

VOLUME 1 – THE MANDATE

THE TRANSFORMATIVE BLUEPRINT

“A NEW OPERATING SYSTEM
FOR A NEW DAWN.”

22 STRATEGIES OF EXCELLENCE

- 01 Purpose & Identity
- 02 Leadership & Ethics
- 03 Curriculum Reimagination
- 04 Pedagogy for Mastery
- 05 Teacher Excellence
- ...
- 22 Sustainability & Legacy

DECOLONISED FLIGHT PLAN NEW DAWN OF EXCELLENCE SCHOOLING IN AFRICA

01
PURPOSE
& IDENTITY

04
PEDAGOGY
FOR MASTERY

08
TEACHER
EXCELLENCE

15
SYSTEMS &
OPERATIONS

16
COMMUNITY
PARTNERSHIPS

22
SUSTAINABILITY
& LEGACY

22°00'S | 30°00'E
DESTINATION:
EXCELLENCE BY DESIGN

SYSTEM RESET



OLD PATTERNS
DISRUPTED

PATTERN BREAK



LIBERATING
MINDSETS

NEW MODEL
INITIALISING



DESIGNING OUR
OWN FUTURE

FUTURE READY



BUILDING LASTING
IMPACT

VALUES CORE



TRUTH
JUSTICE
DIGNITY
KNOWLEDGE
FREEDOM
UNITY

EXCELLENCE BY DESIGN

A New Operating System to Eradicate
Colonial Education in Africa

DR. MUAVIA GALLIE

Table of Contents

FOREWORD by Two respected Public Intellectuals – Prof Jansen and Dr Pandor	4
ABOUT THE AUTHOR – The Invisible Line	7
PART ONE	8
Chapter 1: Introduction - The Ghost in the Classroom: An Unfinished Decolonisation.....	8
1.1 Berlin Conference of 1884 – The Colonial Plan.....	8
1.2 Apartheid – The Perfection of a Colonial Machine	9
1.3 An Educational Revolution for Africa: Fulfilling the Promise of a New Century.....	14
1.4 The Great Exhale - Moving Beyond Blame to Diagnosis	15
Chapter 2 - The Mindset Virus: Deconstructing the DNA of Colonial Education	18
2.1 The Mindset of Mechanical Application (Strain #1)	18
2.2 The Mindset of Fear and Scarcity (Strain #2).....	20
2.3 The Mindset of Intellectual Subordination (Strain #3)	22
2.4 The Mindset of Professional Isolation (Strain #4)	25
Chapter 3 - The Grand Illusion: The Lie of the Pass Rate and the Cult of the "Invisibles"	29
3.1 A necessary deconstruction: A lie we all inherited.....	29
3.2 The Matric pass rate and the Cult of 'invisibles' on trial.....	30
3.3 Our Verdict	39
Chapter 4 - A System in Gridlock: The Cycle of the Blame Bubbles	42
4.1 What is the Gridlock?	42
4.2 Setting the Stage: How the Actors Arrived in the Gridlock.....	42
4.3 The Anatomy of the Gridlock	44
4.4 The Hurtling Back.....	45
4.5 The True Antagonist	46
PART TWO	48
Chapter 5: The Unbreakable Braid – Fusing Purpose, Process, and Platform	48
5.1 The "Why": The Unwavering Commitment to Purpose & Passion	48
5.2 The "What": The Rigorous Discipline of People & Process.....	49
5.3 The "How": The Accelerating Power of Platform & Performance.....	51
5.4 The Unbreakable Braid in Action: A Final Synthesis.....	52
Chapter 6: An Archaeology of Failure – Discovering the Blueprint in the Rubble.....	54
6.1 The origin of the School of Excellence Methodology	54
6.2 The Methodology of the Dig: A Systemic Post-Mortem.....	54
6.3 Discovering the Diseases of the Soul (The "Red Block").....	56
6.4 Discovering the Diseases of the Engine Room (The "Green Block").....	58
6.5 Discovering the Diseases of the Craft (The "Yellow Block").....	60
6.6 From Archaeology to Architecture.....	61
Chapter 7 - Healing the Soul of the School: Managing a Culture of Excellence	63
7.1 The New Creed – Our Unbreakable Promise (Strategy #1)	63
7.2 The Engine of Aspiration (Strategies #2, #3, #4)	65
7.3 The Sanctity of Time (Strategies #5, #6)	67
7.4 The Burden of Leadership (Strategies #7, #8)	69
7.5 Conclusion: The Foundation is Laid	72
Chapter 8 - Building the Engine Room: Managing the Curriculum Processes	74
8.1 The Architecture of Time and Knowledge (Strategies 9-12)	74
8.2 The Tools of the Craft (Strategies #13 & #14)	75
8.3 The Science of Honest Judgement (Strategies #15 & #16).....	76
8.4 Conclusion: An Engine Built for Excellence.....	77
Chapter 9 - Mastering the Craft: Managing the Engagements Inside the Classroom	80
9.1 The Cognitive Ascent (Strategies 17 & 18)	80
9.2 From Compliance to Creation (Strategies 19, 20, 21)	82
9.3 The Great Accelerator (Strategy #22)	84
9.4 Conclusion: The Liberated Classroom.....	84
Chapter 10 - The Unfinished Bridge – An invitation to our University and Professional Partners	87

10.1	An Honest Diagnosis: The Technician vs. The Professional	87
10.2	The Remedy: A Radical Re-Architecture of Teacher Preparation	88
10.3	The Invitation and the Opportunity	90
Chapter 11: The Broken Bridge – How Support and Accountability Fail		92
11.1	The Circuit Manager: From Performance Coach to Pressured Administrator	92
11.2	The Subject Advisor: From Master Artisan to Overstretched Generalist	95
11.3	Conclusion: A Bridge to Nowhere.....	99
PART THREE.....		101
Chapter 12: The Twin Pillars of Sovereignty – Reading for Meaning and Mathematics.....		101
12.1	The First Pillar: The Battle for Meaning – Building the Foundation of Freedom.....	101
12.2	The Second Pillar: The Battle for Mathematics – Forging a Pathway to Sovereignty	102
12.3	Conclusion: Our Non-Negotiable Battlefields.....	103
Chapter 13 - The Battle for Reading for Meaning: Building the Foundation of Freedom.....		105
13.1	Pillar 1: The Broken Compass: Tracing the Reading Crisis from Colonialism to CAPS	105
13.2	Pillar 2: The stakes of the Crisis – the Battle for our Nation's Soul	107
13.3	Pillar 3: Engineering a Rich Literary Environment - A Systemic Remedy to Architectural Failure....	108
13.4	Pillar 4: Creating the Time and Space for Love - The 'No Homework' Advantage	113
13.5	Awakening the Reader's Soul: The Power of Choice and Connection	114
13.6	Conclusion: A Battle for the Soul of Our Nation	115
Chapter 14 - The Battle for Mathematics: Forging a Pathway to Sovereignty		118
14.1	The Reality of Data	118
14.2	The Fictional 'Battle for Mathematics' District	119
14.3	The Result: A New Testament for the Isibane District	124
14.4	Conclusion of the Case Study: Forging a Pathway to Sovereignty	125
Chapter 15 - The 'Lighthouse to Legacy' Model: A Blueprint for National Change		127
15.1	The Lighthouse District – Proving the Possible (Years 1-2)	127
15.2	The Roadshow – From a Push to a Pull (Year 2-3)	129
15.3	The Tipping Point – From Pockets of Excellence to Provincial Norm (Years 3-5)	131
15.4	The Legacy – Fixing the Factory That Builds the Teachers (Years 5+)	132
15.5	Conclusion: A Blueprint for a Nation.....	135
PART FOUR.....		137
Chapter 16 - Great Misconception: Confusing an Administrative Tool for a Transformative Engine		137
16.1	Learning from the World's Best: The Ecosystem Imperative	137
16.2	The Right Tool for the Job.....	138
16.3	A Cost-Benefit Analysis of the SISOPEN.org Investment	138
16.4	Conclusion: From a Line-Item Expense to a High-Yield Investment	140
Chapter 17 – Conclusion: A Dream Deferred No Longer.....		141
17.1	To our teachers on the front lines, we see you.....	141
17.2	To our principals and Heads of Department, we see you.	141
17.3	To our officials in the districts and provinces, we see you.....	141
17.4	And to our parents, we see you.....	141
Appendix 1: A Two-Pages of our Manifesto: A Narrative of Integrated Design		143
Appendix 2: The Testimonials – A Narrative Inquiry		145
A2.1	<i>The Learner's Testament (Voice of "Tasha," Matriculant)</i>	<i>145</i>
A2.2	<i>The Teacher's Testament: A Voice from a Liberated Classroom</i>	<i>147</i>
A2.3	<i>The HOD's Testament: A Voice from the Liberated Engine Room</i>	<i>149</i>
A2.4	<i>The Principal's Testament: A voice from a liberated school</i>	<i>151</i>
A2.5	<i>The Subject Advisor's Testament: A Voice of Integrated Purpose</i>	<i>153</i>
A2.6	<i>The Circuit Manager's Testament: A Voice from the Liberated Middle</i>	<i>155</i>
A2.7	<i>The Senior Official's Testament (Voice of the District Director)</i>	<i>157</i>
The Mandate: A Glossary of Systemic Re-engineering		159

FOREWORD by Two respected Public Intellectuals – Prof Jansen and Dr Pandor

From Senior Professor Jonathan Jansen (most Prominent and Prolific Education Academic in Africa):

If the caption 'from colonialism to CAPS' does not grab your attention, then you will miss out on one of the most incisive analyses of the crisis in South African education, and what to do about it. In *Excellence by Design*, Muavia Gallie brings into one monograph a riveting expose of the stalemate in post-apartheid schooling and a lifetime of experiences of trying to fix the system as both an official within the education system as well as an activist outside of it; sometimes those roles blur in the telling because this very talented Doctor of Education fought for deep change in schools under and after apartheid.

Most of all, Gallie is determined to show the continuities between the basic architecture of colonial education and the crisis of the present. It is a brave thesis but the book does more than enough to make those connections clear and to demonstrate, in Mahmood Mamdani's words, that 'The present is not its own explanation.'

The book leaves one disturbed from the beginning when you realise how what would raise alarm bells in any other democracy has become normalised in South Africa. The low pass rate no longer shocks us. We pretend we do not see the gradual corruption of the National Senior Certificate that lies to young people by saying that they have a Bachelor's or university entrance pass when most of them will never see the inside of a higher education institution.

Notice how universities work without announcing their exclusionary decisions. As more and more young people knocked on the doors of universities with B-passes, these institutions simply raised the bar for entrance by selecting only those with the highest marks to fill limited places thereby leaving everyone else behind. But both the President and the Minister of Basic Education, in 2026 alone, made the unconscionable claim that "we just had the highest matric results ever."

Gallie in a consistent and steady analysis of the data shows the normative deceits that underlie politics and policy in South Africa. For example, in a neat and powerful set of graphs he shows how the number of learners taking mathematical literacy goes up every year with a corresponding decline in the numbers doing mathematics. These deceits in the performative presentations of the annual NSC results allow the pass rate to creep steadily upwards while denying tens of thousands of students access to fields like engineering, architecture, medicine and the basic sciences.

This is the frog-in-the-boiling water problem: we have gradually become accustomed to the cold then lukewarm and eventually boiling water so that what is dangerous for our children is regarded as normal.

What makes this book different from its competitors who draw attention to the crisis in education is that is based on a rigorous commitment to data. Gallie has built up SISOPEN.org ecosystem platform that allows for data-driven decision-making at school level to monitor and support individual learners in ways that boost their success. He has never been an armchair critic or a political windbag on education matters. Everything Gallie does and says is backed up by evidence.

One more thing, the book is not only methodologically rigorous it is also conceptually rich providing readers with what the critical theorist Henry Giroux called a language of critique as well as a

language of possibility. I enjoyed grappling with concepts such as procedural versus conceptual understanding; viral pedagogies; vanity metrics; and, intriguingly, the mindset of scarcity. Each of these concepts carry enormous generative power for the analysis of education systems by postgraduate students and academic researchers alike.

Spread across 17 chapters divided into 4 sections, the book itself is an intellectual feast for those of us who study education and change schools as a lifelong commitment. Every teacher education student should have one to give them a resource on which to draw when they reach the classroom. Every parent should hold this book on their shelves to understand why the short-cuts to distinctions and Bachelor's passes will undermine their children's learning at school and university. Every government official in national and provincial departments of education should guide their subject advisors and district officials to understand the difference between compliance and real learning in classrooms.

From Dr. Naledi Pandor (Former roles as Minister of Education and then Minister of Science and Technology in South African Cabinet):

This extremely relevant and high quality contribution of Dr. Muavia Gallie toward achieving education excellence in South Africa comes as no surprise to those who know him. As an education activist fully committed to the belief that all children – regardless of their birth - deserve quality education and skills opportunities, he has “walked the talk” of his beliefs in this, the first of several volumes.

Education change in post-apartheid South Africa has proven to be one of the more complex systemic changes confronting the newly democratic state. For some, thirty years of democracy has translated to thirty years of failed education policy reforms. This conclusion exists even in the face of stringent and genuine attempts to transform education into a liberating force. While some progress has been made, it has not been enough to signal a substantive break from the inequality that remains the legacy of apartheid in our system.

As Muavia cogently asserts in this Volume 1, the break from inequality has not been achieved. More worryingly, starker and more entrenched inequalities have been created through the new policies of the new democratic dispensation and at times due to poor execution of good policy, inadequate training for implementation and lack of education knowledge. The writer argues that the time has come for a radical departure from our present failures toward a future of excellence and of empowering performance outcomes.

The ordinary reader may wonder why a set of volumes focusing on education excellence is necessary thirty years after the first Education Act. While researchers, opinion makers, education experts and even politicians in service have acknowledged that South Africa has responsive well-crafted education policies and that these outline a visionary path to quality and success. Nonetheless as Muavia shows policy has not been matched by equivalent positive outcomes. These volumes attempt to diagnose and address that fundamental inadequacy.

In fact, in some cases, policy has inadvertently become the enemy of success and excellence. Consider for a moment the case of Mathematics. The well-intentioned policy of “Mathematics Literacy” became destructive to success in the broader subject, as it was misunderstood as a substitute for Mathematics rather than a specific skill set for life management and numbers. At times,

lack of faith in bold decisions that truly break with the apartheid design has resulted in the inadequacy we see today.

One of the key elements of this exciting volume is the idea that we should no longer seek merely to 'respond' to apartheid. Instead, we must create our own bold destiny based on fresh ideas and an understanding of an increasingly complex world. Thirty years of freedom suggests we now have the opportunity to stop looking back and start looking forward toward a bright future in which all young people thrive and hone their skills and intellect. We can now aspire for much more than correction of our ills and create a visionary model of education that inspires learners, parents and communities to strive to do better.

The challenge facing the systemic shift proposed in this series is the necessity of convening and training a new generation of "education activists" prepared to look beyond today's constraints. Active persuasion of those at the coalface will be essential. This book sets out a plausible process for it, beginning with a change in the "consciousness of self" for the teacher, the parent, the district official and the head of education. All must be tutored in this fresh education philosophy of excellence and encouraged to commit to making a difference.

The methodology set out here can move our education sector at all levels from the dismal mediocrity that makes us "less than average" to becoming a global force for innovative ideas, new technology, new practices in education. In the same breadth, it is vital to acknowledge the noteworthy strides already made by schools with committed teachers, excellent parent-supported school governing bodies, student leadership devoted to learning, universities and colleges working for excellence. Happily these volumes recognise and build upon that progress.

This series is an anthology of practice for all in education. It affirms the ideas of the great activists who proceeded us: **Steve Biko**, who taught us that our destiny lies in our own hands; **Nelson Mandela**, who called education the most powerful tool for transformation; and **Es'kia Mphahlele**, who believed that anyone can make a difference through honest effort.

We finally have a well-researched, implementable set of solutions developed by experienced education experts who understand what must be done to turn the tide. I hope we will make full use of this well-informed opportunity to finally move away from the dreadful legacy of our past and toward our own well-designed destiny.

END.