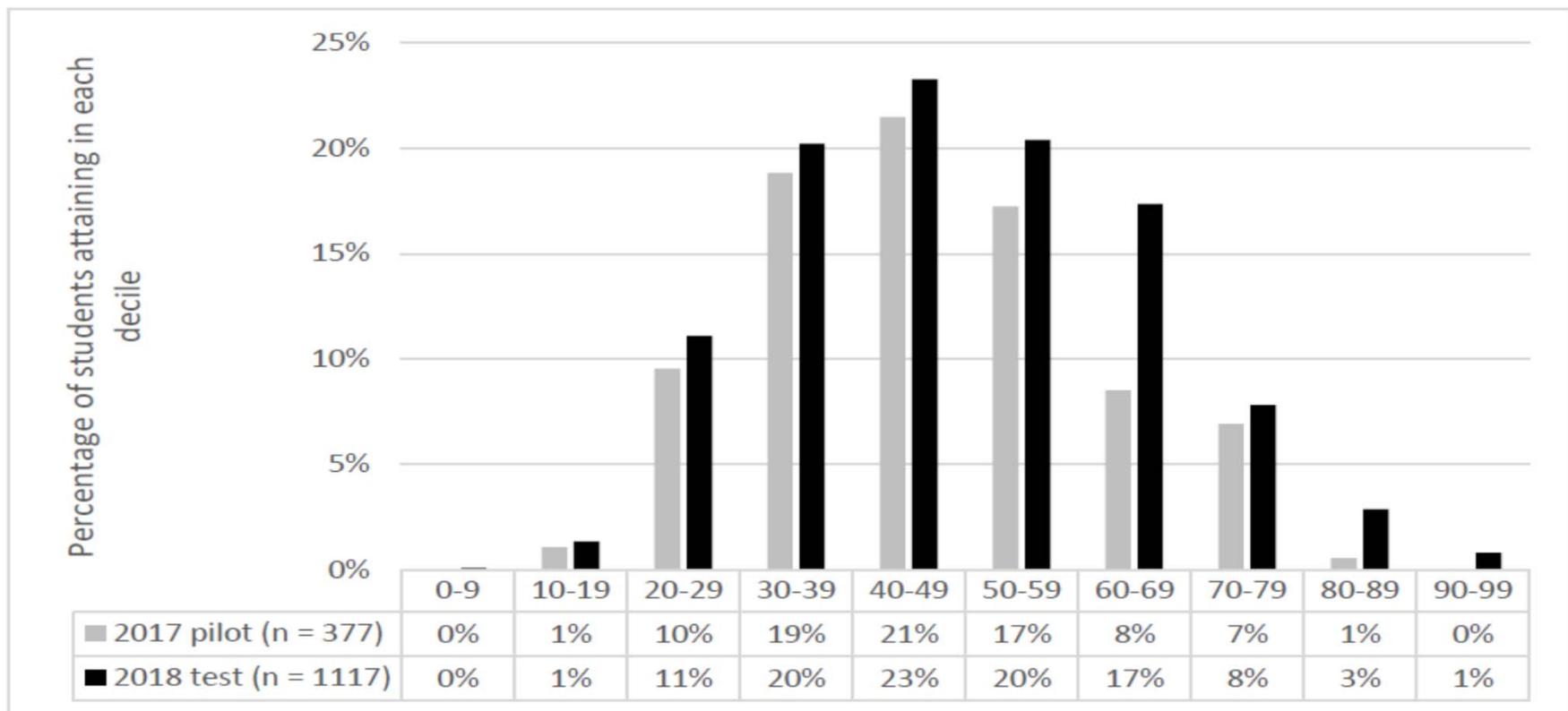


Figure 1: Distribution of attainment per decile in 2017 pilot and 2018 test

## How much maths do they learn in 4 years?

But the really startling finding is that, after 4 years of study, final year students at three of these universities had made very little progress on learning these most fundamental concepts, with the large majority still performing around 40% and less



## Two rational number items



18 out of 600 computers were broken.  
What percentage of the computers  
were broken?

$$3,052 \times 1000 =$$

# What about in-service training for teachers (CPD)?

Over the past 3 decades the public sector and corporate and international donors have been pouring money into CPD with the aim of improving teachers knowledge and skills.

In 2014 for example the DBE budgeted over R1bn for CPD while the private sector contributed at least an equal amount.

Unfortunately, these efforts are generally not evaluated



## The Impact of CPD



Where evaluations do occur the results are generally not encouraging

For example, an evaluation of a two-year part-time Advanced Certificate for Teaching (ACT) programme concluded that:

*... some teachers did shift their beliefs about teaching mathematics and literacy, but overall there was no extensive measurable learning over two years*

## How to make CPD more effective



More encouraging are findings from extensive pilot programmes aimed at assisting early grade teachers to teach reading in Gauteng, KZN, NW and MP.

This research and development approach to establishing the effectiveness of CPD programmes needs to be supported

Failure to assess the impact of initiatives costing millions of rand each leads to a lot of wastage and seemingly little learning.

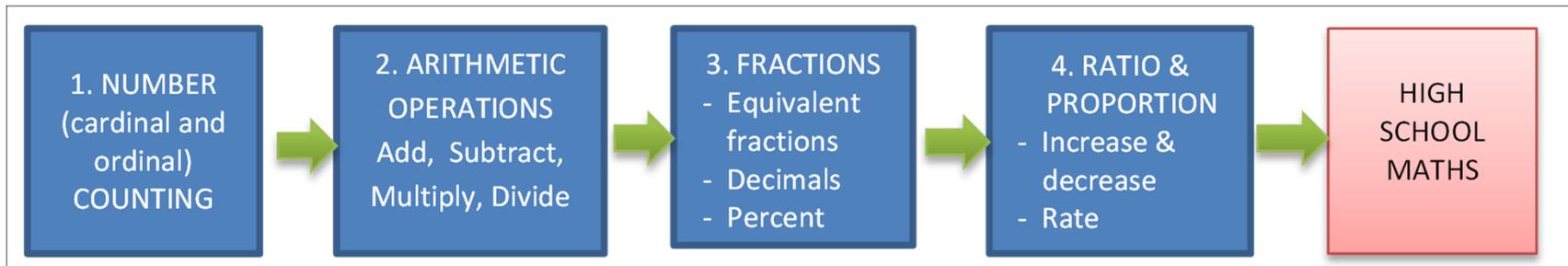
It follows that, in order to optimise lessons learned and stem the wastage of funds on ineffective programmes, no major CPD initiative should be funded without a rigorous evaluation.



## The Limits of CPD

Even where CPD programmes are effective, it is well to recognise the limits of what can be achieved working with teachers who are busy people with many family and other out-of-school commitments and are often past the age of active learning

Consider the task of improving the mathematical knowledge of Grade 6 teachers, currently around stage 2:



To get them from where they are to the end of stage 4, where they are able to exhibit a flexible understanding of proportional reasoning, will take more than a couple of afternoons of CPD after school.

## Research Conclusions on CPD



- Training in the form of short workshops has little effect on teaching practice
- Should last at least for several days, must be subject-matter specific, and must take into account the challenges faced by the school
- Initial teacher education (ITE) and CPD two serve distinct purposes and are not interchangeable:
  - ITE provides teachers with a solid base of the foundation knowledge and skills for teaching
  - CPD allows them to update their knowledge and skills, and to adapt these to changes in the teaching environment

## Reforming ITE



During ITE teacher educators have 4 full years to address the knowledge deficits which student teachers bring to university

This is key to improving the quality of schooling.

DHET is attempting to address the glaring hole in the school system left by the very poor ITE which teachers have been receiving for decades.

Proposing more stringent entry requirements for student teachers:

- languages and Mathematics must have been passed in the NSC at least at 50%;
- if Mathematics Literacy taken, the pass level is 60%

## Elephant 2: The tail wags the dog



These are ambitious proposals and, as with many good policies in South Africa, the devil lies in the application.

Which brings us to the second big problem in the school system:

The way in which schooling is currently managed does not make best use of available human resources, and

In fact, is enough to put off the most dedicated and competent young teacher.



## ‘Quiet Corruption’

The good intentions behind the legislation which governs the recruitment, development and promotion of educators are widely perverted

To serve the interests of criminal cabals intent on promoting and protecting their members, at great expense to the quality of schooling

The essential problem is nepotism: as noted by a **Ministerial Task Team** appointed to investigate corruption in appointments in 2016:

*as a result of collusion between teachers, unions, school governing bodies, and district and provincial officials, jobs are frequently allocated in exchange for bribes, co-optation and intimidation*

## Consequences?



Ministerial Task Team:

**Government is effectively in charge of only three of the nine provinces**

Despite these damning findings, no consequences have thus far been visited on the perpetrators of these practices

... President now talks about 'consequence management' ??

## Nepotism breeds mediocrity



Incompetence, inefficiency and a lack of consequences breed corruption.

Expertise is seldom a consideration, yet expertise in the disciplinary structures which make up the school curriculum is essential to driving learning at all levels of the system.

Those smart young teachers who do know their subjects and are keen to make a difference are soon discouraged by the irregular promotion and lackadaisical work habits of their peers.

How can they be expected to respect their superiors who are clearly their inferiors in knowledge matters?

# How do high-performing systems turn around?

Once made, inappropriate appointments retard development for many years, even decades.

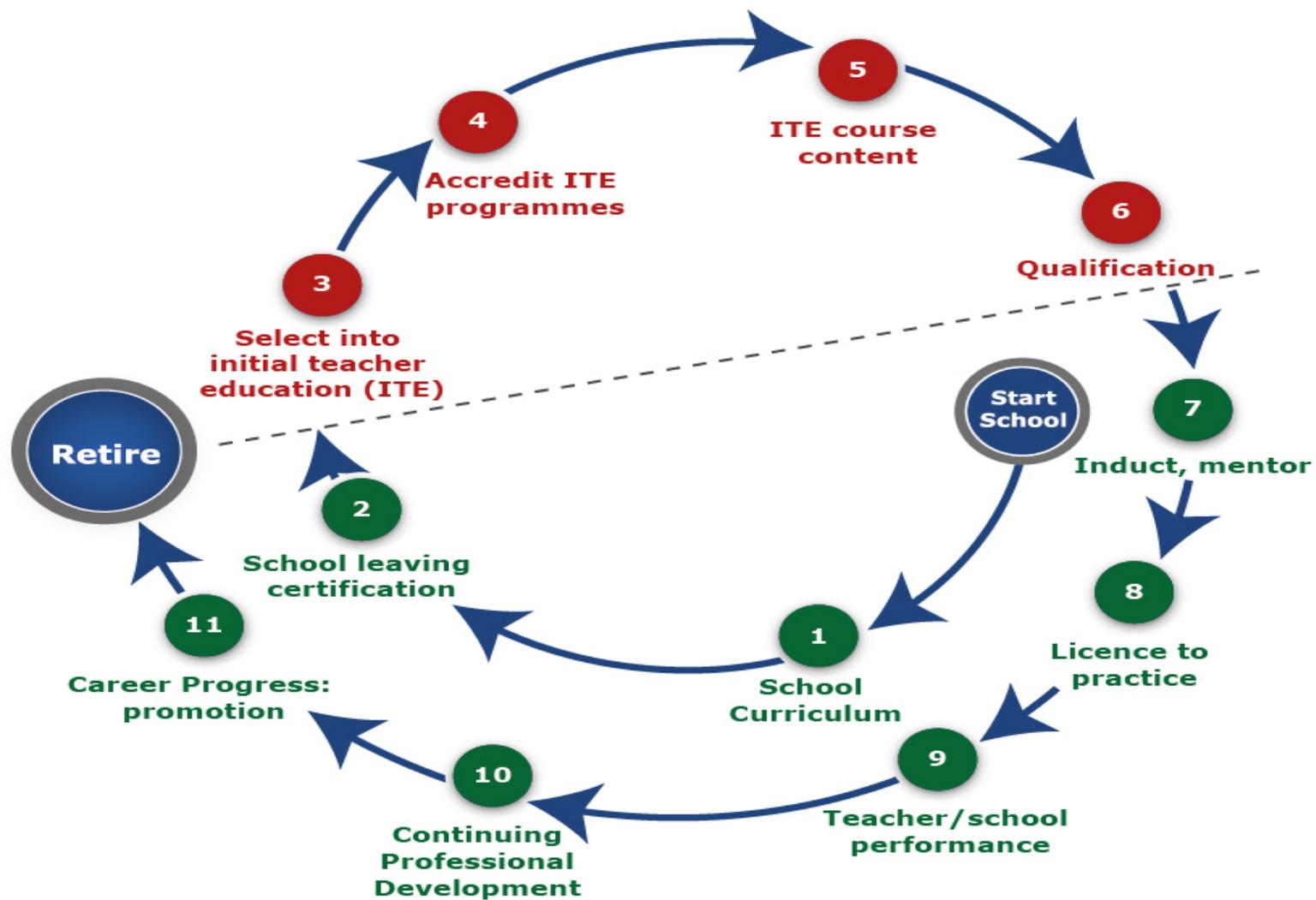
Turning a large organisation such as a school system into an effective mechanism for teaching and learning requires:

- intelligent leadership
- a clear vision
- the application of fair processes for HR deployment
- the relentless search for and promotion of talent and motivation
- over a long time





# SA in a vicious cycle



## Building a virtuous cycle system



- selecting the brightest and most highly motivated students into ITE
- providing them with the best education and training, theoretically and practically
- supporting them to exercise effective pedagogical practices in their classrooms
- identifying and developing the best leadership skills to take the system to higher levels of performance

High performing school systems teach us that these goals take decades to achieve, as:

- a critical mass of competent educators builds up in the system
- and the status of teaching gradually rises
- within an environment of policy consistency and scrupulously sound governance.



**Thank you!**