

# THE HERALD

SERVING SOUTH AFRICA SINCE 1845

## TEACHERS, UNIONS BLAMED FOR CRISIS

Dineo Matomela EDUCATION REPORTER

May 23, 2008:

South Africa's teachers and teachers' unions are behind the low matric pass rate and the dysfunction of township schools, Witwatersrand University education expert Prof Jonathan Jansen said yesterday.

He was speaking during a discussion among educators after the showing in Johannesburg of a documentary film by Molly Blank, entitled *Testing Hope: Grade 12 in the New South Africa*, which looks at the first generation of South Africans who began Grade 1 in the new democracy.

Jansen said more resources were undoubtedly required, and their provision would be part of the answer, but this would not necessarily show up as better results.

"A policy of accountability will also help – where people are named and shamed – but only in the short term. What we really need is a fundamental change in the political culture that is found in the education system.

"Teachers and principals are not even arriving at school, and if they do, they are not bothering to teach and are literally sleeping on the job. Kids are leaving home on empty stomachs, they do not have toilets at school and their parents are disinterested.

"And what makes this more morally reprehensible is that township teachers are sending their own children to Model C schools in the suburbs," said Jansen.

Referring to last year's 21-day public sector strike, Jansen said township school teachers had demonstrated they did not care about their pupils.

"Unions must learn to take responsibility. At the end of the day, the pupils are not the problem, but they are.

"Pupils will not act up if they are stimulated and have commitment from the teachers," he said.

National SA Democratic Teachers' Union deputy president Thobile Ntola disagreed with Jansen, saying all stakeholders, including parents and the education department, and not only teachers' unions, were responsible for the state of education.

"Jansen is speaking out of context and must understand that all teachers, including those from Port Elizabeth's northern suburbs, participated in the strike, said Ntola.

Blank said of the film: "What struck me the most about the pupils was the fact that they valued matric and had hopes of becoming lawyers and doctors despite their circumstances."