

**PROFILE**

# School for new outcomes

**Academic and education policy** specialist Linda Chisholm, who has been appointed an adviser to basic education minister Angie Motshekga, brings 30 years of knowledge to the ministry and an approach in which policy proposals will be backed by evidence and research.

Chisholm, who has held senior positions at the University of the Witwatersrand and University of KwaZulu Natal and was most recently a research director at the Human Sciences Research Council, says Motshekga wants “policies and implementation to be informed by research” and that her own particular contribution will be to make this happen.

“I want to find ways of involving researchers more [in informing policy] and of using their work more effectively. A lot of research gets done, but then often isn’t used,” she says.

As an academic, Chisholm has published extensively, including books and journal articles on supply and demand of teachers, textbook use in the classroom and teacher time-on-task.

She is also regarded as an expert on the school curriculum, having been in-

involved in the first review of outcomes based education (OBE) in 2000, which led to the writing of the national curriculum statement.

Chisholm’s review did away with some of the most problematic aspects of OBE, returning to more conventional and structured teaching, with a more detailed content outline for teachers and the reintroduction of textbooks. But, political constraints — a strong OBE support lobby — meant the review had to strike a compromise, she says, and some components of OBE were retained.

The latest curriculum review, adopted by Motshekga a month ago, which scrapped pupil portfolios and reduced project work, has now swept away the last vestiges of OBE.

Chisholm says that though the “way that OBE will be implemented” is now irrevocably changed, the general principle of OBE — that it measures success according to outcomes — remains.

“We still want to achieve the outcome of critical thinking. But the way we achieve it will change. Our approach to OBE is going to be much more practical.”



**Linda Chisholm** Practical OBE

Chisholm and Motshekga have worked together in the past as fellow members of the National Education Union of SA, an anti-apartheid organisation formed in the 1980s to unite teachers of all races and to fight for changes to the content of education.

Chisholm has an MA in history from the University of London and a PhD in history from Wits.

**Carol Paton**