



Emerging Voices

A Report on Education
in South African Rural Communities



Researched for the
Nelson Mandela Foundation
by the HSRC
and the EPC

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in South African Rural Communities

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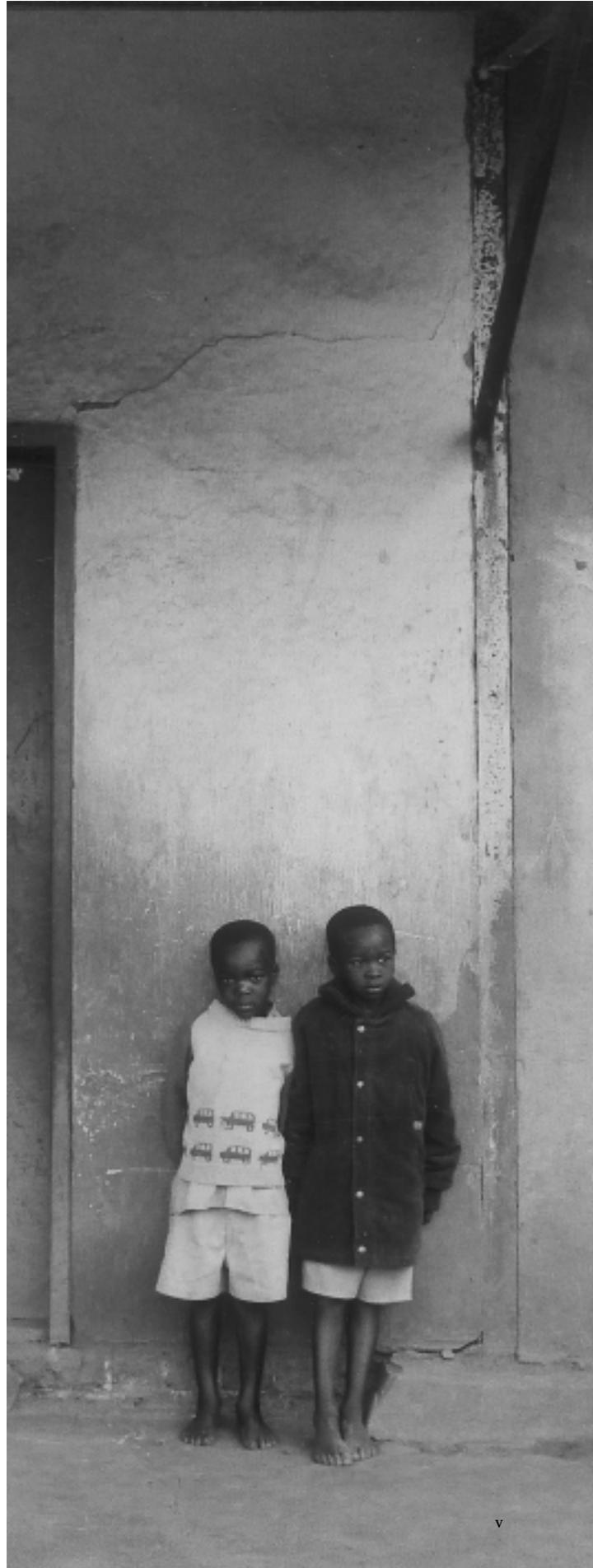
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A note from Madiba

I have often said that the most profound challenges to South Africa's development and democracy can be found in its rural hinterlands. These areas, systematically and intentionally deprived of the most basic resources under apartheid, continue to lag behind the rest of the country in the post-apartheid era.

Foremost among the challenges facing rural South Africa is the task of improving the quality of education. What is often overlooked, however, is the immense, untapped potential of rural communities to take the lead in shaping a better future for themselves. We have to work together to ensure that decision-makers targeting poverty alleviation and social development have access to the voices of the very people who are supposed to benefit from these policies.

This study, *Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities*, acknowledges the voices of members of rural communities across South Africa, and ensures that policies undertaken to improve the quality of rural education are informed by the powerful insights of the people in those communities.

Nelson R. Mandela

Background to this study

'South African society is still divided by huge economic and social disparities. We need to ask ourselves where they stem from and how we [can] overcome them...

How are we going to overcome poverty?... perhaps the answer lies in our ability to replicate the best elements of our society, at all levels and among all communities' (Nelson Mandela 1999).

Emerging Voices: A Report on Education in South African Rural Communities brings together a number of different aspects of the Nelson Mandela Foundation's educational interventions.

Since the 1990s Mr Mandela has facilitated the building of over 120 schools throughout the country. He has prompted this development through smart partnerships with the South African business community.

Mr Mandela's initiative has focused deliberately on the rural areas of South Africa. As he has reminded business representatives on numerous occasions, 'you can smell poverty' when you visit many parts of rural South Africa.

It is against this background that the Nelson Mandela Foundation began to explore and improve its understanding of the complex relationship between poverty and education, particularly in the context of rural South Africa.

The work of the Foundation in support of rural schooling is based on the idea that rural education and its potential for development is deeply connected with the problems of poverty in rural communities. This does not mean that urban education is not so connected. It is simply that the relative scarcity of resources and in some cases the desolation and poverty of rural communities seriously limits the developmental possibilities that might be achieved through education.

Early in 2003, the Foundation commissioned a study into rural poverty and education because of these reasons.

The study will add depth to our understanding of the phenomenon of rurality, poverty and schooling and enhance our approach to development more generally. It will enable us to analyse what rural schooling is all about, what the key barriers to learning might be, the possible strategies to deal with the monumental challenges, and what as a country we should advocate and promote in the search for genuine freedom and development. We have specifically commissioned the study to 'elicit the voices of rural communities', their knowledge, experience and their understanding about the relationship between schooling, rural life and poverty.

We believe that the study has achieved some significant milestones:

- It has produced a rigorous and qualitative overview of the problems of rural schooling in the context of rural poverty. We now understand better the complexity of the problems of rural communities and schooling and the importance of listening to the voices of the rural poor. We understand that there are no magic solutions. In addition, we recognise how important it is to understand more fully the pervasive and negative impact of Bantustan policies and their long-term effects on such rural communities.
- The findings of the study point to a singular conclusion: that the great majority of children in rural poor communities are receiving less than is their right

in a democratic South Africa. Worse still is the fact that this will have long-term effects on their opportunities for development, their capabilities and their lives. Moreover, the communities in which they live will continue to suffer the debilitating effects of poverty and inequality for as long as these problems remain.

- The study makes an important point that it is critically important to engage with and listen to the voices of rural poor communities to understand their experiences better, and that the methodology for doing so is as important as what is 'discovered' through such engaged listening.
- This study has the potential to enhance informed public discussion, debate and dialogue on the issues raised in this book. Consequently, given the political will, it has the potential for assisting policy-makers to make meaningful policy and other programmatic interventions to deal with the challenges of rural education and schooling.
- The cumulative effect of this and other such studies, we believe, can have an important role in contributing to the democratic project in South Africa.

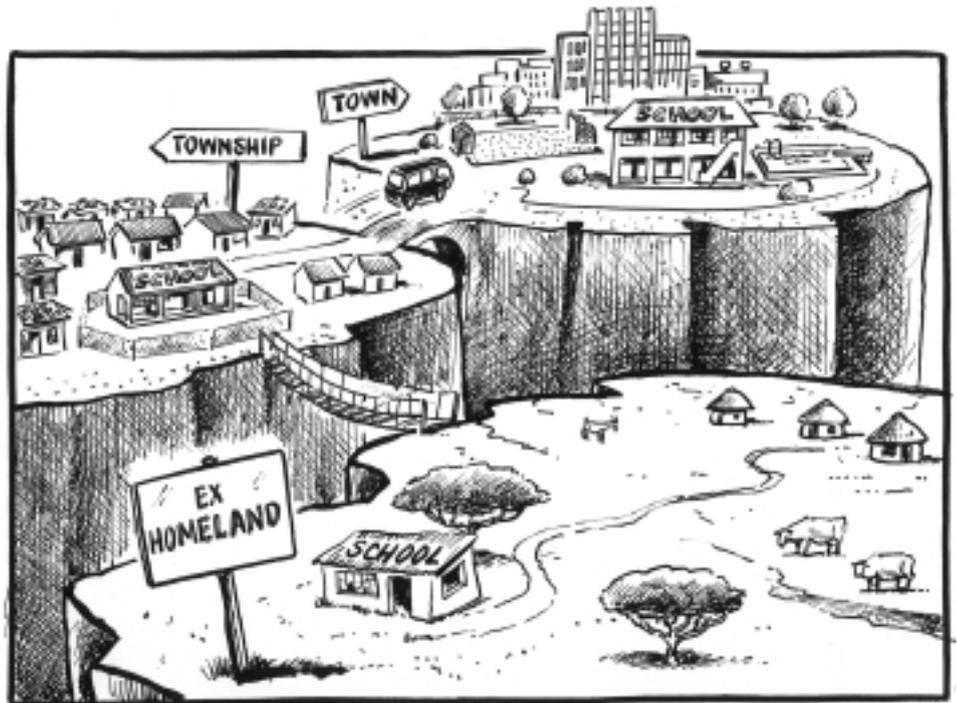
Many organisations and individuals helped to conduct this study. A full list of the participants can be found in Annexure 2. On behalf of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, which conceptualised, initiated and funded the project, I would particularly like to thank:

- The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), and in particular Linda Chisholm (project leader), for conducting this project and compiling the report on behalf of the Nelson Mandela Foundation.
- The Education Policy Consortium, and specifically Kim Porteus (team leader), for the design, development fieldwork and analysis of the participatory, action-research component of the study.
- All the community leaders, elders and other community members who provided guidance and leadership throughout the research process. Their guidance and input is woven through the process, and the pages of this book.
- The school principals and educators at the schools where participatory research was undertaken. Their time and analysis provide rich insights reflected in this book.
- The Youth Researcher Teams which convened in each of the nine communities in which the study was conducted. Data and insights from their investigations are contained in this book.
- Makano Morojele of the Nelson Mandela Foundation as well as Enver Motala for their services on the project.

John Samuel
Nelson Mandela Foundation
October, 2004

Note to the reader

The research for this book aimed to find out what the rural poor experience as education and what these communities think should be done to deal with the problems of education in the context of rural poverty.



There is no agreement about what constitutes rural and urban areas in South Africa. The movement of people between rural and urban areas makes such definitions all the more difficult. Their meaning and uses also vary considerably depending on who employs them and for what purposes.

The research focused on three provinces: KwaZulu-Natal, the Eastern Cape and Limpopo. These three provinces were chosen because they include former homelands within their boundaries, and routinely appear amongst those provinces with the

highest levels of poverty and unemployment and the lowest levels of educational attainment. More than half of all school-going learners in South Africa's nine provinces attend school in these three provinces. Currently, out of South Africa's 11.4 million learners, 2.6 million are in KwaZulu-Natal, 2.0 million are in the Eastern Cape and 1.7 million are in Limpopo. The remaining provinces have far smaller learner-populations. Levels of adult illiteracy and youth unemployment are also highest in these three provinces. Traditional authorities

still play a powerful role and have a strong presence in these areas. And the scourge of HIV/AIDS ravages communities in them.

This book provides a profile of education only in those parts of the three provinces that fell within the former homelands. The conditions that pertain here can probably be generalised to other provinces with former homelands within their new borders.

These former homelands are not homogeneous territories. There is relative wealth amidst the poverty and there are varying degrees of poverty. There are 'urban' areas within these 'rural' areas; equally, there are 'rural' features within the more 'urban' settlements.

The primary research entailed a survey and participatory research conducted in the middle of 2003. The former adapted the survey conducted for the *Public report on basic education in India* (1999). The South African survey covered 595 households and 144 primary schools in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Altogether, there were 4 305 respondents to questionnaires. Respondents included caregivers, principals, teachers and learners.

In addition, nine sites (three in each province) were selected for in-depth, participatory research with communities. In the Eastern Cape, the villages and



schools were: Qandashe Senior Primary School in Bizana in the OR Tambo District, Vulindlela Junior Primary in Lady Frere in the Emalahleni District and Bongweni Junior Primary School in Peddie in the Peddie District. In KwaZulu-Natal, the villages and schools were: Manyoni Primary in the Nongoma District, and Mngagayi and Nyembe Primary Schools in the Empangeni District. In Limpopo, the villages and schools were: Roodtse Primary School in Driekop, Sekhukhuneland, Fuyatha Primary School in Siyandhani in the Mopani District and Tshamavhudzi Primary School in Malamangwa village in the Vhembe District. Details of the survey and participatory research are contained in Annexure 1.

The book begins with a chapter that highlights the voices of the poor. It then

moves on to a chapter dealing with some of the historical and contemporary conditions that shape interactions with schooling. Chapter 3 traces the barriers to schooling via a journey to, through and out of school. These barriers include both direct and indirect costs to families, and result in repetition, drop-out and unemployment. The fourth chapter considers the actual physical and infrastructural conditions of schools, and likens these to the fate of other developmental projects in communities. It shows what communities think ought to be done. Whereas the latter two chapters show how *access to and participation in* schooling and education are limited, so that the passage through schools is hampered, Chapters 5 and 6 contrast the experience of rights and democracy *within* schools with the realities of teachers' lives and experience, and adult and learner perspectives on what needs to change and how. The final chapter contextualises and provides an analytical framework for the book as a whole. Collectively, the chapters illustrate the complexity, interconnectedness and intractability of the challenges that face rural communities and education: simple, quick-fix remedies are clearly not the answer; integrated rural development strategies must form part of the solution.

Different conceptual approaches and

themes informed different aspects and stages of the research and the writing of this book. These included rights, needs and political economy frameworks as well as those that emphasise access, equity, quality and relevance of schooling and education.

Broadly, the report argues that the historical development, contours and consolidation of power relations between urban and rural, and within rural areas, have resulted in neither formal nor substantive equality for people living in rural areas. Formal equality can be analysed in terms of access to and participation in education. Substantive equality, by contrast, relates to the experience, quality and outcomes of education. Issues of formal and substantive equality are approached in the book through the concepts of *rights to, within* and *through* education (UNESCO 2003: 18; Wilson 2003).

The *enabling conditions* for these rights to be translated into formal and substantive equality include those that enhance substantive freedoms through the redistribution of resources. Prior inequalities that constrain rights to, within and through education relate to the responsibilities that children in rural areas bear, particularly in the arenas of labour and human reproduction (Subrahmanian 2003/4). Children's roles

in rural economies, through their role in household labour, constrain their freedom to exercise their rights to, within and through education (UNESCO 2003). This book shows how children's labour in rural economies is implicated in their limited access to, and participation in, education.

Families incur both *direct* and *indirect* (or *opportunity*) costs. The direct costs of food, fees, uniforms, transport and health have immediate consequences for participation in schooling. However, these direct costs are conditioned by the opportunity, or indirect, costs to parents if they withdraw their children from household labour to send them to school. Rural communities, families and households thus encounter direct and indirect (or opportunity) costs in participation in education. Teenage pregnancy, forms of humiliation, sexual abuse and violence, as well as the more limited impact of traditional ceremonies, all form part of this process.

Drawing on a needs perspective, the book illustrates how education and schooling in rural areas are experienced as the denial of freedoms and opportunities to lead a long, creative and healthy life, acquire knowledge and have freedom, dignity and self-respect (Sen 1999: 5).

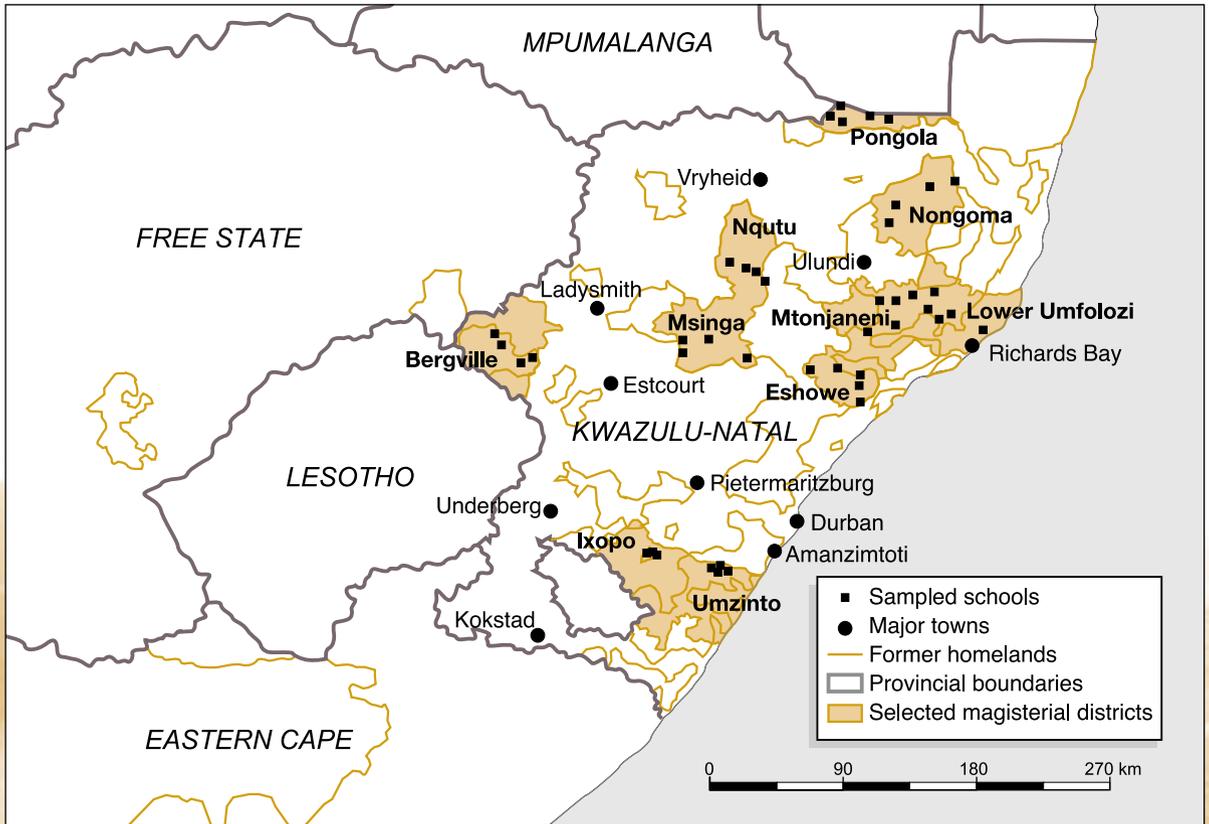
The book tries to demonstrate this by demonstrating the considerable *agency*

and voice of rural communities. In short, it is clear that development and local participatory democracy are inseparable and complementary.

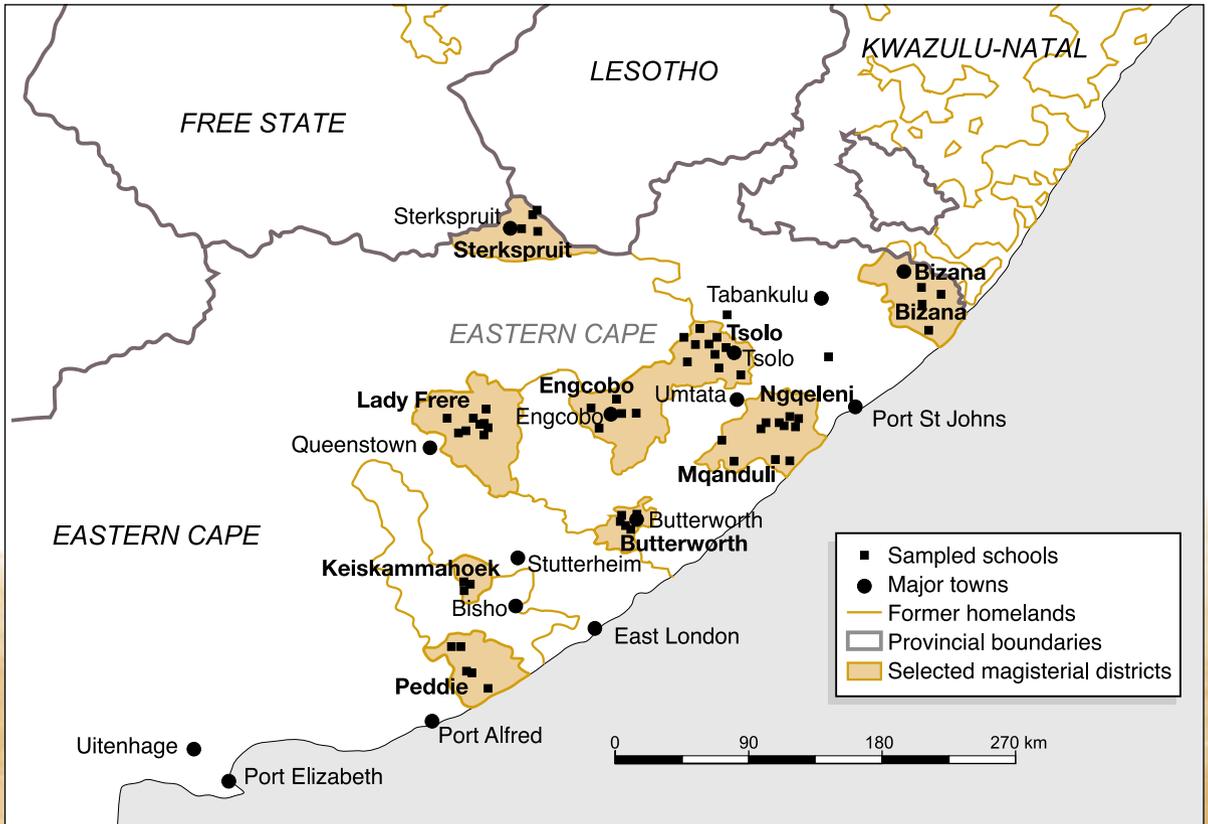
The voices of the poor on their situation and what needs to be done about it provide the backbone to the book. Adult voices express a need for skills and education that would promote community, rural and social development. Teachers seek greater parental participation in the education of children. Learners call for education that is equal, socially just, meaningful, enabling and open to the wider world. All three constituencies want schools to be green and beautiful. All three seek a useful education for citizenship, one that also takes account of history, sports, arts and culture. All three express the need for effective government development programmes, as well as discussion, dialogue and united action within communities around common problems.

It should be noted that educational terminology began to change in the 1990s as the education system engaged in the process of transformation; amongst other things, 'Standards' were renamed 'Grades', 'pupils' became 'learners', and 'teachers' became 'educators'. These terms are now used interchangeably in communities and this usage is reflected in the report.

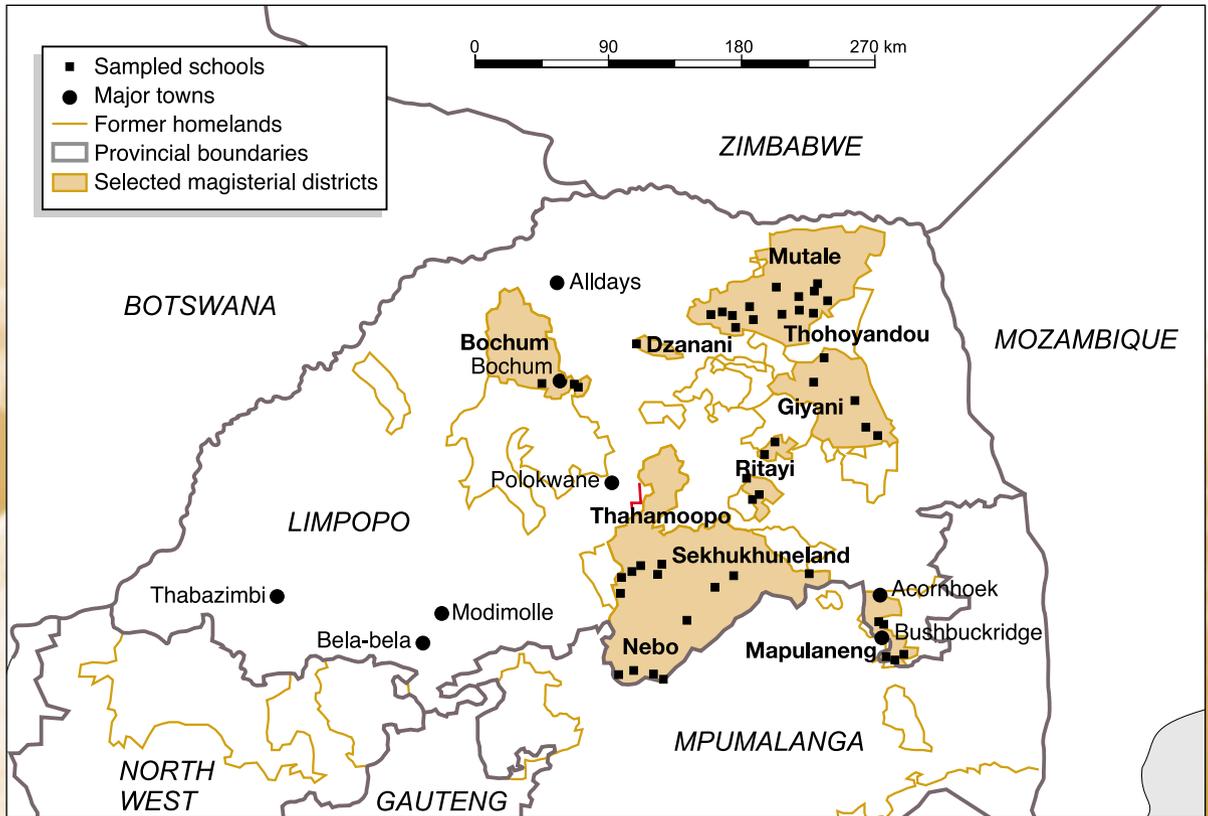
KWAZULU-NATAL: Sample districts and school locations



EASTERN CAPE: Sample districts and school locations



LIMPOPO: Sample districts and school locations







Being there



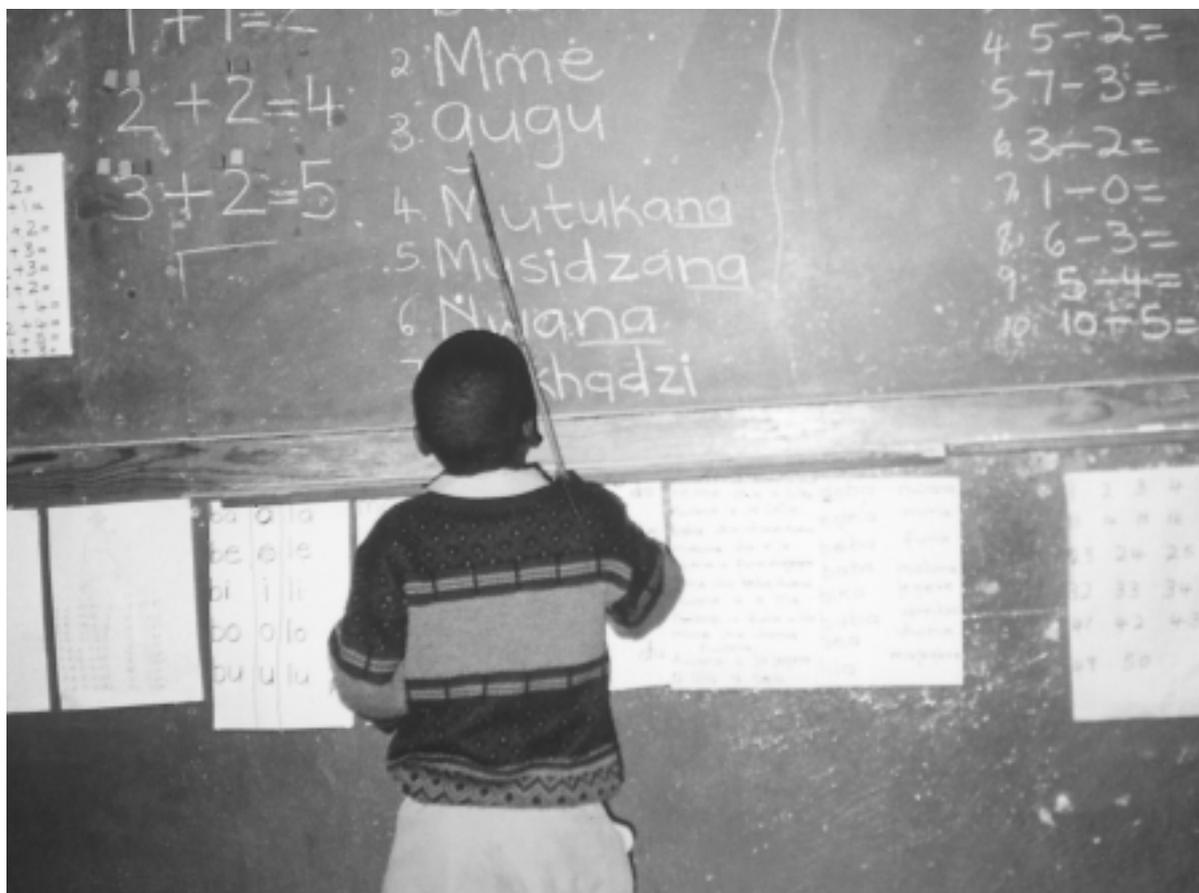
Being there

As the sun breaks over the furthest rim of hills at Bizana, it illuminates a world apart, an idyll in the city dweller's mind of quietude, of lowing cattle, smoke rising in the still morning air, vivid bird calls in the waking bush, a river, gleaming and silent.

Being there is different. Being there is not romantic. To be there is to be engaged in a struggle to live, and to hope. Money and jobs are scarce, the land itself harsh and demanding, and the schools, which straddle the old rural routines and the glittering prospect of a different life

heralded by political and economic change in the far-away cities, are often ill-equipped, under-resourced and poorly staffed. Rural people know this. Their yearning for improvements in schooling emerged strongly in discussions at community meetings, as some of the interchanges between community members that follow make clear. This is no less true for teachers and learners whose essays on a typical school day, and whose visions and ideas for the future, make an eloquent case.

This, then, is what being there is like.



COMMUNITY VOICES

Discussions during the Lady Frere imbizo

- ‘We want education here to be the same as that in the urban areas. We need to teach our children how to cultivate and look after livestock. We don’t need to buy everything; our children should develop what we already have. They must stop going to look for factory jobs – they must stay and develop their own communities.’



- ‘We have a problem. The government says education is equal for blacks and whites but in fact ours lags behind. I blame the government. It has not created equal education for all. Different things are taught in urban and rural areas. That’s where the problem lies. If you have enough money, you take your child to a township or urban area. Teachers all take their children to schools in town because they know that education is no good here. I want to ask the government to make education the same across the board. If we experience a problem with electricity we have to go and fetch someone from town. It would be better if there were children educated in this field, then we wouldn’t have to bother going to find someone to fix our electricity. The government must raise the quality of our education because our youth are sitting at home without work. But it isn’t going to help either to educate them too much because the government doesn’t have jobs for them. They sit around uselessly with their education for years.’



Bongweni, Eastern Cape



CATTLE KRAAL

Strength: ‘It is where our children learn to milk cows. We worship our ancestors and customs and rituals are done here. Young men from initiation are guided (*ukuyala*) here to manhood.’

Nyandeni location, Eastern Cape



LACK OF ELECTRICITY

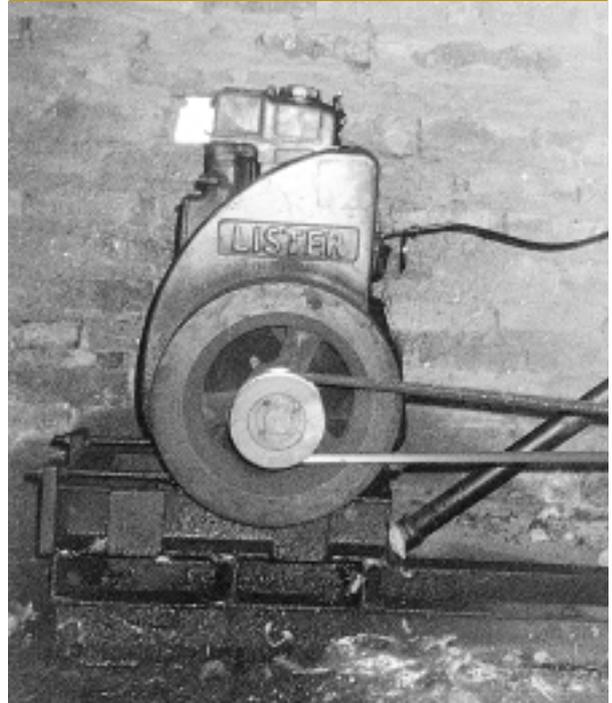
Challenge: ‘Lack of basic services such as electricity hinders education in this area. Learners have to do their homework using candles. It is even hard to buy a candle, which can also spoil the book.’

- ‘I think our education should be the same as in towns. Sure, education does take place here but there are still untouched areas. For example, Afrikaans isn’t taught here like it is in towns. Because they lack this language our children are unemployable.’



- ‘In the old days it was said that electricity chases the ancestors away. But how on earth does it do that? People also said that because of electricity, they didn’t dream. And the very same people who dreamed there in the townships used to come to do their traditional thing in the rural areas. They used to dream of electricity. That’s why our government is trying to supply all rural areas here in South Africa with electricity. Then there’s the question of the water that’s supposed to be supplied to the rural areas. We want to see each and every household with running water in the yard. Free basic water is part of the policy of free basic services for all citizens, rural and urban, though of course it will take time for rural areas to catch up because they were neglected before. In 1994 Mr Mandela passed a law that rural areas must be upgraded. When we have all these services

Emthomjeni, Eastern Cape



ENGINE

Strength: ‘We as a community are proud of this engine. Each household contributed an amount of R100 to buy this engine. Consequently, Mthonjeni and Dike villages now have public taps.’



in rural areas, it will help to prevent children going to towns. We must even have flush toilets. The government must uplift the standard of rural areas as soon as possible so that people living there are not left without hope.'



- 'What we need is career guidance, which will help children to follow the right direction. We need teachers who will help learners to select relevant careers. They must teach children about the things that are in demand in the outside world. They must not focus on things that will make them stay at home, sitting without any kind of job. We must get teachers who will help us to teach our children not to depend only on working for others but who can work for themselves and develop employment. For instance, we take our cars to the mechanics in Queenstown to be fixed but if there were a mechanic here we would not be doing that. We need schools for old people to equip them with basic skills so that they don't starve. We wish our language to be treated like other languages. We also wish final exams to be in our own languages so that our children don't struggle with one that is not theirs.'



- 'I believe in the programme of this government to bring things to the people. It was the government of the past, which kept things from the people, that made me leave the rural area for the urban area. As the government now represents us, things must be brought to the people. Our government should fully support our poor people who depend solely on the cultivation of land, not those who are already well-developed farmers. Perhaps the government could subsidise us to develop the rural areas. There is also the difference between the education of whites and that of blacks. This difference is reflected in the School Governing Bodies (SGBs). There is a problem with the education level of SGB members. If the government were to focus on Adult Basic Education and Training (ABET), we could bring skills to our people. All those people who have a shaky grasp of their skills need to be developed by the government. Nowadays, you are likely to find that education delivered by ABET providers chases our old people away, because they are taught as if they want to go up to Standard 10 or to university level, when all they need are skills. If ABET were to focus on sewing, livestock, poultry farming and so on, it would help people to live. Our children can also follow in the footsteps of their parents. This goes together with



Outcomes Based Education (OBE), the meaning of which I don't know. When it was introduced you heard people talking of the National Qualifications Framework that involves the integration of skills, which were separated before, and so on. But this is all lip service – we don't see these things happening.'



- 'We go to the towns because living conditions are better there than in rural areas. There are water taps inside the house. I know because I have a property in a township. There are subsidies and I have everything inside, even the toilet. The schools in towns are not the same as ours. They're close to one another, even those for blacks and whites. In Queenstown the schools are in the same street, unlike here at Mackaysneck, where schools are far from one another. But still, I like rural areas, even though we don't have subsidies here. Towns and townships are far better than the rural areas but because I was born here I chose to stay here.'



- 'In the old days we used to reap the maize fields and sell bags of maize from this land. Let us make our own things, not compete with townships. We do want education. What I particularly believe in is Afrikaans. It would be better if it could be taught because we were not taught it in the old days.'



- 'To have a better education we need plenty of learning and teaching materials, just like in schools in urban areas. Urban schools have everything and as a result children receive both theory and practice at the same time. We are forced by the situation to use old-fashioned methods of teaching because we don't have materials. We need laboratories and libraries.'



- 'I think the OBE programme is flexible in that a person teaches what he or she likes, whether in a rural or an urban area. I want to say that we are coming from a government of destruction that was not ours, but our present government is preaching transformation and change. However, I see a problem if we don't want to change. We must have a developmental spirit. But people are destroying their own property, like the solar-energy systems. People have the idea that the school belongs to the government, not to them. People must report when they see someone doing wrong. Our people are not committed and they don't like to work hard. This makes me feel very bad and I wish we could change. Commitment to our work can help us change things. It is very rare to see a black person committing him or herself for the future of his or her children. The time has come to acknowledge these things. OBE is fine but we don't attend the workshops so that we can see where we're going wrong.' (A district official from the Eastern Cape.)



COMMUNITY VOICES

Bizana imbizo: interchange comparing rural and urban schooling

- 'I would like our school to be equal in condition to those in urban areas, like those in Umtata. The schools there are very beautiful and the learners don't get cold because the classes are well-built.'

.....

- 'I want to say something about the renovation of buildings. We are in the rural areas that are much bigger than the urban areas. We want to have technical skills. Most parents are staying at home, unemployed. It would be better if we could teach our children how to cultivate. We would then be able to pay the fees and the child would have a definite job.'

.....

- 'I attended this school. It would be better if we had education that offers more skills to our children. Here in the rural areas we don't have money. We must have careers for our children because those who have passed Matric just can't get work. When someone is looking for a job they are asked before they are offered employment what skills they have. It would be better if we could have mechanical workshops so that when a child is not able to go for tertiary education they could at least find a job. Computer courses are not going to help us here in the rural areas because we don't have computers to use.'

.....

Emthonjeni, Eastern Cape



RENOVATION OF BUILDINGS

Point of light: 'The fixer of the school is hailed as a patriot among community members. Whatever he does for the community or the school he does not expect remuneration. He is just putting his skills to use and in the process adding value to the community. We are proud of him.'

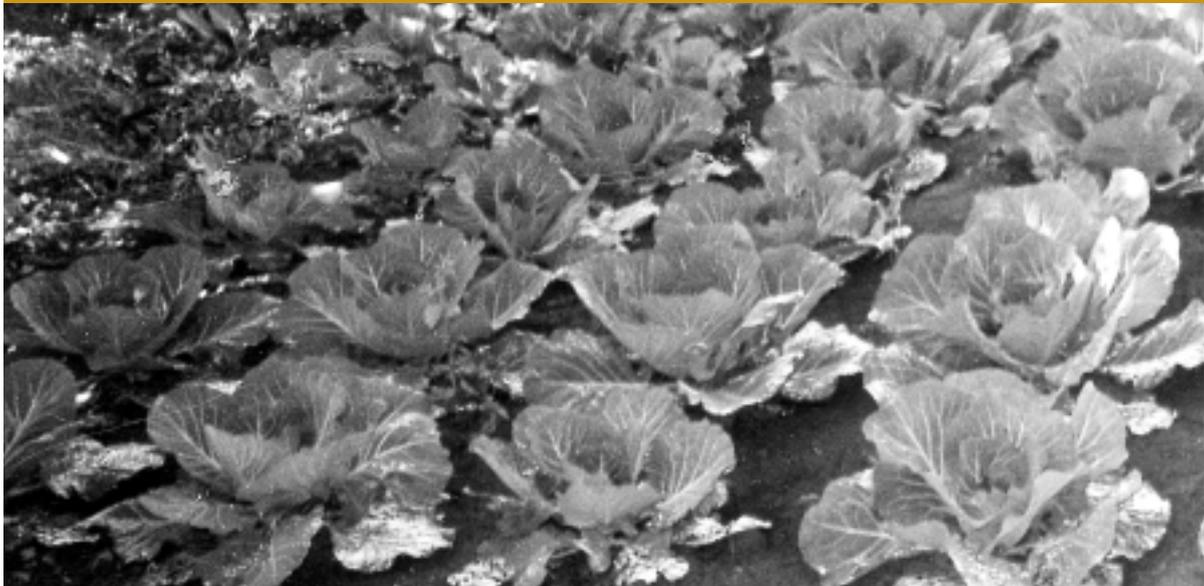
- ‘We have many schools that teach the same things. It would be better to teach agriculture. A child could live from it whether he or she passes or fails. We have bush mechanics that failed to finish their courses, but they can still fix cars and then get money for their children. We must not have this education that is all over the place. When I read newspapers I see that many qualified teachers are needed but they are expected to have five years’ experience. Tell me, where are they going to get that experience without working?’



- ‘I would like people to learn agriculture as we have land to cultivate, and knitting. People have diplomas but they sit with them at home. We must have centres to train people. We must have industries where people can work. Heaters must be provided for classrooms, especially for young children. There must be flower gardens at schools. People must work.’



Emthonjeni, Eastern Cape



FERTILE LAND

Strength: ‘In rural areas land is perceived as gold and diamonds. Favourable weather conditions make it possible for local people to grow vegetables. The land of our fathers is our diamond and gold. It is where we plant cabbage and other vegetables.’

- ‘We would like to see children learning how to farm. Parents must respect the school, and be aware that schools build human beings. A child who cultivates at school can cultivate at home. If she knits at school she can knit at home. The children of today aren’t even able to sew their clothes when they’re torn. And it’s important for them to be able to do so, boys and girls.’



- ‘I’d like our schools to be the same as those in urban areas. Children who’ve passed Matric can’t fill in application forms for another school. They must beautify our school and that can help them beautify their houses in the future.’



- ‘I’d like our children to have skills that help them to survive; that’s the long and the short of it. English can enable them to go to work in Gauteng, and we don’t like to be left behind by our children. As long as the rain still falls we must cultivate, we must knit, and we must build so that we develop ourselves. We must not forget that we are black people, and that we have our own culture. Once children are sent to multiracial schools their own culture is undermined. A child will select his or her own Christian denomination through his or her education. You can’t choose Christianity for the child. It depends on them. Even if a child is educated (*khumshile*) she or he can be a robber.’



- ‘I’m a parent. Our children must be given a skills-based education. We studied history and mathematics but we could not do anything with them. As you have seen, the people of this area are starving. Therefore, firstly we need to identify needs. Once skills are given to these children, there must be a back-up system. Our children must be taught business management so that they can manage money. They must be taught about their responsibilities more than their rights, because once you put your rights up front you tend to forget your responsibilities. All of us in the community have a responsibility to improve our own health and the health of other people in the community. It does not help us to send our children to Model C schools because then they are not going to respect old people. Instead they are going to say, “What are you talking about?” when old people greet them. Our art and culture needs to be improved and must be taught to the children so that they become intelligent and respectful.’



Community's vision for education –

Presented at the Tshamavhudzi indaba by Education Policy Consortium (EPC) researchers

'There should be people who monitor teachers' work.'

.....

'We should have facilities that enable the school to focus on science and technology. Learners should be motivated to do science and mathematics.'

.....

'It should be the parents' responsibility to assist learners in subject choices that will be of help in their future.'

.....

'Educators should be employed who will be able to work with present-day children.'

.....

'Teachers should be engaged in finding donations and/or sponsorships for schools.'

.....

'The community should be helped with procedures they need to follow in making applications for donations.'

.....

'Income-generating projects should be initiated for the eradication of poverty.'

.....

'The community should be helped to develop some of its special features in order to attract tourists.'

.....



Language of instruction – input of civic leader at indaba, Tshamavhudzi, Malamangwa, Limpopo

- ‘We parents must be involved in the education of our children from primary to secondary school. We must attend all meetings. Children need guidance because they can't judge why they are going to school – parents must monitor their work. We'd like to ask the government for education in our mother tongue. Is that difficult? Maybe science and technology could be offered in our mother tongue. Then learners wouldn't fail. They would understand from the beginning: at the moment they struggle with an unfamiliar language that makes learning difficult. Our mother tongue is really important. Countries such as Japan and China use their mother tongue, whatever they do. This should also be done in the new South Africa.’



TEACHERS' VOICES

Teacher from Tshamavhudzi Primary School, Malamangwa, Limpopo

'I sat down, looked around and realised that I needed to develop my community by encouraging the younger generation because there were no teachers coming from my village at that time. They were all commuters from other villages and the school could not function normally because transport difficulties meant that teachers were usually late. As a community member, I thought I ought to become a teacher because that is how I could spend most of my time with children.'



Teacher from Lady Frere, Eastern Cape

'I attended lower classes in my community. I also attended Ludidini High School, but I completed Matric at Manzezulu High at Machibini village. I never liked teaching and I still don't like it as we speak now. I wanted to be a nurse and I still do, but there were not as many opportunities as there are now. There were many posts in teaching, but I waited for a whole year for a response from the nursing college. When there was none, I decided to go to Sigcawu Teacher Training College to train as a teacher. I did not even apply for registration; I just went there and registered. After completing my training I spent almost a year without getting a position.'



Teacher at Roodtse Primary School, Sekhukhune, Limpopo

'I wanted to be an educator when I was still very young. Then, during Bantu Education, we were beaten, you know. I didn't understand why they beat us so. I always asked myself: to be educated must I be beaten like that? ... Then when I finished my Matric, I went to the College of Education in Kwa-Thema. Even though I was doing tertiary education in an urban area, I wanted to go back to my rural surroundings ... So that the kids there can be educated as I am ... So I went home looking for a job, but I was unable to get one because when I became a teacher many others had had the same idea, so there was a glut. My aunt was

working over here (points to Roodtse School). I came and looked for a job here till I got one at Roodtse. I hope to take this school further but most unfortunately the school and the village are so poor and there's a lack of jobs. So there's a lack of funds, and we're having it hard; there are no facilities in this school. Yes, I provide things myself, but it's never enough or quite the right thing.'



Emthonjeni, Eastern Cape



RURAL ROADS

Challenge: 'Roads pose a big problem in the lives of villagers. We have to walk long distances to and from the bus and taxi stops. Ground transport cannot get into the village because of the badly-damaged roads.'

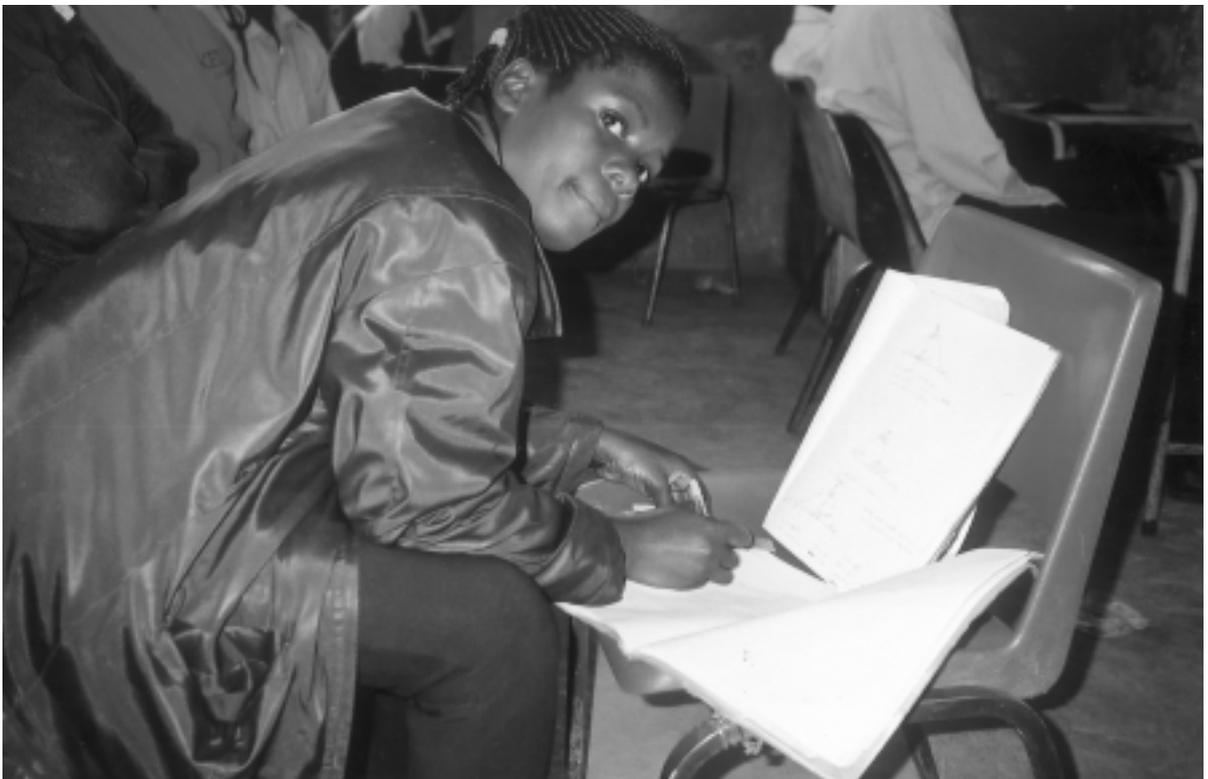
Teacher at Lady Frere, Eastern Cape

'Sometimes it becomes difficult for learners to take part in sport and compete with other schools. As someone who likes sports, I found it very discouraging that there were no sports facilities at this school when I arrived. Another challenge was the lack of science kits. I discussed this with other teachers and we also tried to explain the situation to parents. They also began to understand why learners were leaving our school complaining that there are things we do not have at this school that other schools have.'

'When I first arrived here I noticed that because of the different Xhosa dialect I speak learners would look at each other and laugh and would not even bother about what I asked them to do. The former principal came to my rescue and interpreted what I was saying to the learners. After about two weeks, the principal's child started to understand my dialect and took over from her. Now things have changed, because I also speak their dialect and we understand each other. It is not as bad as it used to be.'

'I wish parents could co-operate with the staff. Since we help in moulding their children, they should not relax and leave everything to the teachers. They must help supervise their homework and see to it that they read their books after school.'

'I remember when I still stayed in this village, trying to be close to people so that we could get to know each other and so that that they should accept me as their friend and neighbour. Then this incident occurred. My place was burgled, but nothing was stolen or damaged. Fortunately, I was spending the weekend with my family in town. I suspect that they came to kill me, because it was the same weekend that an old woman was hacked to death. That left me with questions, because when I went to the community leader to report the incident, he responded by telling me that since nothing was stolen or damaged, it was not necessary to investigate who the culprits were. That did not encourage me to stay in this village.'



Teacher at Tshamavhudzi Primary School, Venda, Limpopo

‘There’s poor communication and relationships between the teachers and parents. Our system of education needs the co-operation of parents, children and the community as a whole. Here you will find that there’s a side that is pulling backwards and not getting involved in anything; they just become spectators. That’s a problem because whatever we teach in the class, we also want the learners to go and do research on it at home. We also want to supplement the few materials that the government is providing, but it is mostly difficult to get the co-operation of the parents on this. You can see that the present regime no longer provides us with everything as did the past one. This government wants us to do something for ourselves, and only provides learners with exercise books and textbooks and that is it. It’s surprising that parents won’t or can’t buy their children just a pencil or pen, which only costs R1. A child will go for months not writing. Those are some of the problems that we have. When we talk with

parents, they will agree and support you in order to make you happy but will take no action after that ... We must help one another.’



Teacher at Fuyatha Primary School, Siyandhani, Limpopo

‘[The standard of education] is still very low because so many children are dropping out of school. It would be good if all children were going to school but things are getting worse because even kids who reach Matric are unable to further their studies because their parents are unemployed. Such a person will just end there in Matric. He’s not really educated; he’ll just go and get work at an Indian business.’

‘Children’s education can only be improved if this government can provide employment for their parents. Then they will be able to pay school fees and when children go to school in the morning they’ll have eaten, even if the feeding scheme is not operating.’





LEARNERS' VOICES

Essays from Roodtse, Limpopo, on what goes on in class

- 'At school we write and read at 08h00. We then do class-work such as drawing. When we're finished we have a break and go to play netball. Then we go back to the classes where we write and read and give our writing to the teacher. Before we leave school, we sweep and clean, after which we put the desks in order and then we pray and go home. Tomorrow, when we go back to school, we will use a floor brush to clean the class so that it shines and when we are finished we start to write and read again.'



- 'When we're in school our teacher lets us read, and she teaches us. Then she gives us homework and class-work. She teaches us Afrikaans and English. When we are finished, we go to fetch water to clean the classroom after school. When we are finished, we smear the floor with cattle dung. She asks us questions and we respond to her. We respond because we have to. When we are finished, she gives us a SePedi composition to write, entitled, "My Dog". When we are finished, we take out SePedi, Afrikaans and maths class workbooks to write in. When we are finished, we go for a break and we eat breakfast. After that we select the cleaners for the day and those boys who will clean the windows.'



- 'During school periods we write and read. Then we do homework and corrections. We also draw houses. After break we read and write again. If some of the learners have gone home during break, ma'am tells us to go and call them back to school. There is corporal punishment if we don't finish the work and corrections. It is very good if there are no questions in the school.'



- 'During school periods we write and read books. We write the following work in class: SePedi, Life Orientation, English, Human and Social Sciences, Economic and Management Sciences, Maths, Afrikaans and Science. I forgot that firstly we sit on chairs to sing and pray. We pray to God to give us mercy so that we may pass in school. If there is no work, we just keep quiet and respect our lady teacher and do corrections. First, before writing Northern Sotho, we read. Our ma'am hates noise in the class – so me, I like to read, write and do corrections. I like my teachers.'



Grade 6 learner at Manyoni, KwaZulu-Natal

'When I wake up in the morning, I fold the blankets and the grass mats and I have a bath. I herd the cattle to the pasture and come back to eat. Then I get ready for school. When I arrive at school, we pick up papers around the schoolyard and then go to morning assembly. When we get to our classes we are punished for making noise, even if not all of us are noisy. We go to the Student Christian Movement, and sing and have fun. We then go to the afternoon assembly and then home. At home I get dressed in my "home clothes", eat, and then fetch the cattle. I then have a bath and sleep.'



IDEAS FOR AN IMPROVED EDUCATIONAL FUTURE

- ‘The change I want is to not have to pay school fees, and to be supplied with my school uniform. I want free education. I want our hair not to be cut. I wish we had a chalkboard. Corporal punishment must be abolished even if we arrive late at school. I want our school to be extended up to Standard 7. We also need toilets that flush. We do not want Natural Science to be offered because it is too difficult. We should have non-teaching staff to clean the school, not learners. The doors must be changed and the beating of learners when they make noise must be stopped.’



Grade 6 learner at Vulindlela Primary School, Eastern Cape

‘I wish our school could have flush toilets and be extended up to Standard 7. Our school needs electricity and telephones. Corporal punishment must be abolished. I wish the school could have trees and a garden. I want our teachers to take us on tours to see places. School children must stop drinking, smoking and fighting each other.’



Nyembe, KwaZulu-Natal



BUS

Challenge: ‘This bus helps us a lot in the community. A lot of learners take this bus to high school because it is far away. The children travelling on this bus pay the bus fares on a monthly basis. However, in the event that the bus fails to come for some or other reason, there are no refunds.’

Grade 6 learner at Tshamavhudzi Primary School, Malamangwa, Limpopo

‘I want us to have both electricity and water pipes that are connected so as to make learners come and study in the evenings during exam time to prevent them from failing. The school yard needs to be fenced with a gate and the five classrooms that are good should be upgraded. We want playgrounds for boys and for girls, and plants and trees should be planted to prevent the wind from damaging the school. The government should supply a feeding scheme with soup and meals. The school needs to be supplied with tables and chairs, desks, toilets, windowpanes, doors that are good and also books to read and write in. We also need rubbers, pencils, crayons and a heater to keep us warm on cold days, as well as computers in the school.’



Grade 6 learner at Roodtse Primary School, Sekhukhune, Limpopo

‘It is a heavy duty to change this school for the better and it will take a long time because there are many things that need to be changed. Point number one is that new teaching blocks are needed because now we use the old cracked blocks. So teachers and learners do not feel happy during lessons, because they are always thinking of the danger if the walls were to fall during thunderstorms and heavy rains. We also need changes to the toilets because we are using old cracked toilets.’

‘Another point is that we are in need of sufficient teachers for all subjects in the school. Also, educational equipment like typewriters and computers are needed. By having these, the learners would be able to use computers even if they are still at primary level. We need to do hands-on education and not only see computers on TV. We also need machines to clean the

floors in the classrooms because we hope that new blocks will be supplied with electricity.’

‘We also need trees and flowers in our school. As learners we must always take care of the school environment. And we must dig a hole for dumping rubbish. We also need sports fields and if we had these we would have different activities in our school. Each activity must have its own uniform to differentiate it from others in the school. We also need a clinic nearby. This would help us in terms of injuries or if a learner is ill, because right now we are travelling a long distance to the clinic.’

‘Lastly, there is a problem of the long distance that learners have to travel from home to school, especially for those who stay in Section 44 and Mshihwaneng Section of Ga-podile. So we need two buses for transport to stop learners coming late for school. In such a way we would say that our school is well developed or improved.’



Interview with caregiver, Mr M, in Bizana, Eastern Cape

‘To improve education, I wish electricity could be installed. The government should build more schools and additional classrooms. We also need to have a school fence erected. We also need teachers, especially coloured, Indian or white ones, to help improve the quality of English in our schools, because even many educated people can’t afford to send their children to urban schools for better education.’

‘I wish that the government would build schools, as we sometimes see schools in other places that are better off than ours. We are serious about education, and we made an effort to develop the school up to Standard 5. We need electricity. There are general elections from time to time and there are a number of political

organisations including the ANC. It's our organisation and we like it, but when we get old without seeing progress, it creates a lot of confusion in our minds, because we do not know what is really happening here even though we see things happening in places far from us. We have children here, and they attend school up to Matric, but when they finish you don't see any difference, because they do nothing and you just wonder what the point of studying was. Even when they go to urban areas to look for jobs, they cannot apply the knowledge they possess. They get confused and shocked because everything is new to them.'

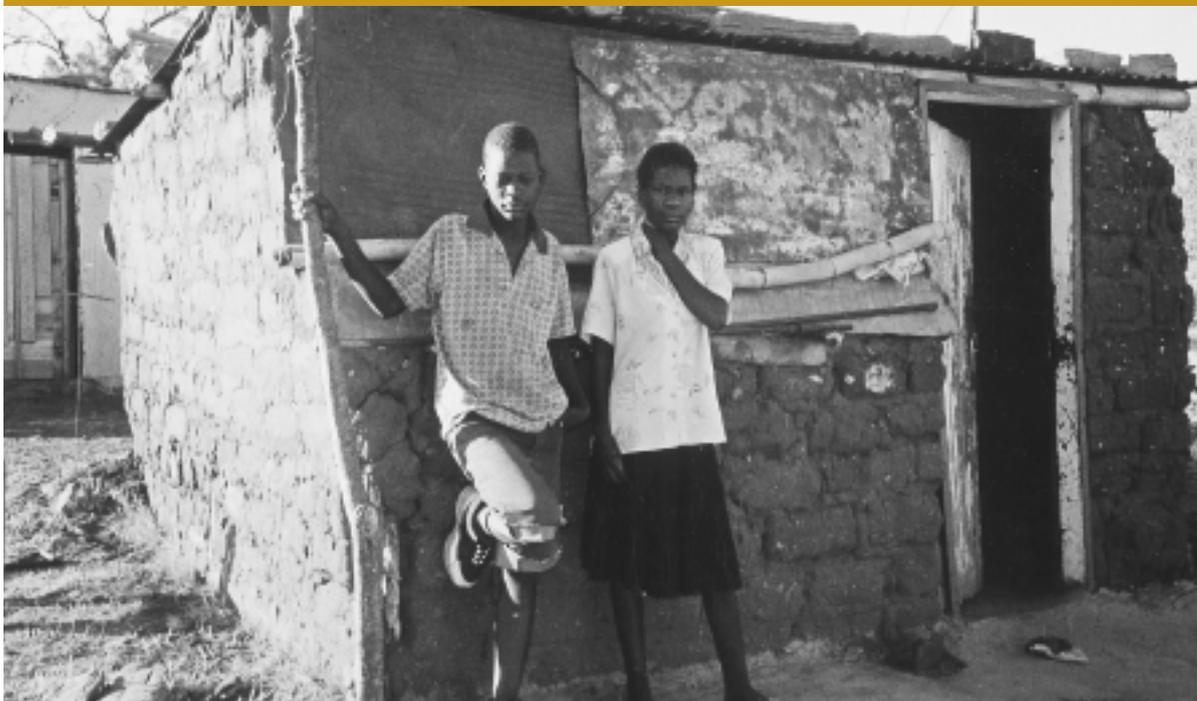
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Grade 6 learner at Qandashe Primary School, Bizana, Eastern Cape

'At this school we want computers. Our hair must not be cut, and we must not be beaten. There should be electricity, and playing grounds for rugby, volleyball, netball, soccer and softball. We also want school uniforms and electricity ... Each class must have its own cupboard. Our school must be extended to Standard 7. The clinic must be nearer. We also want water tanks like in other schools because only in Qandashe are there no tanks. The headmistress must have her own office. Teachers must not sit down when they teach, except in the staff room. We need a timetable.'

.....

Roodtse, Limpopo



MUD HOUSE

Challenge: 'This building is not in a good condition for people to live in. It was built from soil and it can easily be destroyed by rain. There are stones on top of the roof and on windy days these can fall and hurt people. This place is not safe. RDP houses are really needed here.'



Grade 6 learner at Tshamavhudzi Primary School, Venda, Limpopo

‘Our school would be changed for the better by electricity, new classrooms, water, chairs and desks and toilets. And we are in a bad state because of the lack of food. We are finding it very difficult to get enough food to take to school. And we are crying out for roofing during the rains – and green grass, and chalkboards, uniforms, brooms and for the school to be painted. And we want toilets that flush or pit-latrines. One thing we are lacking is sufficient teachers. There are not even nine here and even the principal has to teach. We need an alarm. Remember that this is the only school without electricity and there is no alarm and the toilets are damaged: even the toilet floors are under repair. This is not a school fit for pupils.’



Grade 6 learner at Manyoni Primary School, KwaZulu-Natal

‘In my opinion, for our school to be better we need to know what our goal is. Is it to become professionals like teachers and nurses or is it to stay at home and do no good? This school will never improve because teachers here do not know how to teach. Grade 7 learners still do not know how to speak English well. You cannot know something that you have never been

taught. We need new teachers in Manyoni. All the current ones must leave because I do not know what they are doing. The only thing they know is to how to beat us.’



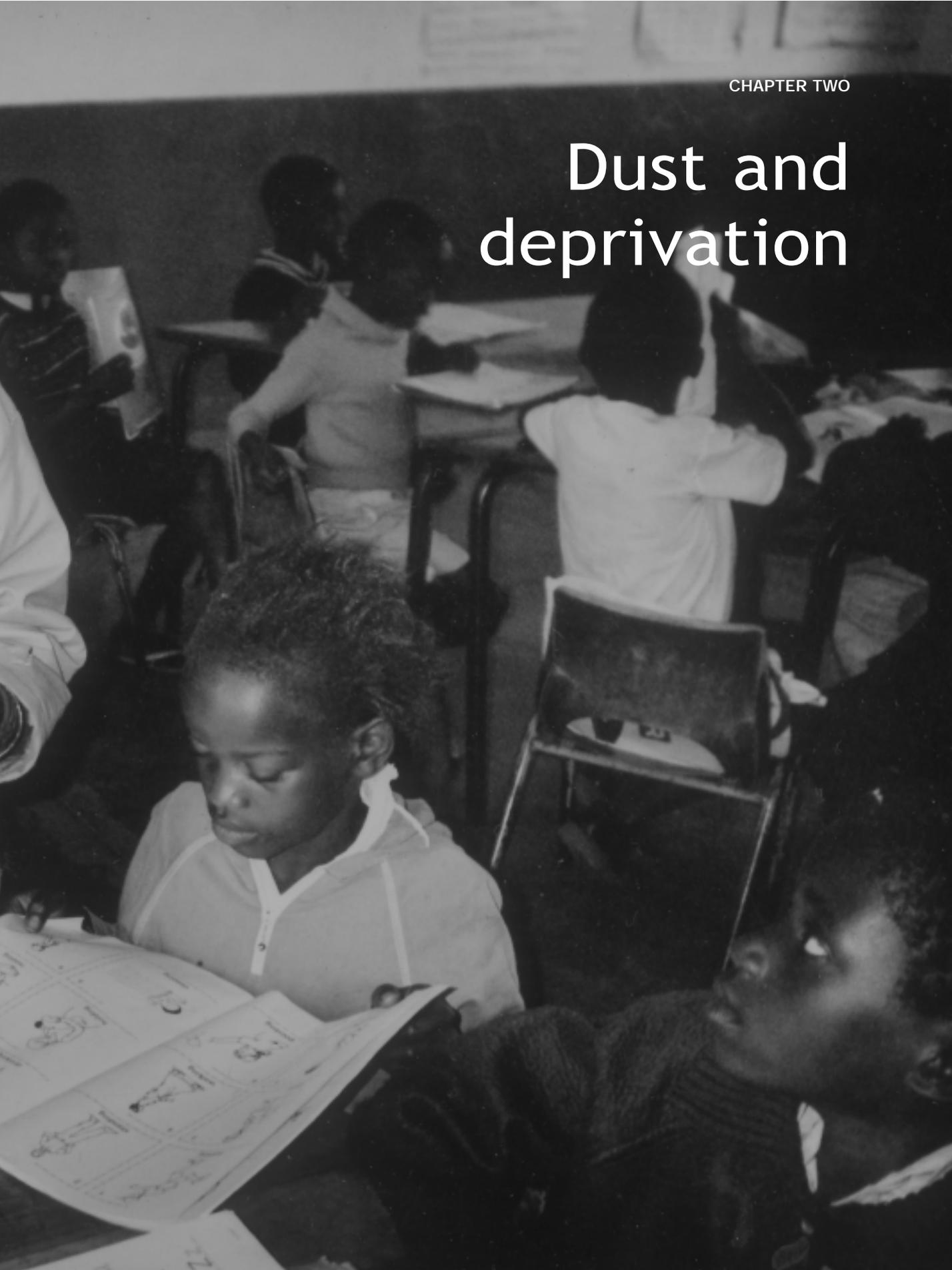
Grade 6 learner at Fuyatha Primary School, Siyandhani, Limpopo

- ‘I want other teachers in our school with new educational ideas.
- I want books in this school.
- I want textbooks because people want to read.
- I want pencils because the small children want to learn to write.
- I want cardboard because the teachers want to use it to teach us.
- I want pens to write anything we want to.
- I want a different principal in this school.
- I want flowers in school because I like it to be beautiful.
- I like visitors in our school who come to teach us.
- I want RDP in the rural areas.
- I want water in the rural areas.
- I want electricity in the rural areas.
- I want small babies to come to school every day to be looked after.’





Dust and deprivation



Dust and deprivation

When the community goes without water or electricity, the school also suffers. Schools are inseparable from the communities they serve, and, without a holistic approach to the general conditions of poverty, neither the school nor the community can address the challenges.



Both the survey and participatory research on which this book draws investigated the conditions of poverty and unfreedom of parents, teachers and learners in former homeland areas of KwaZulu-Natal, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape. Both explored the needs, hopes and aspirations of communities and families for education. This chapter presents some statistics and stories of poverty and education in rural communities and provides fragments of histories, memories and insights into the meaning and experience of education for adults. Given that children live in households where the caregivers may be grandparents or other relatives, we speak interchangeably of families, parents, guardians and caregivers.

Poverty and unemployment in the community

Poverty and unemployment are starkly present in the everyday realities, speech and activities of people living in rural areas. Writing in her journal on 11 June 2003 about her research in Lady Frere in the Eastern Cape, a community researcher describes a day when old and young people collect their old age pensions and child-support grants:

I woke up and prepared myself for the day. I phoned Xolile and because it was a day for the old age pension for old people, I suggested to him that we should go to Vulindlela Primary ... It was going to be a very busy day for adults; we would not be able to conduct interviews. He thought that would be a good idea and started preparing ... I walked to Vulindlela Primary. The place was full of old and young people who had come to collect their old age pensions and child-support grants.

There is a high dependency on social grants and pensions in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal, two of the three provinces where the research was conducted. Even in Limpopo, where more people seem to rely on wage employment, people have to get by on very little.

This dependence is linked to the high levels of unemployment in the three provinces. An analysis of Census 2001 shows the high rates of unemployment amongst the economically active population between the ages of 15 and 65 years in the provinces. Unemployed people are those within the economically active population who did not work in the seven days prior to the census night, or had wanted to work and had taken active steps to find work. The unemployment rate is as high as 54.6% in the Eastern Cape, and 49% in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. Close to half of all potentially economically active people in these three provinces are unemployed.

Table 1 shows that 91% of people in the Eastern Cape, 90% in KwaZulu-Natal and 94% of people in Limpopo earn below R6 400 a year. Several people, including

TABLE 1: Population aged 15–65 years by annual income category and province

	Eastern Cape %	KwaZulu-Natal %	Limpopo %	South Africa %
No income	2.95	2.74	2.39	2.24
R1–R400	18.45	14.86	27.51	13.77
R401–R800	17.68	18.18	19.56	16.96
R801–R1 600	19.80	21.15	15.86	22.00
R1 601–R3 200	17.67	18.93	16.07	19.01
R3 201–R6 400	14.42	14.06	12.56	13.96
R6 401–R12 800	6.33	6.73	4.37	7.48
R12 801–R25 600	1.74	2.22	1.01	2.96
R25 601–R51 200	0.51	0.65	0.33	0.98
R51 201–R102 400	0.26	0.28	0.20	0.37
R102 401–R204 800	0.13	0.14	0.08	0.18
R204 801 or more	0.07	0.08	0.05	0.11

Source: Census 2001

children, have to survive on this.

Women were by far the largest number of respondents to the survey's household questionnaire aimed at caregivers. They also predominated in the communities selected for the participatory research. Between 80% and 90% of respondents in the three provinces were women. See Figure 1. Community researchers in Nyembe also found that many were older women: 'children usually stay with their grandmothers because their mothers are absent from home'.

Sources of income

Poverty is much more than income or the lack of it, but income is important in the access it provides to resources. The household survey generated information from householders on their main sources of income. The results suggest that people in rural communities do not derive their main income from farming. Yet in discussions with people in rural communities, it is clear that cultivation of land and livestock are still central to the lives of

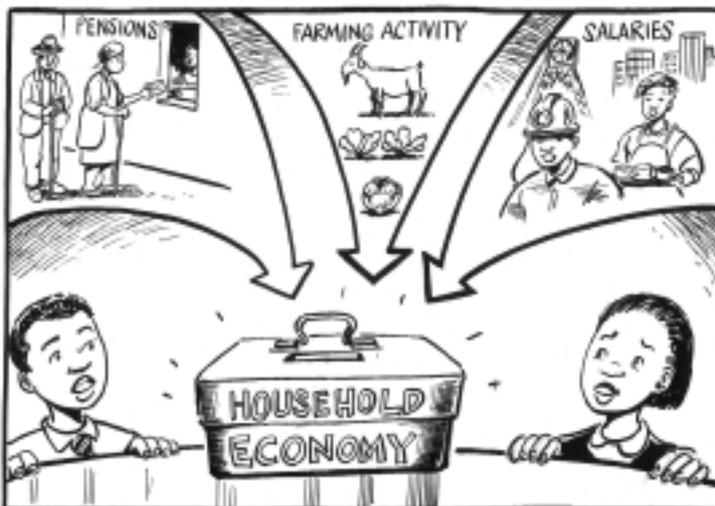
people. They have both a material and a symbolic dimension. Looking back to the past when 'we were selling bags of maize from this land', one of the older participants at the Peddie imbizo said that 'our bank as black people is the land and the livestock'. 'The land ... is our gold,' said another, concurring.

Land and livestock are viewed as a means of survival and a form of insurance against misfortune. They help caregivers to support children financially in school. They provide a sense of community and neighbourliness. Ownership of land and livestock provide the basis for marriage and citizenship, indeed for life. Their importance to one person, which seemed to reflect a general value given to land and livestock, is captured in the picture given below:

We consider land as strength. We have life because of our fields. We plant all kinds of vegetables and we use the soil. We have very rich soil in this part of the country. We cultivate mealies, sugar beans, peanuts and sweet potatoes. We use profit from this produce to send our children to school ...

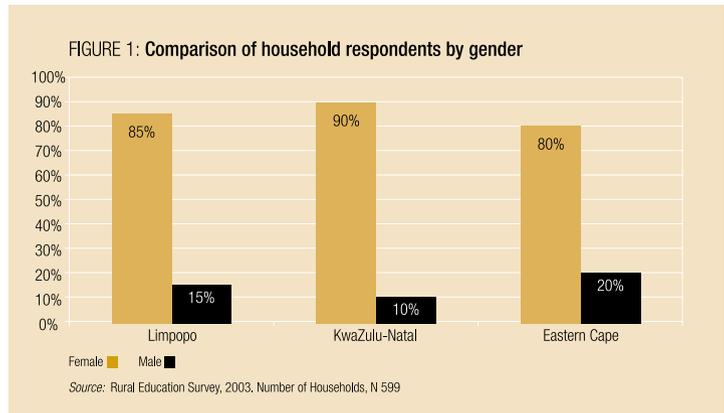
We cultivate and plough different crops that abate hunger. We feed our families with products from the garden. We harvest some and sell it to people who do not have that particular crop. We also teach our children to cultivate and look after the vegetables in the garden. We use the money to buy things that we are short of.

Although farming was the main form of income in only a minority of households, and many areas are drought-stricken, the livelihoods of rural people are not separate from it. Family members are expected to participate in tilling the land and looking after livestock. Most families use the labour of their children to fetch water, tend livestock or support small-scale farming.



While the lack of a secure income is a common feature of rural life for the majority of people, not all households are the same. Interspersed between traditional homesteads are facebrick houses with multiple bedrooms. Often the better-off people in the community run the local shops, even selling water from their indoor water sources. Mrs M runs her own small tuck shop in KwaZulu-Natal, and is not considered to be one of the poorest members of her community. Her story reveals the movements of people like herself between different rural areas, as well as the importance of a wage to provide for her family's educational and other needs:

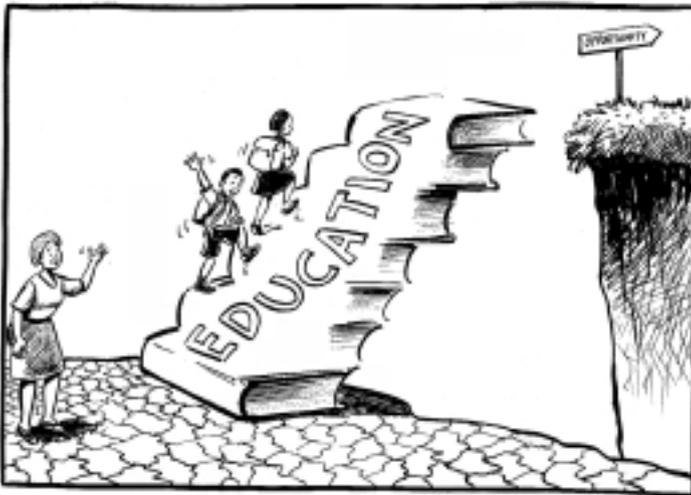
I have seven children ... I was a farm worker before. You, my son, know how little this kind of work pays but it was better than nothing at all. My husband also worked on a farm. This meant we struggled to give our children education. With the little I got as wages I bought flour and made fat cakes and pies. My children would go from house to house selling these after school so that I could put bread and tea on the table in the mornings. This was not easy at all. My husband later got himself a job at the manufacturing company. This improved our lifestyle a bit but I never stopped working at the farm because it was close to home, and I did not lose proximity to the children to know their needs and ask their father to provide if it was beyond me. I continued selling small stuff until I saw myself selling more goods like paraffin and candles. I had assistants to help while I was working at the farm. My profits grew until I opened a tuck shop. Then the problem was when the white farms were closed down to be taken over by black South Africans. This led to us being retrenched and we got next to nothing. I used the very little money that I got to buy more stock for the tuck shop, which put me in good stead because I later got myself a suitable place that I now use as a shop. I am working in this shop till today. These are some of the experiences under which I raised my children.



Literacy within rural households

Poverty can often be passed on from one generation to the next through the lack of education. Women's education is particularly important in this respect. In areas where women have an educational advantage, they are better able to access a wage and so increase life chances for their children (Sender 2002).

A higher proportion of men than women who responded to the survey indicated that they were literate. Table 2 shows that amongst the female household respondents the literacy levels indicated were: 69% in Limpopo, 59% in KwaZulu-Natal and 70% in the Eastern Cape.



However, their levels of education are low overall. In 32% of the households surveyed, the education level of the most educated member of the household is at least Grade 10. In Limpopo, 23% of women respondents had received no formal schooling, 19% had left school below Grade 7 and 16% at Grade 7. Three-quarters of all respondents had left school at or below Grade 10. Fewer than 20% had completed Matric and studied further. See Figure 2.

When responses from all three provinces are compared, the educational needs of these communities are clear. Amongst the small number of men surveyed in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape, a higher percentage of men than women had had no formal schooling. Overall, a remarkably high percentage of women surveyed had received no formal schooling. Most (36%) were in KwaZulu-Natal, followed by the Eastern Cape (25%) and Limpopo (23%). Only 23% of respondents in Limpopo, 16% in KwaZulu-Natal and 13% in the Eastern Cape had attained a Grade 10. Educational disadvantage amongst adult women seems to be more pronounced in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. See Figures 3 and 4.

TABLE 2: Household literacy

	Limpopo		KwaZulu-Natal		Eastern Cape	
	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %	Male %
Yes	69	93	59	65	70	74
No	31	7	41	35	30	26
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of households, N=599)

Youth researcher teams in Lady Frere, Peddie and Bizana all commented on the lack of education amongst the older generations. A youth researcher in Lady Frere said that her team asked their parents if they had had the opportunity to go to school and, if not, why not. ‘They said,’ she writes, that ‘they wanted to go to school but in the olden days education was not taken care of. People were looking after the cattle and schools were scarce. The girls were not sent to school because parents used to say that the future for girls lay in marriage.’ A youth researcher from Peddie added, ‘most of them are not working because they did not go to school’. The same was found in Bizana. Most of the parents are illiterate, she says, because of the lack of schools, long distances they had to walk to go to school, domestic labour, and the belief that schooling had very specific purposes, namely to prepare girls for marriage and to enable husbands and wives separated by migrant labour to correspond with one another.

One question in the survey asked children if anyone assists them with homework and, if not, why not. A striking 65% of children interviewed reported that no one in the house was sufficiently educated to do so.

We also asked who assists with homework when there is help. Only 32% reported that the child’s mother assists with homework, whilst 44% said that this task falls to the child’s older brother or sister. The answers we received suggest that, on the whole, adult caregivers feel they do not assist children with their

FIGURE 2: Highest education level attained by caregivers in Limpopo

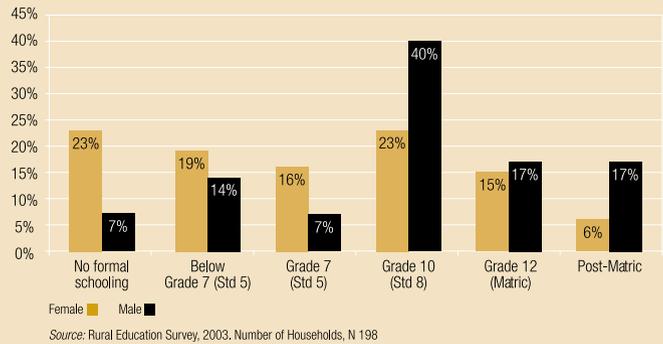


FIGURE 3: Highest education level attained by caregivers in KwaZulu-Natal

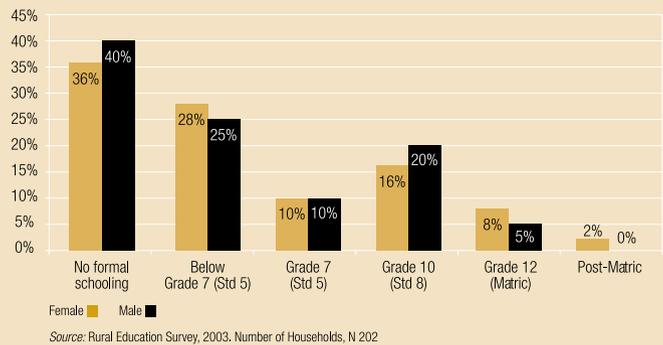
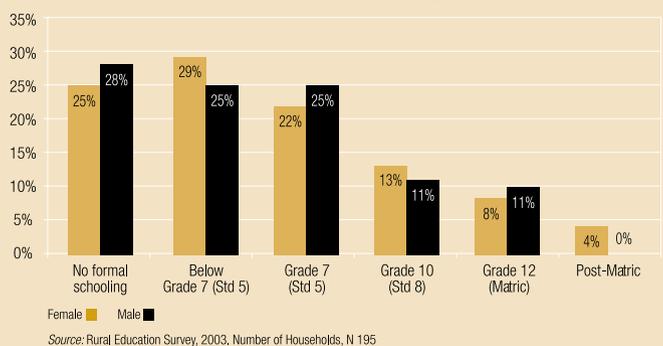


FIGURE 4: Highest education level attained by caregivers in the Eastern Cape



homework because of their own poor levels of education. Where parents do assist their children with homework, mothers appear to play a larger role. See Figures 5 and 6.

Despite, or because of, their own poor education, as we shall see later in this chapter, many caregivers consider education to be vitally important. First, let us look more closely at the experience of poverty and the history of the communities in which our research was conducted.

The experience of rural poverty

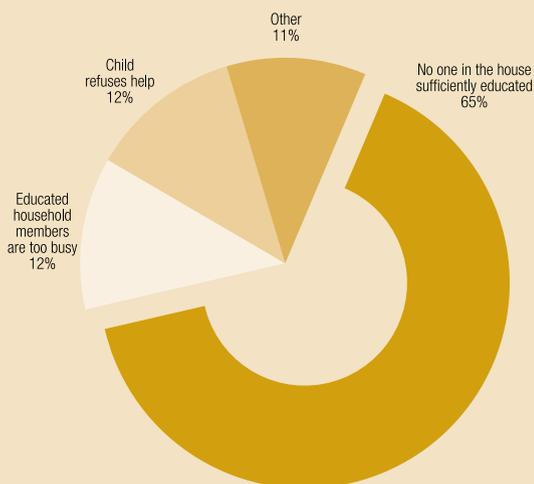
It is important to contrast statistics on income and employment with the experience of poverty and rurality. In order to dig beneath the statistics on poverty and rural life, approximately 500 people across nine sites in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal were asked what poverty and rurality means to them. We

found what others have also found in different contexts: that there are myriad words and phrases to describe poverty and rurality (Ilfie 1987; Rahnema 1992). All languages have different ways of speaking about rurality and poverty. The Zulu language, for one, has eight different expressions for poverty. These refer to degrees of poverty, its visibility, the form that it takes and the emotions and sense of self-worth associated with it. When asked about the meaning of 'rural', people highlighted isolation, vulnerability, lack of opportunity, the need for self-reliance, a sense of community and a commitment to traditional values.

However, the definitions provided of poverty and rurality reveal a sense of rural identity that is closely connected with an imagined urban world that is both better and worse than rural areas. Rural life and identity are defined in relation to urban worlds of plenty and possession. By contrast with this world, rural identity

FIGURE 5: Reasons child not assisted with homework

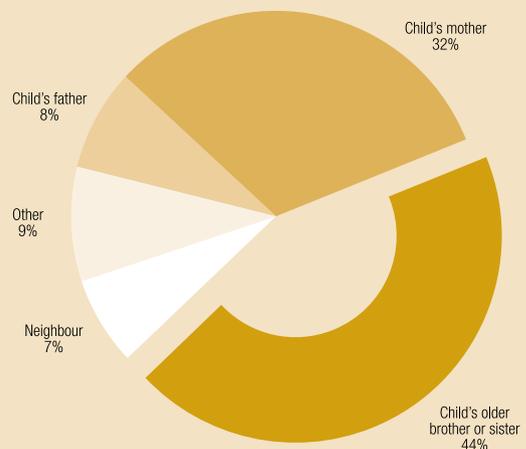
If no one assists child with studies, why not?



Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of households, N=195)

FIGURE 6: People who assist child with homework

Who assists child with studies?



Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of households, N=195)

simultaneously includes a sense of deficit and strength. Rural areas are places that are 'located far outside of town ... where there are no bridges ... where no white people stay ... places far from tar and gravelled roads ... where there are no buses to town ... no street names ... [and] where the police do not follow cases'. This isolation means vulnerability to diseases, as there are no doctors, clinics are out of reach and there is no help for the disabled. For many, these are the 'places where there are no choices except to go to the cities for work'.

The distinctions made between different types of rural area differ from those in official statistics. '*Emakhaya*' refers to remote rural areas, distant, undeveloped, underdeveloped. Those in a different class or geographical zone can use the word in a derogatory manner; but the word '*emakhaya*' also denotes home, seeming to suggest a simple, rustic existence. 'It is [also] where you find *amakhosi* and *izinduna*.' '*Emaphandleni*' is simply 'dust and deprivation'. The literal translation of '*kwanjayiphume*' is to chase the dog out of the house. As a condition of want, it suggests and has come to mean that there is so little food that there is not enough to share with a dog or animal because the people themselves have insufficient to eat. So the word has both a literal and a figurative meaning that point in the same direction. This concept is not spatially bound as '*emakhaya*' seems to be.



The play shows how women are seen to bear the brunt of food-insecurity, responsibility and caring for the family and children. Nozenza is hungry, has a hungry child on her hands and a husband whom she feels is no help to her. She appeals to the neighbours for food, but they too are 'eating their pension'. Yet they still share with her and give her what little food they have themselves. It is dry and without sugar, but it is gratefully accepted and helps prepare the child for school.

Poverty makes communities vulnerable in many different ways. Poverty does not necessarily lead to family strife, but the pressures and pain of poverty do have an impact on family life and relationships, both tearing them apart and drawing them together.

Daily life is mostly experienced as a battle for basic survival. Hunger is ever-present for many learners, and affects health and social relationships between people. Children in households are acutely aware of the conflicts between family members over food and money, dependence on others, notions of what work is and means, and the responsibilities that women have in supporting families. Hunger forms the centrepiece of a youth drama that was written and performed in Lady Frere in August 2003. The play starts with Nozenza (Nontsokolo's mother) asking for food from the neighbours:

- Nozenza: Oh it is Sunday today. I am struggling and I'm hungry. There is this man who is sitting in this house, who does not want to go and find a job. Let me go to him. Nontsokolo's father, you are busy sewing the shoes here, when are you going to look for a job?
- Husband: Oh! My wife, can't you see that I'm working here at home?
- Nozenza: I'm tired of your behaviour because you don't want to work. You don't want to work; you want to sew these shoes. Look at Nontsokolo, she is hungry.
- Husband: What is it today? Oh my wife, please try to get something to eat, so that we can sleep with something tonight.
- Nozenza: Let me go and try to find something to eat. I wonder what I am going to say to my neighbour. I never went to that house. What am I going to do? Nkqo! Nkqo! Nkqo! (*Knock! Knock! Knock!*)
- Neighbour: Come inside.
- Nozenza: How are you my neighbour? (*male neighbour*)
- Neighbour (F): We are all right my neighbour.
- Nozenza: I'm from home. I'm deadly hungry and the worst thing is that I have a child who is crying and is saying she is hungry too. I'm here to ask you to help me with food (*talking to female neighbour*).
- Neighbour (F): What can we do to help you?
- Mother: Please help me with food.
- Neighbour (M): I don't like what you are doing in my household. I'm the only person who worked here and now I am surviving on my pension. That man (Dlamini) must go and look for a job.
- Neighbour (F): Forgive them, father. Let us help them today. Maybe some day they will help us too.
- Neighbour (M): I am not going to allow this to happen again.
- Neighbour (F): Take here my neighbour, here is food.
- Nozenza: Thank you, my neighbour. Let me hurry because they are hungry at home. (*She arrives at home*) I'm back Ntsoki's father. My neighbour has given me *umphokoqo*. Although it is dry, eat it rather than have nothing. Take here, Ntsoki.
- Nontsokolo: The food does not have sugar.
- Nozenza: (*Spills some food*) It is important what I did. Even the ancestors are thanking me.
- Husband: Some more – a little bit. Thank you my wife.
- Nozenza: I'm not going to eat anything, as long you eat it is fine. Let me put this broom aside.
- Husband: Mmm.
- Nozenza: You must eat faster Ntsoki because it is time for school.

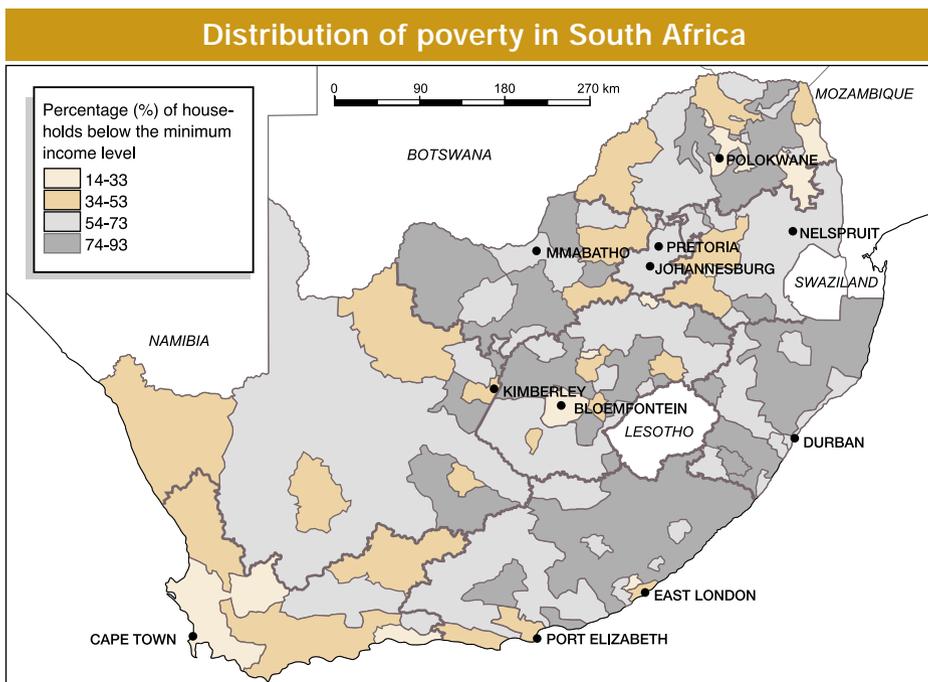
Histories of communities

‘This state of poverty has been imposed on us,’ said one civic leader in Limpopo. At an indaba held between the community and researchers, he said that people are made to ‘compete for space with the livestock in a very dry land’. Coupled with massive unemployment, there is very limited space or land for farming in Siyandhani:

Historically our lives were dependent on subsistence farming. Children of school-going age would come back from school to assist in the fields. Parents placed great value on the education of their children because without it there were few employment possibilities. They were ready to join the migrant labour system and raise their own families. Today, given the dryness of the area, lack of rainfall and disastrous floods, subsistence farming is no longer a possibility. There are no job opportunities in the neighbourhood (Giyani) as well as countrywide. Graduates are roaming the streets. This does not bode well for the confidence of those learners who are still in the system ... This in itself reduces us to a very vulnerable situation.

Siyandhani was established in 1955 as a result of the forced removals of people from their homes, initiated by the apartheid government in furtherance of its homeland policy. It grew rapidly as a result of further forced removals between 1964 and 1996. Located relatively near to the town of Giyani, the village has grown even more through the arrival of people from more far-flung places seeking work in Giyani. It is one of the nine villages where in-depth participatory research was conducted. The villages all have varied histories, but are united by their common history over the last 50-odd years, shaped as it was by homeland policy.

The villages chosen for the research in KwaZulu-Natal, for example, were all in the former KwaZulu homeland, but their inhabitants were not subjected to forced removals. Their ancestors had been there ‘since time immemorial’. Nyembe is not far from the town of Eshowe, but the stony road on the way from Eshowe to



Nyembe makes the relatively short distance a long, dusty and arduous trip. Poverty is another common feature.

Bongweni and Hlosini in the Peddie District in the Eastern Cape were both in the former Ciskei homeland, about 55 km from King William's Town and 65 km from Grahamstown. A gravel road separates them. Bongweni was established in 1986, also as a result of the forced removal of people from neighbouring farms and areas further afield. Hlosini is an older village. It dates back to the arrival of the amaMfengu, a group that has its origins in the wars that Shaka set in motion in the early nineteenth century. Along with all the other villages, it has felt the impact of successive land policies to delimit the areas in which Africans could legitimately live. An older person in the village recalls what happened:

We were forced to reduce our livestock, reduce our plots, yards and fields. The Boers wanted to take our land. Some chiefs accepted white rule and others like our Mr Msutu refused to sign any agreement with them. He fought this oppression and was eventually sent to Robben Island. From those days, this village and the whole of Tyhefu were marginalised, not considered for development by the previous regimes. Our schools are different, we live life in hardship. We don't have water, there are no work opportunities thus it is difficult for us to buy livestock. (*Izikolo zethu zahlukile kuba sitsala nzima, asinamanzi, imisebenzi inqabile kangangokuba kunzima nokuthenga imfuyo.*)

This is a landscape constructed by history. In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, areas like this were reserves. They were renamed homelands in the second half of the twentieth century by South Africa's apartheid rulers seeking a justification for confinement of Africans

to these areas. African communities were penned in here, and labour, mostly male, was funnelled to the farms, mines and industries of white South Africa. Over the course of the century, the costs of African family life were allowed to fall on the increasingly overcrowded and environmentally degraded reserves. Today nearly one third of the South African population lives in such areas, a disproportionate number being women and children. The urban industrial and commercial agricultural economy no longer has any use for the unskilled labour they once provided.

African societies were changed drastically by this history. The reserves, the increasingly stressed rural annexes supplying 'white' South Africa with the labour it demanded, were ironically envisioned early on as unchanging, traditional, pastoral havens. Africans, crucial to the dynamic capitalist economy, were imagined as rural tribesmen and women. Under apartheid, after 1948, the reserve system was formalised into political entities, known as homelands, in which Africans were supposedly to exercise self-government. Traditional leaders were co-opted into subordinate roles in this new political and economic hierarchy in which Pretoria reigned supreme and pulled the purse strings. Some traditional leaders adopted and identified with these roles, while others rejected them and were sometimes deposed as a result.

Since the advent of democracy in 1994, the homelands have disappeared as political entities, but they remain deeply inscribed on South Africa's geographical and social landscape. At every level, from that of the family to that of schooling, the past marks the present.

The history, purposes and significance of education

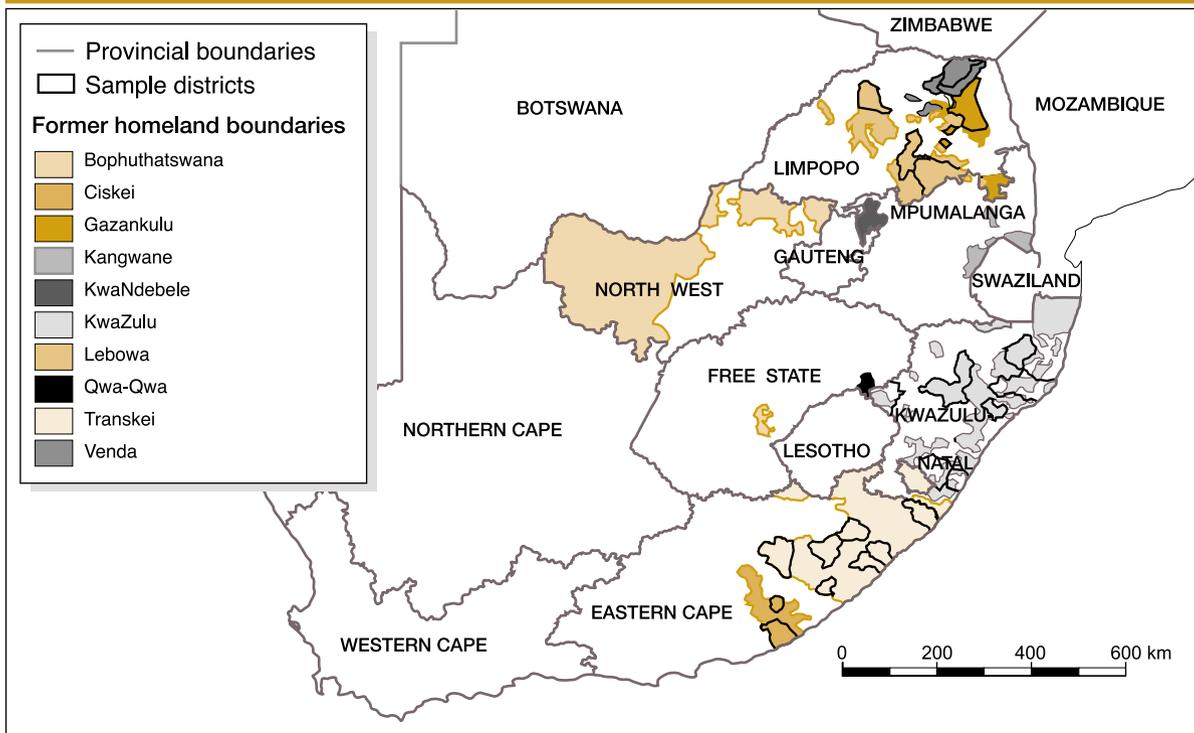
Under successive governments from 1910, education for Africans was as far as possible physically situated in the reserves, under missionary control. Policy evolved towards the transfer of educational responsibility in the reserves to local authorities under strict government control. Educational provision for Africans hinged on the idea of a quintessential African rural character that bypassed the complex ferment of social change that South Africa was undergoing.

There was resistance to these pressures and characterisations, but they carried political, ideological and economic power. The homelands were areas where democracy had no place, in relation either to 'traditional' systems of rule, where chiefs

were often the increasingly authoritarian implementers of white domination, or to the national system of government, where the few Africans in the Cape with the vote were in the end completely disenfranchised. Growing authoritarianism and impoverishment, not democracy and development, characterised these areas.

Formal schooling has taken place in ex-homelands for many years, since the early nineteenth century. Early primary education was an aspect of Christian missions, and school and church were closely related. Often, early schooling took place in the same building that served as a church. From the very beginning the teachers were African, with white missionaries grouped at central mission stations, administering, training teachers and occasionally visiting the dispersed and isolated rural schools.

Former homelands and sample districts in South Africa



In the mid-twentieth century, mission schooling faltered in the face of constrained resources, and collapsed under attack by the National Party government in the 1950s. Rural schools were taken over by the Department of Bantu Education, and, with the formation of the homelands, were handed over to their governments. New schools were started when communities were forcibly removed from one area to another. In many cases, desperately limited resources for black education under apartheid, particularly in the homelands, meant that communities met the need for new schools by building them themselves (Jacklin 1994; Jacklin n.d.). Some of the schools where participatory research was conducted for this study were built in this way. The government and donors, or a combination of donors, the government and the community, built others.

However, not all children went to school. There were several reasons for this. Schools were first established where missionaries happened to find themselves, and so the pattern of establishment was haphazard from the start. This uneven patchwork of schools across the country was reinforced by unequal provision in the apartheid era, the especially paltry resources provided for the establishment of schools in the homelands, and community decisions about where to build schools. In part, households needed the labour of their children and did not send them to school. Communities also had divided responses to schooling. These factors are threads in a complex web of interlocking values that shape participation in schooling.

The response of communities to schooling was often part of a broader response to the church and missionaries in

their midst. Whereas some embraced Christianity and schooling, others rejected both. In the nineteenth-century Eastern Cape, those who responded positively were known as the *amagqobhoka* (literate/school people) and those who responded negatively were known as *amaqaba* or *abantu ababomvu* (illiterate/red people) because of the ochre they wore on their bodies as a mark of their commitment to traditional values. This division within communities was familiar to many across the country. In KwaZulu-Natal, the *amakholwa*, for example, formed a distinct Christianised and educated part of the community (Etherington 1984). Divisions such as these and their consequences live on in many communities to this day.

This conflict was captured most vividly in the youth researcher drama presented at a primary school in Peddie in August 2003. The drama clearly responds to the researcher-visitors and takes the form of a debate between those who see the need for children to go to school and those who do not. The mother, Noqatiko, does not want her daughter, Sive, to go to school as she feels that her daughter should follow in her own footsteps, look after the fields and be respected. Another character in the drama is a representative of the Nelson Mandela Foundation. She advocates education and wonders whether Sive's mother is a 'red person'. Sive's mother argues that 'your education can never match with sheep, cattle and goats' but, finally, after persuasion by Mrs Mavuso, speaking on behalf of the Nelson Mandela Foundation, she instructs her daughter to 'go to school tomorrow'.

Sive's friends are going to school. They meet a resident (MamJwarha) on their way to school. She is telling them that they are too dirty to go to school. She and her friend are also gossiping about the children who are going to school.

Friend: Where are these children going?

MamJwarha: They say they are going to school.

Friend: What is that? (*They laugh.*) Where does the school come from? I am telling you no child in my house will ever go to school. Let's go to fetch water.

MamJwarha: Don't be too scared of these men. I notice you always want to convince them. Who brought this thing of education?

Friend: Mandela, your man, is the one who brought education. Our maize fields are dry, we want to plough. I wish I could catch him with my hands. We don't want school.

....

Nofudukile: I wonder what this child is doing here at this time of the day because she is supposed to be at school.

Mrs Mavuso: Morning! How are you? What is your name? Who is your mother? Please tell her that I'll come and visit her tomorrow and I also want to see you.

Sive: I'm fine. My mother is Noqatiko.

Mrs Mavuso: Okay, I will visit your home and enquire as to why you are not attending school.

Sive: Mother! Mrs Mavuso will come and ask you why you are not sending me to school

Noqatiko: Go collect sheep.

Mrs Mavuso: I wonder what kind of woman this is. I wonder – is she not a red person (*iqaba*)? (*Knock, knock*)

Noqatiko: Come in!

Mrs Mavuso: How are you?

Noqatiko: I'm okay; the sheep are grazing on the ploughed maize fields. Our fields are dry and they are dusty when we hoe them.

Mrs Mavuso: I'm from the Nelson Mandela Foundation. I met your child walking in the streets during school hours. I want to tell you that education is important.

Noqatiko: Stop right there if you are going to talk about this education. My child is not going to school. I have never been to any school. Is that clear! I was raised by maize, pumpkin, and *intyabontyi*. I don't want her to go to school because she will have no respect.

Mrs Mavuso: Education is important. You can't compare her with you.

Noqatiko: That education, your education can never match with sheep, cattle and goats.

Mrs Mavuso: But I would like you to send her to school. Bye!

Noqatiko: Sive! There is a child who came here and she said you must go to school, but I will see about that. You must go to school tomorrow.

Sive: (*Is happy.*) Yes mama.

This drama represents one side of the argument. Another is present in many other voices in the community. Although many parents did not have a chance to go to school, and need their children for domestic and agricultural work, researchers reported that many want their children to go to school. A community researcher in Peddie writes that:

We were going up and down. We were out even in thunderstorms. I want to tell you what we found from this research. We found that parents want their children to be educated. They are saying they are starving, and they are struggling.

In Tshamavhudzi, Limpopo, a youth researcher interviewed a caregiver who outlined the main purposes of education for South Africa's rural areas – that schools and education are important for employment, to make a good marriage and to become a responsible citizen:

As a parent I encourage my child to go to school because I want him to be educated and to be able to find a job so that he could build himself a house because it is difficult for those who are not educated to get a job. Even marriage today is for those who are educated. If you are married and working you do not suffer because you will have your own money. (*Pfunzo i thusa musu vha tshi kho umu kolela, ha tambuli nga uri u do vha a tshi kho u shuma a na tshelede yawe.*)

Go to school, be educated and prosper and be a person we can be proud of. (*Dzhenani tshikolo, ni funzee, ni bvelele, ni vhe muthu ane ra nga di tongisa ngae.*) It becomes bright when you are educated. You will get anything you want whenever you want it and your ways will always be fine. Being at school is advantageous because you save yourself from many things. If you are out of school, you end up getting involved in drug abuse and smoking, alcohol abuse and many other things. You are protected when you are at school.

Despite this strong support and commitment to education, the daily lives of children are such that they seem to be following in the footsteps of their parents. A community researcher from Bizana notes that:

Each month we interviewed four people. Men highlighted the fact that in the olden days education was not considered, but what was considered was the livestock. Children (also) mentioned that some of their home chores are giving them problems in focusing on their education.

The purposes of education differ for boys and girls. For girls there is a strong relationship to marriage and childcare. They reflect gendered norms and beliefs about appropriate roles for adult life.

While many adults believe that better-educated women are likely to bring more money to the household – 'if you are not educated no one will marry you because

Nyandeni location, Eastern Cape



POVERTY

Challenge: 'The woman in the wheelbarrow is very sick and is being taken to hospital. Her condition is further aggravated by the bad conditions of the roads which make it impossible for

buses and taxis to have easy access to the village. Clinics and hospitals are situated some distance away from where she stays.'

you are going to be a burden' – and some believe that 'men like women who are independent', there is a strong undercurrent of male and female concern, often revolving around the same issue: 'women leave their husbands because they have money' and 'men are scared of them – since they know their rights they are not likely to be submissive to a man'. A substantial minority of caregiver respondents in the survey (22%, 25% and 40% in Limpopo, KwaZulu-Natal and Eastern Cape respectively) feel it would be more difficult for educated women to marry. There are thus social perceptions that are both favourable and unfavourable to the education of girls.

The relationship of education to marriage features as part of the explanation of why the chores expected of girls at home and in school are domestic, while those for boys are agricultural. Early pregnancy and marriage can be seen as a way of securing the girl's future. Education can be ambiguous as it can be seen as either improving the chances of marriage or damaging them.

For many parents, traditional and modern forms of education play complementary roles. There is a sense among adults and elders that school is not as important as the community in preparing young people for the 'stages of life', including relationships, marriage, having children, being a young person, being an elder, and so on. Children become gendered beings through these rites of life. However, there is also a perception that the home and community are not as strong as they used to be and that they are eroding.

In many places, parents encourage education around issues of sexuality and



the transition to adulthood through initiation schools; for example, through *ukumisa iduku* in KwaZulu-Natal, or *tikhobha* for girls and *ngoma, koma* or *madhlala* for boys in Limpopo. Some are hesitant about sexuality education in schools, but others actively encourage it. Parents in Fuyatha, Limpopo, for example, believe that sex education and advice on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS, should form a crucial part of the school curriculum.

Parents tend to feel that the school should reinforce values such as respect, discipline, responsibility and appropriate sexual behaviour. Respect for traditional norms, values and expectations are key. 'At home and in the community, children are taught to respect others, especially adults, irrespective of whether they are their parents or not (*Ka gae le mo loagong, bana ba*



rutiwa go tlhompba ba bangwe segolobogolo bagolo, go sa kgatalasegi go re a ke batsadi ba bona kgotsa nya),' says a parent from Roodtse, Limpopo. A parent from Fuyatha, in the same province, says, 'at home, children cultivate critical lessons that guide them through life. These take into account acceptable behaviour patterns, respect, discipline and responsibility.' These are the values that they feel schools should also emphasise.

As we shall see later, significant tensions do exist between the practices and values of schools, families and communities, but many argue that the socialising traditions

of communities should be integrated into the everyday life of schools. One civic leader says that the youth should have the right to choose whether they want to participate in initiation schools or not but he is in two minds about some of the clashes between traditional values and those found in the Constitution. The Constitution has given the youth rights that are seemingly a challenge to the older, established values of communities:

The community should teach respect, responsibility, hard work and a sense of purpose in life ... The school should reinforce and support these critical values. However, in the rights-bound

South Africa, we find it hard to discipline children since they are aware of their rights. They always talk child abuse and threaten to take us to court.

The civic leader is referring here to the common perception amongst parents and teachers that, in some cases, rights embodied in the Constitution can be an assault on the authority of parents and teachers. Corporal punishment is commonly seen as a normal punishment and the Constitutional provision that forbids it, a mistake. Similarly, the roles that girls are expected to learn at home can be seen as being contradicted by the rights and independence they learn of at school.

Conclusions

Poverty conditions the ability of families and children to engage with education. The rural poor in our study are mainly women living in households facing food-insecurity on a daily basis. They live in those areas of the country with the highest levels of poverty and unemployment and rely on meagre sources of income derived from pensions, social grants or migrant labour. Land and livestock remain vital to their sense of themselves and for survival. Household decisions to send children to school are strongly influenced by these economic, social and cultural contexts. In the absence of income, employment and food-security, families have to rely on the labour of children to help make ends meet. There is a deep underlying support amongst parents and communities for the schooling of children, but this support is constantly undermined by the conditions of life imposed by poverty and unemployment.

Bongweni, Eastern Cape



DAM

Challenge: 'Its water is not clean, children are playing in it, and all animals drink there, and we also wash our clothes there.'

The history of poverty and deprivation in these communities is also tied up with long histories of authoritarian and patriarchal rule. The advent of democracy has opened up the possibility of a better life for all through rural development. In the short term, formal democracy has not resulted in development in these areas, whose histories have been to serve as labour reservoirs for the mines and factories of the urban centres. What are the implications of this situation? Does development require the exercise of a different kind of democracy? Does the continued existence of a national democratic state depend on the development of these areas? What indeed do democracy and development mean in these areas, and what contribution can education and schooling make to both?



The road to school



The road to school

An 11-year-old can have her work cut out for her. One such Grade 6 learner from Nyembe writes that every morning she puts away her blankets, takes the chickens from the fowl run and the cows from the kraal.



She cleans the yard, tethers the cows and returns home to wash and prepare breakfast for her granny, her mother and father, and her brother and sister. After breakfast, she does the dishes and irons her clothes. Then, after all this, she heads for school. On returning home from school, her day is far from over. Her household duties in the evening include washing the dishes, collecting firewood, sweeping the yard and taking the cows to the river to drink. She eats and plays while herding the cows. After she has taken the cows for grazing, she brings them home. The family depends on her.

The start to her school day is not unlike that of a young boy from Manyoni in KwaZulu-Natal. His essay describes the work he does before and after school and the consequences he faces as a result of being late for school:

On Tuesday I woke up and went straight to the dipping tank. There were many people there. I waited in the queue and I was very cold because I do not have wellington boots so I walked barefoot. (*Ngalinda emgqeni futhi ngangizwa amakhaza ngoba anginazo lezicathulo ezibizwa ngama wellington ngakhoke ngangihamba ngezinyawo.*) I took the cows to the field on the hill. And then I came back home. I washed, got dressed and ate. I was late for school so my teacher spanked me. We wrote Zulu and English and went to break. When school let us out I went home, ate and then went to the field for the cows. I came and had supper. Then I went to bed. I slept very well.

Punishment for late-coming is not uncommon so many children simply stay away from school on those days when their chores make them very late.

In this chapter, we take a journey with the children from the moment they wake up to the end of the school day. We see

how this journey between home and school results in interrupted schooling, absenteeism and dropping out. On their journey, children face many obstacles that prevent their full participation and concentrated attention in school. These obstacles include both indirect and direct costs to the family.

Indirect costs include those incurred by way of domestic and agricultural chores. The distance from school, hunger, school fees and uniforms, ill health and HIV/AIDS, disability and teenage pregnancy all involve direct costs for families. In addition, the emotional costs of humiliation, bullying and sexual harassment in school cannot be ignored. Far from being safe havens, schools can be places of intolerance and violation of rights. Together, these costs make schools hard to access. Being hard to access, they also do not meet the vital and social needs that enable children to live their lives to the full.

Parents and learners face a real dilemma in so far as domestic and agricultural duties are concerned. One out-of-school learner expressed it sharply: 'You can't leave cattle at home and go to school ... you cannot desert your father's bank like that.' Deserting 'your father's bank like that' means there is no money to put food on the table, for school fees and uniforms. In some situations, said one teacher, 'children are exempted from farming activities [by their parents]. They have all the time they need for their school activities, except that parents do not have money and they cannot afford to make everything available for their children.'

The issue is a vexing one for teachers, who are often particularly anxious about

children doing dipping duty (taking cattle to the cattle dip) on test days:

If there is a dip, children go to the dip and do not attend school. Parents do not chase up the children even when they are back from the dip. If you are forced to go to the dip, you have to wake up early, because you know thereafter you will have to wash and go to school.

The problem is severe in winter. In only one school, Lady Frere, did the principal take the initiative to adjust the starting times of the school. Here the sun rises late because it has to come over the mountains. In winter, school-starting time is 08.20 to 08.30; this is a great help to the families and the children.

Another tricky period is the start of the school year. Many parents live in cities, and children often spend their holidays there, returning to school once the school year has already begun. In this context, the rhythms and routines of rural family life,

Qandashe, Eastern Cape



KRAAL AND CATTLE

Strength: 'Livestock is the source of our living in the rural areas. We sell it so that we can send our children to school.'

too, do not correspond to the rhythms and routines of school life. This is often to the detriment of the children. Family responsibilities frequently have to take precedence over schooling. Explaining the impact, one frustrated community member said:

I would like to respond to the issue of the large number of absentees. Really it was so big a number that it shocked me. Parents have a tendency not to send children to school when the schools have just re-opened, especially in the first week. You will see them in the second week. Sometimes you are told that children are still on holiday in Thekwini but later she or he comes back to school. Then it is also the day for the dipping of

goats and sheep and the schools have just re-opened. Our parents bring children at the beginning of the year but you will see them taking their children away again. The children don't know what is going on, especially in Grade 1 and 2.

How to reconcile the different expectations of the home and school creates a tension for learners within families and between schools and communities. One of the commonest reasons for children not attending school, or why their schooling is disrupted, is that their families need them to work. Every child has extensive domestic duties. Boys' work is mainly agricultural, in the fields and with animals. Girls' work is mainly around the house (see, for example, Gordon *et al.* 2002). Yet, depending on family circumstances, girls can also be expected to do boys' work and boys to do girls' work.

Household chores create tensions between school schedules, family responsibilities, social roles and the desire for education. Schools require learners to be there on time, ready for school, and that is what most parents and learners also want. However, agricultural and domestic chores are necessary for survival and are part of the daily routine of rural life – something that parents have done in their time, and expect of their own children.

Not only do parents need their children's labour, they also believe that household chores are part of learning about and preparing for life, complementing formal education. This is not a simple question of cost alone, but is embedded in social mores and values.

Manyoni, KwaZulu-Natal



THE DIPPING TANK (DIP)

Strength: 'The "dip" falls under the useful things in this community. It was built in 1981 when a number of cattle died of *amakhizane*.

The cattle are dipped at least once every month to prevent such deaths. We are sceptical of outsiders touching our livestock. One time a white man came from the government to inject our cows against ticks, but all those cows died prematurely. Now we do not allow anybody to go near our cattle.'

The road to school

The walk to school is the bridge between home and 'formal' education. In the mornings, children wend their way to school across hills and through valleys, fields and dongas, rivers and streams, over potholed or muddy rural roads, past bushes and forests. Almost all children walk to school. Some children have to travel long distances, in many instances having to cross rivers in flood. In Nyembe, when the river is in flood the bridge is impassable and neither children nor principal and teachers who live outside the village in town come to school.

In many cases, it is both an expensive and threatening experience to go to school. This is especially so for girls:

I walk a long distance from here to Nongeke. I have to buy shoes approximately three times a year. Our journeys to school are actually not right. We have to pass scary bushes. (*Sidlula amahlathi oyikekayo.*) When we get to school we are no longer tidy as we were when we left home. (*Sifika esikolweni singasacekanga njengangoko besisuka emakhaya.*) It's worse when it's raining.

The long distances to school increase the chance of road accidents and the threat from criminals, who in some areas have been known to rob or rape learners going to school. Other studies of children's descriptions of their journey to and from school repeatedly tell stories of older boys and adults who are regularly to be found at certain locations and of whom younger passing children are afraid. (Brookes and Higson-Smith, 2004: 118). School can be a relatively safe space, but toilets are often dangerous places. Children can be threatened during breaktimes and when teachers send them on errands during class time.



Compounding the distance is the cost of transport. This is what a high school learner from Mngqagayi, in KwaZulu-Natal, had to say when asked about the problems that he experiences with school (the problem affects primary school learners as well):

As you can see, I start the day by going out to sell wood so that I can get money with which to buy a bus coupon. This is because there is no high school nearby; they are all far away ...

I sell my own wood to buy the coupon and the candle, which I use to study. My mother sells her own wood to buy food for the family ... And the issue of distance is very serious. I have to wake up at 04:00 and only get back home at 16:00. I am normally dead tired and very hungry on my return and there is no time to study.

Learners and parents are concerned about the long distances that children must walk to school. They need schools to be closer, and are especially concerned about the lack of secondary schools and the distance between them and their homes. Young people perceive the distance from school as one of the reasons some children drop out of school. Poor roads also make other services such as nurses, clinics, police and taxis difficult to access.

Early childhood education

The benefits of early childhood education to further learning have been demonstrated across a large number of countries and contexts. Preschools tend to be more informal, flexible and focused on play than primary schools, which by contrast can be more formal, rigid, teacher-centred and subject-based (UNESCO 2003: 182, 183). Early childhood development centres can provide a safe environment for children, especially girls.

Early childhood education in South Africa occurs in a variety of sites. Recently, there has been a move to locate early childhood learning in a reception year in primary schools. We had a low response rate for ECD centres in our survey. Most learners will probably start school in Grade 1. There are very few crèches and not all schools have a reception year. Where ECD centres have been established, they also have to contend with family poverty and rely, for the most part, on the selfless commitment and dedication of women in the community.

Mrs K retired from teaching at the end of 1998 and started an ECD centre in Engwebini in the Nqutu district. Here is her story:



After I retired from teaching, I stayed for a year thinking of children. I thought about how they are a problem when they start Grade 1, being 6 years old. I thought I could help to give them a mind, a thought, before they go to classes. I talked to the community and they agreed. I had heard about crèches on the radio and the need for them. I liked that and I started. We started to do this in 2001. We had 38 children from this community. We talked about how they eat. We collected R5 a month from parents and made soup and bread, and they were attracted. They liked this soup. We stopped this R5 because the community is so poor. They have their own food now. I was the teacher for one year. Then this lady came and asked to help us. She gets nothing as a payment. She said she would help. She is still helping. Luckily she attended the course given by TREE [Training and Resources in Early Education]. There, at Nqutu, she is trained as a teacher. They learn to pay attention to the children. They gave us a kit, some toys. The toys are kept in a house next door where it is safe.

Our study shows that the poverty enveloping preschool children in rural areas painfully limits their learning opportunities, frustrating even the best intentions.

In school

National statistics often mask disparities between rural and urban areas and between the genders. This is evident in our study. Children typically enter schools that range in size. Total enrolment in schools in our study averaged from 487 in Limpopo to 471 in KwaZulu-Natal and 334 in the Eastern Cape. These figures are higher than the national averages recorded in the Department of Education's School Register of Needs (DoE 2003b: 10). The most recent statistics available are for 2001. In 2001, the national average school enrolment

figure at ordinary schools was 427. In four provinces, Gauteng, KwaZulu-Natal, Mpumalanga and the Western Cape, the figure was higher than the national average at 706, 469, 469 and 573 respectively.

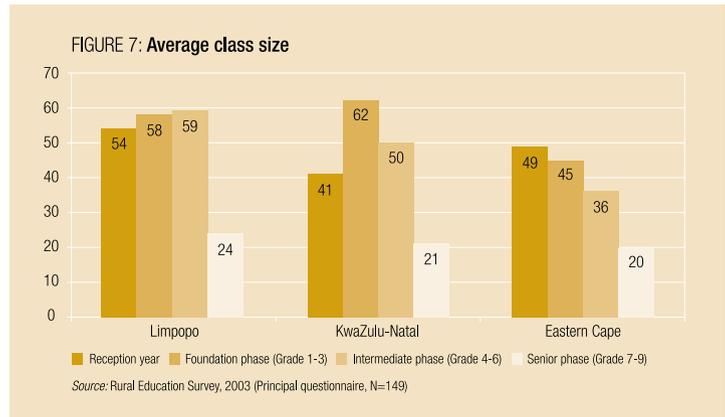
Learner:teacher ratios

The average learner:teacher ratios in our study were 39:1 in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape and 41:1 in KwaZulu-Natal. The national average learner:teacher ratio at schools in South Africa was 33:1 (DoE 2003b). The national average for public schools was 33:9 and for independent schools, 16:5. This is a clear indication that teachers in our study taught larger classes than are the norm in other parts of the country. This has consequences for the quality of teaching and personal interactions between teachers and learners.

Class size

Average class sizes in the three provinces are relatively large, and many children struggle to find a place in them. Class sizes vary quite dramatically from province to province, but they also vary from phase to phase. Figure 7 shows that average class sizes in the reception year – where they exist – are larger in Limpopo and the Eastern Cape than in KwaZulu-Natal. Class sizes were much smaller in the Eastern Cape in the Foundation Phase than in KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. In the Intermediate Phase, Limpopo had larger class sizes than KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. It was only in the Senior Phase that there was equity across provinces,

with average class size ranging around 20. Class size reduces dramatically from the Foundation to the Senior Phases. Classes in the Foundation Phase accommodate on average more than 50 learners, in contrast with classes in the Senior Phase that accommodate between 20 and 24 learners. This seems to suggest a high attrition and drop-out rate across all three provinces.



School fees and uniforms

FIGURE 8: School fees per year as reported by principals

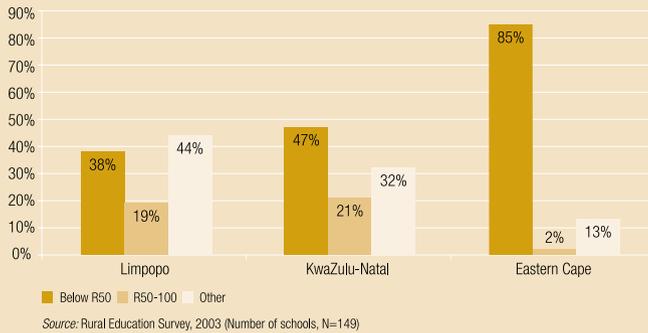
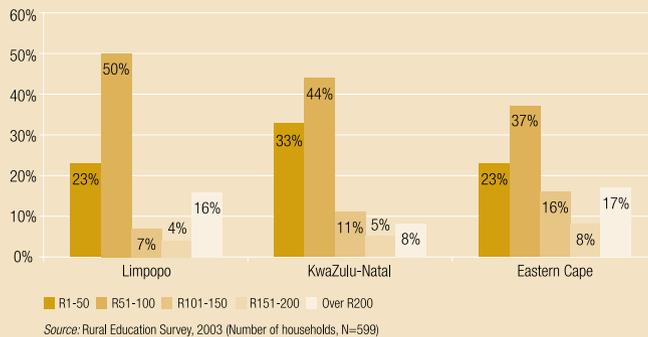


FIGURE 9: School fees per year as reported by caregivers



The cost of school fees and uniforms is a major concern for parents and learners. They prevent children in poor households from going to school and create tensions between poor families and schools. Most schools (98%) charge fees, but the information on how much they charge varies. Figure 8 shows that about 85% of principals in the Eastern Cape reported fees of below R50 per annum, compared with 47% in KwaZulu-Natal and 38% in Limpopo. Less than 5% of principals in the Eastern Cape said they charged between R50 and R100, but around 20% said they did in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. 44% in Limpopo, 32% in KwaZulu-Natal and 13% in the Eastern Cape reported charging a category defined as ‘Other’.

Parents differ. Of those surveyed, 50% in Limpopo, 44% in KwaZulu-Natal and 37% in the Eastern Cape said they paid between R50 and R100 per year. These constituted the majority in each case. Only 11% in Limpopo, 10% in KwaZulu-Natal and 8% in the Eastern Cape said they knew about the exemption policy. See Figure 9.

Research in communities reinforced the finding that schools charge fees that parents



cannot afford given the level of their monthly incomes. The cases below illustrate the hardships imposed on families by school fees:

- Thembi did not go to school for a month because she could not pay school fees. Her mother slaughtered and sold a pig to make the money to send her to school and sells maize grown for domestic consumption to buy shoes. She also cut up one of her own old skirts to make two new ones for her daughter to wear to school.
- Xola stayed away from school for a long period for the same reason. His unemployed father did odd jobs like cattle-herding, digging toilets for neighbours, and so on to make the money to pay for school fees. Xola's school clothes were second-hand. When his father died, he was orphaned and left school, both on account of not having the money for school fees and on account of the humiliation of poverty.
- Ntsuku is one of three children living with their grandmother who is in receipt of an old age pension. School fees are R100 a year for each learner. Once the school fees are subtracted for each child in the family, R200 is left for

food for the whole family as well as other school expenses such as uniforms. There is simply not enough left for food or medicines when they are needed.

School fees and uniforms are a major cost for the families of significant numbers of learners. More than this, they inflict pain and humiliation on those unable to pay. Some children explained how fees are the focal point of tensions that are brought to bear on them. Children explained to researchers that they are criticised at school for not paying their fees, take this criticism home, and are then confronted by parents unable to pay who feel attacked and disrespected. School fees can make children of very poor families feel welcome neither at school nor at home.

In rural and poverty-stricken contexts, there is the pain of being marked by poverty. One out-of-school learner made associations between poverty, 'being troublesome' and not belonging. Most children are anxious to fit in but their poverty can make them feel like misfits:

My problem was uniform. When the school uniform was changed to a gold shirt, my shirt was not gold and also my jersey was not the red one. I was still wearing the old jersey which was a home-made jersey made by my mother. That disturbed me because I looked like a troublesome kid; my jersey was more



of a casual wear. And the thing that disturbed me most was that I was wearing short khaki pants although other children were wearing grey trousers. I felt like I didn't belong in the same class with them.

While legislation provides for exemption from fees for parents who are unable to pay, many parents seem unaware of the procedures, or even of the very possibility. Whereas 57% of schools in our study say they have an exemption policy, fewer than 12% of caregivers say that they know about it.

In the sites where more in-depth research was conducted, not one parent appeared to have applied for exemption. When asked why they had not applied, many were simply ignorant of the possibility – ‘people

don't tell us these things’ – or were vaguely aware but did not know how to set out about applying. Information, it would appear, has not been passed on to parents. There may be good reason for this. From the point of view of principals, fees are necessary to pay for the most basic of facilities.

More significant, perhaps, is the irrelevance of the exemption policy in these areas of deep poverty. In order to qualify for exemption, parents have to provide evidence of income; but in circumstances where income is negligible, barely able to meet basic needs, such a request is often hard to fulfil.

Schools and teachers impose punitive measures on children who do not pay



school fees. These measures often have a discriminatory effect. Failure to pay school fees means that a child can be sent home, kept outside the class, not be given books and stationery, be excluded from writing examinations and using school facilities, have his or her report card withheld and be made to repeat the class. One youth researcher explained how it works in some cases:

In terms of school fees we were told to go home and ask for money from parents. The rule was that if you don't have the money, you can go home and come back when you have the money. The parents at home would simply say 'go and plough the land' when it's summer and get the money, or in winter they will say, 'go and get wood from the forest then you will get the money'.

Parents and community members are resentful of these practices. Although they can understand the need for school fees, and are divided over whether schools should charge fees or not, they also feel, as one community member in Bizana expressed it, that school fees could be lowered 'because we struggle to feed our families, as there are no jobs'.

Hunger and school meals

The lucky few have breakfast before going to school. Many children go without anything the whole day long. Figure 10 shows that, overall, 14% of children surveyed had tea or nothing, while 75% had tea and/or bread and/or porridge. These figures varied across the provinces, with Limpopo having the highest proportion of households (22%) where learners go to school with nothing, or only tea, for breakfast.

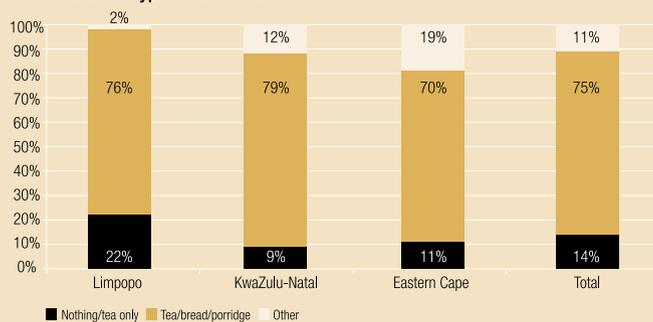
Tshamavhudzi, Limpopo



KITCHEN IN THE SCHOOL

Challenge: 'There is dust inside the kitchen which makes both parents doing the cooking for feeding schemes and children vulnerable to disease.'

FIGURE 10: Types of breakfast



Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of households, N=599)

A typical day for one Grade 6 learner from Roodtse in Sekhukhune is consumed by worries about food:

I start the day by thanking God for protecting me during the night. Then I take out the potty and open the windows for fresh air. I make my bed and begin to sweep the house before I get ready for school. Then I bathe, put on my ragged clothes and go to school. But I don't understand the lessons at school because we eat nothing at home, we don't have proper uniforms and we don't get a good night's sleep.

What bothers me most are the unpaid school fees, because teachers always ask pupils who haven't paid fees to stand up and you will find that most are those with single parents – and we are poor. After school I go to the bush to find firewood and get water, but I can't manage to finish all my domestic work because our mother goes out looking for a job. We are very sad and disappointed when she comes home with nothing. Most of the time we eat nothing during the day. I just make a fire to get warm because my mother spends a lot of time away from us looking for a job. When she arrives home she shares whatever she has got to eat for that day with us. We then thank God for taking care of us all day and for the little food that we had. I

take the few blankets that we have and we go to sleep around the fire to keep warm. We pray to God to give our parents jobs so that they can pay school fees, so that we can then have a better future and be the leaders of tomorrow.

Despite hunger and cold, children still go to school. Some teachers can be acutely conscious of the homes from which children come, as the one below indicated, when she spoke of the impact of hunger and cold on attentiveness in class:

They come without food and then eat here at school ... Sometimes they come inadequately dressed, without a jersey or shoes and it's cold and it's a learner who does not have a home. When a child is shivering, he doesn't learn well. That's the reason he has a difficulty. He won't listen to you or concentrate on what you do because of the hunger and cold that he's feeling.

One teacher confessed she sometimes had difficulties realising that children who seemed out of sorts were simply hungry:

Those who are at the lower level, they come with an empty stomach. You will find that this child [is] getting drowsy.



When you follow up, you will find that he or she is hungry ... You may think a child is sleeping around with boys if this child was a girl or you may think he was doing silly things if he was a boy. We found in most cases that the child did not have something to eat before he or she goes to school. The only reason is the unemployment.

The results are visible starvation in classrooms, skin diseases and illnesses that result in bleeding:

You then have a problem of a child that is dull. You can tell if he or she is hungry if you look at him or her or they will tell you they have a stomach-ache. And if you ask why they have a stomach-ache, they will tell you that they didn't eat and that they are hungry. Some will tell you that they slept without dinner and they drink water and go to sleep so that they are full, but they are full of water. You will find this stomach-ache is not a sickness, but is a problem back at home ... A problem in class is that you'll find children are sick with rashes and I think that this also relates to starvation. You want the child to write and they bleed in some parts, such that it is difficult to touch a pen.

Teachers find themselves having to be in constant readiness for occasions when

'some children collapse in the classroom because of hunger'.

School meals in this context are a major incentive to come to school. An evaluation of the Primary School Nutrition Programme in 1997 showed that 'brown bread and peanut butter were rated as the most popular food items by the children' surveyed in four provinces, and that more than 70% surveyed also indicated that they felt less hungry and were able to concentrate better at school after eating a school meal (Child Health Unit 1997: 43).

Of principals surveyed for this rural education study, 99% said school meals must continue. The principals surveyed cite poverty as the main reason for their opinion, and report that school meals promote regular attendance, learners are more attentive and consequently academic performance improves. Schools in poor areas cannot avoid playing a role in children's nutrition if education is to be effective in these circumstances.

In some cases, however, school meals are poorly managed and irregular. The



person in charge of school meals at Fuyatha Primary School said that:

I encounter many things, like in class you find that a child is unable to concentrate well because he has not eaten. Like now, they haven't given us money for the feeding scheme so the children won't be able to pay attention during lessons ... No it is not operating. If they grant us money they take a very long time without giving us more money. We go for months, even a year, without these children being fed. It is not a consistent feeding scheme. Even when they give us money it is so little – like they last gave us a R12 000 cheque. It is so little, we are unable to cover everything. We still owe Giyani bakery.

Feeding schemes also suffer from other problems at the school level. When the school has no cooking facilities, food is placed in storage and sometimes is even used by teachers. Parents usually cook, but if relationships between parents and teachers at a particular school are poor, they do not, and so the children suffer. An evaluation of South Africa's Primary School Nutrition

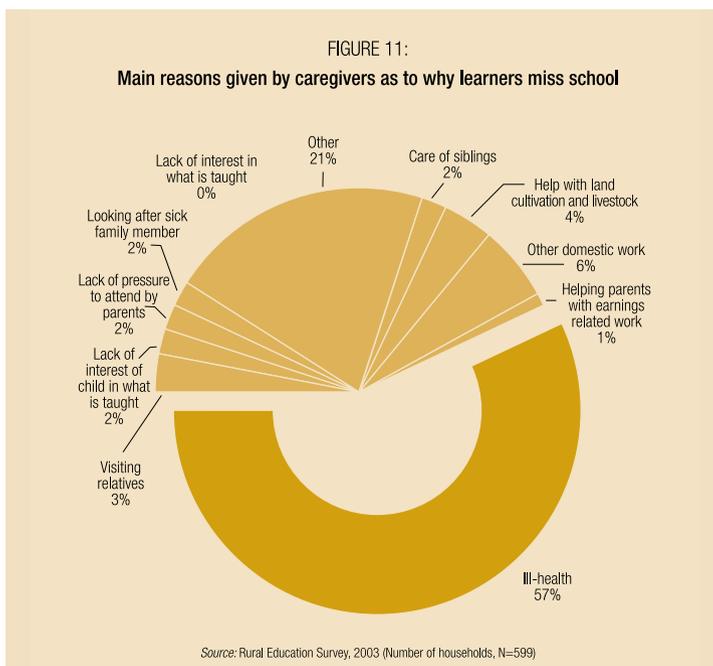
Programme in 1997 drew attention to the fact that the poor infrastructure of schools prevents the development of innovative initiatives and increases the burden on teachers: 'the lack of water, electricity, telephones, kitchens and storage facilities are serious impediments to the full implementation of the Primary School Nutrition Programme' (Child Health Unit 1997: 23).

If school meals are a major reason for coming to school, what are the main reasons for not coming to school? We asked this question of both guardians and educators. Their responses varied. About 57% of those parents and guardians who gave reasons cited ill-health as the main reason for children missing school. This was followed by a variety of family-related reasons.

By contrast, teachers did not consider ill-health as the main reason. Highest on their list of reasons for child absenteeism and drop out is lack of parental interest in education. Boys are considered to be absent largely because of this lack of parental interest and because they have to help parents with cultivation and livestock.

Reasons given for girls' absenteeism are in a similar order: lack of parental interest, helping parents with domestic work, lack of learner interest and teenage pregnancy.

There is a high correlation between the lack of parental interest and the need for children to help with domestic chores – in fact, these two reasons may be linked in the minds of those educators responding to the survey. Teachers think that parents are not interested in education because they keep their children out of school to do domestic and agricultural chores. When you remove the 'ill-health' reason given by parents and 'lack of parental interest' given



by educators, the reasons for absenteeism are remarkably similar. See Figure 11.

III-health and HIV/AIDS

Although caregivers cite ill health as the major reason for children missing school, there is a major silence amongst the rural poor about the impact of ill health. Only sometimes is it spoken about, as in this instance:

Yes, I started in 1996, at Bongweni. I did Sub A and B, then I moved to Middledrift, where I attended Std 1 and 2, then I attended Lamani Primary to do Std 3. I came back to Peddie to do Std 4 and 5. Then I started Std 6 in 2003, but I had to drop out, because I stayed alone. I also have a problem with eyesight and I did not have everything I needed to continue attending, because my parents are gone; they do not even phone. They come back home once in a long while. I still want to attend school, even if it is next year.

More often, it appears in song. At the Bizana imbizo, for example, researchers reported that a *scathamiya* song was sung about HIV/AIDS.

HIV prevalence amongst children aged 2 to 18 years is in the region of 5.6%, according to a Human Sciences Research Council study funded by the Nelson Mandela Foundation. The prevalence is highest in the 0- to 9-year-old group of children. School-age children form a relatively small proportion of the population infected with HIV. For those who are infected, there are a number of direct effects. One of these is increased nutritional needs. Due to a weakened immune system, other infections start to occur, which raises the need for nutrients.

We probed whether children are being kept out of school for reasons related to HIV/AIDS, but the majority of teachers said they did not know which learners had

TABLE 3: Reasons for absenteeism and drop-out as reported by teachers

	Limpopo (%)		KwaZulu-Natal (%)		Eastern Cape (%)		Total (%)	
	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	M
Care of siblings	23	6	27	9	17	6	22	7
Helping parents with domestic work	31	15	52	24	41	24	41	21
Helping parents with cultivation and livestock	15	26	29	53	19	62	21	46
Helping parents with other wage-earning activities	12	14	16	21	14	20	14	18
Wage labour	4	12	5	7	4	9	4	9
Lack of parental interest in education	60	57	52	52	41	36	51	48
Lack of learner interest in education	33	54	38	44	19	28	30	42
Schooling is too expensive	8	8	6	6	9	10	7	8
Looking after sick family members	8	7	31	19	11	9	16	12
Pregnancy	32		21		34		29	

Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Limpopo, N=192; KwaZulu-Natal, N=183; Eastern Cape, N=185)

FIGURE 12: Teachers aware of learners who have lost family members due to HIV/AIDS

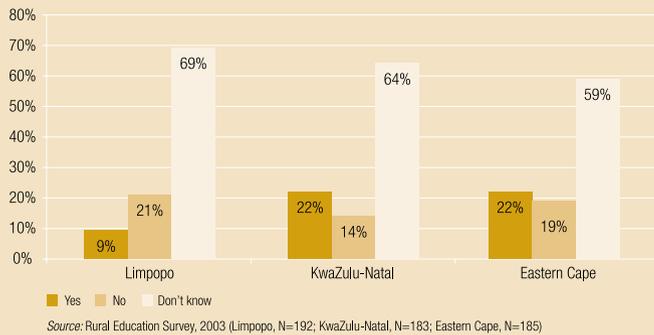
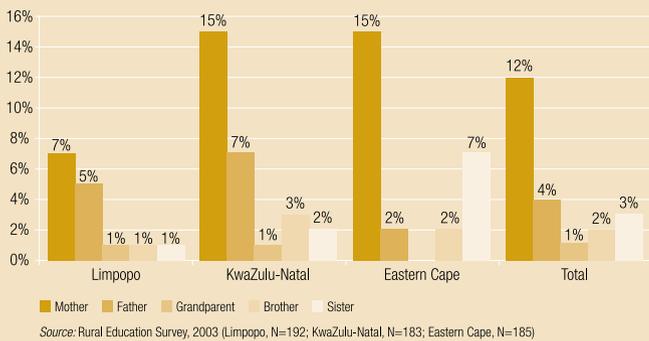


FIGURE 13: Learners' relatives known by teachers to have been lost due to HIV/AIDS



lost family members due to HIV/AIDS. This may be because they do not know or because of taboos that surround sexuality and especially HIV/AIDS. Such taboos prevent open discussion of sexuality and reproduction, which might ensure that boys and girls are guided into a safe and healthy adulthood. See Figure 12.

Figure 13 shows that when teachers said they knew which family member had died, it was more frequently the mother who was mentioned. This is consistent with the knowledge that the majority of caregivers are women. However, the information should be treated with caution, given the stigma that is associated with the disease and the taboos that surround talking about it.

Measuring the impact of HIV/AIDS is not a simple matter. Researcher, Peter Badcock-Walters tells us about it:

Quantifying the impact of HIV/AIDS on education – rural or otherwise – remains a frustratingly inexact science. Nowhere are there certificates attributing death and orphaning to AIDS, or doctors' notes conveniently linking extended sick leave to HIV; nor indeed is there any incontrovertible connection between the direct and indirect impact of the pandemic and fluctuating education quality and outcomes. We are all certain of its profound impact and can cite evidence of growing orphaning and educator mortality rates, declining enrolment and drop-out, but find it more difficult to present clear and unambiguous data confirming that these problems are rooted specifically in HIV/AIDS.

The problem is that the primary impact of HIV/AIDS on education is to make *existing* problems in the system worse: HIV/AIDS is not a stand-alone problem; it is subtle, insidious and erodes long-standing cracks in the education system, increasing educator attrition, depressing enrolment and distorting flow rates and outcomes. Its effects combine to make system behaviour unpredictable and projections confusing and even contradictory. Moreover, teaching and learning take place in a socio-economic context that itself may distort function and delivery, even without any observed HIV/AIDS impact – particularly in rural areas. Where does this leave us, given the clear imperative to deliver improved education to all the nation's children? How can we measure and quantify the impact of HIV/AIDS and better determine where routine dysfunction stops and the erosion of the pandemic starts?

One approach has been to recognise that we presently lack management information systems capable of measuring and monitoring the dynamic behaviour of systems as large and complex as education, in the AIDS era. We rely on annual snapshots of the system, its enrolment and provisioning, but have no idea how it behaves from month to month

– or what such time series and trends might indicate. This is less a criticism of the current system than a note that we cannot continue to base our planning and expenditure on historical data that has little relevance to the day-to-day situation at the school and district level.

Despite the silences, HIV/AIDS is a consistent presence in the lives and thoughts of communities.

Disability

Children with disabilities are a large group whose needs generally go unnoticed. Widespread biases and exclusionary practices affect the educational possibilities of boys and girls who have disabilities. A Grade 6 learner in Siyandhani, Limpopo, lives with her mother and grandmother. She says: 'At school other learners laugh at me saying I have a crippled leg. When boys play soccer at school they hit me with the ball while I'm standing at the wall and they don't apologise for that.'

Where and how do children who cannot walk to school, or are confined to wheelchairs, go to school? What happens to the sight-impaired children, and those with hearing defects, or those who have learning difficulties? Government policy is that schools should become as inclusive as possible and should mainstream learners with special needs. In rural schools, it seems that learners with disabilities either do not go to school because of the difficulties in doing so, are hidden by families, or are mainstreamed by default without any recognition of the attention they may need.

UNESCO (2003: 132) argues that there is a circular relationship between poverty and disability that accentuates gender bias.



Poor nutrition can worsen poor eyesight. Child labour and maltreatment can lead to mental illness and physical and psychological disabilities. Girls are more likely to be deprived of basic necessities. Disability can also impose additional costs on families: there are medical expenses, and the withdrawal of child labour from the family on account of their disability can constitute another cost. Amongst the schools we surveyed, a third had learners with special needs. Most of them were integrated into the mainstream. Only 29% of school principals surveyed felt that learners with special needs were coping in school.

Teenage pregnancy

Teenage pregnancy, absenteeism, poverty and unemployment are causally inter-locked. Being a mother provides a sense of importance and purpose that many young people lack when they live in deprived conditions. Sometimes having a child is a positive and rational decision from the viewpoint of certain teenagers, especially if they feel that education has little to offer.

However, young single parenthood also holds both immediate and longer-term disadvantages for young women. Teenage pregnancy contributes to drop-out in a number of important ways. Many girls who fall pregnant hope to return to school, and school policy permits this, but they may find it hard to go back to school after having a child because there is no one at home to care for that child. Even if they do, they are unable to concentrate on their studies as they spend most of their time thinking about the problems that they face.

The source of income in many of the families in the researched communities is social grants. Some girls mentioned the importance of the child support grant as a source of relief from poverty and to supplement family income, but the money also creates tension within families. Said one teenage mother from Siyandhani:

My parents are both not working and they don't have money for school fees. Don't forget that we are four. [The baby] only made [my problems] worse, but it helped me a bit ... I am now earning the children's grant. What I don't like is that when I get the money, my mother pretends to be my friend and takes my money. That's the reason why I say having a baby only made it worse.

A youth researcher, Nyiko, interviewed a young girl, R, about her teenage pregnancy, and found that the benefits of receiving a social grant were offset by the additional hardships that a baby imposes on a young woman:

N: Can I ask you some few questions?

R: Sure.

N: Why did you leave school?

R: I got pregnant.

N: Did you plan for the baby?

R: No, it was an accident, but I also wanted the child support grant to buy food and clothes.

N: Whose clothes?

R: My baby's and mine.

N: Are you telling me that you got pregnant because of poverty?

R: Yes, no one at my place works, so someone had to do something to earn a living.

N: Do you enjoy life with your baby?

R: No, not at all.

N: What have you experienced?

R: It is hard living with an unplanned child, especially when you're so young like me. I thought I was going to enjoy it, but it just got worse. Now I see that education is very important and very helpful.

Humiliation, bullying, sexual abuse and violence

Sometimes girls choose to fall pregnant. Sometimes they do not. Schools are not happy or safe havens for many learners. They suffer maltreatment, abuse and discrimination at the hands of both peers and teachers. There is widespread evidence of sexual harassment and frequent beatings by teachers and bullying, as in this case:

In my opinion, bullying at school leads to drop-out caused by lack of food. So those bullies are bullying other children for food, because they have no food to eat at school ... I didn't concentrate in class.

I was scared of bullies. They wanted me to tell them the answers when the teachers asked questions, and if I tell them that I don't know, they will threaten to beat me. At breaktime they demand money from my breaktime-money, and when I refuse to give them my money they beat me.

Many learners drop out of school because of poor educational experiences and discouragement from their teachers. This learner had internalised a low sense of self-esteem:

This I will never forget ... I remember my former Tsonga teacher saying how bad I am. She also said that I would never succeed because all of my relatives whom she knew never succeeded, and she told me that education and poverty don't go hand in hand, so as I was poor and heard every word she said. I thought about it and realised she was right.

Violence within schools and violence against girls is a serious problem. Going to and from schools, girls are at risk of harassment, beating and rape. Inside

schools, relationships between male teachers and female learners can find expression in everything from the 'sugar daddy' phenomenon to girls being demeaned and treated as less than equal in classrooms. The inaccessibility of the criminal justice system in rural areas compounds the difficulties that girls and families face in reporting such abuse and in obtaining justice (Children First 2003).

Both the Department of Education and teacher unions have placed these issues high on their agendas, and have embarked on awareness campaigns. Pinning responsibility on teachers for actions that may be seen as normal by both themselves and children, simply by virtue of habit and continual abuse, is a hard task. The Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) also provides opportunities for teaching how to recognise and act on harassment and abuse.



Traditional ceremonies

Traditional ceremonies can include anything from initiation rites to weddings and funerals. They are important in the lives of rural people but the evidence from research conducted for this book suggests that they do not seem to be as important as poverty and the related reasons mentioned above for high levels of absenteeism and drop-out.

Our survey shows that participation in traditional ceremonies appears to be more common among male than female children, except in KwaZulu-Natal. In the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal, respectively, 52%, 48% and 13% of households said they send young girls to participate in traditional ceremonies. For boys, the corresponding figures are 89%, 53% and 7%. Only in Limpopo did respondents say that traditional ceremonies have an impact

on school attendance. In the Eastern Cape, for instance, the male initiation schools centred on circumcision are obligatory for young men, but they have been shortened over the years. In both the Eastern Cape and Limpopo, they are now nearly always held during school holidays in June and December. Even so, researchers from the Eastern Cape reported that boys leave school immediately after exams and often do not return exactly when they re-open. When they do, they return as *amakwala* (new men) and often demonstrate a need to prove their masculinity by demanding a certain form of respect from other learners and by asserting themselves sexually over girls.

More research is clearly needed on the changing role of traditional authorities, ceremonies and schooling as they relate to both boys and girls.

Tshamavhudzi, Limpopo



TRADITIONAL DANCE

Strength: 'Children learn about traditional dance in the community.'

Consequences of disrupted schooling patterns

Repetition and drop-out are amongst the most important consequences of irregular school-attendance. Our survey found evidence of both.

Repetition

Not surprisingly, there are high levels of repetition. Figure 14 shows the mean percentage of learners repeating Grade 7 at the time of visiting the schools: 16% in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal and 12% in the Eastern Cape. Repetition was slightly higher amongst boys in the classes surveyed in Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal than in the Eastern Cape, where more girls than boys were repeating.

Drop-out

There is also evidence of drop-out. Youth researchers were extremely concerned about young people who roam the streets during school hours. Many of the interviews focused on this as a problem. In a number of ways, communities paint a bleak picture of rural learners failed by the social system as a consequence of poverty, unemployment, lack of money to pay school fees and other

costs for further education.

Very few learners in rural areas are likely to proceed with education beyond secondary school. Even those with good Matric passes and higher education qualifications are unlikely to find employment if they remain in the villages. Each village has a large group of young people with a sense of having nowhere to go and nothing to do. Their presence preys on the minds of the youth still at school.

The *Education Statistics at a Glance* report for 2001 (DoE 2003b) suggests that out of every hundred learners in ordinary schools, just fewer than ten were enrolled in Grade 1 and just over four were enrolled in Grade 12. The report goes on to state that this could be an indication of the high drop-out rate between Grade 1 and Grade 12, with only 40% of learners continuing through the system all the way to Grade 12.

The research conducted for this report confirms these high drop-out rates in rural areas. We asked households about the numbers of children, boys and girls, between the ages of 6 and 18 who were out of school. Figure 15 shows that in Limpopo one out of six children in each household surveyed was out of school.

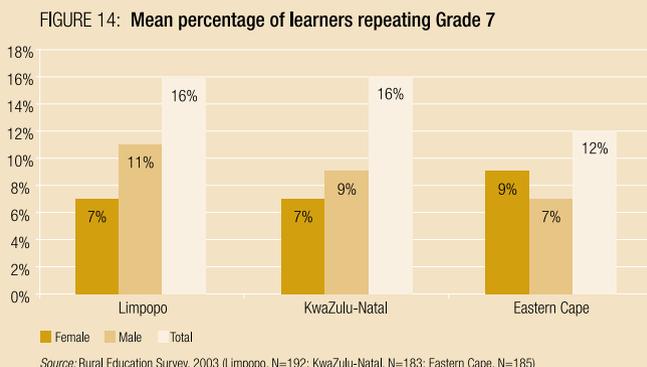
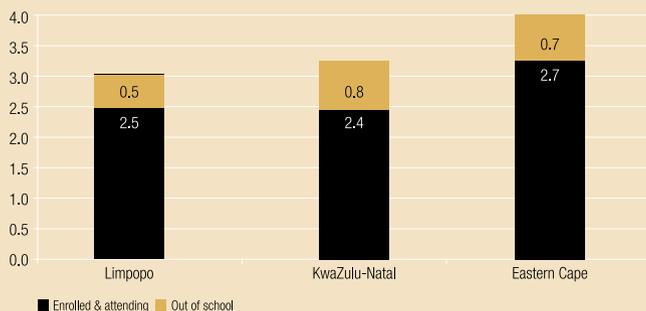


FIGURE 15: Mean number of enrolled and attending, and out-of-school children per household



Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of households, N =599)

This compared with one out of every four in KwaZulu-Natal and one out of every five in the Eastern Cape.

The majority of drop outs interviewed stay in the rural areas 'doing nothing' while others, according to a researcher, 'spend their time making mud bricks at home or in the community, assisting in the community by digging and delivering manure, doing washing and looking after livestock'. Some of these learners become involved in alcohol and drug abuse while at school. An example of a wasted life and talent is that of this young boy fresh from prison:

I was born poor. I attended school at Tshamavhudzi Primary School and I was very intelligent. I left school when I was in Standard 9 because my father worked in Johannesburg and he didn't come back and pay my school fees and buy my school uniform. My mother tried but because we were seven she failed. I started smoking and drinking alcohol at the age of 15.

However, the more I got involved with bad company, the more my life deteriorated. I tried to fill the hole within me by taking drugs. Because of my poverty, I failed to finish my education.

I got arrested for rape and sentenced to six years. In prison there was something accusing me all the time for things I had

done. With a deep feeling of guilt, I just wanted to commit suicide. I regretted the way I was living but it seemed too late anyway.

I simply couldn't see the way out when I got to a stage where days and nights mean nothing. I realised that if I were educated, I would be in a different situation. I know that the key to a better future is education. Through education your dreams can become reality. But because of poverty I failed.

Conclusions

This chapter examined the barriers to schooling and the impact of poverty on children's participation in schooling. It looked at the ways in which poverty and household decisions shape children's daily lives and how these patterns of daily life create patterns of participation that include late-coming, absenteeism, repetition and eventual drop-out and unemployment.

Patterns of daily life – which include household chores such as minding animals, collecting wood and water, collecting social grants, cooking and cleaning, and looking after siblings – are shaped by domestic economies. Domestic economies rely on children participating in activities that help to raise the funds necessary to pay school fees and put food on the table. Patterns of daily life are also shaped by rural geographies and lack of basic services such as good roads and transport systems. Children walk long distances to school.

The inability to pay school fees, to afford school uniforms and to cope with hunger means that the experience of schooling is associated with shame and humiliation. Children are often sent home if they cannot

pay fees. Principals may know about exemption policies, but the majority of parents do not. School feeding is important in ensuring attendance, but there is evidence of mismanagement and unreliability in the administration of the schemes. Ill-health, HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancy form part of the daily lives of learners. Although children participate in traditional ceremonies, the evidence for their role in disrupting schooling activities is variable.

Overall, the consequences of poverty for poor children's patterns of schooling are not gender-neutral and are exacerbated in the case of children with special needs. Children speak of the need to work as a reason for leaving school. Fees and teenage pregnancy also feature strongly in their accounts. When these costs are considered alongside the income of families, it is clear that measures to reduce the direct costs of schooling must be one of the most potent ways of improving children's participation in schooling, particularly for poorer households. It is also clear that there is a compelling need for educational opportunities to be made available for all those of school-going age, as well as those adults and youth who have dropped out of school.

Educational inequalities and disparities continue to exist for girls and boys in rural areas. The fact that not all children in rural areas participate fully in schools means that their *right to education* is being infringed. This right is guaranteed in the Constitution and in a variety of international conventions, including the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, one of the most widely accepted human rights treaties, guaranteeing the right of every child to education.

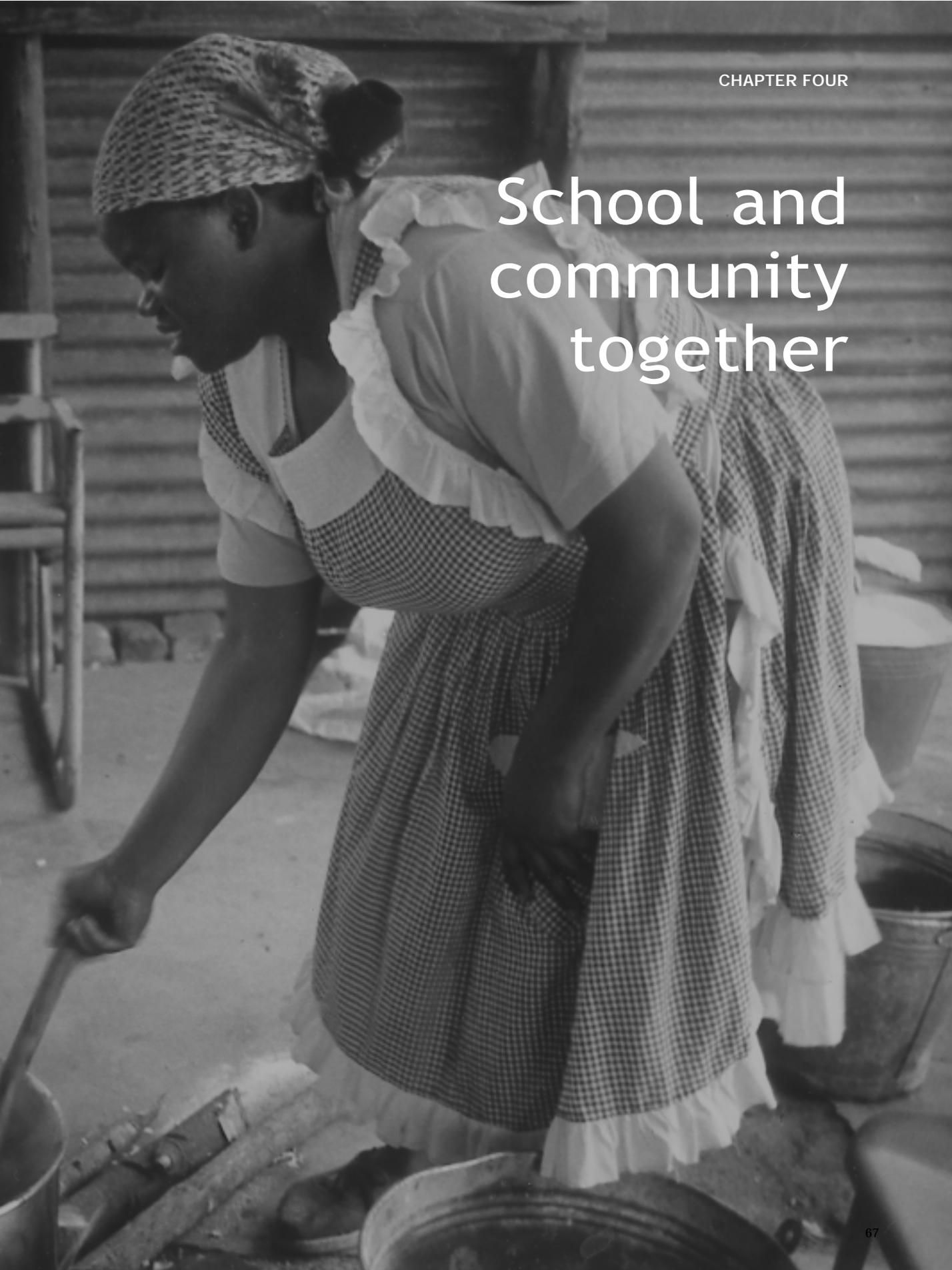
Children's rights within education, as will be shown in the succeeding chapters, are not realised, and this ultimately means that their rights *through education* – to equal participation in social and economic life – are also not being met.

More importantly, perhaps, children are trapped in a series of 'unfreedoms' created by poverty that fetter their capabilities to be the persons they would like to be. Life is not, and will not be, lived in freedom, dignity and self-respect – poverty denies this.

This means that development can be seen as a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy. These freedoms are not only freedoms from want and poverty, for example, but also the freedoms to enjoy sports, arts and culture in leisure time. Realising the conditions for the enjoyment of these freedoms is critical. The ability to read and write is important not only for work and/or marriage, but also as an end in itself. In this perspective, education is intrinsically valuable in and of itself. It is an end of development and not only an instrument for the achievement of developmental goals. As one community member said: 'Go to school, be educated and prosper – and also be a person.' Ensuring that the conditions exist to meet these needs is an equally important goal.



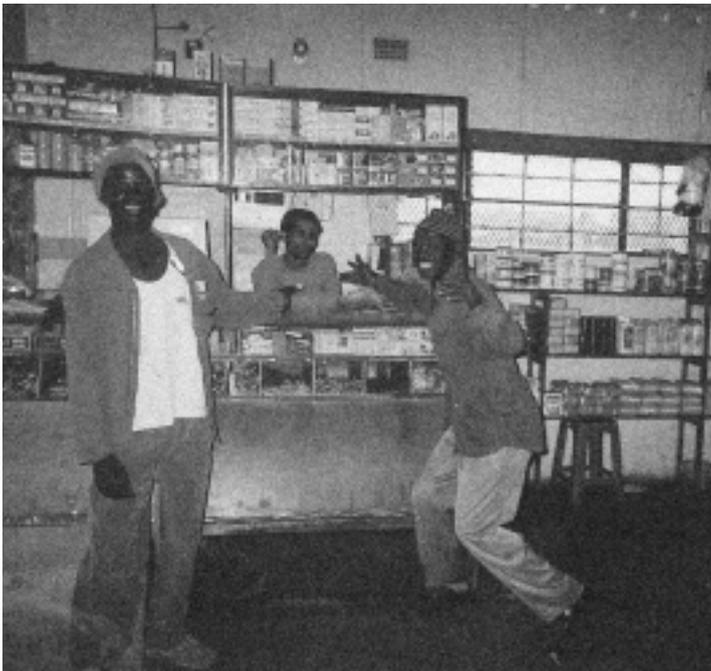
School and community together



School and community together

Outwardly, Mnqagayi is a busy, developing village. Like most rural villages, it has a crèche and a church that served as a school until the community built its own school.

Mnqagayi boasts a store or spaza shop, dipping tank for livestock, borehole, garden project and maize storage facility. Livestock, including cattle, goats and chickens, are a source of livelihood. Sources of pride include meeting places, the graveyard and dusty sports grounds and facilities, however rickety. Fences separating livestock from schools and cultivated land are valued for the protection they offer. When schools are not fenced, the livestock trample and dirty the grounds and school walls and break the windows.



Services

Here, as in other communities, villagers point to taps, dams, water pumps and electricity poles, windmills and reservoirs that were installed but are not working. In some cases dams have dried up or there are no pumps, as in Dike location. Dike has a dam and people have the right to use the water from the dam – the only problem is that it is too far away and there are no pumps to enable irrigation of the local fields. In some instances, such facilities were set in place by homeland governments; in others, as recently as 2002.

According to villagers in Mnqagayi, the local councillor started the dam project in 2002 with government funds but it 'has not been useful to the community' as 'it is not fenced, the water is not purified and the cows trample in it and pollute the water'. The water pump is dysfunctional and the taps have no water. When the councillor was told about the problem, 'he left for overseas without ever explaining to us what is going on'. So 'the people got angry and destroyed the taps because they are useless anyway'. The villagers suspect that the councillor used the money meant for the maintenance of the dam, pump and taps for himself. Fortunately, the government had built new toilets after the outbreak of cholera in the village and so 'children no longer go to the loo under trees (and) they can now use the toilet with proper seats without fear of falling in'.

COMMUNITY STORE

Strength: 'Mr B Shembe who is still running it built this store in 1930. It was the first store to be built in the village by someone who comes from the community. There had never been a store before, so this man came up with a good idea.

The shop is quite important to the community.

Besides selling goods to the community, it also acts as a checkpoint for pensioners who receive their monthly payments on its premises. In addition, the owner allows the Department of Home Affairs and Social Development to use it as an office for identity documents and birth certificate registration for the locals.

Sometimes even community meetings take place at the store because there is no hall. So the store is very useful and locals are extremely proud of it. It has made a huge contribution to a better lifestyle for the village.'



MNQAGAYI SCHOOL

Point of light: 'This school replaced the church building. It was built by the community. Initially it had four classes – from Grade 1 to Grade 4. After Grade 4 children had to commute to nearby Mbude. Some had to drop out as they could not afford commuting every day. Through the efforts of the community members,

the school has been extended up to Grade 7. The government has provided furniture.

'Education is important and so the school is a very important thing to us as a community.'



Conditions can vary from locality to locality. There are toilets and taps in Lady Frere but a poorly-working pump, which the community bought with its own funds, can only pump water to one village a time. So Dike receives water on one day and Mthonjeni on the next. Peddie, also in the Eastern Cape, has neither taps nor water, either in the school or the community. People drink water from dams with pigs (*sisela amanzi amdaka kunye neehagu*).

The pit toilets at the school are said to be dangerous and on several occasions people allege they have seen snakes in them. In situations such as these, children, the elderly and animals alike use the dongas, streams and forests to relieve themselves.

Dongas, rivers and forests have many uses and play an important part in the lives of communities. Rivers and streams are for washing and drawing water; they also serve as toilets and as impassable barriers if they have to be crossed on school days. It is not uncommon for children to drown when rivers flood. Fourteen-year-old N sees the local dam at Hlosini location as a challenge



because 'the water we get is dirty' and 'because we use it together with the animals. It is not fenced and the water stinks as if there is something inside'. Examples of unsustainable development abound. One village had several taps, dry and unused, beside a spring that pushes up about 1 cm of water an hour. Women queue at the spring for hours, waiting to skim off the water as it rises. The taps are right there, unusable.

Forests are for collecting food, traditional medicines and firewood, for allowing cattle to graze and for going to the toilet during school-time. As long as communities do not have electricity, they will use the firewood from the forest for cooking and heating – another form of unsustainable development, as areas soon become dry and deforested.

A donga may be part of the road to school – indeed, it is often difficult to tell a donga from a road. During the rains, roads are muddy and can be washed away; after the rains, they become deeply rutted by the first vehicles to travel along them. It is best for both teachers and learners to stay away from school on the days when the rain comes down. Even when it is not raining, roads are generally strewn with large stones and potholes. They damage cars and injure people. For the sick and elderly, a trip to the clinic is not always completed; where villages are far from clinics and hospitals, people often die on the way.

Communities are well aware of the health hazards that arise from people and animals sharing the same water for drinking and defecation, and of the advantages of electricity over firewood from forests, of good roads over bad and of telephones.

However, they either do not possess the skills to address the problems or, when they do, have not been involved in projects that require their agreement and the use of their skills. Often, they also simply lack the communication networks, confidence and resources to call on assistance.

Many different solutions have been tried. Often donors spend large amounts of money on what are considered to be low-cost and low-tech solutions for rural communities only to find that they become 'white elephants'. This is the case with solar energy and the installation of solar panels in rural communities that do not have electricity.

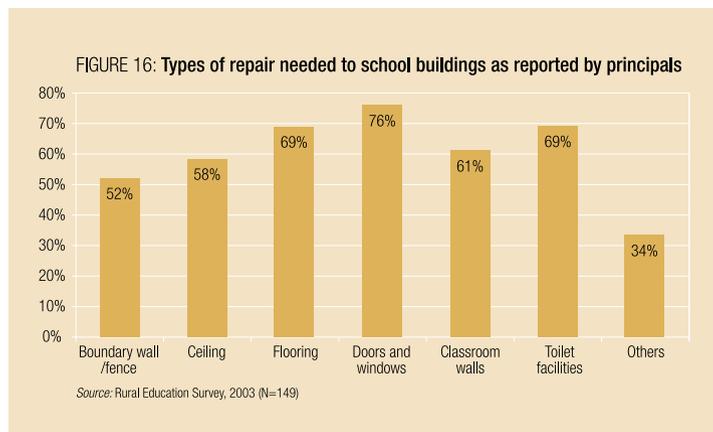
Community researchers learnt of such a case in Tshamavhudzi, Venda. The community was deeply concerned about the lack of electricity at the local school. Gradually it emerged that the provincial government had offered the area solar energy, but there is deep resistance to the idea in the community. Solar energy is seen as inferior to mains electricity. Villagers argue that if they accept solar energy, 'electricity will never come'. In the eyes of the community, solar energy provides insufficient energy: it is enough to light the house but not to use for cooking purposes.

School infrastructure

The lack of basic services affects every aspect of community life: daily living, schools, clinics and recreational facilities. In Ga-podile, for example, the government built a clinic in 2001, but it has neither electricity nor water. The nursing staff abandoned the clinic after a few months.

Schools are in no better shape. The lack of basic services in the community affects schools and impacts on the access to schooling and quality of education for all. When schools do not have electricity, they cannot offer adult education classes in the evenings. Many buildings are in serious need of repair, with doors and windows, flooring and toilet facilities being highest on the list of repairs needed. As Figure 16 shows, around 76% of schools need proper doors and windows, flooring and toilet facilities. Classroom walls are a problem for 61% of schools and ceilings for 58% of schools. Just over half the schools are said to be in need of a fence.

Facilities linked to basic services are poor. Table 4 shows only 45% of principals surveyed said that drinking water was available in their schools, and only 43% said they had electric lighting. 71% reported that toilets were available, but availability does not always correspond to functionality. The quality of toilet facilities ranged enormously; some schools had relatively new toilets, while others had completely dilapidated and unusable structures.





The same applies to other kinds of resources for schools. Table 5 shows the miniscule percentage of schools that had telephones, fax machines, computers and storerooms. Only 22% of principals reported having telephones, 4% having fax machines and 25% having photocopiers. Here too, however, where fax machines and photocopiers may be physically present, for practical purposes they are unavailable. Not infrequently such facilities are 'stored' and unused in the principal's office or another safe place.

Communities see the provision of infrastructure as integral to the improvement of

TABLE 4: Available facilities

Item	Available (%)
Drinking water	45
Toilet facilities	71
Electric lighting	43

Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (N=149)

schooling and education. Across all research sites communities focused on the lack of basic infrastructure: water, electricity, roads, clinics, secondary schools and community halls. These constitute the 'practical social' needs of communities.

Schools are used for a range of purposes other than schooling. They are vital as community resources for the further education of adults. Figure 17 shows that 47% of schools used their premises for

TABLE 5: Available resources

Item	Available (%)
Telephone	22
Fax	4
Copier	25
Radio	39
TV	27
Computer	12
Storeroom	26

Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (N=149)



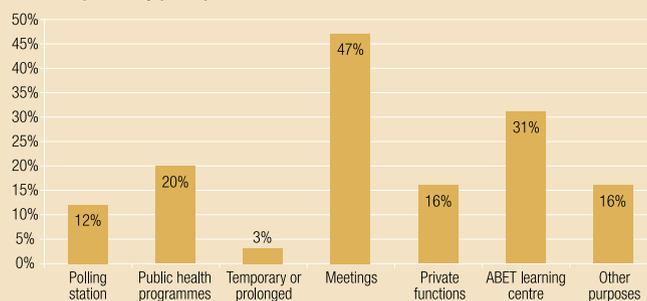
meetings, and 31% used schools as ABET learning centres. In only 20% of cases were they used for public health programmes. In 16% of cases they were used for private functions, another 16% for other purposes and 12% as polling stations. Clearly, their availability for extended adult and community education and development initiatives is limited by facilities and infrastructure.

When community researchers identified people in communities – the young and old – to photograph places of significance, these ‘practical social’ needs were the subject-matter of the photographic collections. Our Lady Frere community researcher’s journal (2 June 2003) documents her interaction with one of the photographers whom she visited at his home in Dike village:

He welcomed me warmly, asking me why I had to expose myself to such cold. I

explained to him that I had brought the photographs with me. He invited me inside ... [and] explained why he took photographs of the sites depicted in the photographs. I discovered that he was not taking photographs for the fun of it, but he was telling the story of the pain of poverty in the villages. There was lack of water, sanitation, good roads, clinics and so on. He also depicted what he thought is the pride of the people of the villages: the school, the fence for the fields, livestock and the fields that are the wealth of the rural people and so on.

FIGURE 17: Uses of school premises for purposes other than learning as reported by principals



Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of schools, N=149)

Education, as shown in earlier chapters, is critically important to communities for many reasons. However, as a community member from Bizana said, education cannot end poverty:

In my opinion, education is developed with the intention of counteracting poverty. But here it cannot serve that purpose because we do not have the means to improve the quality of education without resources and things like electricity, because they are connected to the development of education in rural areas ... To improve education, I wish that electricity be installed. The government should build more schools and additional classrooms ... We made our efforts to develop the school up to Standard 5; we are people who would like to see this school developing.

What then is the solution? How do communities frame the basic problem and the solution?

Several accounts in community indabas, and by community and youth researchers refer on the one hand to government neglect, and on the other to tensions and conflicts within communities. These tensions can be between the movers and shakers in the village, as well as between figures of authority and villagers, or between villagers themselves:

The clinic should be operational, but the problem is with the community. The community is not working together with the induna. The induna is not working together with the local councillor. The community itself is not united. There is a member of the community who acts alone, whose word is final.

The induna is not committed to bringing development in our community at all.

Researchers reported on a typical conflict in a community over the building of a school and then a clinic:

She said that the community lacks people who would follow up on the building of a high school in the area. Mr A was elected as a development officer, responsible for, among other things, the building of schools in the area. Mr A started building the primary school, but before he could finish there were some disagreements with some members of the community, and he gave up building the school. He tried building a clinic, and again some members of the community 'stood against him'. He then handed over the keys to the induna and asked him to continue with the building. The induna was also not supportive of Mr A. He announced in a public meeting that he suspects that somebody wants to take over his role as an induna in his own area.

Conflict can arise between those who can and cannot make contributions, however meagre, for the improvement of their lot. Across sites, people alluded to tensions between those who do and do not contribute towards joint initiatives such as building a classroom or fence. These tensions are made worse by unemployment, crime and vandalism, which can destroy local efforts. 'There are communities able to build a school without the help of government,' said one teacher, 'but it is difficult for our community to build this school because most people are not working.' 'Three months ago,' said an induna at a community indaba, 'we had a meeting with Eskom about installing electricity. The technicians complained that when they come to this community to place cables, they are hijacked at gunpoint. What shall we do?'



PRESCHOOL

Strength: 'Our children begin their education there before Grade 1.'



NEW SCHOOL

Strength: 'There is water, a library and office space for the educators. But classrooms are not enough.'



WATER TANK

Challenge: 'Its top is not sealed and dirt comes in and contaminates the water.'



SICK PEOPLE

Challenge: 'Sick people are struggling, some die on their way to the hospital. There is no clinic. For children to be vaccinated they have to go to a far-away hospital.'

In several instances, communities were inspired by the visits of the researchers to revive community structures so that people can begin to solve problems that they identified as needing attention. Young people also called for activities, events, cultural clubs and initiatives to keep them busy and involved. Women appealed for community agreements to punish people who vandalise public property. The recognition that the research project, allied with the Nelson Mandela Foundation, gave the communities appears to have been extremely significant in generating a sense of agency and purpose. Whether this enthusiasm was dependent on the intervention of an outside agency, and whether such interventions have a long-term impact, can only be established by returning to the villages some time after the research has been conducted.

David Hemson, who researches service delivery in rural areas, provides a graphic picture of the problems that can beset development from the top down. His account shows that government interventions on their own are insufficient as they can themselves become stalled by internal dynamics:

The experience of a taskteam initiating school-based treatment of parasite infections from relevant departments gives some idea of the constraints in successfully implementing critically important programmes. In 1998 the KZN Department of Health initiated a school-based treatment and control programme intended to benefit one-and-a-half million children in areas where clean water and sanitation were inadequate.

The programme planned to combine treatment, health education and sanitation in the schools that served areas where there was not adequate clean water and

sanitation. Other departments and institutions were gathered around the Department of Health in a taskteam. They met regularly, encouraged focused health education and ensured the necessary drugs were available at schools.

In addition, the programme had the potential for a number of associated institutional and social spin-offs. It was sustainable as it did not place large additional demands on budgets and the drug costs were relatively low. It selectively benefited poor communities, encouraged community participation and provided an entry-point to community-based health care. It readily linked with other programmes such as health promotion in schools, nutrition, etc. Most importantly, it encouraged intersectoral collaboration between Education, Water Affairs, and NGOs specialising in primary health care.

An evaluation conducted at 40 schools found that treated children experienced freedom from pain and blood-loss. They were less often absent from school and less likely to repeat grades. They were more likely to perform better on scholastic tasks. In addition, after some initial misgivings, parents/caregivers expressed a willingness to become more involved in the programme and open to information.

The impact has been fairly rapid. There was a dramatic decline in parasite prevalence in the schoolchildren between 1998 and 1999, but very little improvement between 1999 and 2000. Although the programme had been launched and implemented with some enthusiasm, difficulties appeared in interdepartmental co-ordination and insufficient commitment from the 'lead' department. There was a drop-off in drugs being distributed to the schools, and in the case of a number of the parasite infections, the incidence was starting to rise to pre-treatment levels.

The main lesson from this case study appears to be the need for accountability by a lead department, dedicated funding, and the need for relentless campaigning to ensure that the remnants of the old thinking are effectively replaced by progressive health care measures.



The research conducted for this study suggests that empowerment of local communities, through knowledge and information, and recognition of their power and agency, is important in ensuring the success of development projects. Without such empowerment, development becomes stalled rather than being a means and an end towards freedom.

Conclusions

Schools are as much an aspect of rural development as they are a symbol of development. There is a fundamental continuity between the lack of basic services in schools and in the community – water, roads, electricity and sanitation are in poor supply in schools because they are in poor supply in the environment. Lack of basic services in the community affects schooling and impacts on the access to and quality of schooling. Infrastructure in the community and at school is high on the list of priorities of all participants. It constitutes a particular social need in communities.

However, numerous failed development projects litter the landscape of impoverished rural communities. The issues and implications are complex. From the point of

view of the communities, these can be addressed through a combination of community mobilisation and government intervention.

In short, for rural development strategies to be sustainable they need to integrate both educational issues as well as community participation. The current national and provincial rural development strategy does not integrate education. This does not augur well for sustainability.

Development in this context requires democracy – local, participatory, consultative, and problem-solving. The ability to be a carer, householder, worker and citizen is dependent on the opportunity to become actively involved in meeting basic needs. Democracy also requires education – of adults, out-of-school youth and children in the community – to enable individuals and communities to become more actively involved in everyday evaluation and meeting of needs.



Experience of the classroom



Experience of the classroom

Teachers at Fuyatha Primary School regard their school as a model of its kind. They pride themselves on their record of never turning children away because they cannot pay their fees, or for any other reason, and they regard Fuyatha as the leading primary school in the entire area, not just this village.



The teachers are well-qualified and they work hard and co-operatively to provide high-quality education, including voluntary extra lessons for learners who have difficulties. All the real problems that they identified come from outside the school and are not under the control of the educators: bad roads, lack of water, flooding, hungry learners, unemployed parents and lack of parental involvement in the education of their children. The message from the school is that there is no need for real change; just a few improvements are needed.

Parents and teachers in this and many other schools cherish the fact that the children at their schools excel at choral music, cultural work and sport, and they draw strong satisfaction from knowing that children from their schools do well when they proceed to the local secondary school. A principal in Limpopo Province is justly proud of his school when he says: 'Parents just love what's happening at school, with extra lessons after school hours for slow learners and of course the character of the principal and his staff.'

However, many parents, members of the community and learners also have some strong criticisms of the quality of schooling. Many issues affect the quality of the experience of schooling: the curriculum, teaching and learning resources and approaches to teaching and learning. This chapter first examines responses to Curriculum 2005 and resources available to implement it, and then considers approaches to teaching and learning through four different sets of eyes. The chapter shows that perceptions and experiences differ amongst parents, teachers and learners, particularly around issues such as corporal punishment and views on what schools should prepare children for. We highlight the rights of children within education and focus on the unfreedoms within schools, which hinder the development of the capabilities for full human functioning necessary in a democracy.

Curriculum

Girls and boys in urban and rural areas should be given equal opportunities to succeed and advance while at school. In this process the curriculum is crucial, in that it is a key source of learners' knowledge about, and orientation within, the social world. This is widely acknowledged (UNESCO 2003).

Curriculum 2005 was introduced in 1997 to provide a common curriculum and to remove bias, discrimination and social injustice. Founded on outcomes-based education and the values of the Constitution, it intended to sweep away the legacy of mental underdevelopment, authoritarianism and rote learning



characteristic of Christian National Education and Bantu Education. The apartheid curriculum devalued the rights of all and promoted a sense of superiority amongst whites and inferiority amongst black people. The post-apartheid curriculum is central to building a new sense of citizenship and possibility. At its core is a commitment to human rights, equity and social justice. In order to achieve this it promotes learner-centredness, active learning, problem-solving, critical and creative thinking, an understanding of the world, and the skills of evaluation and analysis.

Are Curriculum 2005 and outcomes-based education implementable in rural schools? Some have argued that it is appropriate for schools that have small classes and qualified teachers but that it is inappropriate for schools in rural areas where classes are large, resources limited and teachers largely inadequately qualified to do what is expected of them. What do educators say and what resources do they have to support them? We look at this.

We also examine what happens in practice, from many perspectives. We show that teachers have varied opinions on

whether outcomes-based education is appropriate to their realities or not, and that resources are limited. In addition, although there are teachers who do sterling work with limited resources, the large majority of teachers teach in tried-and-tested ways that do not challenge learners. Too many learners do not understand their teachers and do not understand their textbooks. The excessive use of corporal punishment in schools also suggests that, despite the new curriculum, classrooms are not places where learners' rights are respected, democratic relationships between teachers and learners are fostered, or recognition and autonomy, the lynchpins of a sense of agency, are acquired.

Our survey asked teachers what they think about Curriculum 2005. The results showed that there are mixed feelings. Figure 18 shows that 58% of the respondents were dissatisfied with OBE and only 41% were satisfied. Dissatisfaction was highest amongst educators surveyed in Limpopo (67%), as against KwaZulu-Natal (59%) and the Eastern Cape (49%).

Teachers who are not satisfied with OBE give a long list of reasons for their dissatisfaction. They complain that it does not cater for rural areas and is difficult to

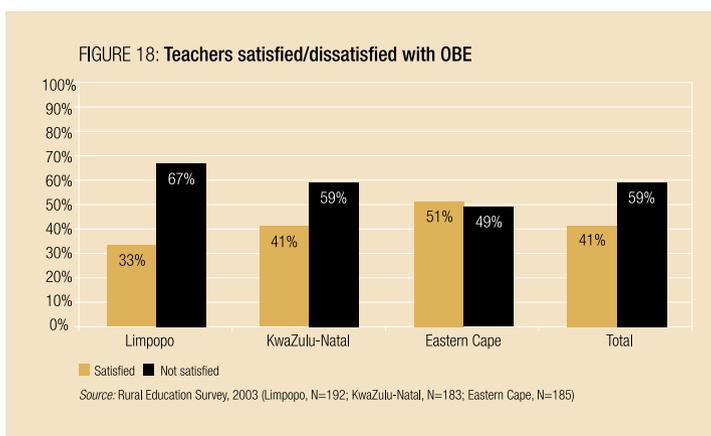
implement there – that 'training in OBE is inadequate', 'overcrowded classrooms make attention to individual work difficult', 'learners become too relaxed', 'no real learning takes place', 'OBE encourages talk but not reading and writing', 'parents struggle with their children's schoolwork if they are uneducated', 'there are insufficient learning materials', 'OBE requires too much paperwork', 'the implementation of OBE takes too much time', 'it is expensive', 'teachers are confused' and 'there is a lack of discipline at school'. Teachers say that they 'lose interest in their work because of OBE'.

Almost all teachers indicated that there is a school exam/test for Grade 6 learners. The majority said that they did not experience difficulties with assessment. Only 34.2% said they did experience difficulties with assessment. They raised issues about paperwork, time required, lack of training and understanding, resources and parental understanding of the new system.

More in-depth research on OBE at particular sites shows a contrasting picture. There are certain teachers who find the OBE approach highly liberating to themselves and their learners, as in the case of this teacher from Limpopo:

Yes. I can say yes because the curriculum we are using, the OBE or National Curriculum Statement makes every child able to be creative and able to develop their own creativity. (*Ee, ndi nga amba ndari ee ngauri kharikhulamu hei ine ya khou shumisiwa zwino inopfi OBE kana National Curriculum Statement i ita uri nwana ene mune ane a vha creative vhu creative hawe vhu bvele phanda nga ene mune.*) It is unlike those days when we were told, 'This is A', and people didn't have to reason about it but just take it as it is. We just believed that it was A ...

These kids, should you give them an activity you will realise that each person



is doing something different and that is what learning is, because everyone is developing his or her capabilities. They are able to demonstrate their skills and what they are capable of doing. They can demonstrate how they understand certain things and through that I think their talents will develop. We were taught to memorise things without understanding them. But these ones do not memorise, they create things because we are trying to encourage every child's creativity. (*Fhedzi havha a vha khiremi, vha tou sika zwithu vhone vhone nga uri vhutali vhunwe na vhunwe ha nwana vhu a todea nahone ri a vhu tutuwedza.*)

Teachers at the primary school in Bizana were clear that OBE's skills, values, attitudes, norms and standards should not be changed. They like the learner-centred classroom because, they say, learners become free and active, educators now learn from learners and the relationship between the two improves markedly as a result of using this method.

Teachers in Lady Frere are also of the view that OBE helps with lesson-planning and promotes healthy competition. They believe that groupwork assists learners to share their work, support one another and to think broadly. They also like continuous assessment and find that OBE enables learners to say what they think. A curious thing is that these same teachers from Lady Frere want corporal punishment to be reinstated.

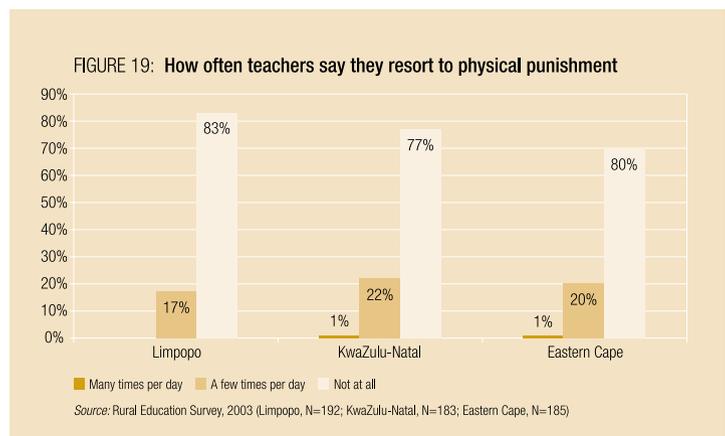
A teacher in Lady Frere found that OBE improved relationships with parents:

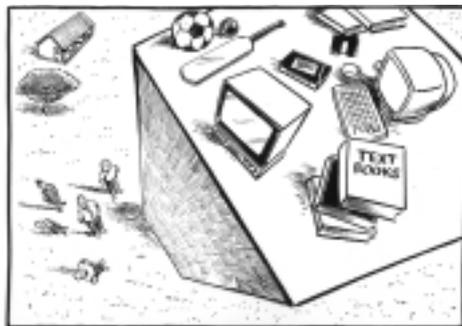
It was very difficult in the past, because parents did not want anything to do with the supervision of their children's work. They would point out that they send their children to school for you to teach them. Things changed when outcomes-based education was introduced. We attended workshops and training on relations between the schools and the parents, but the responsibility lies with the school to

build these relations. It was difficult because we had to make efforts to invite parents and inform them of this new approach that teachers, parents and learners should work together.

The survey asked teachers to describe their own teaching styles. Only 2% of educators claimed to be encouraging 'learning by heart'. 90% of teachers said they used games as a part of their teaching method, citing rhymes and songs, drama, crossword puzzles, singing in action, blindfold games, *tiekie-draai*, traditional games, miming, business games, role-playing and acting games.

Our survey also asked about forms of punishment and whether or not teachers feel the need to resort to physical punishment. Most teachers across the three provinces said that they either send children out of the classroom or to the principal's office. Figure 19 shows that the vast majority claim not to use physical punishment at all. If what teachers are saying is true then it seems that teachers have taken the principles and practices of Curriculum 2005 and outcomes-based education on board and that classrooms are lively, dynamic places where children learn to become active, conscious and skilful human beings.





As we shall see, neither learners' descriptions of their classroom experience nor the observations of classrooms support these claims. But first let us explore the resources that teachers have to make teaching a meaningful experience.

Resources

Teachers regard quality in education as being difficult to achieve. The most important problems they cite are lack of teaching aids, poor infrastructure, lack of co-operation and shortages of teachers. 71% of teachers considered lack of teaching aids to be their biggest problem. A high proportion of teachers (60%) cited lack of co-operation (by parents and/or learners) and poor infrastructure as important. 48% were concerned about the shortage of

teachers, and 41% with class size. 26%, fully a quarter of teachers, cited harsh living conditions as their most important problem. Irregular salary payments and harassment by authorities, reportedly major problems under previous homeland authorities, were minor problems, mentioned by only 12% and 7% of teachers respectively. See Figure 20.

The lack of teaching aids is an issue that arises again and again in the participatory research. Textbooks are one of the most central teaching aids and an extremely important source of learning but they need to be accessible and understandable and the values embedded in them need to respect everyone equally.

As Table 6 illustrates, the main resource in the majority of schools surveyed is the textbook. Other kinds of resource are in poor supply. Only 56% of principals reported that their schools had teaching kits or aids or guides, 49% that they had maps and charts and 10% that they had toys and games. A paltry 5% said they had a library and 7% said they had musical instruments. As is the case with telephones or photocopiers, such resources are often stored for safety reasons in an inaccessible place and are rarely used.

FIGURE 20:
Most important problems teachers say they face

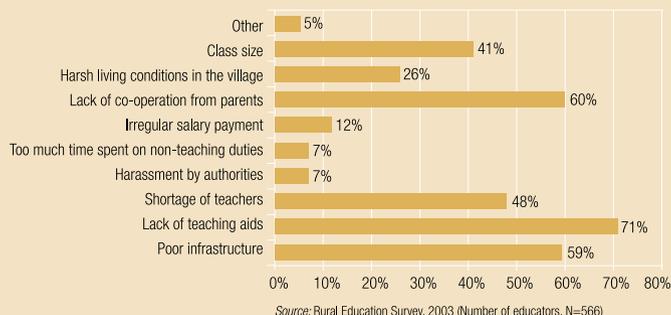


TABLE 6: Availability of teaching resources

Item	Available (%)
Library	5
Textbooks	93
Toys and games	10
Maps and charts	49
Teaching kits or aids or guides	56
Musical instruments	7

Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of educators, N=566)



Our Lady Frere community researcher's investigations into the availability and use of textbooks, as reflected in her diary, are revealing. In one school that she visited she found that they are available only in some classes and only for some subjects. Mostly, they are made available by an organisation operating in the area. Workbooks are also in short supply:

26 August 2003

I woke up today and prepared to go to Vulindlela to do a [check on] Learner Support Materials in Grade 1 ... Xolile and I began to count the books used in Grade 1. We found that the learners have a Xhosa textbook. They are not allowed to take the textbook home. But the senior phase has them and they are 18. The junior and the middle phases do not have it. In Literacy 2, which is English, they do not have the textbook – even in Life Skills, and also in Numeracy – but the educator has the teacher's guide which she uses. There are many and various textbooks, which they said they receive them from the Business Trust ... The learners are supposed to share them because they

are six. The educator also complained of the shortage of learners' workbooks.

Of the 556 educators who responded to the survey, significant numbers of teachers said that they do not find their textbooks easy. In some subjects, almost a quarter of teachers find the material in textbooks difficult to explain to learners.



At Fuyatha Primary School researchers also observed that even though the staff regard the school as a model school in every respect there was no mention of the need for a library, how the shortage of learning materials has made outcomes-based education impossible to offer, the need for better sporting facilities and so on. Individual teachers said that there is a need for science laboratories and other resources and everyone agreed on the need for computers at the school.

The implications for the researchers are that children learn what the teachers tell them and are ignorant of everything they are not directly told. Without a library, they have very limited opportunity to discover ideas and information for themselves. Even the best teachers do not know everything, and their point of view, even professionally, is only one, single point of view. The new curriculum expects learners to become

independent and critical thinkers. How can that happen when the resources available do not permit independent inquiry?

Learners can and do have opinions on the teaching materials and equipment that are essential aspects of making OBE work. They suggest a wide range of improvements – libraries and books, TV and radio, games, ‘apparatus for natural science’, and the like. With all these wished-for improvements, we should note the down-to-earth response of one child, who says ‘there are no learning resources at all, only chalkboards and chalk’.

Approaches to teaching and learning

It is important to contrast teacher and learner perceptions of teaching methods in order to understand the actual teaching and learning process. It is also important to note that there are differences between classrooms, what teachers do in them and how what they do is perceived. An understanding of how teachers teach and what they teach in rural schools can be gained by glancing through different sets of eyes: the eyes of learners, a student of classroom practice in rural schools, a group of visitors to a rural school and classroom observations conducted in the course of this study.

Through the learners’ eyes we will see that teaching styles remain largely unchanged except for some superficial adjustments. Our visitors’ eyes will show us that learners continue to be taught by rote and with little understanding. The student of classroom practice in rural schools will draw our attention to the fact that teacher-centred styles are not in

Qandashe, Eastern Cape



NATURAL SCIENCE TEACHER

Challenge: ‘The teacher, instead of using a kettle to show the movement of electricity that boils water, uses a mug and a lamp connected with a wire for heat to be transmitted.’

themselves negative: some teachers can make good use of this style, while others make extremely poor use of it. Finally, some of the classroom observations for this study will show us that while there are some innovative teachers, the majority seem to use very traditional methods.

Through learners' eyes: cosmetic changes

Through our first set of eyes, then, we see that learners are critical of the extent to which teachers have actually changed their practice:

The teachers seemed to remain the centre of the process and controlled and orchestrated activities as directors rather than as facilitators. Most of the changes from the old to the new are just cosmetic. Educators on the whole are teaching the old way, but using the new terminology ... Educators appear to know that OBE is about dividing learners into groups. So

learners are sitting in groups. But there are no group activities.

Learner essays also reveal what happens in classrooms:

We write the following classworks in class – Sepedi, LO, English, HSS and EMS, maths, Afrikaans, and science. I forgot that firstly we sit on chairs to sing and pray. We pray to God to give us mercy to pass in school. If there is no work we just keep quiet and respect our lady teacher and do corrections. She raises questions and we respond to her. We respond because we have to. When we have finished, we take out Sepedi, Afrikaans, and mathematics class workbooks to write. The first thing we do in the class is we write and sing three songs – from there we pray. Then our lady teacher comes in the class and first greets us and we stand up and greet her. Then she instructs us to sit down. And then we thank her. For the second teacher we do the same as the first teacher.

In responding to the survey, children are almost uniformly positive about their



education and their teachers. However, large numbers of children – the majority in the Eastern Cape – find it difficult to understand what the teacher is saying. Figure 21 shows that, as an average across all three provinces, 42% of children have difficulty understanding the way the teacher speaks. Why this is the case is

unclear. It is, nonetheless, a worryingly high percentage.

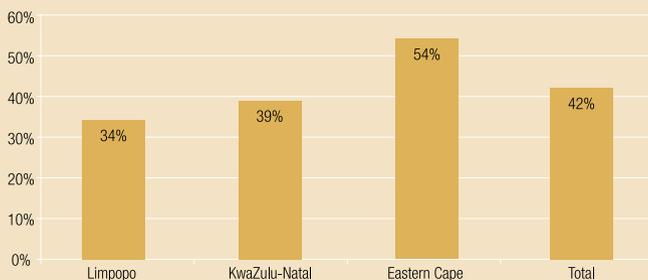
Large numbers – more than a quarter overall – also report that they do not find it easy to understand what is written in textbooks. See Figure 22.

This lack of understanding of teachers and texts was dramatically illustrated in a visit to a school in KwaZulu-Natal.

Through visitors' eyes: learning without understanding

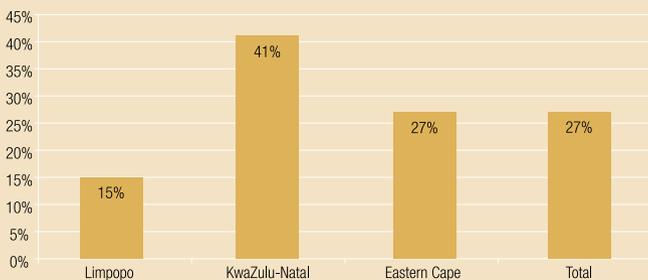
Our second set of eyes reinforces this finding through the account of a visit to a primary school located in the Valley of a Thousand Hills, west of Pinetown in KwaZulu-Natal. This is an area that was not part of our study but had many of the characteristics of the schools we visited. There is one major difference: it has seen a great deal of NGO intervention over many years and so should have shown some improvements over other schools. Unfortunately, it did not. The story is told by one of the researchers on the project from KwaZulu-Natal:

FIGURE 21: Percentage of children who have difficulty understanding the way the teacher speaks

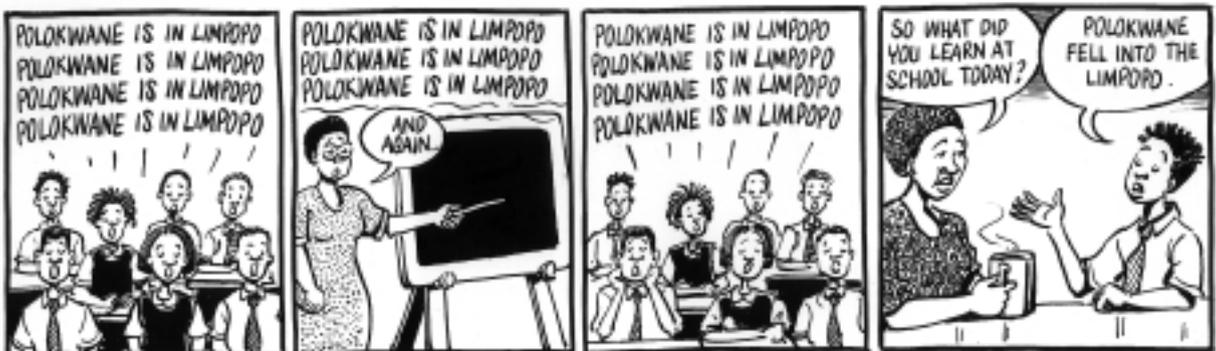


Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Limpopo, N=980; KwaZulu-Natal, N=1 005; Eastern Cape, N=882; Total N=2 867)

FIGURE 22: Percentage of children who do not find it easy to understand what is written in textbooks



Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Limpopo, N=980; KwaZulu-Natal, N=1 005; Eastern Cape, N=882; Total N=2 867)



The story shows classrooms unattended to by teachers, and learners surrounded by learning materials in a language they do not understand, and without possessing even rudimentary arithmetical knowledge.

The name of the school, loosely translated from Zulu means 'we are still waiting'. The area is hilly – it is like a sea with waves of hills. It is very scenic and people come to see the area just for its beauty. There used to be a lot of small-scale farming in the area. There is less of this now. Even small gardens are not so common any more. Many households do have livestock, mainly cattle and a few goats. While many of the households have traditional rondavel-type structures, more and more of the central homes are built 'western style' with four walls in a square – even if they are still made from mud. The area has become more and more congested over the years. From the school you can see the Inanda Dam, built less than 15 years ago. This dam is why this school has piped water. There are no water-borne toilets but there is piped water in the school.

We spent time with the Grade 1 and Grade 4 classes. The Grade 1 teacher was in her classroom. The majority of the teachers were not at school on this day. They were attending a workshop on OBE. Most classes were full of children on their own. The Grade 1 teacher led her class, mainly by conducting a chorus. The children, excited that there were visitors in the room, were hearty in their repetition of the alphabet – A! B! C! D! And they were equally into a routine they seemed to know well – ma! me! mi! mo! mu! Watching the visitors, the educator would move away from the 'chorus' exercises from time to time, to ask certain children to sing simple rhymes that they appeared to know well.

There was no teacher in the Grade 4 classroom. The learners were excited to see visitors come into their classroom. They were eager that we were having a conversation with them. There was a chart on the wall. It had a stray dog that was biting a child and pointed to the danger of rabies. It was in English. The chart was flipped over so that one could only see the bottom of the chart but it was easily readable. We asked the learners (we were communicating in Zulu) if they could read the chart, starting from the middle of the chart, where it could be seen. They were uncomfortable with the idea of just starting from where you could see. A child jumped on a desk and stretched the chart out so that you could see the whole thing. Then the whole class began reciting the chart. When they were finished we asked them what the chart was saying. They did not know. We asked if any of them knew. None of them knew. We took some of the words in the chart, like 'vet'. We discussed the word in English and Zulu. They say they had not understood what the word meant.

One boy was carrying a book. We asked him, 'Is this a book you are using in class?' He said that it was. We asked him if he could read us a story that he liked in the book. He paged through the book. When he got half way through the book he stopped at a story about the elections in 1994. He read it out loud. Again, it was in English. We asked him to describe to us what the story was about. He said that he didn't know what the story was saying. We then asked him if he could explain the story to us in Zulu. He said he was not too sure.

On the board were examples of long division from the lesson of the day before. We had a visitor with us from India who was a teacher of maths and science, and she had worked a lot with rural schools in India. She started with a much simpler example than what was on the board from the day before: 90 divided by 3. All of the children were crowded around her at the board. They were excited to have a visitor trying to explain these things. None of the children could answer the question. What was more, when Anita tried to explain the idea of division, it was clear that none of the children had an understanding of the concept of division in their own lives. Children were coming up with quick 'formulas' for how to approach division (all of them wildly wrong) but appeared not to be used to 'thinking' about the idea of division and working from there. Anita taking them through simple ideas to get a sense of what division actually means excited them.

At the end of the class we asked each child to write a paragraph about anything that they would like to write about. Many of them struggled. Reading their paragraphs out loud proved difficult for the few who tried before the class time was over.

Through a researcher's eyes: differences within the same method

Makhole Phurutse has been studying teachers' classroom practice in rural Limpopo. He sees things with a different set of eyes. He shows that there are differences between teachers' uses of traditional methods. His research focused on watching teachers practice in the context of rural schools in South Africa. In almost all the lessons he observed that teachers used monologue as the main teaching method. He argues that there are some teachers who use monologue to reinforce rote learning without understanding, but there are others who use it to present information in a more engaging way. He asks us to compare the following two examples. In the first example, the teacher's questions are not educative:

Teacher: [reading] Leah wore a gay blue dress with red and white flowers and she wore a many-coloured kerchief round her head.

Teacher: [reads, explains and asks] Xuma stared at her, obviously Xuma was appreciating her in the dress. Are we together?

Learners: Yes.

Teacher: Can you recall what she was actually putting on? Ya Gloria Mohlala, sister to Neo?

Gloria: Blue dress.

Teacher: [explains and asks] There is nowhere where we are told Leah was putting on a blue dress. Is there anywhere, where we are told that Leah was putting on a blue dress? Ladies and gentlemen is there anywhere where we learn Leah was putting on a blue dress? [Becoming agitated, with a stern face]. It was a floral dress consisting of red and white flowers. Can we say it was blue, Gloria?

Gloria: No.

In another example, an educator uses teacher monologue more effectively. The lesson is one on productivity and unemployment. The teacher deals explicitly with misconceptions and then carefully explains the concepts he is trying to communicate to the learners. His understanding is accurate and his presentation is engaging. In this way Phurutse demonstrates that teacher-centred monologue can be effective if well-structured and logical.

The point is that the quality of the result is not merely dependent on the use of monologue. What is important is whether material is presented in a knowledgeable, engaging and critical manner.

Through another researcher's eyes: traditional and innovative methods

Analysing learner essays on what happens in classrooms, researchers show that classroom activity is dominated by three modes: reading, writing and correcting. Learners read and write and correct. Teachers mark and learners do corrections. Learners also draw and pray, colour in, sweep and clean windows. This is a typical essay:

When we are in school, we do class-work. When we are finished, we submit it to our educator to be corrected. After she is finished, she gives us back our books and we start to do corrections. Then we go to break. When we are back in the classroom, we are offered another lesson, and we are taught again what we wrote in our books before break. When we are in the school, we write school works. When we are in the class, we sweep, read and lastly an educator gives us homework. Then tomorrow we submit our homework to the educator who starts to educate us about what is happening.



Judging from these essays, school days are dominated by formal and customary procedures such as greeting, cleaning, assembling, praying, writing, correcting and taking dictation. There is no reference to spontaneous interaction during lessons (and little room for it) between educators and learners and we have already learnt

that a large percentage of learners do not understand their teachers or the texts that they use.

A different picture is also evident. Perhaps this is an isolated example, given the weight of evidence showing the use of traditional methods that do not enhance learner autonomy and critical thinking,

but teachers who do teach differently can be found and are a beacon of hope in their communities. In Siyandhani in Limpopo, there is one such teacher. He allowed researchers to observe his Grade 7 mathematics lesson on measuring the perimeter.

This was the comment of the observer:

The management of this lesson was done with tact, logic, sensitivity and lucidity. Learners were given practical examples to work out and their tasks were entirely consistent with the aims of the lesson. In particular, Mr E handled learner errors and mistakes constructively and so learners were quite open and willing to admit lack of understanding, confusion and uncertainty about aspects of their tasks.

Mr E agreed that the class was unusually quiet and subdued on account of my presence, as they are robust, some are large and there is vigour in these young people. However, he kept them very busy with appropriate exercises as well as intermittent instruction so that they were active throughout the lesson.

All these learners will proceed to secondary school regardless (almost) of their performance or achievement this year. This is because Grade 7 is not a significant year for evaluation. However, Mr E starts the year in mathematics with a pass mark of 80%, which few attain. As the year proceeds, he lowers this mark gradually and in so doing more and more learners achieve a pass. He believes that this encourages learners wonderfully.

His teaching style is friendly and supportive and there is an easy and constructive atmosphere in his classroom. Though he did not use group work as such during the lesson I observed, learners talked to each other and jointly solved problems without difficulty or constraint. He was able to work with special groups at the blackboard while keeping in contact with the others at their desks.

Mr E was particularly interested in the Wits EPU book on alternatives to corporal punishment. I took five copies to educators in the village, including one for

Mr E, which he read with pleasure and relief. He is a large and gentle man. He has supported learners in need with material necessities (like clothes) and is most concerned that the feeding scheme functions regularly.

It is clear that even though the teaching of the majority of teachers continues to be uninspiring there are exceptions to the rule. These teachers address the needs of learners to become active and creative citizens and realise the hopes of communities for a better life for their children.

Corporal punishment

Corporal punishment is a major bone of contention amongst parents, teachers and learners. Although corporal punishment is against the law, and teachers say they rarely resort to physical punishment (see Figure 19), it is clear from interviews and other sources that it still takes place, often with the tacit approval of parents. Many principals, parents and teachers see corporal punishment as a normal way to discipline children when all other methods fail.

There are diverse views amongst parents. There are many who want policy on corporal punishment to be revised. Others want corporal punishment to be administered, but within limits: 'they should not punish a child as if they are killing a snake', said one.

As we have seen, almost no teachers admit to using corporal punishment. Nonetheless, many teachers have sticks in their classrooms. Some use them to threaten children into obedience, while others use them regularly. Teachers say they have difficulty finding useful alternatives to corporal punishment. The issue of corporal punishment is bound up not only with the

correspondence between the values of parents and teachers, but also with the rights of learners and the ability of teachers to distinguish between offences that require an educational or a punitive response.

Evidence from learners suggests both that teachers regularly use corporal punishment for extremely minor offences, and that learners object strenuously to such punishment. Essays written by Grade 6 learners at one KwaZulu-Natal school reveal a deep revulsion on the part of children at the persistent and excessive violence that some of their teachers use regularly. As one learner from the area said: 'In my opinion, for the school to be better, teachers must stop using corporal punishment. Mr X must stop beating us like there is no tomorrow.'

In Bizana, the 'frog jump' (*intsuka*) is a form of punishment that is also deeply resented. Across all sites, the young vigorously oppose the use of corporal punishment. The main alternative to corporal punishment is to send learners out of the class, but there are reservations about this, too, as S's story below illustrates.

S exposed some of the ambiguities of corporal punishment when he described how he was beaten for being late as a result of taking cattle to the dipping tank. He was unhappy about being asked to stand outside the class. His view was that corporal punishment was a punishment worth bearing because it did not deprive him of class time:

The abolition of corporal punishment brought about a new way of punishment, which I think is more painful because you end up losing more information. It happens that you are chased away from the class during the first period and you stay outside

and don't even hear the bell for the second period. When you go back to class you find that the second educator will also chase you away saying you are late although you did not hear the bell. But during that time when corporal punishment was still applied, you would get punished and sit down with the rest of the class.

No, I did not appreciate the abolishment of corporal punishment, because looking at the way things are you end up losing more information on subjects being taught. I think a child is supposed to be beaten and sit with the rest of the class for lessons. It is what they are there for.

For S and many others, deprivation of class time is even more punitive than corporal punishment, signalling the importance that learners attach to education.

Learners fear corporal punishment. They are routinely punished for both serious and trivial offences. Most alarming is the use of corporal punishment for reasons that require an educational rather than a punitive response.

Learners said that they are beaten for the following misdemeanours: when they do not do their homework; when they go to the toilet without permission; for going outside the school yard without permission; when they are late; when they give wrong answers; for teasing one another; for being playful; for not having uniforms; for dragging desks instead of lifting them; when they fight in the classroom/school; for being absent from school; for being absent on school opening days; for making a noise; for pronouncing words incorrectly; for asking for a ruler from another learner; when they do not understand; for not wearing a school jersey; and for not doing what they are told to do.

'*Bayapakanyela*' (they all beat you at the same time) is a common refrain.

Corporal punishment is completely inappropriate for many of these alleged offences, such as pronouncing words incorrectly, not understanding, giving the wrong answers and when learners do not wear the school jersey. The root cause of this may be simply that teachers do not know how to manage classrooms and stimulate a democratic and just environment by using the best educational methods – the result is that learning needs are unmet and learner capabilities undeveloped.

Improving rural classrooms

Learners have many ideas about how schools could be improved. They hold different opinions on issues. At the heart of their vision for change is a school and classroom that respects them as human beings and recognises their right to learn.

In their responses to the survey question of how schools could be improved, many concentrated on teaching methodology: teachers should organise games, use charts, ‘make sure to concentrate on each learner’, ‘make more time for us to read stories’, ‘use experiments when teaching science and laboratory’, ‘teach us more about HIV/AIDS’. Teachers should ‘stop telling us we are stupid when we don’t understand’. Advice is not always conventionally progressive: ‘the teaching method must change; I don’t like group discussion’.

Language is an issue. One wants Afrikaans to be taught – another wants it to be abolished. There are contradictory responses about being taught in English, or in learners’ first language, and the complexities of a multilingual society pose

problems: ‘some of our teachers speak Sepedi and most of us speak Ndebele’. Parents also hold contradictory views on this matter: some argue for mother-tongue instruction, others for English and yet others for Afrikaans.

The language of learning and teaching has historically been a highly-contested matter. Many international and national reports on learner performance, particularly in rural areas, point to the importance of the mother tongue in the early years, followed by proficiency in the language of learning and teaching. Currently, the policy in schools promotes additive bilingualism in order to realise the national policy of multilingualism. In other words, learners should start studying in their mother tongue and as they progress from the Foundation to Intermediate and Senior phases begin to study additional languages. The School Governing Body is required to decide on the language of learning and teaching, which can be the same as or a different language to the mother tongue.

Language scholar, Neville Alexander, provides some background and context:

Most rural schools in South Africa are monolingual because of the continuing regional concentration of languages and the local or village concentration of speech varieties. In only a very few cases is regular contact with English and/or Afrikaans prevalent. It is also true that most [primary school] teachers who are prepared to live and work in rural areas tend to be those who are less articulate in the languages of power and high status, i.e. English and Afrikaans.

What this amounts to, therefore, is that there is neither an English-speaking environment nor any good first-language (or proficient second-language) English role models in most such areas. In brief,

the possibility of extramural reinforcement is minimal or totally absent. Hence, the normal benefits of L1-medium education (mother-tongue instruction) are vitally important under these conditions. Moreover, since most children in rural areas seldom get beyond the primary school, it can be accepted that whatever cognitive development and stimulation they will receive at school will come by means of the L1. This does not imply that an additional language, specifically English or, where it is relevant, Afrikaans, should not be taught as a subject.

We do say, however, that it is very unlikely – with the usual exceptions that prove the rule – that any proficiency will be attained in the additional language. Under the conditions obtaining in most of these areas, it is simply educationally unsound to want to use the additional language as a language of teaching, especially if, as so many parents ignorantly insist, this is done from Day 1 or ‘as early as possible’. One of our tasks is in fact to bring parents up to speed in regard to the science of language-medium policy.

Some of the complexities are underlined by dialect-differences in rural areas. Whether it is official English or Xhosa, the challenges of the relationship between the language of learning and teaching and the languages spoken by teachers and learners at home remain fundamental.

Researchers, Xola Ngonini and Mmeli Macanda, show that the issues around language are even more complicated in rural areas than is reflected in the usual conversations about language and schooling. They highlight the issue in the context of the Eastern Cape, where there is a move to standardise Xhosa:

The conversation about languages usually revolves around the 11 official languages, and particularly the relationship between English and the other recognised African languages.



Xhosa is supposedly the dominant language spoken in the former Transkei and Ciskei. However, there are various ‘dialects’ of Xhosa: Original Xhosa, Gcaleka, Mfengu, Thembu, Bomvana, Mpondomise, Pondo, Baca, etc. All of these languages are subsumed under the Xhosa’s codified form regulated by the Xhosa Language Board in Ciskei and Transkei.

Pedagogically, all African learners in the Eastern Cape are compelled to master the official Xhosa grammar in both spoken and written form. Educators examine learners on the basis of their mastery of official Xhosa and expect them to have acquired specific skills by the end of the year.

Many learners who do not speak the ‘dominant language’ find it difficult to cope when they have to write essays. They get penalised for using the language they know and that is closer to their hearts. Outside the classroom and at home learners revert to using their Xhosa ‘dialects’. In the sites that we researched, we found this to be common in Bizana where they speak isiMpondo. Bizana is close to the Eastern Cape border with KwaZulu-Natal, and isiMpondo has borrowed from both ‘dominant’ Xhosa and isiZulu.

There are a few strong voices in favour of the use and development of the mother tongue in the context of schooling. However, an overwhelming number of learners and parents associate the 'poor quality' of rural schools, as compared to the 'high quality' of urban schools, with the lack of English. The community researchers in the Eastern Cape interviewed learners and parents about the difference they saw in the quality of rural schools and more urban schools. The most common comparison was made with regard to English skills, where rural schools are regarded as 'failures'. Teachers also feel that parents unfairly judge the quality of their teaching on the basis of their use of English.

In addition to language, learners talk much about the improvement of their school buildings and the acquisition of learner support materials, as well as the need for laboratories, computers, chairs and tables. In an essay on what she thought needed to be done to change the school to make it suitable for children of the village, a Grade 6 learner at Qandashe Primary School wrote:

I think there should be things like gramophones or telephones so as to contact nurses when we have injuries. I want the teachers to stop beating us even if we are late. In sport there should be netball, volleyball and rugby. There should be beautiful toilets. When we have not paid the school fees we do not write June examinations, so I think that should be stopped. When teachers come to tell us something, we must sit down. It's better not to destroy weeds at school; there should be employed people because we pay fees when the schools open. The habit of putting us behind the gates when there is a graduation ceremony for young kids must be stopped. When we win at music competitions we must go to the following level of competitions.

Among a few schools, there was a call for more 'up-to-date' education. Such an education is associated with maths, science and, particularly, computer technology. The idea is that rural learners will be unable to engage with the modern world or find jobs if they do not have a strong basis in maths and science, and if they are not exposed to technology from an early age. Inadequate maths, science and technology education is seen as signalling the divide between rural and urban schools.

Making the curriculum 'relevant'

Rural education and making curricula relevant to the lives of people living in rural areas is a recurrent theme throughout history. In the colonial period it was associated with attempts by colonising powers to keep African people from white-collar work. The apartheid system also misused and manipulated the use of local culture and notions of rural South Africa to introduce a narrow and limited curriculum.

When Verwoerd introduced Bantu Education in 1954 he made it clear that African men and women were expected to 'serve their communities ... in a natural way'. In a system where men would be primarily migrant workers and women would serve the state by carrying the costs of meeting the social and reproductive needs of families in the homelands, what this meant was that Bantu Education was to turn African men in rural areas into 'hewers of wood or drawers of water' and African women into 'scrubbers of floors, child-minders and weeders of fields' (Truscott 1994: 42).

For most of the 1950s and 1960s, the school curriculum for African primary schools was based on minimum literacy skills, plus sewing and housecraft for girls and woodwork and gardening for boys (Gaitskell 2002). With Bantu Education, agricultural education enjoyed a newfound status in the curriculum as 'gardening'. Primary schools and, from the 1970s, high schools, particularly in the homelands, offered agricultural education. African teachers and learners resisted agricultural education because it was associated with the impoverished curricula and visions for Africans of colonialism and apartheid. Conditions in schools militated against agricultural activities. By 1957, when apartheid was in full swing, an educator teaching gardening said that for quite some time already, 'the period for gardening simply meant in the majority of cases a period of relaxation for the teacher, the commonest excuse always being that no facilities were provided for the practical side of the subject' (Paterson 2004: 88).

At the same time as Bantu Education was being introduced to limit African aspirations, rural education resurfaced as a progressive form of education in Nyerere's concept of 'education for self-reliance'. Throughout the 1970s and 1980s, experiments and innovations were conducted in different parts of independent Africa to try to make curricula more alive to rural realities (Atchoarena & Gasperini 2003). In the early twenty-first century, the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation and UNESCO placed a revitalised concept of rural education back on the agenda.

Educationist, Peter Kallaway, invites us to rethink how we view rural education in

South Africa when he writes:

The question of understanding what kind of education might be appropriate to African rural development or the African poor has exercised the minds of educators from the early days of missionary education to the era of twenty-first century globalisation. Often contrary to the wishes of African educands and their families, educational innovators attempted to create a form of curriculum that was argued to be 'relevant' to the lives of ordinary people in the rural society. 'Adapted' education was the great educational experiment of the early twentieth century in colonial Africa ...

A particularly famous defence of this policy ... focused, in keeping with progressive educational ideas of the time, on the needs of everyday rural life: health and sanitation, appreciation and use of the environment, home and household, and recreation – intellectual, physical and spiritual ...

Yet the harsh reality of African politics, economics and society during the twentieth century was that those who would plan an education system predicated on an isolated or romantic vision of rural Africa were engaging with planning for a future which was disappearing before their eyes. In real terms adapted education for life in rural Africa was an education for a social and economic life that was in rapid decline...

In the context of globalisation in the twenty-first century, and the declining access of rural people to the formal job market in Africa, there would seem to be a challenge to educators to revisit these debates of the colonial era and explore if there are any critical lessons to be learned about the relationship between education and development.

In the light of this history, the overwhelming need in rural areas for schools to be more enabling and the renewed interest and focus in national and international circles, it is important to ask the question: What do parents and learners in South Africa's rural areas think today?

Parents' perspectives: education for rural development

There are two main approaches amongst parents. Both involve education being useful to them and their children in making a living and recognising and appreciating their history and culture. One approach builds on the gendered division of labour that exists in families at the moment. It links schools and curricula directly to agricultural and domestic work. It considers agriculture and domestic or home-based skills as important to rural livelihoods and maintains that schools should provide the skills and knowledge required for agricultural and community development. This approach focuses on skills like sewing (to

make local school uniforms), mechanics (to fix local water taps) and applied science (to install and maintain electricity). Many of these skills are skills that adults in the community wish they had been taught and would like to have themselves.

Mrs Y expressed her vision, from the perspective of her Eastern Cape village, as one in which education is made relevant to the problems of the community. The role of education is to serve the community and enable community development. This is to be done through a relevant curriculum, which she defines in terms of the curricula of the past:

I want our schools in the rural areas to come to the old method. A child must learn what is going to develop him or her, just like the whites (*abelungu*). Whites plough oranges with the hope of getting



the jam at a later stage. We were sewing and doing home craft at school but nowadays we don't see those things happening. It is not going to help (*ukukhumsha*) to speak English without having something that is going to help us. Agriculture is important for us because it is where we live.

I think it will be helpful for our children to go back to that sewing that was done in the past. We can open sewing projects that can help to design our school uniform. There must be health education in our schools because there are many killer diseases like HIV/AIDS, and ways of treating the water before we drink. The educators must bring back nature to the community.

The other main approach wants to make rural schooling more relevant to the modern world. In this approach the provision of computers and electricity to rural schools is the symbol of a modern education.

Current curricula are seen as outdated and of a low standard. A real education is the one that focuses on science and technology and provides modern facilities and resources. In addition, many parents have called for a wide and varied education for their children.

These approaches are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes a person will adopt and emphasise the one approach; at other times, the other. They are both focused on how education can best be linked to employment. The one might call for adult education, the other for improvements in schooling. A third approach is evident in the perspectives of learners below. It is one that sees and wants a scientific and cultural education that is simultaneously practical and meaningful and gives access to a wider world.

Learners' perspectives: equal education, democracy and social justice

Learners in Tshamavhudzi, Limpopo, think that the education they receive is not relevant to equipping them for the outside world:

Again, we in rural areas are forced to do useless subjects. When we go to tertiary level, some students are given bursaries because they have done useful subjects. We are forced to do useless subjects and the certificates we have seen are valueless.

One out-of-school learner's analysis, when the youth researcher team interviewed him, was that the problem in rural areas is that 'the education offered is based on theory; there are no practicals'. His notion of a

YEAR PLAN 2003	
DATES	ACTIVITY
22.01.03	School opening.
04.02.03	S.G.B. meeting
11.02.03	Parents meeting
14.02.03	valentines day
28.03.03	school closing
24.04.03	Jeans day
28.04.03	S.G.B. meeting
07.05.03	Parents meeting
09.06.03	Examinations
24.06.03	Submission of schedules
27.06.03	school closing
22.07.03	School opening
24.07.03	S.G.B. meeting
29.07.03	Parents meeting
22.08.03	Traditional day
25.09.03	Funny day
24.09.03	S.G.B. meeting
30.09.03	Parents meeting
10.11.03	Examinations
21.11.03	Submission of schedules
28.11.03	School tour
05.12.03	School closing



relevant education is not agricultural education in the old sense of the term, or science and technology in the formal sense of the provision of facilities. His notion of a relevant education is one that teaches about science in a real and meaningful way in order to promote understanding. What he wants is for learning to be more active:

Yes, we were just learning with nothing that I can recall that was practical except when I was doing standard four. During that year we were given practical lessons on sowing, we were given bean seedlings to sow in water. We were told that it will take so many days for it to germinate when in water in the soil. That is what we were able to practice ... It was interesting to wait and see the whole process of seed germination taking place. Even if you are at home you would long to see how your seedling is doing and want the education set-up to be designed along those lines.

What bothers this young man is that when he compares himself with learners living in urban areas, but who are in a lower grade, he finds that they are more informed than he is: 'That means your education is meant for purposes within the school premises. When you are out of school your education becomes useless, compared to a town fellow.' This comparison is made repeatedly

and learners in rural areas find themselves constantly wanting. This perception of difference is also the basis for a sense of inferiority and lack of confidence and self-esteem. In order for learning to enable confidence, self-esteem, autonomy and recognition, curricula in rural areas are in need not of adaptation but of strengthening.

A Grade 6 learner wrote an essay on her vision for rural schools. She does not polarise 'local' and 'modern' skills. She says that rural schools must help learners to update themselves about their local surroundings, as well as to understand the outside world (towns):

MY VISION FOR RURAL SCHOOLS

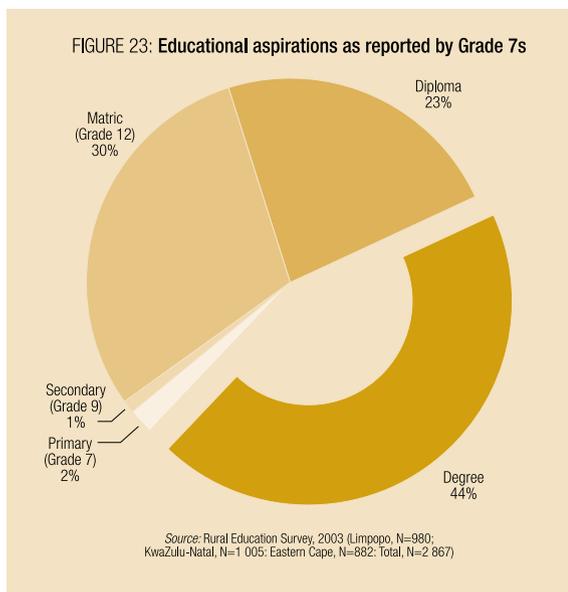
School can help us to know towns.
 School can help us to know how we learn.
 School can help us to be intelligent.
 School can help us to know problems of South Africa.
 School can help us to know history.
 School can help us to have respect for our elders.
 School can help us to know education.
 School can help us to know drama.
 School can help us to know the importance of being educated.
 School can help us update ourselves on where we are staying/living.

Learners' educational and occupational aspirations

We conducted a survey of Grade 7 learners to probe their occupational aspirations. We also asked parents what their aspirations for their children were. Families' aspirations for the education of children are high and virtually the same for boys and girls. Very few parents want their children to obtain less than Matriculation (the terminal point of high school). Only 8% aspired to Matric, with 90% wanting children to obtain a bachelor's degree or higher. Approached from another perspective, in Limpopo more than 60% want children to be educated as far as they can go, with the corresponding figures in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape being approximately 45% and 55% respectively.

The educational aspirations of learners also showed the majority aiming at a degree and/or a diploma. See Figure 23.

The reasons learners give for continuing with their studies mostly revolve around their aspirations for a 'bright future', economically and socially. Some say they appreciate education for its own sake – 'because I like going to school and learning' – and some go to school because it is



expected and because they know it pleases their parents and families. Some cannot articulate a reason. Occasionally the bones of more tragic situations show through as when one child says, 'so that I can take care of myself and my younger sister, because we lost our father and mother who went to Johannesburg'.

Children consider medical doctors to be the most important people in the community. In responding to the question of what they would like to become, most mentioned doctors first, followed by teachers, police officers, nurses, scientists and lawyers. Hardly any mentioned



wanting to become farmers, business-people or preachers. Almost half want to study at university, followed by technikons, technical colleges or teacher-training institutions. Agricultural colleges are the least popular choice.

The most popular school subjects are English, mathematics and science, which are also considered the most helpful in terms of future studies and work. Learners' aspirations appear to be a powerful argument against any proposal to orient education towards a rural future for these children. On the other hand, they may simply reflect dissatisfaction with the existing curriculum.

Figure 24 shows that whereas 26% of learners wanted to become medical doctors, 18% wanted to become police officers, 19% teachers, 12% nurses, and only 11% wanted to enter the field of science and technology. Only 7% mentioned law as a preferred option, and a miniscule

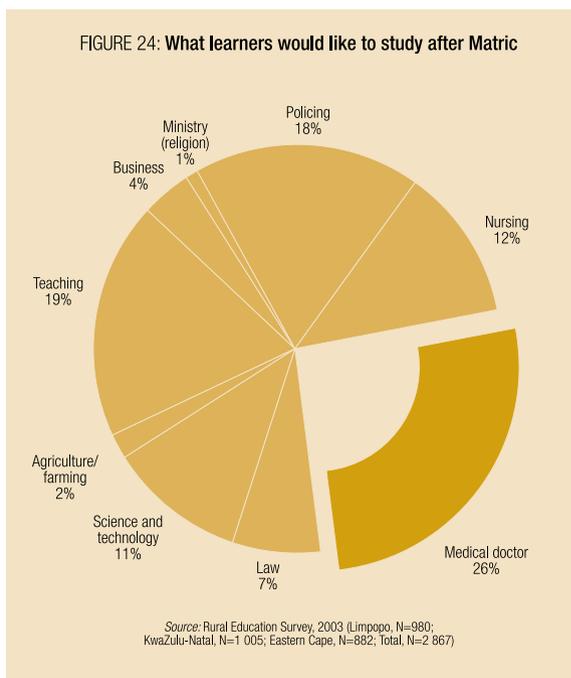
4% and 2% respectively were interested in business and agriculture/ farming. Agriculture/ farming is not a preferred occupational choice. This may be an indication of children's very real perception of the limited livelihood possibilities to be derived from it.

This is the children's wish-list. Underlying it is a sober realism about their likely fates. In her report to the imbizo at the Qandashe Primary School in Bizana in August 2003, a member of the youth researcher team introduced this note of realism when she said:

Learners are saying they go to school just to be able to read and write and some are saying they wish to go as far as Matric, but they don't see themselves as going to universities because of the scarcity of money.

She is not alone in identifying unemployment as one of the central challenges facing rural learners. Community indabas and imbizos expressed anxiety about the fact that schools do not provide a pathway to the future for learners. Whereas parents seek a solution through skills and education for agricultural and community development, learners want a modern and meaningful education, equal to the best in the country and in which they enjoy rights *within* and *through* education that will enhance their capabilities as human beings.

Families and children themselves have high ambitions and they hope that school may be the means to realise these ambitions. With few exceptions families commit substantial resources to education and, despite the costs and the financial burden on families, they are committed to it.



Though survey results show a high level of belief in schools it seems also that a substantial proportion of children have little sense of what is actually going on in the classroom. There is a sense that education brings few rewards and fails to lead to jobs. Despite this there is a profound commitment to an institution that is perceived as giving a window to the wider world and enhancing possibilities and capabilities to improve and alter life chances. In a world of poverty, hunger and sometimes despair, but also one of strong commitment to self-improvement, education offers hope.

Conclusions

This chapter focused on the vision and reality offered by the curriculum in theory and in use. The curriculum places great expectations on teachers to seed democratic values in society through democracy and social justice in the classroom. Indeed, many teachers do see themselves as having taken on board the principles and practices of outcomes-based education.

However, most teachers are ill-trained and ill-equipped to meet these extraordinarily high expectations. They are also stymied in their work by inadequate resources and support. Learners experience their classrooms as authoritarian rather than democratic places, spaces in which there is little learning and less understanding. Some parents and teachers see corporal punishment as a normal way to discipline learners but learners experience

it as abusing their rights *within* education.

The chapter shows that there are two main visions for rural education amongst parents and learners. Both see a link between education and development. Parents and caregivers hope for an education that will promote rural development, while learners hope for an education that will promote their participation as equals in social, economic and political life. Learners have aspirations for recognition and autonomy, for active and creative expression, as well as for greater control and power over everyday obstacles, decisions and outcomes.

Democratic classrooms are central to the building of democratic societies. They require curricula and teaching methods that promote and acknowledge autonomy, recognition and critical thinking. In order to take control over their own lives learners need to learn to be active, autonomous and creative beings in classrooms that respect and recognise them, but classrooms in rural schools still show too many traces of the authoritarianism of the past. There is too little respect and recognition and too few possibilities for real and autonomous learning and creative action. Possibilities exist for the development of a culture of human rights and democracy in classrooms but they require new relationships between teachers and learners. Such new relationships between teachers and learners, as well as parents and the wider community, can be forged in mutual recognition of each other's educational needs. This in turn can provide the basis for schools and classrooms to become more than white elephants of development.



Democracy in schools



Democracy in schools

Everybody in Mnqagayi – the principals of schools, the izinduna, their right-hand men (*amaphoyisa ezinduna*), young people and community councillors – everybody had the same message for the youth researcher team in this KwaZulu-Natal community.

‘All the people we spoke to,’ they declared in their report to the imbizo held at the end of the research process, ‘raised concerns that as a community we are not united in partnership for a common cause.’



The second point they found was that ‘development is slow in our community’ and that ‘when we have to deal with development we have no public representation’. In this and many other communities, there is the sense of a need to revive community structures so that people themselves can begin to solve problems that need attention.

Despite the commonly-held view that strong neighbourly bonds hold rural communities together, deep divisions run through some of the communities around schooling and education. These rifts appear between community members and generations within communities, between communities and schools, and also within schools. Many people and structures have an influence on the school. How they are involved with one another and the rural school is critical in understanding the need for active work in and around schooling, and education more broadly, by all the constituencies in rural areas. We shall consider the roles of, and relationship between, schools, communities and their teachers, community and traditional leaders and district officials.

The School Governing Body is intended to be the pre-eminent vehicle for the development of an educational community and practice around the school. The South African Schools Act (1996) envisaged SGBs as realising the vision of democracy in schools. However, like all development, this requires the active involvement of all concerned; and for the democratic school to grow, socio-economic needs must be

addressed as a matter of right. How fertile is the ground in rural schools for SGBs to be the agents of development and democracy in local communities? To what extent are they the hub around which a new vision can be realised for rural schools? A vision is needed in which there are no barriers to learners' participation in school, and in which schools become centres as much for the human development of children as for community rural development and adult education.

This chapter will look at the relationships between teachers and communities in terms of the position of teachers, and will then move on to a discussion of the relationship between teachers and learners, the relationship of parents, guardians and caregivers to the school and the relative involvement by different constituencies in SGBs. It will consider also the influence of local community leaders and traditional authorities as well as that of the more distant representatives of the state, district officials. It will show that some scope for change lies in the hands of communities themselves.

Relationships between home and school

We have already explored the conflict between the domestic duties required of children and the demands of schools. Although parents have faith in education and wish their children to be educated, the pressures of everyday life result in a conflict between the achievement of their dreams for the education of their children and the survival of their families. These conflicts also overlap with deep historical

divisions in communities over responses to formal schooling.

Teachers and communities

In many communities there is a deep rift between teachers and the guardians of children in their care. Some communities are proud of their schools and teachers, and do want the 'calves of the manure', as they call teachers from the community returning to teach in it, to teach their children. There are also serious concerns.

Criticisms of teachers encompass a complex set of issues related to their lack of qualifications, subject knowledge, commitment and sense of vocation. Community researchers picked this up when they recorded the following view:

Some teachers are not well-qualified and they are a problem to learners who are willing to learn. Due to the lack of knowledge on the part of teachers, learners are forced to study what they don't like or want and in which they are not interested. Again what I have discovered is that if one is doing a job one doesn't like, one does not commit wholeheartedly to it. For example, we have teachers who hate teaching but they are teaching, the reason being that they will be earning at the end of the month.

Interviews revealed that parents like teachers who are hard working, who give children homework, make contact with them when there is a problem, are patient and helpful with children and who make children want to go to school; and these teachers certainly exist. What parents do not like are infrequent attendance by teachers, assaults on children and the use of children for tasks other than learning; and this is far too often the case.

But who are the educators in schools? What is their situation?

Educators in rural schools

When we speak of educators in this book, we refer to all educational personnel who are involved in teaching and learning. It is a term that encompasses both principals and teachers. We also distinguish between principals and teachers when we refer to their different roles. In the previous chapter, we saw that teachers are expected to achieve a major transformation of classrooms, but how able and equipped are they to do so?

Primary school teachers in rural areas have had a complex history. From the first mission schools, African teachers taught in primary schools. Initially, these were only for the few. From the 1950s there were massive enrolments of African learners in lower and higher primary classes but the overwhelming majority of African learners were exposed only to primary education. From the 1970s, high schools began to be built but they are still in short supply. Training for primary teacher education was confined to colleges that proliferated across the homelands and purveyed little

more than a repetition of the high school syllabus wrapped in an authoritarian pedagogy.

African teacher associations played an important role in homeland education, and provided an avenue of upward mobility within the educational apparatus for some of their members. On the whole, however, this route was open mainly to men who dominated primary school principalships. In time, as resistance to apartheid gathered momentum in rural areas in the 1980s, new teacher unions emerged to challenge the vision and role of the older teacher associations.

In the 1980s and 1990s, the teacher unions helped reshape the professional identities of rural teachers through mobilisation around new national policies and priorities. By 2003, the climate of teaching and the expectations of teachers had changed significantly from the old apartheid days. New National Norms and Standards for Educators expect teachers to fulfil different roles from those they performed under apartheid. Teachers are expected to

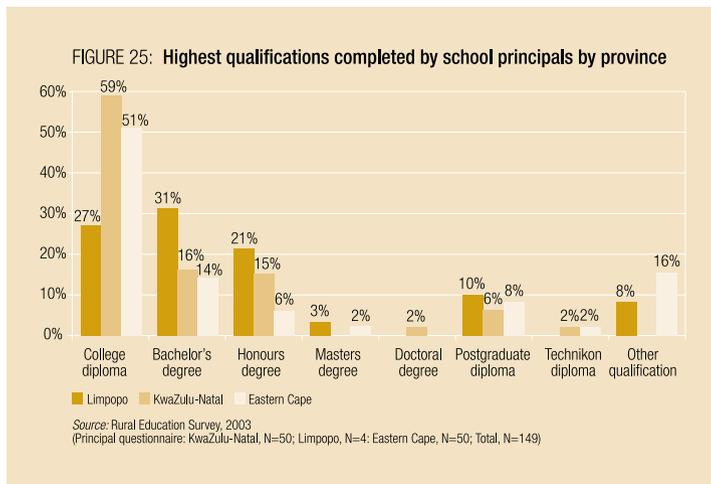


be mediators of learning, interpreters and designers of learning programmes and materials, leaders, administrators and managers, scholars, researchers and lifelong learners, community members, citizens and counsellors, assessors and learning area or phase specialists. Within each of these roles they are expected to demonstrate well-defined practical, foundational and reflexive competencies. In the midst of this bewildering array of roles and demands teachers are struggling to deliver education of adequate quality and they are blamed for not doing so.

The roles that teachers are expected to perform, alongside the expectation that they will implement a curriculum that will empower children and transform the classroom, are extremely difficult. They place a burden on teachers in rural schools that they simply cannot carry. Little in their own educational experience and teacher training has prepared them for these roles and expectations. Their situation in rural schools (including their working conditions) is not encouraging. Little wonder, as we shall see, that there is such a large gap between expectation and reality.

School principals

In any educational system, the school principal is a crucial figure. In a system until recently as authoritarian as that of South Africa, where this tradition cannot be eliminated overnight, this is particularly so. In rural areas, where close-knit networks may make it more difficult than in cities to express dissent or question established authority, this tendency is even more marked. The appointment of a new principal can make or break a school.



Our survey revealed that the gender dynamics of principalships have improved since the apartheid days. This may have an impact on relations within schools but we have no evidence for it. Only a slightly higher proportion of men (51%) than women head the schools studied. They are mostly Christian and mainly between the ages of 45 and 55. About 8% are younger than 35 while a mere 15% are older than 55 years.

By far the majority of principals in KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape (59% and 51% respectively) have a college diploma. In Limpopo, 27% of principals have a college diploma. And in Limpopo, a far higher percentage (31%) than in either KwaZulu-Natal or the Eastern Cape have a Bachelor's degree. See Figure 25.

Principals are ambiguous figures. In all but the biggest schools – and the rural schools of this study are mostly quite small – they teach with their colleagues. They also manage and sometimes discipline their colleagues. Principals are generally union members but are also the voice of central authority. They have to implement curricula and observe management criteria

that are national or regional, but they must also take account of the norms and preferences of local people. They are part of the community but, in most remote rural areas, are often to some degree isolated by their prestige and education. A researcher captured the pride yet also loneliness of an Eastern Cape school principal in an essay on a day in the life of a principal she shadowed:

I asked her what motivated her to do what she was doing and she said she liked children. They come to school without knowledge, and she likes to change and develop them. As a principal she has no problem since she is exposed to the community. She wakes up in the morning, because she knows that as a leader she must do the right thing so that the staff can be easily disciplined and instructed. She says there is a good relationship between the school and community members, because they erected this school and it is recognised. At the beginning she felt proud since she never thought that she would be a leader, and she is still proud, but she is discouraged by the government not building a new school.

When she first came to this school, she felt that she was faced with a big challenge, but she worked hard because there was shortage of staff. She wanted to see the product of her hard work. She always has hopes, but she felt more hopeful after the 1994 democratic elections, only to find now that the new officials do not follow certain criteria in the development of needy schools, they give favours to people they know. The community has been working so hard trying to improve the situation of the school. She usually breaks from school at 14h45, visits the Circuit Office, and gets home at about 16h30–17h00. She starts preparing for the following day, lesson plans and for meetings. Since it is Friday she will break earlier than other days and sign out in the register at 13h00. After school she prepares her supper and she usually goes to bed around 19h00–19h30.

The principal plays the pivotal role in formal and informal interactions between school and community. Formally, SGBs are the main focus of this interaction.

Teachers

Teachers are important because they make the difference as to whether schooling is meaningful for learners or not. Their relationships with parents and learners, and the school community at large, influence the overall ethos and climate of teaching and learning. Along with the curriculum, the quality of education is usually linked to their qualifications and commitments. Teachers can make a difference to whether learners feel safe, respected and valued. As such, they are vital as role models; but in their everyday practices and language they can also reinforce prejudice, discrimination and sexism. Many teachers in rural areas, for example, require learners to perform chores like sweeping the classroom floor or going to fetch something from the shop. These small practices make all the difference to what children learn and do not learn about themselves as gendered beings.

Who are the teachers in rural areas? In our study they are mainly women. Their motivations for going into teaching are varied but strong themes seem to be family histories, few alternative choices, role models, poor career guidance, the availability of teacher training colleges and chance. Conditions in rural schools, as well as their own earning capacity and aspirations, mean that they prefer not to live near the schools where they teach. They send their own children to schools outside the rural communities. This has



implications for, amongst other things, absenteeism and connections with the communities in which they teach.

Let us probe a little more deeply into these issues. We look first at pathways into teaching, then at teacher qualifications and training, whether they live and educate their own children in the villages where they teach, working conditions and absenteeism. We then examine the consequences of these issues for relationships between teachers and learners and teachers and parents.

Pathways to teaching

Whereas some teachers became teachers through a sense of vocation, others became teachers by chance, or because there were no alternatives. Teaching as a contribution to community development motivated this teacher from Malamangwa in Limpopo:

I sat down, looked and realised that I needed to develop my community by encouraging the younger generation because there were no teachers coming from my village at that time. They were all commuters from other villages and the school was not normal because, as these

people used transport, they were usually late. As a community member, I saw it as fit and proper for me to become a teacher because that is where I could spend most of my time with children.

Coming from a family of teachers inspired some to go into teaching but the influence of teachers, who had been positive role models in their own lives, was probably an important influence for many more. This teacher from Bizana had both these streams of influence acting on her:

In my family even the older people were educators and that was an influence by itself. Almost all my biological siblings except my sisters-in-law were educators, and the sisters-in-law were the only people who came with different professions ... What actually prompted me to become a teacher was my biology teacher in Standard 9 and 10, Mr P. I liked the way he treated learners, and at that time I wanted to be an educator ... I don't want to lie and say my intention was to help my community. I've just discovered what teaching does for the communities. So ... I grew up in an educator-infested family and the influence of my Standard 9 and 10 teacher, I wanted to be like him ... I remember when I passed Standard 10 my family wanted me to do law.



Fortunately I was alone when I went to register at the university so I registered for a BA in education.

For many, teaching was a second choice. They wanted to be nurses, lawyers, journalists, pilots, social workers and so on, but because of financial constraints they could not fulfil these career aspirations. One teacher in Limpopo described how he was originally not interested in teaching, but gradually came to love it:

I actually never intended to be a teacher but I wanted to be a pilot but because of the financial constraints I couldn't become a pilot. After matriculation in 1986 I worked for two years as an assistant teacher. From there a new college was opened in my area where, because I didn't know what to do, I applied. Fortunately enough I was admitted. It was a new college with many facilities. You know after six months (we did orientation for six months) I started to love teaching because of the facilities available at the college, like the language laboratory, science laboratory.

Pathways to teaching seem to comprise a haphazard combination of events. A young person in Bizana, Eastern Cape, who had spent some time talking to teachers, described how the lack of career guidance made it appear that teaching was the only available option:

Teachers said they never knew what careers they should follow and that they were just going to school for the sake of satisfying their parents because their parents chose careers for them. Some of them never dreamed about their careers. They complain about the career guidance that was not there during their lifetime because people become lost when selecting an appropriate career for the future. They don't have hope about the education they give to the learners because of the lack of learning materials. They are not sure if this education that they give will benefit the learners.

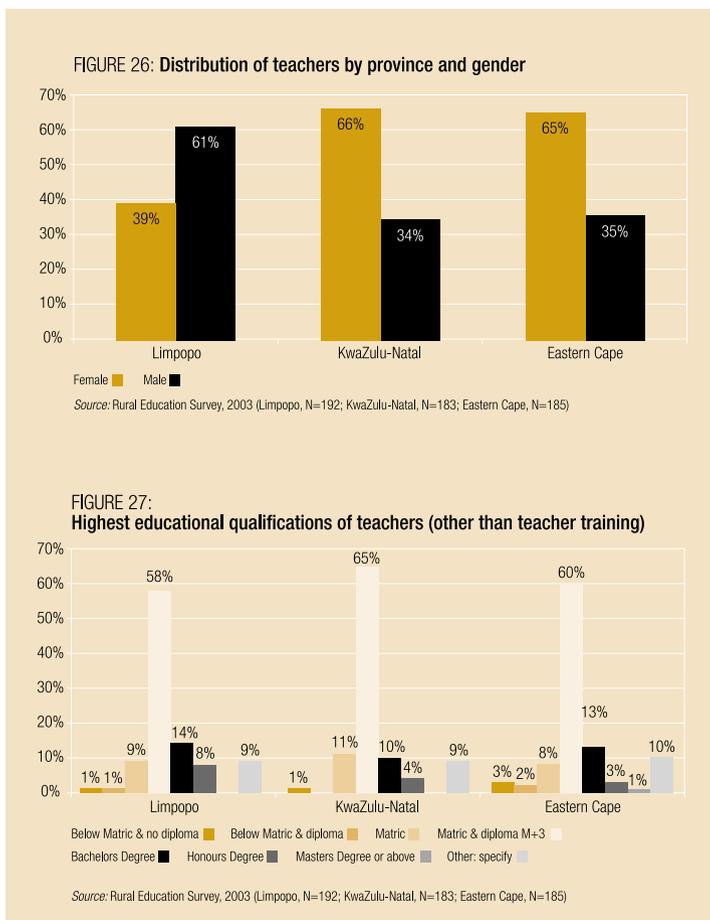
Teacher qualifications and training

We surveyed 197 teachers in Limpopo, 182 in KwaZulu-Natal, and 184 in the Eastern Cape. Figure 26 shows that there were more female primary school teachers in our sample in KwaZulu-Natal (66%) and the Eastern Cape (65%) than in Limpopo (39%).

The survey shows that although there are a fair number of male teachers in Limpopo, the majority in the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal are young women between the ages of 31 and 40. They describe themselves as Christian (86%). Although the language of learning and teaching in Grades 6 and 7 is either English or Afrikaans, neither of these is the home language of the teachers in our sample.

The highest qualification for teachers is an M+3, which was probably gained from the now-closed colleges of education. Figure 27 shows that the highest qualification for the majority of primary school teachers in the three provinces is the M+3. Ten percent or less of teachers in all three provinces were unqualified and teaching with only a Matric. In each province there were also a few teachers with less than a Matric and either with or without a diploma.

Teachers in rural schools have their roots amongst the rural poor. Their parents are domestic workers, casual workers or unemployed. The overwhelming majority have children, and their partners are either unemployed, teachers themselves or are employed in a range of semi-skilled occupations. Most teachers do not live near the school in which they teach. On average, they live 36 km away from the school. In the Eastern Cape, 79% of teachers do not



live in the village where they teach, compared with 63% in Limpopo and 60% in KwaZulu-Natal. 6% in Limpopo, 2% in KwaZulu-Natal and 3% in the Eastern Cape live in the village during the week and go home to town over the weekend.

Most of the teachers in rural areas are involved in some form of community activity, not in the communities in which they teach, but where they live: in the church, on community infrastructure-improvement work such as the 'electric committee', the 'water committee' and the 'health committee', sports, funeral and burial societies, as well as cultural activities, youth development and women's organisations. Some are HIV/AIDS

facilitators and counsellors, 'helping orphans to find grants' and 'helping them to get pension'.

As Figure 28 shows, of the teachers in our sample, only 17% in Limpopo, and 3% in both KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape send their children to the same schools as those in which they teach.

Teachers earn relatively sound salaries in contexts where incomes are very low indeed. But this does not always cover all their costs. Most of those surveyed who send their own children to other schools spend an average of R1 292 on school fees for primary schools and R2 580 on secondary education. In the villages where they teach, parents pay substantially less.

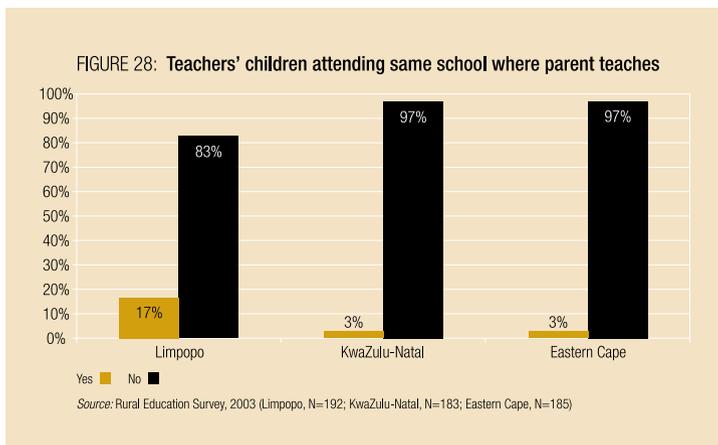
The three highest items of expenditure for educators per month were food, education and maintenance of their homes. The highest items of expenditure for educators vary by province. In KwaZulu-Natal, almost 40% cited food as their principal item of expenditure. In Limpopo, food and education are equally rated and in the Eastern Cape, more than 40% of educators said that education is their highest item of expenditure per month.

Fully 74% said they also spend their own money on school supplies which include school trips, stationery, books and school meals. 6% admitted to doing extra work to supplement their wages. They could add up to 30% of their salary with extra work. This usually includes some form of selling – from sweets, snacks, cigarettes, vegetables and fruit to insurance and commercial products. Some also engage in poultry farming, sign-writing, video graphics and tailoring. One or two engage in activities related to teaching, such as adult education and the translation of texts.

Working conditions in rural areas

Teachers themselves compare their conditions unfavourably with those in urban areas. One Eastern Cape teacher described the perceived advantages of urban areas as follows:

There is a big difference. Let me put it this way. In the township the advantage is that resources are there and that makes teaching easier for you. Another thing is that learners are exposed to many things since they live in the townships. So they know many things, unlike a rural child. I don't want to mention television and papers. And teaching is more challenging in rural areas compared to townships. Here you have to explain more for a child to get the understanding of what you intend to teach. In townships, teaching is also challenging because you are dealing with a child who is exposed to many things. Then, if you are not informed it is easy for them to notice you. But teaching in rural areas is more challenging because you have to devise means and ways to use what we call teaching aids (now we say resources) to make the child to understand.





In addition to these challenges, there are those described by Jon Lewis of the South African Democratic Teachers' Union:

Educators, like health professionals, have sometimes been reticent about committing themselves to work in the rural areas. Problems they experience include the following:

- Poorly-resourced schools – many without adequate buildings, water, sanitation and electricity, let alone libraries and computers.
- Lack of access to training and upgrading facilities either through contact or via the Internet.
- Lack of infrastructure including transport, communications, shops, banks, ATMs and other services.
- Lack of suitable housing – by urban standards – or no housing at all.
- Should educators working in former homelands, where customary land law prevails, choose to build their own homes they are not eligible for the government housing allowance since they do not have tenure.

There are of course educators who do take up positions in rural areas, but some do so reluctantly given the practical problems experienced.

A common strategy is to commute to the school from an urban centre (or at least the nearest small town). This addresses some of the problems, but has a number of disadvantages:

- High transport costs and wear and tear on vehicles (this is moderated by the organisation of lift clubs).
- More seriously, it means that educators' commitment to the school and the wider community is necessarily reduced because of the reduced time available. Extramural activities may suffer. Also long distances, poor roads and inclement weather are likely to impact on attendance.

In the health sector, government has adopted a number of strategies to keep doctors in rural areas: community service for interns, Cuban doctors, and more recently the introduction of incentives. Rural schools in certain areas have long relied on expatriate teachers. The Education Labour Relations Council is now discussing incentives for teachers in rural areas. Additional proposals include the following: making available the government housing allowance in 'deep rural' areas and providing housing near the schools. Another recent proposal –

which costs nothing, but recognises the difficult and important work done by rural educators – is to explicitly credit rural teaching for promotion purposes.

The vast majority of teachers (94%) in our sample are union members. The two most important issues teachers expect the union to take up are salaries (72%) and working conditions (24%). Several teachers had been redeployed, 47% because they had been in excess elsewhere and 42% at their personal request. They spend an average of four or five days a month on official, non-teaching duties which include mainly teacher union and training activities undertaken by the provincial departments of education.

Teacher absenteeism

Under these conditions, educator absenteeism is a frequent occurrence. When the research team visited the sampled schools they found principals present in 82% of the schools, and deputy principals and senior teachers acting on behalf of principals in 11% and 7% of the schools respectively. In the latter group of schools, both the principal and deputy were absent and therefore a senior teacher was interviewed. The main reason given for the principal not being available was 'school-related duties'. Other reasons put forward included that s/he was on casual or sick leave, out on personal business, on duty but temporarily unavailable, expected to arrive later, or that the principal's post was vacant at that moment.

Teacher absenteeism was evident in some of the schools. On average, 13% of the female and 8% of the male teachers were absent on the day the research team visited the schools. The reasons for absenteeism included being sick, and attending official

meetings, official workshops or conferences.

Teacher absenteeism is a major cause of concern for parents. Caregivers at a Bizana School Experience Workshop (10 July 2003) in the Eastern Cape charged that:

Educators come late to school. Sometimes they do not teach. School sometimes breaks early without parents' knowledge. Sometimes the school breaks for educators to do shopping in town. Parents do not have any say in decision-making. They [educators] just do as they wish. There are no monthly and quarterly meetings to report on finances. Parents get reports only in December 2003.

Teachers and learners

Although the same picture does not prevail equally over all sites and within all sites, there are great conflicts between teachers and learners and between teachers and parents over various aspects related to teachers' perceived lack of commitment. One researcher's journal shows how her attempt to assert her rights to education and fair treatment in class were abused:

Even if we go to educators and complain, they come up with an answer about this, and when we go to them, we are not able to ask them anything because we know they are rough and cruel, they talk to us harshly. That decreases the love for schooling in us.

We have explained earlier that they are cruel and they beat us up, to such an extent that we fail to think, and we lose the desire to learn. They also like to send us to the river during lesson time. You see what's happening here? When you are at home you are sent to the river. And now when you go to the place where you hope to get an education, you find that you are doing the one and the same thing, there is no difference between staying at home and going to school. When testing time comes, we write and fail the test and we get the stick once

Peddie, Eastern Cape



SCHOOL

Strength: 'It was built through community efforts and our children get education.'



NOMZAMO PRESCHOOL

Strength: 'By the time our children start school they are bright. They are taught to sing, draw and pray and to differentiate colours.'



BONGWENI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Strength: 'Children learn how to read and write. But the building is not up to standard.'

more, because the only thing they know is to beat us up with the stick. The manner in which they teach us is full of ruthlessness. They rush us when they want an answer. They don't give us time to think. They also call us names, they use your body defects to call you, and no one enjoys being called by what he is. Those things are embarrassing, and you can't concentrate, and each time an educator comes in, you know that you are going to be heartbroken. I think that as learners, we do have rights to ask if there is anything we didn't get quite well.

Her personal view is that if there are bad relationships between teachers and learners there can be no progress. She says that the cause of bad blood between educators and learners is the lack of respect between them. And 'if there is no respect between them, then that increases an unfavourable climate that actually stifles effective learning'. From the perspective of the learners there is little recognition of them as sentient beings.

Our survey asked teachers if they knew the name of every child who attends school regularly. Most of them said that they do. When asked if they know whether any learners in their class have lost family members due to HIV/AIDS, more than half claimed not to know. We also asked what action they take if an enrolled learner does not attend school for more than ten out of 15 consecutive days. Over 98% indicated that they do take action and that this action mainly involves enquiring from parents.

There is still a sense that teachers are not committed to their work. At Manyoni Primary School the youth researcher team centred its report to the imbizo held in August 2003 on 'WHY?? The questions are: Why do local teachers not seem to be enthusiastic about their work? Why are children not motivated about education?

Their main finding was that 'there is no communication between teachers and learners'. Teachers, they suggested, were helpless in the face of children's late-coming, absenteeism and poor concentration in class, and more so in the absence of adequate teaching and learning materials. Their frustrations are often taken out on the children. Sometimes the problem extends beyond the classroom to their own treatment at the hands of the community. Our Lady Frere community researcher's journal documents the story of one teacher's reported experience:

24 July 2003

I woke up and prepared to go to Vulindlela Primary where I was going to meet Miss N. At 10h20, I left home because we had set the appointment for 11h00. I rushed to the school and got there at 10h40 and waited for 11h00. Miss N asked us to come to her class. We checked the tape and explained the procedure and then started with the interview. It became clear that she wanted to voice her opinion about the school and the things that hurt her and the challenges she encountered when she arrived at the school. It shocked me that if one comes to work in a community, people would reject her to the extent of trying to hurt her physically. After the interview she told us that she forgot to tell us that the other day she left her wallet on the table and went out, but remembered that she needed something from the wallet. When she went back to get the wallet, she found it open and the money was missing and she asked the Grade 1 learners and they denied any knowledge of the money and who took it. She says she does not trust anyone, even Grade 1 learners.

On the whole, relationships between teachers and parents and between teachers and learners appear to be fraught. On the surface things go well but underneath there are simmering resentments and sometimes anger as a result of unmet needs and unrealised capabilities.

Parents and schools

It is important for parents to be involved with, and supportive of, their children's education. Children feel encouraged when their parents are informed about their progress in school. Sometimes they also need their parents' support and assistance. How involved parents feel with the teaching and learning of their children is partly reflected in the relationship they have with the schools and teachers.

Such strained relationships between teachers and learners and between teachers and parents as discussed previously are reflected in the nature of parents' participation in school matters. Despite their support for, and vision of, what education might do to lift families from poverty, they do not have much of a relationship with schools. As a parent from Fuyatha says: 'There is a pressing need for a sound relationship between the educators, learners and parents ... Parents should continually assess the progress of their kids. If they are not satisfied, they should get closer to the educators for clarity.' However, the reality is that many parents do not set foot on the school premises. Frequently, parental involvement seems confined to uniforms and fees. Many understand the need for involvement, but do not find it easy to act on this understanding.

Teachers, and some parents, often feel that parents do not co-operate adequately with the school. A parent at Nyembe, KwaZulu-Natal, said: 'The school invites parents to come to school and discuss important issues, but most of the time they don't come in their numbers to attend meetings. It is very rare that parents' attendance is good.' A teacher at Tshamavhudzi, Limpopo, says: 'Only a few parents par-

ticipate in the school life. Other parents do not visit the school even when invited to attend meetings.'

The relationship that parents have with the school can be measured by the amount of contact they have with their children's teachers to discuss issues such as discipline, academic performance and attendance. This may be undermined by tenuous or non-existent literacy, often combined with embarrassment about their financial state, non-payment of school fees and unfamiliarity with the school system.

There is a strong belief in education but a generally distant relationship between many parents and guardians and schools. Great sacrifices are made for an education that many comprehend as giving only a remote possibility of entering the modern, almost certainly urban economy. There is a great need and high hopes for what can be achieved by education but apparently very little understanding of, or involvement with, its substance.

School Governing Bodies

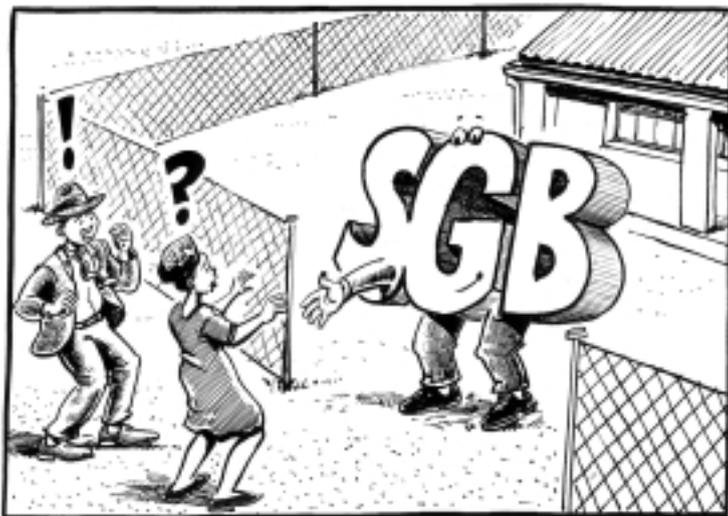
Contemporary discussions on school governance focus on decentralisation of control, both from the political centre to provinces and localities, and from the schools themselves to communities, parents, and in high schools, to learners. These complex issues relate to the nature of equality, democracy and equity in contemporary South African education, a South Africa that is part of a changing, globalising world.

These are discussions, however, that seldom refer to the *specific* circumstances of rural areas or the ex-homelands. What does it mean to promote educational

equity, democracy and quality in the context not only of poverty, low levels of education amongst parents and strained relations between teachers and parents, but also in the context of a long authoritarian tradition and a cohort of unelected 'traditional leaders', the legitimacy of some of whom is open to question, yet who appear to be consolidating their authority in the ex-homelands?

South African parents and guardians have an accepted role in the education of their children. Since 1994 they have the main legal responsibility for educating their children. They have the right to be consulted about the form of that education, and must be enabled to participate in its governance. The parents' right to choose includes choice of the language and the cultural or religious basis of children's education, taking account of the rights of others and the choices of the growing child.

That said, what factors may make it difficult for parents to become involved in the schools their children attend? How do parents relate to formal structures intended to promote their involvement, such as School Governing Bodies?



SGBs are the organisations intended to extend control of school education to parents and others concerned in the process. Educationist Crain Soudien describes some of the paradoxes involved:

When the new government came to power in 1994, governance infrastructure in black schools had all but collapsed. As part of the process of rebuilding the school system, the government passed the SASSA as an attempt to give parents the responsibility of managing the schools their children attend and of legitimating parental participation in the life of the school.

The Act required that schools establish School Governing Bodies (SGBs) to be composed of parents, teachers, students (in secondary schools) and members of the school support staff. This structure was to develop school policy across a host of areas and to ensure that the school managers would carry out this policy. Achieving this, however, was compromised by the way in which the new legislation framed identities in the schools, particularly parental identities.

The Act tended to project parental identity around a restrictive middle-class notion of who parents were and how they functioned. Central to this were particular understandings of how time is used, what domestic resources are available for schooling, how much cultural capital parents can draw on in relating to school and so on. The inadvertent upshot was to privilege the middle classes, black and white, and to marginalise the poor who generally did not have the time or resources of their better-off counterparts to participate in school governance. In black schools, SGBs continued to be dominated by principals or teachers. In formerly white schools, middle-class white parents tended to be voted on to governing bodies and positions of leadership within them.

Soudien's argument applies to rural schools in ex-homelands with even greater force than to those in urban townships.

All schools surveyed had SGBs. Overall, 45% of teachers indicated that they participate in the SGB. Teacher participation is higher in the Eastern Cape and Limpopo at 51.1% and 48.2% respectively than in KwaZulu-Natal (35%). The overwhelming majority, around 90% of teachers, think that SGBs are useful. Responses to open-ended questions in the survey indicated that SGBs are concerned firstly with financial matters: payment of school fees, managing finances and fundraising. Building maintenance is the second most common topic of discussion and concern. Appointment of staff, school discipline, security and school food are other, but less frequent, topics of discussion. SGB meetings do not appear to focus on curriculum and quality of education or on social issues such as gender violence or HIV/AIDS.

The participation of parents in the running of schools can be described as ceremonial. Most parents do not feel able to fully engage with teachers over the education of their children, nor do they have the resources to participate in the SGB or to hold it accountable. The involvement of parents seems to be largely limited to control over school furniture and repairs and assisting with feeding schemes.

Decisions on critical issues (employment policy, school management, managing school funds, school fees, uniforms and late-coming) seem to be the domain of educators in the SGB, often dominated by principals. As a local researcher at Mngqayisi, KwaZulu-Natal says, 'as a member of the SGB, the principal acts

alone as no educators or parents seem functional or active in this structure'.

Though parents appreciate that schools support social norms, on other issues they may feel that schools are less responsive to their concerns. These accusations largely revolve around enrolment, access, participation and progression by learners, and complaints about teachers' 'unprofessional conduct'. The school invites parents to meetings but when they complain about issues like educators' chronic absenteeism, as one parent says, 'nothing is done to correct the situation'. This begs the question as to the power of parents to ensure that complaints are dealt with. How can the formal right to participate be transformed into reality?

There are many problems in running SGBs in impoverished rural areas. Even in a well-run school where relations between staff and parents seem good, issues such as low attendance at SGB meetings, lack of skills ('our treasurer has a problem with financial accountability that is required by the Department. There are numerous forms written in English that need to be filled.') and the difficulty of persuading impoverished families to pay fees are constant problems.

Some SGBs are dysfunctional, with the structure often 'in the principal's pocket'. As a parent at another Eastern Cape school said, 'I want to say this school is struggling because the principal is creating her own laws to rule the school'. It may be that even here other factors are involved. A teacher from the same school said: 'A female heads this school, so they believe a person who can lead is a man. I would just cite one of the stories where I discovered that they

really believe that only a man can lead, you know. I remember I met with these parents – males – in town some time ago. One of them introduced me to his colleague he said is T, the real principal of the school. He said, “the female is just holding for some time”. So I’m trying to say there is that silliness.’

A speaker at an Eastern Cape SGB meeting gives a clear sense of the SGB’s struggle to succeed when he says:

The SGB should call the parents and tell them that it delays children’s schooling when they take turns in taking the cows to the dip. We need to win the parents first. Parents need to be called to look at their children’s books. Parents from this community do not care for their children’s education. Sometimes even when you give children books to ask their parents to help them, children say their parents just ignore them and say teachers should not involve them when children do not know their schoolwork. The principal does not come during school opening, avoiding parents who always shout at her when they take their children to other schools. Parents insult the principal for children who are failing. Democracy is creating problems in this community. Parents are convinced today and they come again tomorrow saying the same thing ... The policy is that people should start from the principal and listen and not just go to the SGB member’s home and confront him or her.

Most principals appreciate the attitudes of many parents towards their schools. The way they express this, however, reinforces the impression of the merely auxiliary role of parents. They say that they ensure that children attend and do their homework, and that they help raise money for the school and improve school infrastructure, but they also think that some parents have an unhelpful attitude to the school. They

complain that such parents do not participate in SGB activities, do not attend school meetings, are hostile to educators and do not take responsibility for their children’s attendance.

This apparent failure by parents and guardians to engage fully with SGBs, in spite of their overwhelmingly positive attitude towards education, is not a simple matter. Indeed, there seems to be a more general problem: it appears that there is often a general lack of participation in community organisations. In part, this may be due to a lack of formal training and, in part, principals may often fail to implement the spirit, if not the letter, of the law. Above all, it may be that the ethos of the school tends to intimidate village people unfamiliar with the concepts and language of the teachers. Women in particular are excluded or subordinated, with traditional forums and elected structures like SGBs dominated by men. Women seem to be relegated to kitchen-oriented activities like feeding schemes, with little done towards redefining their role in community and school leadership structures. As a Tshamavhudzi, Limpopo, parent put it, ‘women offer voluntary service in areas of feeding schemes and teaching traditional dance to young people’.

There are also voices that relate inadequacies in the SGBs to what they claim is a wider atmosphere of authoritarianism and autocracy. One civic leader is very clear when he sees SGBs as white elephants:

With regard to SGBs and school management, it remains unclear who is who in terms of decision-making. A lot still needs to be done in capacity building to empower SGBs to become true

representatives of the community. The prevailing trend is for SGBs to sing praises of the school manager and rubber-stamp decisions of which they are not part. Autocracy is still ruling in our school; teachers are governed by fear. They fear as opposed to respect the principal, just as the SGB cannot challenge him. Principals are imposing 'yes people' in SGBs. The community feels that it is not represented; its aspirations and frustrations are not on the map of school management. Essentially, the SGB is a ceremonial or 'white elephant' kind of institution. (*Hikokwalaho va aka tiko va titwa va nga yimeriwanga hi ndlela leyi hetisekeke; vutitwi, ku tikeriwa, ku navela ka vona a hi leswi swivumbaka nongonoko wa swikolo ngopfu-ngopfu loko swi ta ethleweni ra vufambisi bya swikolo.*) The educator component makes strategic decisions on behalf of the SGB and subsequently the community.

Public schools should be made easy for learners with disabilities or special educational needs. There are learners condemned to wheelchairs. Others are deaf and dumb. Schools should be user-friendly environments for all these categories. It is the responsibility of SGBs to cater for inclusivity in public schools. SASA states that it is a constitutional right of every child to have access to free compulsory education. What is the SGB doing to ensure that no child is denied access?

An SGB member equated a non-functioning clinic with the situation of the school in his discussion of the role of external development agents and conflicts within the community over how to resolve problems:

The reason for us not having a clinic is because our community is not united, and the powers-that-be are not in touch with their constituency. Therefore, whatever we try to achieve doesn't go anywhere. Yes, we don't have a clinic, but we do have empty buildings, with no nursing staff inside. The reason for this was that initially we got assistance from another district, but when we had to move to our

own centre here no proper consultations were made, and those professionals who were helping us simply abandoned us. What they are doing is wrong: the last time they set foot here was in March; that is why it seems as if there is no clinic whatsoever. Even when it comes to the schools issue, I'm going to repeat the same thing: certain people in the community want the school to be built in their area so that it will be closer to them, and then you will find another one pulling in the other direction. (*Futhi uzothola ukuthi omunye udonsela le omunye naye adonsele le, akukho ukubambisana.*) To conclude, I can say that we are not united as a community to speak with one voice. (*Ukusonga, ngingasho ukuthi asibambisananga njengomphakathi futhi asikhulumi ngazwi linye.*) Even izinduna who are our authority persons are not in touch with their own communities.

In answer to the question of how schools and SGBs could better meet community needs, the gathering agreed that 'real community discussions about education can help to bring different sectors together to find solutions to the challenges to the education of village children'. Parents and the community, the gathering felt, should find ways to co-operate with schools to deal with the impact of HIV/AIDS, drop-outs and the limitations of rural life. Staff should live in the communities where they teach as part of a joint responsibility for the quality and kind of education for children. SGBs should represent the wishes and needs of the community. Ways must be found to bring fresh and new ideas into education and thus into the community. Schools should expose learners to wider and more contemporary experiences than they do now. When this happens, then education can assist communities to confront the multiple challenges that they face on a daily basis.

Despite all this, the creativity as well as vulnerability of rural communities should be kept in mind. As Sandile Mbokazi, a researcher on this project put it, schools in rural areas are disadvantaged and impoverished but they often deal innovatively with their plight through:

- **School-community gardens, in partnership with private firms and the NGO sector.** Schools harvest vegetables for feeding schemes in the fight against malnutrition thereby improving learner concentration during lessons.

- **Partnerships to support the building of classrooms.** This has improved the physical condition of schools and reduced vandalism.
- **Fundraising when fees and departmental allocations are not sufficient.** Through this, schools have increased resources for teaching and learning, as well as for extramural activities. Parents often willingly provide such financial support over and above fees, despite their low income.

Manyoni, KwaZulu-Natal



HIGH SCHOOL BUILDING

Point of light: 'We have been complaining over the years for a high school; now one is under construction. We are grateful the other photograph depicts a wall of the school started by the community in 2002 which had to stop due to lack of funds. I have picked up that the government has pumped in funds to continue the construction. It is however, difficult for the builders since there is no water nearby. But the process has given us hope because we were faced with the problem of massive drop-outs before Matric as a result of the lack of a secondary school in the village. Now that we will have one, children will no longer have to go places far from home to further their studies.'

Community leaders and schools

Communities, formally in SGBs and informally through local influence, play an important role in school management. Principals were asked to indicate the degree of influence of various community leaders on the running of the school. Overall, the chief/headman and the local councillor were ranked first and second highest. The chief/headman was ranked first by the highest proportion of educators in KwaZulu-Natal (44%) followed by Limpopo and the Eastern Cape at 40% each. Community workers in the three provinces came third in terms of the proportion of educators endorsing them as having influence on the local school. It is worth noting that 17% of educators in KwaZulu-Natal ranked gangsters second on their list of people having an influence on the school. Also significant is the high number of educators in KwaZulu-Natal (12.7%) relative to

Limpopo (2.1%) and the Eastern Cape (1.3%) who ranked sangomas as second on their list.

Almost half of principals in the survey said that the traditional leader in the community plays a role in the SGB. Major roles of traditional leaders involve mediation between the school and community, an advisory and consultative role to the SGB and the supporting of school activities. Actively encouraging education through these roles was a key theme underlying comments on the role of traditional leadership.

Overall, 83% of surveyed schools are situated on communally-held land. According to 45% of principals, this gives the traditional leader authority and control over the school. He wields power and exercises influence over the SGB according to 39% of principals; the majority of these (56%) are in the Eastern Cape. Of principals in the Eastern Cape, 46% mentioned that the traditional leader also plays a role in disciplining children.

TABLE 7: Teachers' ranking of community leaders who have most influence on the school

Community leader	Limpopo (%)		KwaZulu-Natal (%)		Eastern Cape (%)		Total (%)	
	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 1	Rank 2	Rank 1	Rank 2
Chief/headman	40.0	21.0	44.2	10.9	39.9	31.5	41.1	21.8
Councillor	19.0	11.8	22.7	41.1	15.0	17.4	18.7	21.9
Police	4.6	9.2	9.6	15.6	4.3	6.1	5.9	9.9
Church leader	11.3	14.4	10.4	11.1	7.8	10.8	9.9	12.3
Businessman	4.6	6.7	15.4	10.0	1.3	5.0	6.4	7.0
Gangster	0.0	5.8	1.0	17.3	0.0	3.2	0.2	7.6
Nurse	5.1	8.2	12.9	12.1	6.4	11.0	7.6	10.2
Community worker	12.3	12.8	18.7	3.7	8.1	15.1	12.6	11.2
Medical doctor	6.3	2.6	16.7	1.8	2.5	1.3	7.5	1.9
Sangoma	0.0	2.1	1.0	12.7	0.0	1.3	0.2	4.3

Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Limpopo, N=197; KwaZulu-Natal, N=183; Eastern Cape, N=185)

The role of traditional leaders is clearly important. Under the 1955 Bantu Education Act, School Committees were set up, ostensibly to give control of schools to local communities. The local chief or headman was to nominate five members, and from these the parents were to choose four. None, however, could serve without the prior approval of the Secretary for Bantu Education. Two further members were to be directly nominated by the Department of Bantu Education. School boards for black schools in urban areas were constructed in much the same manner. Though subordinate to the Department of Bantu Education, traditional authorities were particularly powerful in black education in rural areas (Seroto 2003).

At present, chiefs and headmen do not automatically have a formal role in SGBs. They have, therefore, lost their central position. However they remain a potent, though not uncontested, force in local education. Authority is exercised through

control of the land on which the school is situated and by direct involvement in the SGB, monitoring and supervising its activities, calling meetings and mediating between the school and the community.

Principals see chiefs or headmen as having a positive influence on schools. Teachers are more ambiguous. Half think their role is helpful and the rest do not, or are indifferent. On the one hand, teachers describe them as supportive, giving direction and advice to the school on matters such as safety of school property, truancy and helping to organise school activities. On the other hand, teachers also see them as negative, controlling and interfering: 'he wants to dictate terms to the educators like an employer', said one, and 'he claims the school is his and all that pertains to the school'. The situation amongst teachers is also complex. Table 8 shows that more educators in KwaZulu-Natal (48%) than in either Limpopo (37.7%) or the Eastern Cape (33.9%) do



TABLE 8: Teachers' responses to the role of chief/headman in the school

Do you find the role of chief/headman helpful in relation to your school?	Limpopo %	KwaZulu-Natal %	Eastern Cape %	Total %
Yes	49.2	45.1	63.2	52.4
No	37.7	48.0	33.9	39.8
Indifferent	13.1	6.9	2.9	7.8

Source: Rural Education Survey, 2003 (Number of educators, N=566)

not find the role of chiefs or headmen helpful in relation to the school.

Heads of households are also divided on traditional authorities. For those who approve of their role there is a strong emphasis on hierarchy and procedure: 'if something is going to be done in the school he should be the first to know'; 'he has the final word'; and 'nothing is done without the chief'. For others, their role is that of stern but perhaps caring paternalism: 'he is father to this place'; 'he intervenes once the child has completely failed to listen to the teacher'; or even, 'he intervenes when a child has been badly hurt perhaps by the teacher'. It appears that the chief or headman sometimes collaborates with the school in disciplining children. However, the province where this is most widespread is not KwaZulu-Natal (at 16%), where traditional authority is often considered most pervasive, but rather the Eastern Cape where more than half household heads say traditional authorities play such a role. Only in this province do a bare majority recognise a place for chiefs in disciplining school children.

Some schools and traditional leaders see eye-to-eye on matters of social concern. A chief in Limpopo raised the issue of HIV/AIDS for the first time at a public forum where youth, men and women were present. He said:

As a community we seem to be doing less in terms of discussing openly with young people about issues such as HIV/AIDS. (*Tani hi va aka tiko, swi ti komba hi nga ri ku tekeni ka magoza yo karhi ku humela e rivaleni hi kombisana na vana va hina hi timhaka ta xitsongwatsongwana xa HIV/AIDS.*) It is high time that we push aside our own cultural sensitivities and open up these issues. The church should also play a role in addressing HIV/AIDS, since it has a considerable constituency of young people. I want to declare my own kraal another platform where these issues could be dealt with. I want to believe the school has already started. I would like to appeal to young people to focus on their education and stop roaming the streets during the night. Parents, please act responsibly, talk to your children and show them the way.

However, the image of a benign traditional hierarchy is not universally accepted. In fact there is a strong thread of hostility towards these authorities, some of which seems to derive from the school context, and some from wider origins. Some refer to the lack of involvement of chiefs and headmen in educational matters and meetings, to their lack of education, and to the absence of a link between them and the teachers. Some emphasise their alleged venality: 'they want money for themselves; they don't care about school'. One respondent simply says, 'he is a drunkard'. Many local people do not see themselves living in a benign pastoral hierarchy.

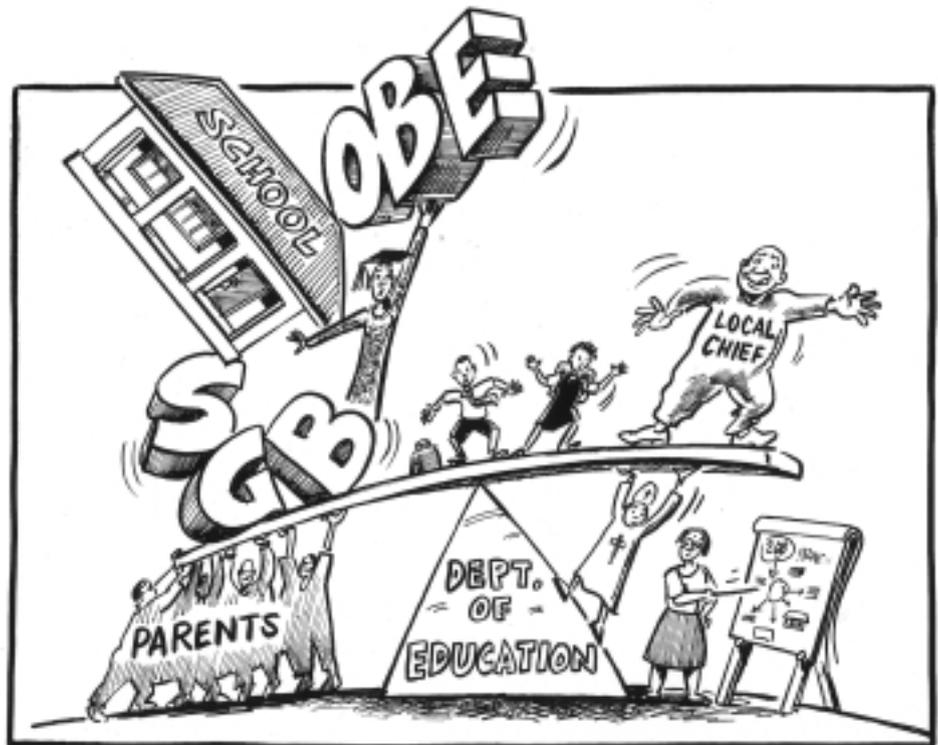
Education officials and rural schools

Education officials in provincial and district offices are important in giving schools, principals and teachers back-up and support when they need it. Since 1994, new structures and officials have been set in place to assist schools and teachers in realising the goals of the new education system.

The relationship between central authority, schools and teachers was extremely difficult before 1994. This was particularly obvious in township schools. However, homeland education authorities tended to behave in an authoritarian manner towards teachers and principals. Though reaction to this was masked to some extent in the homelands by the isolation and vulnerability of teachers and principals in scattered rural schools, resentment was without doubt widespread.

After 1994 the system was meant to move towards a supportive and developmental mode. How has this worked out in practice? The answer seems to be: in different ways in different places but overall better than might have been predicted.

Nevertheless, the contrast between the education offices and the primary schools themselves is often stark. In the district offices there is always electricity and running water and the buildings are generally sound and repaired when necessary. There are secretaries and messengers and official vehicles. When the researchers visited Butterworth, in the Eastern Cape, a tarred road was being constructed from the town to the district offices some kilometres away. A degree of tension between those undergoing the stringencies of life at a rural school and those enjoying the modest comforts of small-town bureaucracy would not be surprising.



Regular supervision and inspection by education officials is likely to improve the management of schools. In a year, District Directors, school evaluation teams, curriculum specialists and subject advisors visited schools on average twice, and Circuit Managers and learning area specialists three times. Few of these visits included observation of teaching, indicating an emphasis on administration rather than curriculum and pedagogy. On the whole, principals go to the district office rather than dealing with the district officials visiting the school. Of the 86% of principals who had gone to the district office in the previous year, 68% said they had visited the district office at least six times.

The role of the district office is in most cases not considered to be supportive. The district office is not visited often, and is still seen as the 'inspectorate'. District officials are known to call educators into workshops at the last minute with no contingency plans for learners. When the school itself makes special requests for assistance, the district office is seen to respond negatively and rudely.

Conclusions

This chapter has focused on relationships between teachers, communities and school governing bodies. It showed that there are tensions between parents and learners as well as between parents and teachers over schooling. These tensions are linked to the conflict between the daily struggle for survival requiring all family members' participation, and the rhythms, routines and requirements of schools. They are linked to the high expectations placed on teachers

and schools and their actual situation in being able to meet these expectations.

Principals and teachers dominate SGBs. Chiefs wield authority in SGBs, and parents are largely marginal to them. SGBs play a limited role in attending to school-community issues but have great, unrealised potential. District authorities tend to be remote although there is evidence that a greater role brings positive benefits in that they improve morale and attendance.

As yet, the schools and SGBs do not live up to the expectation of democracy for robust links between schools and communities. Among all the communities, however, there is a strong sense of the need to unite across divisions and to form structures around common problems, to discuss these problems and to work out ways of dealing with them.

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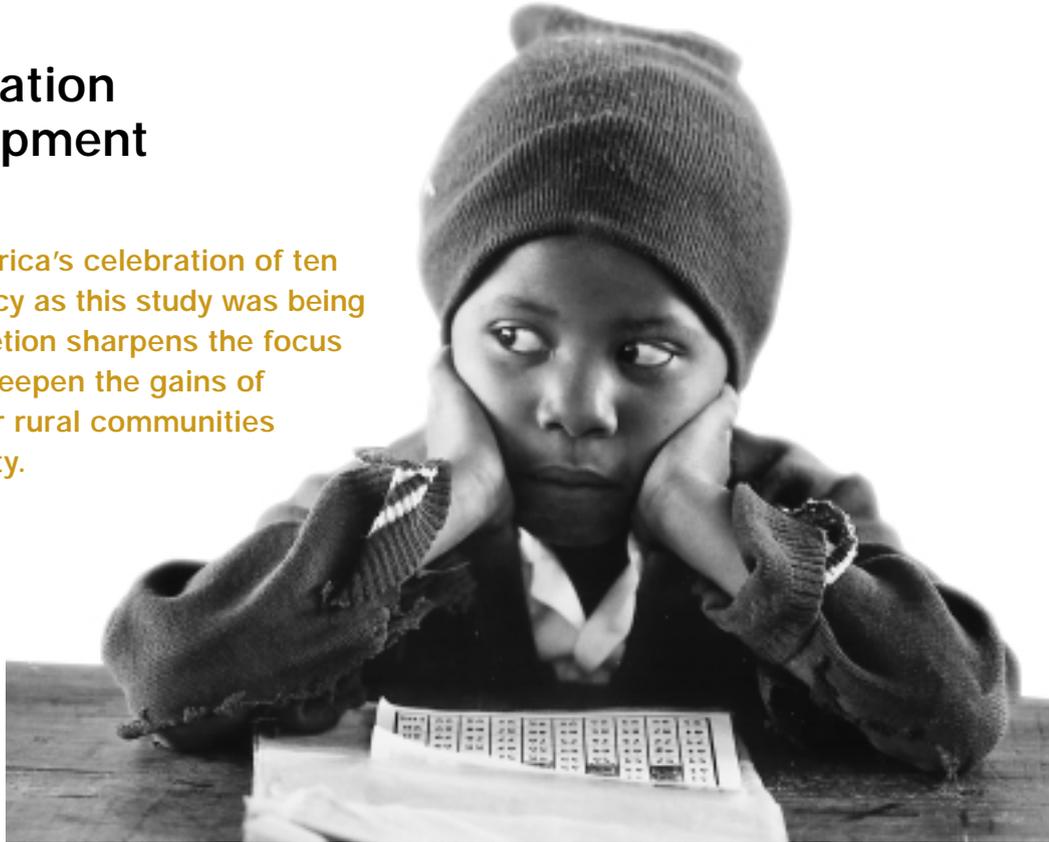


Rural education and development



Rural education and development

Fittingly, South Africa's celebration of ten years of democracy as this study was being brought to completion sharpens the focus on strategies to deepen the gains of transformation for rural communities blighted by poverty.



In education, ten years of democracy has meant a major overhaul of the apartheid education system. One national and nine provincial departments have been created out of 18 fragmented departments based on race and ethnicity. Budgeting processes are no longer based on race and curricula no longer reflect the values of a white minority. Major gains include improved access, as reflected in enrolment figures, accelerated provisioning of school infrastructure, more equitable distribution of resources, improved learner-educator ratios, the introduction of school nutrition programmes and the establishment of democratic structures in the form of School Governing Bodies at the local school level.

However, the inequalities that produce poverty take a dramatic spatial form. Rural

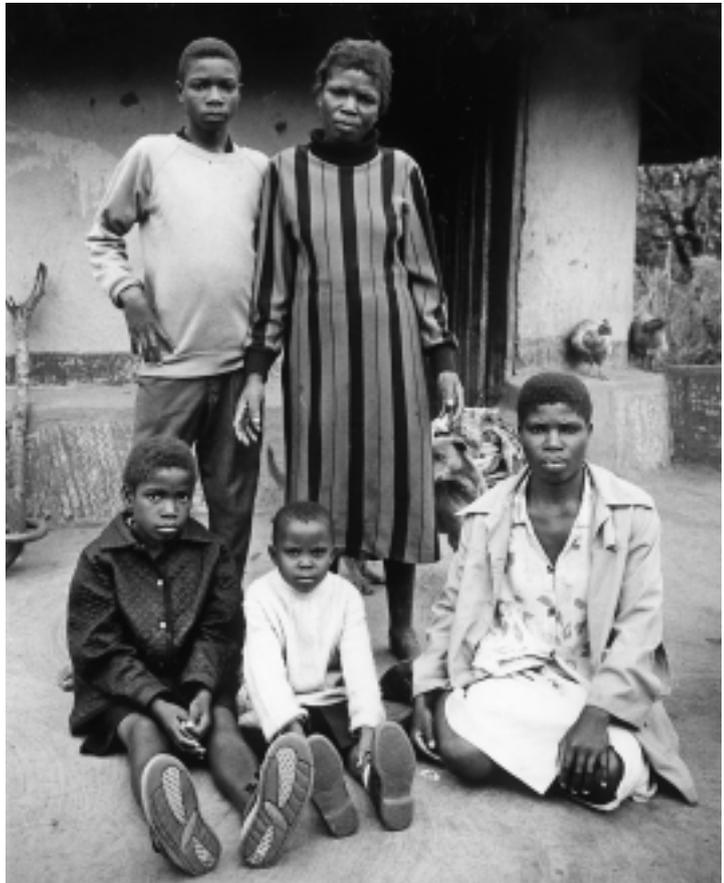
poverty is integral to any broader consideration of poverty. Rural education, in particular, lags behind educational development in other parts of the country. This is despite the fact that the vast majority of school-going children in South Africa live in rural areas. The poverty of education in rural areas is integrally linked to inadequate employment, infrastructure, nutrition and health, rest, exercise and entertainment of the rural poor and vulnerable groups in rural areas. These are the conditions that need to be resolved if the right to education guaranteed in the Constitution is to be enjoyed. These conditions are intimately linked to South Africa's past and the unequal power relations both between urban and rural areas and within them.

Education and rural development in historical context

Education and development in rural South Africa have historically been linked to the particular role that these areas were to play in the national political economy.

One of the most enduring legacies of the twentieth century is the policy of land dispossession pursued by successive white South African governments. Unequal land ownership patterns were instituted through successive Land Acts in 1913 and 1936 and consolidated in the Bantustan system of the latter half of the twentieth century. The consequence is that by the end of the apartheid period 14% of the land of South Africa was allocated to black occupation, mostly under communal systems of tenure, and 86% of the land was dedicated to white commercial farms, national parks, forests, reserves, military ranges and other uses. As many as 1.3 million households occupy the remaining 14%, and are engaged in subsistence or small-scale farming. The destruction of peasant economies, the ensuing labour migration and the emphasis on traditionalism have given these areas their distinctive characters. Women head the large majority of these households. Child malnutrition and food insecurity plague families in provinces such as the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. Inequalities in the provision of education and training between urban and rural areas are acute despite ten years of democracy.

Contemporary patterns in rural areas owe much to the education policy of the apartheid government. While denied rights in 'white' South Africa, African people were



to be re-tribalised and concentrated in homelands established on an ethnic basis. These were to be run by chiefs authorised by the apartheid state. Educational development, within the framework of apartheid, was to occur in these rather than in urban areas. The process set in motion by the Bantu Education Act of 1954 removed the bulk of African schools to the Bantustans. 'Bantu Education,' in the words of one analyst, 'served to place Africans psycho-ideologically where the Bantustans placed them physically' (Molteno 1984: 93). By the same token, girls were cemented into 'traditional' patriarchal relationships (Truscott 1994: 42).

Teacher training colleges were located in the homelands to provide this apartheid-created system with appropriately trained



UMQWASHU TREE

Strength: 'The tree is a symbol for the anniversary of the arrival of amaMfengu on 14 May 1835. On this date every congregation usually go there to pray. School children sing, and we dance with the king and his chiefs (*amaphakathi*) in attendance.'

teachers but these have since been closed down or absorbed, as elsewhere in the country, into institutions of higher education. Early childhood education and adult basic education programmes have suffered the same neglect as all other aspects of general and further education.

There were significant historical differences in access to and quality of schooling even within these rural areas. Within the former Bantustans there was a crucial distinction between proclaimed townships and those areas governed by traditional authorities. In the former, schools were state schools; in the latter, they were community schools over which chiefs exercised considerable influence as they controlled the land on which the schools were built. Educational development in many cases depended on the status and interests of chiefs in the area. In the Transkei, for example, more schools were built in the 1970s and 1980s in the areas from which the then-president of the Transkei homeland hailed than in other areas.

Political rather than educational considerations determined the establishment, quality and staffing of schools. Communities themselves built and paid for community primary schools, and, ill-funded from the beginning, the quality of such schools was accordingly often poor. Learner:teacher ratios were also high. Teachers were drawn to live in townships and towns rather than in rural communities. Mostly women, they were able to access housing subsidies only in those areas where private land ownership was possible. This excluded land under the control of the chief. Legacies remain as a result of this pattern of landholding: a high turnover of teachers who have few incentives for remaining in rural areas, the phenomenon of commuting teachers and tensions between teachers and rural communities owing to their different and sometimes incompatible interests.

Even in the apartheid years, some areas did benefit from work, experimentation and intervention by those who sought to explore alternatives to the poor quality and meagre outcomes of mainstream schooling. In practice, urban and rural school curricula were similar but the range of subjects in rural schools tended to be narrower. This narrowness was determined by the availability of staff and resources rather than by conscious policy. Whether and how science and art, for example, were taught, depended substantially on the limited physical and human resources available. In this context, NGOs and groups such as those clustered around the journal *Mathlasedi* in Mafeking played a critical role. They raised awareness of conditions in rural schools, explored alternative ways of thinking about the



KIDS PLAYING IN THE STREET

Challenge: 'We don't have grounds or a community hall for dancing, etc.'



BOYS PLAYING SOCCER

Strength: 'They become involved in sport when they are still young.'



SCHOOL CHILDREN

Challenge: 'This was during break. The children were hungry without anything to eat. They said they live far from the school so they don't want to be late or miss the lessons. I think there must be properly managed feeding schemes at school since these kids cannot learn on empty stomachs.'

curriculum and the school-community linkage as well as supported and stimulated interventions in the relationships between education and work.

The relationship between urban and rural development

Many threads connect the remote areas with which this book deals to centres of economic and political power. Rural areas are isolated but as fully part of contemporary South Africa as Johannesburg or Cape Town. They are impoverished but also fully monetarised. The labour of their people contributes, as it has long done, to the development of the country. Their poverty, and the erosion and degradation of the land, has played its part in South Africa's particular development trajectory. These areas are not traditional havens cut off from a South Africa that forged ahead without and in ignorance of them but rather their very traditionalism has been created by a South African society and

economy that needed the labour that could be extracted from what misleadingly appeared to be timeless rural enclaves.

South Africa has changed politically. Equally fundamentally it has changed economically. At one time in South Africa's history the areas that comprise the former homelands were reservoirs of unskilled labour and then dumping grounds for the unemployed. Having been bled of labour for decades it is now ironically apparent that the ex-homelands are crammed with people, most of whom are surplus to the requirements of the labour market. The educational system is now examined for its relevance, or lack of it, to the 'developmental' needs of the country. The discourse of democracy and development is concerned with how to provide some way out of what is now seen as an educational dead end where poor quality schools churn out the now unemployable.

Change-oriented educators and others still struggle against the powerful inheritance of apartheid. It is an enormous challenge to set the educational system on



a course that is equal in all parts of the country, that would adequately prepare young rural people for life wherever they choose to live it and would address the needs of adults and out-of-school youth for education and skills. This is in tune with the aspirations of rural people themselves.

Meanwhile, rural schools and teachers struggle to implement new forms of governance and new curricula based on national educational policy. They fall far short of the expectations of national policy. These schools, their teachers and communities around them confront many difficulties. They often lack the skills and experience tacitly assumed by Pretoria or the regional capitals. Issues peculiar to the ex-homelands demand careful thought, notably that of the role of traditional leaders within schools and SGBs. More attention needs to be paid to ways in which these schools and communities, which represent a large proportion of the South African population, can realise a democratic system of school governance and a form of teaching and learning that takes account of their

particular circumstances and needs. These needs, as stated by rural parents and learners, seem remarkably similar to those of communities elsewhere: they should be listened to more carefully.

Democracy, development and rural education

Since the advent of democratic government two converging state initiatives have had a bearing on rural schools. The first is the state's policies towards rural areas and the people who live in them. Integrated rural development policies are in place but do not make any reference to education. These policies seem not to have touched the rural areas of our study in any substantial way. During 2004 government made poverty reduction in rural areas a major priority. Education must be at the heart of this programme.

The second set of initiatives arises from the constitutional guarantee of the right to education. The state assumes responsibility



for, and control of, the provision of education and training in rural communities. In addition, the South African Schools Act of 1996 brought into being SGBs which are democratically elected and intended to ensure local democratic control over schools. Outcomes-based education also introduced a new curriculum, resources and values into schools from 1997.

Our study has shown that children do not have their constitutional *right to education* realised, and their rights *within education* or *through education* are also limited. Access to primary schooling is compromised by the opportunity costs to families who require the labour of their

children. Large numbers of children, amongst them girls, do not attend school regularly. These indirect costs are multiplied by the direct costs families have to bear in school fees and paying for uniforms, transport and clinic visits. Food-insecurity of families is immensely relieved by school meals. Poorly-trained teachers with few incentives to live in the areas where they teach, as well as startlingly limited facilities and resources to assist them in their task, compromise the rights of children *within education*. Early childhood development programmes are virtually non-existent.

Social relationships in classrooms between teachers and learners as well as between teachers and parents do not enhance the



learning of children and the participation of wider communities in the educational possibilities within the school environment. Lack of educational opportunities outside schools, or offered through schools for adults and out-of-school youth, form part of this wider picture of educational deprivation. Not surprisingly, the literacy levels of adults and the educational attainments of children in rural areas are amongst the lowest in the country; and the foreseeable future for the majority is unemployment.

We have shown that democracy requires that these rights be met alongside the socio-economic rights that would bring an end to poverty and food-insecurity but a prerequisite for achieving this is also the democratic participation of the communities involved. Structures for participation, whether these be cultural, sporting, civic or educational, are essential for revitalised community development. An education for rural development is one that actively harnesses these energies.

Why rural education?

Three main arguments can be made to explain why rural education has been a low priority area:

- Urban constituencies are more organised and vocal than rural ones and have succeeded substantially in monopolising attention.
- The universal framework employed in government and policy documents is insufficiently sensitive to the specific conditions and needs of the rural poor, especially those of women.
- Education cannot compensate for poverty and inequality, and social

inequalities need to be addressed before rural education will change.

A powerful rationale for rural education and a robust political constituency to argue for it are now required. Such a rationale can be provided: it is one that sees education as being able to play a role in rural development alongside and integrated with other social policies aimed at addressing inequality and poverty.

Siyandhani, Limpopo



SCHOOL BLOCK

Strength: 'This is where formal education is found. The school is also a centre for social interactions; where young people meet friends and get to learn new things in life.'



CHILDREN IN A COMMUNITY HALL USED AS AN EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT CENTRE

Strength: 'They get early education. They are being looked after and protected from rapists.'

Why is it important to argue for rural education?

1. The Constitution requires it

The Constitution of South Africa states that the nation is founded on principles of 'Human dignity, the achievement of equality and the advancement of human rights and freedoms'. It holds that 'everyone has the right to a basic education, including adult basic education; and to further education, which the state, through reasonable measures, must make progressively available and accessible'. These rights co-exist with the socio-economic rights that enable them.

2. People are living there

South Africa can be seen as relatively highly urbanised. However, a large proportion of the population still live in rural areas and, of these, a particularly large number of the poorest live in the ex-homelands, which are struggling to emerge from a history of marginalisation and social and political oppression.

3. Popular demand

The research findings of this study show the importance of education to rural people. South Africans living in rural areas believe in education, want more of it and want its quality to be as good as possible.

4. Human development

Human development, as measured by levels of literacy, health and general well-being, is at its worst in South Africa's rural areas. Education is a good in itself, and a precondition for, though it may not be a guarantee of, wider economic and social development.

5. Joy of learning and individual well-being

The research for this study amply demonstrates the commitment of the rural population to education. The issue is to create and support education of such quality that it will measure up to this commitment and advance from rote learning to a more stimulating discovery-based mode.

6. Social progress and political participation

The history of the inhabitants of ex-homelands, and of the poor in white farming areas of South Africa, is one of exclusion from power and decision-making at many levels. On white farms, black workers and their families have been and still are amongst the poorest and most isolated workers in the country; in homelands, most rural inhabitants were and still are crowded onto uneconomic land-holdings that obliged many to migrate. These remain weak foundations on which to build robust political participation. Education cannot in itself solve these problems, but it may give rural communities the means to articulate their problems and act on the many issues that confront them.

7. Social justice

The contemporary South African state has been founded on principles of human rights and social justice. Social justice, however, is not achievable by handing benefits to a passively grateful population, but is rather striven for by an alert and critical citizenry. Education is central to the achievement of equality along a broad

range of frontiers. Inequalities of race, class, gender, age, disability and sexual orientation are accentuated both between urban and rural and within rural areas. Social justice requires that people be enabled to confront the injustices visited by inequality and poverty on the vast majority of people living in South Africa's rural areas.

8. Democracy and development

Democracy requires development, and development requires democracy. Both require the highest levels of education amongst all citizens. Education is a key constituent of each, and each is indispensable to the other. This book is based on the view that improvement of the life chances of the poor in rural areas remains a major priority. Inequalities between rural and urban areas remain marked. Central to this is education and the extension and consolidation of democracy, freedom and rights. Development and democracy in rural South Africa are integral to one another. It is not simply a question of providing more schools or more teachers, or even of guaranteeing peoples' rights. It is also about providing the enabling conditions for the exercise of the freedoms that come with enhanced capabilities. Community participation in and for development is not only a means but also an end.

A case for an extended notion of the right to basic education

The Constitution guarantees the right to a basic education. Basic education is that whole range of educational activities in different settings that aim to meet basic learning needs. It comprises both formal schooling (primary and sometimes lower secondary) and a variety of non-formal, informal, public and private educational activities offered to meet the defined basic learning needs of people of all ages.

It is commonly argued that South Africa has full enrolment in the General Education and Training band (Grades R–9) and that the government has made significant strides in ensuring full access through more equitable spending. While spending has improved, this is not reflected in learning and educational performance. Various reasons are given – amongst these is the view that there is something distinctive about rural areas and that special solutions are needed for special contexts. There is much discomfort about this argument in some quarters, in part because it sounds so similar to the arguments of the apartheid planners: that education in rural areas should fit rural people to a rural future through orienting curricula more closely to community needs. There is a fear that any special attention will simply reinvent the policy prescriptions of a hated past. Yet there is the nagging feeling that unless the real differences between urban and rural areas are appreciated and given special attention, inequalities will persist and come to haunt future generations.

The research conducted for this book reveals that parents, principals, teachers and



learners place a high value on education and the benefits that they think it can bring; but the research also reveals that education in rural areas is far from realising these expectations even modestly. This requires special interventions and the strengthening of democracy and participation in education.

For many, education cannot compensate for much deeper economic and social inequalities – it is not a ladder out of poverty, it simply confirms one's status in life. For the authors of this book, education can and must offer hope and possibility, but it can only do so when the conditions of poverty are addressed alongside those of education. This involves an extended and richer understanding of what the right to basic education might entail. The argument is not for an outdated idea of a domesticating agricultural education, but a broader educational approach that will serve the needs of diversified groups of people and prioritise the learning needs of rural

children, especially girls, out-of-school youth and adults. An integrated approach is required that centres on access to quality basic education for all. It should include:

- Integrated regional and rural development strategies that address the food-insecurity and health of families.
- Access to good quality, equitable, well-managed and democratically organised education for all, including early childhood education, giving special attention to the conditions that exist for girls.
- Development of non-formal educational opportunities for adults and out-of-school youth, giving special attention to women and girls.
- Rural development policies that give priority to basic education and strategies that recognise the special needs of the rural environment.
- An approach that involves the democratic mobilisation of communities to assess and act upon their needs.



SCHOOL

Challenge: 'In this village we have one primary school, which starts from Grade 1 to 7. Unfortunately there is [no] secondary school. The community also use the school for community meetings. Parents always encourage their children to place an undivided faith in education. Some classrooms were let out to the (*umphozeni*) secondary school because of shortage of classrooms. Both heads of schools share one office. Worse, is that the school has no windowpanes and right now it is winter and children go cold all day. One good thing about the school is that most of the teachers come from the village so it created employment opportunities for educated youth in the community. But the school has no proper fence which makes it easier for the thieves to break and steal school property. Items that frequently get stolen include the foodstuff for feeding schemes.'



PRINCIPAL'S OFFICE

Challenge: 'The principal's office in Nyembe looks nice since they have installed the iron burglar proofing on windows and the door. But hooliganism still continues in this school. For example, one day thieves opened up the roof and stole food supplies for the school feeding scheme. We have to work hand in hand with the school for it to be safe.'

Methodology



Research methodology

To develop a representative picture of the state of rural education and to capture the complexities of formal and informal education within rural areas, the research used both survey and participatory research methods to gather data. The research targeted mainly former homeland areas within three provinces: the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo. In these ex-homeland areas, the study focused on both schools and surrounding communities. Research was conducted over three to four months in mid-2003.

The survey

The survey reported on here attempted to replicate the Public Report on Basic Education in India (PROBE) conducted in India. There are key similarities and differences:

- The PROBE report was carried out from September to December 1996. The South African survey was carried out from 5 May to 5 June 2003.
- The PROBE survey covered all schooling facilities and a sample of 1 221 households in 234 randomly-selected villages of five states that account for 40% of India's population. These were the worst-performing states in terms of elementary education in India. The South African survey also covered all schooling facilities and a sample of 595 households and 144 primary schools in three provinces: the Eastern Cape, Limpopo and KwaZulu-Natal. These are the worst-performing provinces in terms of elementary education in South Africa.
- The PROBE survey focused on poor provinces in the north of India. The South African survey focused on former homeland areas.
- The villages covered by the PROBE survey were essentially an extended sub-sample of a random sample of villages studied in 1994 by the National Council of Applied Economic Research in India. Villages were selected by random sampling. In each village investigators began with a detailed survey of all schools with a primary section. Households were selected in villages in relation to primary schools. A similar process

was followed in South Africa. The 1996 census was used to identify areas in the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal and Limpopo provinces that had at least 50% of households with a household income of no more than R6 000 per year. Ten such districts were selected from the three provinces. The selection criteria for the districts included size and whether they covered a part, or whole, of the former homeland areas. Five areas per district were selected by stratified sampling and the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS). One primary school with a Grade 7 class was randomly selected from all the schools in the selected areas. Thus, a total of 50 primary schools in each province was selected.

- In the South African study there was an overall return rate of 87% but it is worth noting the low return rate for the Early Childhood Development questionnaires. These centres were mostly non-existent.
- In the Indian household survey, the focus was on the 0–18 age group. In the South African study it was on the 6–16 age group. In each household, investigators collected basic information (age, gender, schooling status, etc.) from householders and conducted direct interviews with a sub-sample of children. Given that the majority of children were not at home but at school on the day of the interview, interviews were conducted only with non-enrolled children in the household.
- The PROBE questionnaires were adapted for use in South Africa. There were several questionnaires aimed at different role-players within communities and

TABLE A1: Respondent type and number, 2003

Respondent type household	Number per household
Adult	1
Enrolled child	1
Never-enrolled child	1
Out-of-school child	1
Primary school	Per school
Principal	1
Educator	4
Learner	20

schools. Within communities, household questionnaires were administered to an adult, enrolled child, never-enrolled child and an out-of-school child. At schools, questionnaires were administered to the school principal, educators and learners. Questionnaires were also developed for Early Childhood Development centres. Table A1 gives the sampling unit, respondent type and number of questionnaires administered. A total of 4 332 respondents were surveyed. Across schools, 149 principals, 565 educators, 2 867 learners, 156 ECD centres and 595 household caregivers answered questionnaires. Within households, a total of 600 adults answered a household questionnaire.

- Two further questionnaires were developed: one for learners and one for ECD centres. Language and questions that referred to specifically Indian conditions were removed or adapted for South Africa. Closed and open-ended questions were added. The questionnaires were on the whole too long.
- All questionnaires were translated and administered in the language of the respondents.

- Like the PROBE report, the South African survey focuses on primary schooling. South African schools are now divided not into primary and secondary schools but into General and Further Education bands. The schools in the South African sample thus include the General Education band, or what is traditionally understood as primary and lower secondary schools, which comprises Grades R–9.
- The PROBE report makes the case for universal elementary education in India. It highlights the enormity of the problem through low attainments, the high disparities, particularly with regard to female education, and the slow progress linked to state inertia. It debunks myths that parents are not interested in their children’s education, that child labour is the main obstacle to the achievement of universal education, that elementary education is free and that schools are available. It shows how the great strides that have been made in Himachal Pradesh, a state in India, are linked to its attitude towards the education of girls.
- The South African survey makes the case for education in the poorest rural provinces. National and provincial statistics hide the conditions under which the majority of children, based in these rural areas, go to school. The South African report highlights the links between poverty and education at all levels.

Participatory qualitative research

Background: The choice of participatory action research

The second component of the research methodology, to complement the large-scale survey, was a process of participatory action research (PAR) across nine rural communities in three provinces. The choice of methods within the broad family of participatory action research reflects the following ideas which motivated the design of this study:

- The experiences of the rural poor in South Africa are not well-understood, and are not currently fully appreciated in the processes of education policy development.
- The history of colonialism and apartheid served to undermine the voice and analysis of the rural poor.
- The history of rural development and policy-making is too often not based on a deep understanding of the rural experience.
- Sustainable and democratic development is framed by rural communities coming to a better understanding of the development challenges they face, defining the nature of the challenges and actively engaging in resolution processes.

Our aim in using a participatory action approach was to facilitate a process whereby community members could actively engage in exploring and analysing their own experiences of rural education – and of rural living – in order to respond to the three core research questions:



- What is the experience of rural communities and education?
- What is the relationship between education and rural poverty?
- How can education better serve rural children and communities in the future?

The methodology was designed to provide community members with a new space for reflection and dialogue to analyse their lives and the lives of their communities to generate ideas and strategies for action. The development of the tools was directed by the following principles:

- **Promotion of community dialogue:** To provide a space for reflection and new conversations within communities about school and community development.
- **Promotion of power:** To confront the history of paternalistic and expert-driven rural development by promoting the transfer of power from 'expert researcher' to local communities with reference to knowledge generation, problem-solving and action.
- **Multiple voices:** To facilitate and respect the multiplicity of voices and perspectives within a community. To engage in joint analysis without requiring uniformity of experience or consensus of opinion.
- **Avoid easy answers:** To facilitate beyond the formulation of simple solutions to complex school and community development dilemmas.
- **Non-deficit model:** To affirm and build upon the liveliness and resources of life in rural areas and avoid the dangers of considering rural lives through a dominant urban lens.
- **New conversations:** To create environments and creative processes to facilitate new conversations, both respecting and transcending the patterns and limitations of 'normal' conversations that have become rooted in historic relationships.
- **Action and reflection:** To commit to an iterative process of action and reflection as an approach to knowledge generation.
- **Challenge, flexibility, openness:** To maintain an openness to having

preconceived assumptions challenged, to new possibilities, and to thinking and working in new ways. To commit to creativity and humility in the face of unknown experiences.

- **Relationships count:** To appreciate that the integrity of reflection and dialogue depends upon the human trust developed between community members and the research team. Issues of respect and human connection were central to the integrity of the research design.

These principles guided the development and facilitation of the methodology and they lie at the heart of the depth and richness of the knowledge generated by it. Methodological decisions – large and small – were guided by these principles. An example of a decision that was made to bring these principles to life was a decision that all researchers would be accommodated in the community during the entire site-visit process rather than in hotels or guest-houses in the nearby towns. Such decisions sought to provide a new kind of relationship between the community and the research team.

Research design

The sample

The participatory component of the research was conducted over a period of five months, from April to August 2004. Nine communities were selected, three each in Limpopo, the Eastern Cape and KwaZulu-Natal. The sample was selected from within the survey sample (see above), and chosen to represent the diversity of provincial areas. Final selection was influenced by pre-existing relationships (direct or indirect) between communities and collaborators of the Education Policy Consortium (EPC).

The research team

The entire research team consisted of four interrelated teams in each community.

- **Education Policy Team:** Teams of two researchers from the EPC spent an average of two weeks in each community across five site visits. The EPC team facilitated the formation of the other research teams and facilitated participatory workshops according to the methodology described below.

TABLE A2: The final selection

Limpopo	KwaZulu-Natal	Eastern Cape
1. Tshamavhudzi Primary in Vhembe District, Malamangwa Village	1. Manyoni Primary in Nongoma District	1. Bongweni Junior Primary in Peddie District
2. Roodtse Primary in Driekop, Sekhukhuneland	2. Nyembe Primary in Empangeni District	2. Qandashe Senior Primary in OR Thambo District
3. Fuyatha Primary, in Mopani District, Siyandhani Village	3. Mngqagayi Primary of Lower Umfolozi District	3. Vulindlela Junior Primary in Emalahleni District

- **Community Researchers:** Two community researchers were recruited to conduct full-time community-based research activities across the four months of fieldwork. They participated in monthly training, reflection and analysis sessions, and undertook activities ranging from conducting oral histories, documenting a journal of community conversations, supporting youth researcher teams and documenting the lives of people in the school. One male and one female community researcher were selected from each community, and paid for full-time work during the site-visit process. Communities were involved in specifying the process for the recruitment of these posts. The criteria for selection included confident literacy skills in local languages as well as English, curiosity and dedication to issues of community and school development, good organisational skills, openness to listening to the perspectives of others and learning new things, good relationships with a wide range of community members, experience of working with young people, and ability and willingness to travel and work long hours. They were responsible for drawing up a Community Participation Plan, continuously reviewed, to ensure respectful and maximum participation from the broadest range of the community. Beyond the training and support provided through the course of the research process, the project culminated in a process of personal life-planning with each Community Researcher. Where possible, further support has been provided since that time to assist the Community Researchers in moving toward their goals.
- **Community Reference Group (CRG):** In each community a Community Reference Group was convened to provide guidance and direction to the project, engage in conversations relating to the research questions, and to voice any concerns or critical feedback about the process so that problems could be addressed. Participation in the CRG was open to all interested community members. In most communities, they came to represent a cross section of local leadership – traditional leaders, healers, SGB members, principals, community activists and others. In the Eastern Cape a community meeting took the place of convening a specific CRG.
- **Youth Research Team (YRT):** In each community young people were invited to participate on a volunteer basis in a Youth Research Team. On average, these teams consisted of approximately ten to 15 young women and men between the ages of 13 and 21, and included both in-school and out-of-school learners. An effort was made to include young people who were in school, who were out of school, who had done well in school, who did less well in school, who liked school and who did not like school, and so on. The research questions were discussed in detail with each YRT. Each YRT was encouraged to identify the specific research questions that were of most interest to them, and to develop a research strategy to match their investigation. Each member of the YRT kept a

detailed journal of the interviews, surveys, observations and other processes they undertook during this research period. They presented their findings in the community indaba at the end of the fieldwork process, often in the form of a report and a drama.

The research process and content

The core design

The methodology was divided into five phases – each defining a month of research activities. Detailed facilitator guides were developed to guide core activities and conversations of each research process. The first month was dedicated to introducing the research team to each community, and to recruiting the Community Researchers. The following four months represented the core of the research process: (See Table A3)

- Month 1 – Community mapping:**
 The first month was focused on an in-depth mapping of community strengths and challenges. Three workshops were convened (women, men and youth) of approximately four hours each. In the course of these workshops, participants reflected on the important historical events that shaped their community, the places of learning, the ‘points of light’ (people and resources considered to represent positive possibilities for the community) and community challenges. Workshops were documented and conversations were taped and transcribed. The workshops were taken forward by a community photo essay, whereby community members documented places of learning, points of light and challenges in their communities. The photo essays were used to stimulate broader conversations in the community.

TABLE A3: Participatory action – Methodological design

May	June	July	August
Community Reference Group Youth Researcher Team			
Community mapping History, map, places of light, places of learning, challenges, vision for change	Purpose and content of education Purpose and content of education in community and school; tensions and synergies	Experience of schooling Analysis of school strength, weaknesses, and visions for change; classroom observation	Community indaba Community analysis; EPC, CRG, YRT presentations
Oral histories (144) Community photo essay Day in the life of (45) Grade 6 learner essays (340) Community Researcher / Youth Researcher Journals (100)			

- **Month 2 – Purpose and content of education:** The participatory workshops in this month were dedicated to taking a step back to ask the question – why education? Three workshops were convened (parents, educators and learners) of approximately three hours each. Participants reflected on the important stages of life and the extent to which education in the community and education in the school contributed toward preparing young people for these life stages. Conversations were taped and transcribed.

- **Month 3 – School experience:** This month was dedicated to exploring the current in-school experience. There were two primary activities of the site visits during this month. First, four workshops (parents, educators, learners, SGBs) were undertaken to explore the strengths and weaknesses of the current school experience. The workshops focused on two aspects of school lives – leadership, management and governance as well as the classroom experience. The workshops culminated in developing a pathway forward for local action. The second activity of the month was a limited participatory classroom observation process. Educators volunteered to participate in the process and jointly developed a protocol for the observer. Researchers observed several class sessions and took notes according to the agreed protocol. Post-observation workshops were conducted to reflect on the experience. All processes and conversations were carefully documented.

- **Month 4 – Community indaba:** In the final month, the Community Reference Group was allocated a limited budget to convene a community indaba. (Note this term was used by the research team but not by the communities involved. Different more relevant terms were used in each community.) These sessions were designed with three purposes in mind. First, the EPC team presented a report to the community outlining their analysis of what they heard over the months of fieldwork. This was done specifically so that community members could engage with whether they believed the EPC team was accurately reflecting the experience and analysis of the community. Second, the Community Researchers, Community Reference Group and Youth Researcher Team were presented with an opportunity to present the findings and analysis emerging from their work. Finally, the community was provided with a space to engage in conversation about the implications of the findings for local action. These were large community meetings, often involving more than a hundred community members.

Community Researcher activities

Throughout this period, the Community Researchers undertook a range of related research activities to complement the theme of each month. The following activities were some of the most important:

- **Oral histories:** Each community researcher undertook at least two oral history interviews each month with in-school learners, out-of-school learners, caregivers and parents as well as educators. The interviews probed their life experiences, experience of rural schooling and analyses for change. Subsequently, interviews were translated and transcribed. Approximately 150 oral history interviews were documented.
- **Day in the life of...:** Community Researchers followed people around during a typical day, from the time they woke up in the morning until the time they slept. They documented a day in the life of the principal, a female educator, a male educator, a female learner and a male learner.
- **Community photo essays:** Community Researchers supported community members in using disposable cameras to document the places of learning, points of light and challenges of their community, as well as facilitating conversations around this analysis.
- **Grade 6 learner essays:** Grade 6 learners were asked to write two essays. They were first asked to write an essay about what they did during a typical school day. They were then asked to write their ideas for how to change rural schools. (One group was asked to write a further essay on their experience of school.) Conversations were facilitated with the learners before and after the essay-writing to learn more about the thoughts of these learners.
- **Research journals:** Both Community Researchers and Youth Research Team members kept detailed research journals. Many of these journals represented detailed documentation of interviews, discussions, observations and personal reflections about the research questions.

Training, reflection and analysis

There was an intensive programme of training, reflection and analysis throughout the course of the process. Each month cycle started and culminated with a national two-day workshop to train for the month's research activities and to reflect on and analyse findings to date. Further, each month cycle started and culminated with three two-day provincial workshops to provide training and a forum for reflection and analysis for Community Researchers.

Limitations

A range of limitations to this research process existed, the most important of which was time. The process was undertaken over a period of only four months. While great effort was invested in establishing relationships of trust upon which to facilitate new conversations, the process, by definition, would deepen over time. Further, the transcription and translation was undertaken rapidly, and not confirmed by back-translation techniques. Some loss of meaning should be expected through the translation process.

The impact on the community

The process was limited in its duration. Further, we continually reinforced that the research team had no access to material resources, and there would be no direct material gains for the community from this project in the longer run. The process was focused entirely on building new conversations around complicated issues of schooling and development facing the community. Can simple dialogue, if driven by participatory and empowering principles, seed change in rural communities? The experience of this study affirms these possibilities. The Community Researchers were asked to reflect on the positive and negative impacts this project had on their communities. Their reflections

are contained on pages 154–155. In the limited time of the process, Community Researchers saw change in relationships (intersectoral relationships, relationships within communities, relationships between communities and governmental services) as well as a shift toward community action rather than relying on the solutions of outsiders. In many communities, the Community Reference Group continued as a forum for discussion of school development within leadership structures traditionally operating outside the sphere of education. In other communities other structures for community action emerged. Some silences in communities were broken open, particularly with reference to HIV/AIDS. Some of the participatory planning manifested in clear community action.



Community Researchers' reflections

- I think in my area the project has brought the community together. The community has realised it is high time the community came together and did something for themselves. To do something to push the school and community forward. During the Community indaba the fire started. There is a sense that the fire must keep burning.

There was a change of attitude in our local chief. He has been known to be overly strict. Oppressive [tape]...

I left something out. In my community, there were silences concerning sensitive issues like HIV/AIDS. During the Community indaba I was surprised to see the chief himself stand up in front of the public to say something about it. I think we as community members are now going to do something about it. Teach each other about it. And help each other. (CR, Siyandhani)



- Before the research started, we had a problem organising meetings. When the team came to my area, I think there was some sort of a motivation factor because people started to attend meetings in large numbers. I have been struggling to form a youth forum in my area, but during the process I did form a youth forum. People began to participate in large numbers. We were able to organise the youth. We were on the verge of organising a developmental forum, although there are still tensions from the headmen's sides. Before the research, the headmen would have to invite all to the meetings. During the research, we did not have to only go through the headmen. And people would just come in numbers. It has had a positive impact.

I think that the approach used by the EPC was just different. They were unique in the way they introduced and then followed up to the end. It was the first time they saw someone come and explain clearly. People have gotten used to people coming and going and breaking promises. This was somehow different. (CR, Bizana)



- I have never seen a ward councillor sitting together with an induna. During the Community indaba they were sitting together, eating together. I don't know, maybe that can continue. Before the start of the project, youth were not invited to participate in things. This changed in the workshops. They realise the youth have a lot to say, so we must give them a chance to say something. (CR, Manyoni)



- In my community, before the research, there was no community development committee. After the youth researcher team met the councillor, and found out the councillor cannot meet without the development committees, the youth researcher team came back to report. We decided to have a wider community meeting and formed a community development committee. What I can say is that the impact of the research is a big change. There was no electricity and roads. But during the research, and using the councillor as part of the reference group, things have changed. (CR, Nyembe)



- This research has changed the style of the community. Before, the youth could not take part in the meeting, and now they can take part. The project has made the community very interested. The EPC has asked them to think about the problems of the community. (CR, Lady Frere)



- Previously, I could describe the community as stubborn. We always said there are many ways to kill a cat. You know this project has killed that cat of a village that becomes stubborn. Previously, if community members are saying no, they would never change. Now they are not really that stubborn. It is not the only positive thing that has changed. In May and June there was more expectation they would see Mandela for the first time and a lot of things can happen because Mandela is rich. But when we went on and on explaining that Mandela is not going to bring anything and that we must find solutions for our community ourselves, they came to see; if you can't beat them, join them.

We have a proverb. I think this proverb tells them that he who unveils the fountain is not the one who is going to drink at the fountain. (CR, Tshamavhudzi)



- OK, thank you. Before the research arrived in my community, my community was running in darkness. For example, I can talk about the first workshop. Most of the people did not really understand what was happening. In the second workshop they started to enjoy the process of our research. In this present

moment, our community is ready to stand up and create the community project, for example the vegetable gardens, through guidance of our research. We have also been able to open community trust. Civil and tribal authorities are putting together the ideas coming out of research. (CR, Roodtse)



- At this community during the analysis session, what happened was one community member pointed out the issue of the nearby gamepark. They asked how can they approach the game rangers in their community who employ the community members to ask them to plant something back into the community? The chief and the induna were there, and already the issue has been taken up. There was a resolution that the chief, community members, and ward councillor would approach the owners of the gamepark and have these discussions about planting back into the community. (CR, Manyoni)



- This project has made a big change in my community. My community was divided. Now it is like one big family. There were some materials that were there and people waiting for government. Now people are starting to do the job themselves. Now a large number of people are coming to school meetings. And these meetings are combining civic and traditional structures as well. (CR, Tshamavhudzi)

Key process findings

The learning emerging from this methodological approach reaches beyond the scope of this book. Some of the most important reflections on the process relate to the history of power and dependency. The history of oppressive power relationships within rural development is deeply entrenched in history.

Rural communities are used to 'outsiders' coming in and out of their communities, perhaps providing 'solutions' or material benefit in the short term. This paternal and expert-driven approach further erodes a sense of community power. Even well-intentioned initiatives can play into historic wounds of powerlessness and dependency. Genuine conversations between communities and outsiders (whether researchers or development workers) are undermined by a history that undermines authentic relationships. The commitment to processes that ultimately have the chance of seeding local power requires a clear consciousness around the history of power relations, strict principles of collaboration, extended time, a sense of humility, and an appreciation for investing in human relationships of trust. The introduction of the process to communities, staying in communities rather than hotels, and working with locally-based researchers were all important pieces of an approach that attempted to challenge historic 'development project' footprints. The very experience of being listened to accurately was an extremely moving one in most communities.

The process confirmed the power of an approach that affirms local communities as the primary actors in their own development, and as the most important source of understanding of the experience of rural livelihoods.

List of participants

The team that produced this study worked on different aspects of the research. Without the work and participation of everyone involved, this book would not have been produced.

The **Human Sciences Research Council** team consisted of Linda Chisholm, Sean Morrow, Mbithi wa Kivilu and Kim Engel. Stephen Rule provided survey assistance, Adlai Davids drew the maps, Annemarie Booyens gave technical assistance and Monica Strassner provided for the information needs of the team. Mark Orkin provided invaluable support to the project as a whole. Zakes Langa co-ordinated the fieldwork for the survey and the provincial fieldwork managers – Barbara Moaheli, Sydney Fryer and Enency Mbatha – as well as the provincial fieldworkers listed below.

The HSRC team would like to thank the Education Policy Consortium for conducting the participatory research and providing their data, analyses and insights for use in the final report, as well as Neville Alexander, David Hemson, Peter Kallaway, Jon Lewis, Makhole Phurutse and Crain Soudien who wrote short pieces for inclusion in the report. Critical comment was received from Adele Gordon and Ben Parker. Michael Morris and Elaine Unterhalter made valuable suggestions on the early drafts. Anita Ramphal from Delhi University inspired and guided team members at a crucial stage of the work.

Photographs were provided by community members and Adele Gordon. Alistair Findlay did the illustrations, Niccola Perez did the final edit and Jenny Young did the cover and text design. Garry Rosenberg and Mary Ralphs of HSRC Press made invaluable contributions to preparing the report for publication, Makano Morojele from the Nelson Mandela Foundation was responsible for overall management of the study. Enver Motala generously made time to comment throughout the process.

The provincial field workers were:

Eastern Cape Sydney Fryer, Jacqueline Mdekazi, Ezekiel Mkondwane, Nolunsindiso Abenta, Nozipho Faith Mjobo, Nontsikelelo Ncukana, Tenjiwe Ngudle, Portia Ngeziwe Paulos, Nontryikelo Cwancisa Soldati, Nonzolo Soldati, Evelyn Tshuwa and Nokutula Zingato.

KwaZulu-Natal Barbara Moahloli, Patrick Mandla Khoza, Sibongile Sylvia Mathe, Sibusiso Selby Khumalo, Lungani Philemon Khweshube, Sithembile Siebritz Mathe, Nompucuko Princess Matiti, Thobile Mbambo, Lloyd Miya, Mthethokawuncengi Absolom Mthembu, Reginald Nala, Nhlanhla Nkosi and Musawenkosi Zulu.

Limpopo Enency Kuki Mbatha, Mosindadona Julia Lusenga, Annah Mehloti Molefe, Ntombizodwa Theodorah Dladla, Sibusiso Justinah Gunene, Rosina Mmapaledi Langa, Mamome Portia Mabhena, Tenyeko Abel Marivate, Jane Moswana Masipa, Richard Sibusiso Gert Matjeni, Martha Mantombi Msezane, Alugumi Benedict Sikhwari and Nomkhosi Sophie Vilane.

The data processing team

Ann Coetzer, Anneke Jordaan and Monica Peret.



The **Education Policy Consortium** team was led by Kimberley Porteus of the Wits Education Policy Unit and Michael Gardiner of the Centre for Education Policy Development (CEPD). Carrie Pratt Moloto of Vuk'uyithathe Research and Development developed the research tools and trained the core team in their use.

The **provincial research co-ordinators** were Mmeli Macanda of the Wits EPU, Samiera Zafar of the CEPD, Paul Kgobe of the CEPD, Reshma Sookrajh of the CEREP and Donald Guambe of the Education Policy Unit (Natal). The core team also consisted of Van Rooi Khosa (CEPD), Thivhulawi Gerson Mukwevho (CEPD), Xola Ngonini (CEPD), Sandile Mbokazi of the Education Policy Unit (Natal), Thamsanqa Thulani Bhengu (CEREP), Daliwonga Menziwa (EPU Fort Hare), Thandiswa Gadu (EPU Fort Hare), Busisiwe Sokopo (EPU Fort Hare), Victor Mathonsi (NASGB) and Collin Makola Phurutse (HSRC). George Moyo (UPU Fort Hare), Cliff Malcolm (CEREP) and John Pampallis (CEPD) provided leadership support through the process.

Two **community researchers** were recruited from each of the nine site communities. They included: the late Mr Xolile Sanele Maphinda (Bizana), Ms Busiswa Fekeza Msitheli (Bizana), Ms Dorah Luambo Netshikulwe (Malamangwa), Mr Remember Khumbudzo Sadiki (Malamangwa), Mr Mhlonipheni Shongwe (Manyoni), Mr Mbongeni Buthelezi (Manyoni), Ms Fikiswa Matoti (Lady Frere), Mr Xolile Zothe (Lady Frere), Ms Shongile Mabunda (Siyandhani), Mr Victor Mabasa (Siyandhani), Mr Bheka Ndawonde (Mnqagayi), Ms Qhakazile Gumede (Mnqagayi), Ms Hombokazi Mkangisa (Peddie), Mr Mondli Phekuza (Peddie), Ms Gladys Moila (Roodtse), Mr Robert Phelane (Roodtse), Mr Khumbulani Gcensa (Nyembe), and Mrs Sthembile Mkhize (Nyembe).

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BIZANA: Mr Mpfana (Headman), Mr Simendi (Headman), Mr Nyama (Headman), Mr Madikizela (Headman), Mr Jali Mfana (Headman), Mr Khubalo (Headman) and Mr Melani (Headman).

MALAMANGWA: Vhakoma Vho-Negondeni (Chief Representative), Vhakoma Vho-Davhula (Chief Representative), Mr TS Mpilo (Councilor, Malamangwa), members of the Community Reference Group: S Mpilo, J Mpilo, N Negondeni, S Negondeni, A Negondeni, G Nemaranzhe, S Nemaranzhe, M Nemaranzhe, A Netshikulwe, M Phathela, G Mphaphuli, U Makondo, N Ndambakuwa, T Nethenani, R Baloyi, O Siala, L Netshikulwe, M Makwebe, and L Mudogwa.

MANYONI: Members of the community reference group – Ms Ngcobo (Principal), ZE Nkosi (Deputy Principal), Mr P Nhleko, Ms Madlophe, J Ndwandwe (Ward Councillor), Mrs DR Ndwandwe and M Shongwe (Chair-SGB).

LADY FRERE: Mr Mzandisi (headman), Mr Nkwebe (Board-Mthonjeni and Dike), Mr Sibango (Board-Ndulini), Mr Matoti (former principal of a neighbouring school), Mrs Tsheyini (former principal of the researched school), Mr J Gugwana (SGB), Mrs Marhabana (SGB), Mrs Siyo (SGB), Mrs Bhidi (SGB), Mr Siyazi (SGB), Ntsokwini (SGB), Mr Mhlakaza (SGB), Mr Makhazibe (SGB), Mrs Tsheyini (SGB).

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MNQAGAYI: members of the community reference group: MMC Sibiya (Principal), Mr Sangweni (Induna), Mr Mdletshe (Induna), MT Gumede (SGB Chairman), Mrs Siyaya and Mr MJ Njoko.

PEDDIE: Mr Nxawe (Mayor), and men and women in the community: Nomahomba Mkhangisa, Nokhombile Khunjuza, Nongenile Mali, Nongazi Mzangwa, Nokhaya Silahla, Nozukile Yani, Jameson Mali, Ntlanganiso Nyama, Domen Mali, Weight Tsitsi, Mkhita Camagu, Mbulelo Camagu, Khuthele Kunjuza, Zuzile Mkhangisa, Sihonono Gwaxu, Phakamile Ngcaku, Fanele Kuhlana and KS Mbaza.

ROODTSE: Community reference group members: Kgosi J Phelane, Jacob Moloto, Judas Tselane, Hendrick Phelane, Jack Mokgotho, Tshepo Moraba, Ida Moraba, Albert Phelane, John Phelane, Justice Segabetla and Johannes Makomane.

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Emerging Voices

One of the greatest challenges South Africa faces is rural poverty and education. This book graphically illustrates the conditions that make the dreams of a better life for all virtually unrealisable in rural areas. Through the voices of rural people themselves, we are told not only what the problems are but also what can and should be done. This book is a richly documented portrait of the lives of communities in selected rural areas, and specifically their thoughts and feelings about education. It is a book that can come at no better time as South Africa is poised to launch a major offensive against poverty in rural areas. Education, this book shows, must be a central component of such an initiative.

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