

APPENDIX SIX

Education Provision in Mpumalanga (with Specific Reference to the Former KwaNdebele Region and Farm Schools around Groblersdal)

INTRODUCTION

This study had two main purposes. It sought to investigate and identify barriers to learning in the current education system. At the same time, it sought to identify some positive aspects in schools and other institutions of learning, which could be harnessed to advance the notion of open learning. Although a detailed questionnaire was developed to guide the interviews, the study was based on the following broad questions:

- How are schools and other institutions of learning operating both in terms of positive and negative aspects?
- What are some of the problems faced by management structures and how are such problems addressed?
- What are some of the problems experienced by teachers, which interfere with processes of teaching and learning?
- What are some of the problems experienced by learners both within the institutions of learning and at home?

The study was undertaken in three educational regions of Mpumalanga, Moretele, Groblersdal, and KwaMhlanga. Large parts of these regions constitute what was previously known as KwaNdebele. This area was chosen because it is well known to the researcher, and language was not a barrier in hearing from learners the problems that prevent them from learning.

The institutions visited were selected randomly, however most of them fall within the educational region of Groblersdal. A total of 11 schools (4 secondary and 7 primary schools) were visited. Of the 7 primary schools, 5 are farm schools.

In addition to schools, the following institutions, educational projects and NGOs were visited:

- 2 adult centres run by an NGO known as Masifundisane Community Literacy Project;
- 1 adult centre run by the Department of Education;
- 2 projects for learners with disabilities;
- 1 NGO (SEIDET) focusing on educational improvement and development; and
- CN Mahlangu Technical College.

This report focuses on broad issues such as, how these institutions are managed, support for managers, teacher needs and support, learner needs and support, conditions in classrooms,

facilities and resources and other general problems that learners encounter in the institutions or at home which prevent them from learning effectively.

For purposes of clarity, the report is divided into five sections. The first section focuses on general information about Mpumalanga. This general information throws some light on education and conditions in schools and on trends in the education budget in the province. The second section focuses on schooling in the province. It specifically covers issues of management and governance in schools; facilities and condition; classroom practices; learner needs and support, including learners with special needs. The third section focuses on similar issues but with specific reference to Further Education and Training (FET) in the region. The fourth section deals with Adult Education and the last section draws a conclusion and makes recommendations.

GENERAL INFORMATION

According to Statistics South Africa (1995), Mpumalanga is South Africa's second smallest province with a surface area of 79 940 square kilometres. The province has a population of three million representing about 7,3% of the total population of the country. 61% of the total population in the province lives in rural areas. The average per capita income is R10 625. Mpumalanga has an adult literacy rate of 75,5% compared to 82,2% for the country.¹

In terms of administration, Mpumalanga Province covers sections which in the previous regime fell under the homelands of Kangwane, Lebowa and KwaNdebele.

Based on the Central Statistics Services household surveys of October 1995, this report was compiled about Mpumalanga:

- 66,5% of black households in the province lived in fully paid-off dwellings, as opposed to 21,7% of white households;
- Only 20,1% of black households had access to running water in the dwellings as opposed to 95,6% white households;
- While 99,1% of white households used electricity as the main source of power for cooking, this was the case in only 20% of black households, where wood was the most common source of power (30,6%), followed by coal (25,4%);
- For lighting purposes, 50,6% of black households used candles, while electricity was used by 32,0%;
- The unemployment rate in the province was 36,4 with the rate for males being 27,6% and females 49,2%.²

BACKGROUND ON EDUCATION AND CONDITIONS IN SCHOOLS

Mpumalanga is divided into 10 educational regions: Moretele, Groblersdal, KwaMhlanga, Witbank, Nelspruit, Eerstehoek, Standerton, Ermelo, Hazyview and Malelane. In 1996, the province had about 1,926 institutions of learning of which 1,698 were schools, 12 special education learning sites, 1 tecknikon, 10 technical colleges and 5 teacher training colleges.³ Among others, the National Schools Building Programme Education Dataset covered the following information about schools in Mpumalanga:

¹ http://www.statssa.gov.za/Reports/general/00_90_08.htm 03/07/2000

² Ibid

³ Education Foundation. 1999. National Schools Building Programme Education Dataset (CDROM). Durban, Education Foundation

Power supply in the schools:

- Dead 216
- Generator 8
- Other 3
- Unwired 715
- Wired 971

Water availability in schools:

- Communal tap 158
- Inside 368
- None 314
- On site 1042
- Other 30

Toilets/ ablution facilities were as follows:

- Bucket None
- Flush 541
- Improved Pit 121
- None 227
- Pit 842
- Septic tank 165

Conditions of school building were said to be as follows:

- Good 699
- Tatty 958
- Very good 79
- Very weak 21
- Weak 137

According to these statistics, there are still many schools where conditions of buildings are either tatty, weak, or very weak; where pit latrines are used as ablution facilities; where there is still no water within the school premises; and where electricity is either non-functional or has not been installed. In terms of provincial profiles presented in IDASA's Intergovernmental Reviews (1999), assuming the classroom learners ratio of 1:40, by 1997, Mpumalanga still experienced a shortage of 4 954 classrooms.

In the 4 years between 1996, when the Schools Register of Needs was conducted, and 2000 there may have been significant changes in the conditions of schools in other parts of the province. However, in the area that was visited, there is no evidence of practical improvements to the conditions of schools in the province. This is not surprising given the provincial budgetary constraints.

TRENDS IN THE MPUMALANGA EDUCATION BUDGET FROM 1996/7-1999/00

According to IDASA (1999), from 1996/7 to 1999/00, provincial budgets increased by an average of 7,6%. In this period, Mpumalanga experienced an increase of about 8.5%. In order to avoid overspending, provinces, including Mpumalanga, have had to scale down their education services to a smaller core of services that would correspond to their fiscal

situation.⁴ The major factor affecting the improvement of conditions in schools is that more money is spent on personnel than on other resources and facilities of equal importance. IDASA shows that in Mpumalanga, personnel expenditure as a percentage of the education budget increased from 87% in 1995/96 to 92% in 1999/2000. However, it is estimated that in the Medium Term Expenditure Framework period between 1999/2000 and 2001/2002, personnel expenditure in Mpumalanga will decrease by -0.26%.⁵

IDASA's Intergovernmental Review of Budgets further shows that personnel expenditure has had a major impact on other kinds of expenditure in all the provinces. While there has been an estimated national decline of 13.8% on books and stationery between 1996/7 and 1999/00, Mpumalanga had increased spending of about 5.2% on stationery and textbooks in same period.⁶ On the other hand, while Mpumalanga needed about R44 million to meet transport needs of scholars in 1999, only R4,5 million was allocated for scholar transport.⁷ This confirms the fact that due to financial constraints, Mpumalanga, like other provinces has had to prioritize its spending.

Personnel expenditure has also had a negative impact on spending in other forms of education other than public ordinary schools. Non-formal education, which provides facilities for Adult Basic Education and Training and Out-of School youth, has suffered in the process. In Mpumalanga, while 56.8% was allocated to non-formal education in 1997/8, this declined to -35.0% in 1998/9 and it is estimated that this will decline further to about -15.9% in 1999/00.⁸ This inconsistency and declining allocation for non-formal education suggest that adult education and education for the out of school youth is not taken very seriously in the province. It is worth noting, however, that overspending in education has since come under control. For example, overspending on personnel in Mpumalanga education budget improved from 57.06% in 1997/8 to 4.85% in 1998/9.⁹

According to IDASA's Review of Provincial Budget for 2000/01, provinces are still expected to spend more on public ordinary schools despite the fact that adult literacy has been pronounced by the Minister of Education as one of the national priorities. The IDASA Review shows that public ordinary schools in Mpumalanga will consume 84.4% of provincial education budget whereas personnel expenditure will still account for 94.0% of the public ordinary schools budget.¹⁰ In real terms, spending per learner on books and stationery in Mpumalanga is expected to be not more than R71 for 2000/01. However, Mpumalanga is showing positive growth in expenditure in non-formal education. For example, spending on non-formal education will go up by about 2.7% in 2000/01.

Another area that has suffered a lot as a result of more money spent on public ordinary schools is Education for Learners with Special Needs (ELSEN). This area has not received the attention it deserves as despite the estimate that, nationally, the number of disabled children currently in schools is about 30%. Although Mpumalanga has slightly increased its

⁴ IDASA - Budget Information Service. 1999. Intergovernmental Fiscal Review: A review of Provincial Budgets 1996/97 to 1999/00, IDASA, 11 October 1999: 72

⁵ Ibid: 84

⁶ Ibid: 90

⁷ Ibid: 95

⁸ Ibid : 92

⁹ Ibid : 96

¹⁰ IDASA – Budget Information Service.2000. 'A Review of the 2000/01 Provincial Education Budgets. <http://www.idasa.org.za/bis/briefs/default.htm>, 08/03/2000

spending in education for learners with special needs, this is clearly not enough because after an adjustment for inflation, Mpumalanga will still be spending -3.3% on ELSSEN.¹¹

Given that more money in education is spent on personnel, there is little hope therefore that there may have been any significant changes in the conditions of many school in Mpumalanga since the School Survey of Needs was conducted in 1996..

SCHOOLING IN THE FORMER KWANDEBELE REGION OF MPUMALANGA

This section focuses on schools. It specifically examines issues of management and governance, facilities and conditions, classroom practices and learner needs and support

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE IN SCHOOLS

Management

Many of the schools that were visited had management structures comprising of principals, deputy principals and heads of departments (HODs). However, there were exceptional cases especially with farm schools. Generally, farm schools had fewer teachers, for example, one of the farm schools visited had 5 teachers, of whom two are permanent staff members. These two teachers constituted the acting management of the school. In two other farm schools, each had two teachers who worked together on many issues including issues relating to management. In another farm school, there was only one teacher who also acted as the principal.

In 10 of the schools that were visited, teachers and learners were positive about their school managers and their management styles. These were schools where management consulted with teachers before decisions were taken and which also involved the Learner Representative Councils (LRCs) where needed. In these schools teachers felt that the principals respected teachers and valued their opinions. In some of the schools, management was credited for taking initiatives to alleviate some of the problems that would undoubtedly interfere with teaching and learning. For example, in one school which had lost a block of four classes in a fire, there was a critical shortage of classrooms. Seeing that the education department was not moving speedily in addressing the problem, the school management, in collaboration with the school governing body, decided to seek sponsorship from private businesses. Some company from Witbank eventually donated 8 prefabricated classrooms.¹²

Although in some schools management seemed to be working in close cooperation with other stakeholders, there were some schools where teachers expressed serious reservations about their management. In one school, teachers felt that their opinions were not valued and that teachers were consulted as a formality rather than purposefully soliciting different opinions and ideas. According to teachers who were interviewed in the school, issues were brought to staff meetings for discussion when the management had already taken a decision. If teachers did not agree with what the management team suggested, the matter would be rested for few days and be brought back to a staff meeting without any changes. This would be repeated

¹¹ Ibid: 7

¹² Interview with Principal, Zidobhele Secondary School, 04 February 2000

until teachers gave up. Teachers in the school also complained that the school management, particularly the principal, did not appreciate good practices and commitment from staff.¹³ They cited an incident where their colleague had been nominated the best Biology teacher in the district and the principal did not inform him about this.

Besides teachers and learners being positive about their school management, we observed that in some of these schools, management lacked vision and waited for the government to do things for them. These were schools where facilities such as the library were there but where books were scattered all over the floor and covered in dust instead of being packed nicely in boxes until shelves were secured for the library.

Governing Bodies

All the schools that were visited had established governing bodies (SGBs) as stipulated in the South African Schools Act of 1996. In most of these schools governing bodies consisted of parents whose children attend at the schools as is required by the law. However, in some schools they had, for various reasons, also coopted other members of the community. For example in one school, one businessman and a local Catholic priest had been coopted onto the SGB. The businessman had been coopted so that he could assist the school financially, the priest was coopted because the Catholic Church contributed enormously to the founding of the school although the school is now fully under the government.¹⁴

In another farm school, teachers informed us that they knew of an amount of R14 000, which was held by the farm manager who was also involved in helping to run the school. The money belonged to the SGB and was supposed to have been used to build an additional classroom. However, because of internal conflicts in the SGB, there had not been agreement on how the money should be spent.¹⁵

In some schools, principals and teachers were positive about the functioning of the SGB while in others principals and teachers expressed serious concerns about the SGB. Various teachers raised the following concerns about the SGBs:

- They abuse their powers by taking decisions without consultation.
- Some SGBs interfere in matters which in terms of the law do not require governing body intervention.
- Some SGBs are made up of parents who are not educated and who do not really know what they are supposed to do.
- Some SGBs are dominated by individuals.
- Some members of SGB have terminated their membership without giving notice of their unavailability, mainly because of internal conflicts.

Although many schools acknowledged that there had been workshops to train members of SGB, concerns raised by teachers about governing bodies seemed to point to the fact that many SGBs did not understand their roles.

Support for School Management and Governance Structures

Principals who were interviewed had mixed feelings about support which school management received from circuit and district officials. All the principals were positive about

¹³ Interviews with teachers at Hlanganani Secondary School, 31 February 2000

¹⁴ Interviews with Principal, St. Joseph Comprehensive School, 04 February 2000

¹⁵ Interviews with teachers at Foxtot Primary School, 08 February 2000

workshops that had been organized to train them in various aspects of management including financial management. Although many of them could not remember exactly how many workshops they had attended in the previous year, they were satisfied that they had had enough workshops of good quality and that information they received in such workshops was useful.

Some principals felt that although workshops organized by district officials were generally good, the bureaucratic nature of the education department sometimes stifled progress. This is what one principal said about districts and circuit offices:

Support you get from the circuit and district is that they will provide you with or bring documents to the school. They will take the documents, sympathising with you but they would not be assisting you in the problem that you are having because they will take all the things that need to be signed, like the requisitions for books. They will take those forms, approve them and take them to the district which will also approve them and then they will be taken to head office where they will get stuck and lost. The next thing you have to start from scratch, so on and so forth. To us, unless these structures are given powers, they are very much ineffective in a way. To be honest, it becomes a waste of tax payers' money to have the circuits and districts because they serve as post offices.¹⁶

In the school, which had lost four classes in a fire, including a class that was used for administration purposes, the principal felt that the Department of Education had lacked a sense of urgency regarding classroom shortage. According to the principal, the problems was serious because the school was at the centre of the village and the enrolments were high. Attempts to get the department to assist had proved futile. The school management had undertaken initiatives to get donations from sympathisers and some company in Witbank had donated eight prefabricated classrooms. According to the principal, the department had only provided the school with transport to collect the structure but had not provided manpower to erect the structure. The school management had had to use school fees to get people to erect the structure.

FACILITIES AND CONDITIONS IN SSCHOOLS

School Buildings and Infrastructure

Generally, the schools that were visited had buildings that ranged between good and very good. However, there were schools where buildings were tatty. Because of classroom shortages at Zidobhele Secondary School, they had had to erect shacks to provide accommodation during Northern Sotho and Home Economics lessons. All the primary schools that were visited had no library, laboratory or media centre facilities. On the other hand, of the four high schools that were visited, three had such facilities although some of them were not functional. There are a number of reasons why these facilities were not functional in these schools:

First, government intervention is needed to provide these schools with necessary equipment for the facilities that are currently not used because schools do not have sufficient funds to purchase the equipment.

Second, in some cases school management lacks vision. In such cases our findings were confirmed by Christie et al (1997: 11) where they noted that management in some schools lacks preparedness to act or move from passivity and victimhood to active agency. We found

¹⁶ Interview with a principal in a school in the former KwaNdebele (04 February 2000)

that in such schools, management failed to take initiatives to improve conditions in their schools and were waiting for the government do things for them. In one such school we found books scattered all over the floor covered with dust in a non-functional library. While it is understandable that the library did not have shelves, those books could at least have been packed in boxes and the place cleaned while management was trying to secure shelving.

Third, crime and lack of security in schools is another major problem causing the non-functioning of some of the facilities in school. In some of the schools, doors, windows and ceiling were broken as a result of vandalism and attempts to steal school property. All the schools that were visited reported that they had had burglaries where school property, particularly furniture and science equipment, had been stolen. Farm schools in particular, indicated that during break-ins to their schools, mainly food left over by children during feeding sessions had been stolen. This could be a clear indication of conditions of poverty under which some families in farms live. During our visit we found that in one school the toilet roof had been stolen.¹⁷ In another school, the classroom still had marks from fire which thugs made to braai a sheep on New Year's eve.¹⁸ Such criminal activities and the fact that there is no security in schools have made some principals very sceptical about spending money to buy resources for schools in case they get stolen.

Some principals complained that despite their attempts to get the department to intervene by providing security for schools, nothing had happened. According to the principal of St. Joseph Comprehensive School which housed very expensive machinery for welding, motor mechanics, woodwork, fitting and machining and typing, their attempts to get the school guarded had proved futile to date. According to the principal, sometime the previous year one of their workshops was broken into and equipment worth R70,000 stolen and the department had not been able to replace the equipment. What makes this an especially sad story is that most of the equipment had been acquired through donations.

At Hlanganani Secondary School, the principal also indicated that they were planning to convert their home economics centre into a computer centre but their major problem was security. This was the school where a toilet roof had been stolen and the principal's genuine concern was whether computers would be safe.

Of the eleven schools that were visited, five had flush toilets and 6 had pit latrines. In some schools, the flush toilets were not of good quality, while in other schools the toilets were not used with care. As a result, the drains often blocked causing toilets to be flooded with water. In some of the schools using pit latrines, particularly at Mandlakababa and Aquaville Primary Schools, the conditions of those latrines were appalling and posed a serious danger to the users. While some learners and teachers did use the latrines, most learners preferred to go into the bushes.

Overcrowding in Classrooms

Overcrowding was a problem experienced mainly in the farm schools, which were usually smaller. In the five farm school that were visited one had a single classroom catering for 80 learners, three schools had a maximum of two classroom each and one had 8 classrooms of which one was used for administration purposes. Some of these schools are not overcrowded

¹⁷ We saw the toilet with a roof and teachers told us that the roof had been stolen.

¹⁸ We were informed by a teacher at Mandlakababa Primary School after we asked him what happened to the classroom.

because they had fewer learners. Teachers at Zidobhele and St. Joseph Secondary Schools complained that some of their classes were large. We observed that in these schools some of the classes had up to sixty learners each.

In another case, Foxtiot, a farm school which falls under Gauteng and is situated on the border of Gauteng and Mpumalanga, was built with the intention of catering for learners living on farms around Jakalasdans. However there had been massive developments with the mushrooming of an informal on the border of Mpumalanga. Although schools had been built in the settlement, many learners travelled to Foxtiot causing overcrowding in classrooms.

Multi-Grade Classrooms

All the five farm schools that were visited had multi-grade classrooms. In one of these schools, grade 1 to grade 7, were all in one class with one teacher, who was also principal of the school. Teachers in multi-grade classrooms indicated that it was extremely difficult for them to teach in such classrooms especially where some grades were doing Curriculum 2005 while others were not. For example, grades 1,2 and 3 and 7 were expected to be doing the new curriculum while grades 4, 5 and 6 had not yet started. Their survival strategy was to give one group work to do while they focused on another. Although some of them indicated that they did survive, others were adamant that this system affected learning because teachers were unable to give individual learners maximum time and attention that they sometimes needed.¹⁹

Over-Aged Learners

The problem of over-aged learners was still prevalent especially in the farm schools. We managed to interview 39 learners in two schools (23 at Foxtiot and 16 at Mooisrivier). In the two schools age and grades of learners who were interviewed were distributed as follows.

GRADE	NO. OF LEARNERS	AGE
1	1	20
5	2	14
	1	15
	1	16
6	1	15
	1	16
	4	17
7	1	12
	3	15
	4	16
	8	17
8	2	14

¹⁹ Interviews with teachers in farm schools in Groblersdal and Jakkalsdans

GRADE	NO. OF LEARNERS	AGE
	3	15
	4	17
9	1	19
	1	20
10	1	15

This table shows that some of the learners in farm schools are, in terms of age, far older for the grades they are doing. Whereas, in terms of the law, learners in grade 1 should be 7 years old, we found a learner 13 years older than the cohort. On the other hand in terms of the law, learners in grade 9 should be around 15 years. However, there were still learners who are about 20 years old in that grade. In terms of policy over-aged learners should be sent to technical colleges. However, farm schools found themselves in a dilemma because there are no such institutions available. This often meant that children had to be sent either to boarding institutions or to stay with relatives, as it happens with learners who have completed primary schooling. According to teachers in farm schools, many families in their communities did not have money to send their children to technical colleges elsewhere, meaning that if the learners were not admitted into existing schools, then they would either have to find jobs or stay at home.²⁰

Physical Accessibility

Most of the schools that we visited were easily accessible by public and private transport. There were roads leading to the schools and in some cases, particularly in the densely populated villages, learners did not walk very far to get to the school. Those learners who had problems with transport were in farm schools. Two of the farm schools that we visited, had school buses subsidised by the government. In the other schools some learners used bicycles while others walked to school. In one school in Groblersdal, sympathetic farmers played an important role using their 'bakkies' to transport learners who lived on their farms.²¹

Provision of Materials in Schools

Textbooks

Due to time constraints we were unable to secure statistics to verify if there were enough textbooks for learners in schools. Some of the schools with a smaller enrolment figure, for example Hlanganani Secondary School which had about 400 learners, management had no serious complaints about textbooks. Their only problem was a shortage in Accounting textbooks which according to the management had just been introduced in the school. In some of the primary schools, teachers indicated that they had not yet received workbooks for grade 3 where Curriculum 2005 is being implemented. In two secondary schools that had enrolments of between 900 and 1000, principals indicated that at times, they were required to use school funds to purchase additional books and textbooks. According to the principal of

²⁰ Interviews with teachers at Moosrivier, 11 February 2000

²¹ Interviews with principal and learners at Rondekop Primary School, 07 February 2000

St. Joseph Comprehensive School, for the current year, they had already spent R20 000 to buy textbooks in order to ensure that tuition went on without hindrance.²²

Furniture

In some schools, there was a shortage of desks and chairs for learners. At Rondekop Primary, where 80 learners from different grades shared one classroom, some learners sat on the floor which made writing extremely difficult. At Zidobhele Secondary School, one teacher informed us that learners often fought for chairs because one learner would mark a chair, for example with green paint to show that it was his/hers. The following another learner marked the same chair with red paint, and so learners would claim that the chair as theirs.

Other Resources

As indicated earlier, some of the schools had facilities such as libraries and laboratories that were non-functional. One of the reasons was that the school had not been provided with the necessary equipment and apparatus. At St. Joseph Comprehensive, the school offering technical subjects, there were workshops which, according to the principal, were worth more than R1million. However, as the principal further indicated, some of these workshops were not working because the government was unable to provide other components. To make matters worse, some workshops had been blown away by a storm and the school had not been able to repair the damages. According to the principal, the school submitted a requisition of consumables that they needed in the workshop 3-4 years previously but they had not received anything. This had motivated parents and the SGB to raise school funds from R50 to R200 with the intention of purchasing some of the necessary equipment. However, the machines were proving difficult to maintain because, according to the principal, it took about R15 000 to R18 000 to repair one machine.²³

It is clear that some of the problems raised here require government intervention. At the same time the department of education lacks a sense of agency to address some of the problems. Unless this is addressed, teaching and learning processes will remain seriously affected.

Communication Systems and Infrastructure

Improving communication infrastructure in the area would go a long way in facilitating communication between schools, districts and head office. Of the eleven schools that were visited seven, including two farm schools, had access to a telephone. Only four of the schools has access to computers but did not have access to e-mail. In one school that had 10 computers donated by ABSA, the computers were not on the school premises as they had been given to teachers for safekeeping the school management sorted out problems of space and security.

Many of these schools had access to mailbox. However, some still experienced problems, receiving postage late. One school gave an example of a situation where the principal had been invited to three meetings on the same day and at almost the same time. According to teachers this was not due to a slow mailing system, but rather to poor communication and correlation amongst different sections in the district office, where the various divisions in the district office planned activities for principals without informing one another.

²² Interviews with principal at St. Joseph Comprehensive, 03 February 2000

²³ Ibid, 03 February 2000

CLASSROOM PRACTICES

We are not in a position to comment much about classroom practices because we did not observe any lessons to see how they were conducted. We only asked teachers and learners about the curriculum; subject choices; assessment strategies; about some of the practices that make them lose time; and about their motivation for teaching and learning.

Curriculum and Subject Choices for Learners

All the primary schools that were visited offered similar subjects and all of them are already implementing Curriculum 2005 in grade 3 as required. The farm schools which had grade 7, were also implementing Curriculum 2005 in that grade. Of the four secondary schools that were visited, one catered for the Science stream only, two catered for Science, Commerce and Social Sciences stream. However, according to management at Hlanganani High School, their intention was to do away with subjects such as History so that they would focus on Science and Commerce. One of the four secondary schools offered academic subjects in Science and Commerce streams and also offered vocational subjects such as motor mechanic, welding, fitting and machining, woodwork and typing. While learners in the latter school had a variety of subjects to choose from, learners in the other schools had a limited choice.

Assessment Strategies and Quality Assurance

Teachers who were interviewed mentioned that they used a variety of assessment strategies. These included the commonly used classwork, homework, assignments, tests and examinations. In some schools they had developed forms specifically to check the number of tests that were given by the individual teacher in his/her subject. Many of these schools indicated that they had no specific policies regarding the number of classwork or homework or assignments that had to be given to learners. However, teachers were encouraged to give learners as much classwork as possible.

Teachers implementing Curriculum 2005 also indicated that they used various assessment strategies to encourage the development of skills and to allow learners to use knowledge that they brought from home. Some indicated they also assessed learners' ability to work in groups, and how they expressed themselves through presentations etc.

In all the schools that were visited, there were no formal ways through which learners were able to evaluate their teachers. Except in standard 10, where learners write external examinations, teachers indicated that they had never had external people or government officials coming to evaluate their performance in the classrooms. This suggests that in some of these schools there were no mechanisms in place to ensure quality.

Use of Time

In his 'Call to Action' statement, the Minister of Education Prof. Asmal raises a major concern about schools that start late and finish early. He maintains that "schools must start on time, from Monday to Friday, everyday of the week of the school year."²⁴ A number of studies have identified various factors as sources of time lost in learning. These include cases

²⁴ Asmal, K. 1999. 'Call to Action: Mobilising citizens to build a South Africa education and training system for the 21st century' 27 July 1999

where teachers do not come to classes, sit and chat in the staff room instead of teaching,²⁵ or go on strike and/or attend union meetings during school time.²⁶ In a study of Mixed-Mode Further Diplomas in Education and Their Effect, the researchers raise the following issues in relation to time:

- Working in more than one language takes time. Teachers and learners use their main languages together with English to rephrase instructions or to explain ideas and concepts.
- There are relatively large numbers of absentees each day, though not the same learners each day. Under these circumstances, teachers find it difficult to plan for continuity and development in learning.
- The background knowledge of many learners is poor. Teachers are forced to go back to the work of earlier grades, and they then run out of time for the new work.
- Homework is either not given or not consistently done. This restricts time for learning and teaching in class time. Yet success in subjects like mathematics at school depends on learners having time to work on mathematical problems themselves, and homework time is needed for this.²⁷

In addition to these factors the following were also raised as factors causing loss of time in the schools that we visited in Mpumalanga:

- Lack of time management skills amongst learners. Teachers argued that learners often did not know how best to use the time they have to do their school work and their everyday home chores. To address this problem teachers have been trying to assist learners to draft personal study timetables.²⁸
- Traditional practices and the attitude of parents to school based learning. There were parents who either did not give learners time to do their schoolwork or intentionally disrupted their learning process. When learners tried to talk to them they told them that as children, they had to do what they (parents) wanted them to do. A clear example of this related to the issue of initiation which is one of the traditional practices of the people of the area that was visited. Among the AmaNdebele, the normal practice is that after three years, boys of between 15 and 21 years or even younger, leave school to undergo initiation for a period of between three and four months. During this time, schooling gets disrupted in a visible manner often involving more people than the initiates. The younger siblings are expected to take food to their brothers in the forest meaning that schools either have to start late or cope with scores of learners coming late.

The initiation process does not only happen to boys but to girls as well. For girls the process is undertaken anytime of the year as long as she is at puberty. Parents who try to respect schools normally initiate girls during the June or December holidays. The process for girls takes anything from a month or two. As a result of this practice some girls return to school long after schools have reopened in the New Year. Parents who do not have much respect for schools would initiate girls anytime in the middle of the year, meaning that the learner would stay away from school for a month or two.

According to teachers and learners who were interviewed in various schools in the former KwaNdebele region, some learners struggled to catch up with missed work,

²⁵ Kgobe, P. 1999. 'Transforming the South African Basic Education and Training System: A Report of Case Studies', Centre for Education Policy Development, Evaluation and Management, Presented at Education 2000 plus conference, August 1999

²⁶ *Ibid*

²⁷ Adler, J. 1999. 'Mixed-Mode Further Diplomas in Education and their Effects'. Summary Report

²⁸ Interviews with teachers at St. Joseph Comprehensive School, 03 February 2000

resulting in poor performance. Some of them became demotivated about continuing with school.²⁹

- Time is also consumed by large classes. For example, where a teacher had many learners for one subject much time was lost when the teacher tried to give individual.³⁰
- Time is also wasted in late coming. In some of the schools that we visited, late coming is evidently a problem. In many cases we found learners locked outside the school gates. In one school teachers told us that they locked late comers out until the first recess at 10h00 meaning that learners who came late ended up losing about 2 hours and 40 minutes of instructional time.³¹
- Where principals are expected to manage and teach, a lot of time is also lost for learners. This was because principals were sometimes required to focus on administration duties or attend meetings. This often meant that learners taking the subject taught by the principal lost some of the instructional time. In extreme cases, there was a farm school with only one teacher who was also the principal. For example, at Rondekop Primary, the teacher informed us that, he sometimes had to attend both teachers' and principals' workshops to learn about management and about implementing Curriculum 2005. When he went to workshops, no teaching took place.³²

Clearly, although it is the wish of the Ministry of Education that all schools start and finish on time, there are many factors within schools or at home, that result in learners losing instructional time. Although it may be easy for the department to deal with factors within schools, more thinking and planning has to go into educating parents to cherish and value the education of their children.

Teacher Morale and Motivation

The issue of teacher morale is one of those that the Ministry of Education has identified as an area needing immediate attention. In the schools that we visited, it was clearly very difficult for management and teachers in some schools to respond when asked to describe the morale and of motivation among their colleagues. The following emerged as factors affecting the morale of teachers in the schools:

- Teacher redeployment. As Professor Asmal himself acknowledged in his "Call to Action", although the process of redeployment of teachers was necessary it has caused serious uncertainties among teachers. Much as this process has impacted on the morale of teachers employed on a permanent basis by the state, it has been even more costly to those employed on a temporary basis. According to some of these teachers they had been regarded as temporary teachers for four and more years. Some indicated that their contracts had been reviewed after one year while others said theirs were reviewed after three months. According to these teachers the process of filling in forms was very slow as it had to go via the district to the head office. In many cases it affected their salaries. Some teachers waited for months before their salaries are paid. They found that inconvenient because they could not plan for their classes or their lives beyond three

²⁹ Interviews with educators and learners in schools in the former KwaNdebele (31 January to 03 February 2000)

³⁰ Interviews with teachers from various schools in the former KwaNdebele region (31 January to 12 February 2000)

³¹ Interviews with school management at Hlanganani Secondary School, 31 January 2000

³² Interviews with principal, Rondekop Primary School, 07 February 2000.

months or one year depending on their situation.³³ The general feeling amongst teachers in this predicament was that the department of education did not care about them. As one teacher clearly articulated it, 'a happy teacher is a productive teacher. As long as we are unhappy, we are tempted to be unproductive'.

- Lack of adequate support for teachers. Teachers who are currently implementing Curriculum 2005 lamented that although there were workshops to train and help them understand what the new Curriculum requires, trainers themselves did not seem to understand what they were doing. According to the teachers, during the workshops they often did activities which were not easy to implement in class. They would prefer trainers to come to their classes to show them practically how the activities could work with learners. Secondary school teachers also complained that there were not enough subject advisers to assist teachers in the various subjects they were teaching.
- Lack of cooperation among stakeholders in education. According to some teachers, there had been attacks and counter attacks among stakeholders in education. For example, the government blamed teachers for the poor performance and high failure rate of standard ten learners. On the other hand, teachers blamed the government for not providing schools with the necessary resources to enable effective teaching. Parents blamed teachers and teachers blamed parents for their lack of involvement in the education of their children. As one teacher mentioned, 'by blaming one another, we are especially destroying the kids.'³⁴
- Lack of transparency about promotion. Some teachers felt that there was no fairness in how promotion for teachers was handled. They were adamant that posts were advertised as a formality while those in power had already earmarked someone they know, for the post.³⁵
- Salary increments –Some teachers felt that salaries for teachers would not improve because the unions were no longer very strong. For example, the government had managed to introduce a 'no work no pay' policy which they successfully applied to teachers who were on strike last year. To express his disillusionment, a History and English teacher at Hlanganani High School said, "If I was in science or commerce, I would move straight to industry."³⁶
- Feeling of being disempowered. In some of the schools that were visited, particularly the secondary schools, teachers felt that the government was more interested in punishing them as teachers but was doing nothing about learners. This argument was linked to the fact that corporal punishment had been abolished. Some teachers felt that the department had abolished corporal punishment but had not given them alternative ways of punishing learners who misbehaved. Their concerns were that some of the mechanisms that the schools had put in place to enforce discipline created a mockery out of teachers because learners did not take them seriously. One teacher gave an example where she had made some learners to run around the school as punishment and to her surprise, other learners joined the race, clearly indicating to her that they enjoyed it. One teacher also made some

³³ Interviews with teachers from various school in the former KwaNdebele area, 31 January to 12 February 2000

³⁴ Interviews with teachers at St. Joseph Comprehensive School, 03 February 2000

³⁵ Interviews with teachers at Hlanganani High School, 31 January 2000

³⁶ This was said by one of the teachers who were interviewed at Hlanganani High School, 31 January 2000

learners dig a hole and to his astonishment, those learners did not have problem with it. According to him, they were enjoying it because it kept them outside the classroom.

- Lack of appreciation for good practice. As indicated under management, some teachers indicated that their school management did not appreciate good practice from teachers. For example, teachers sometimes organized extra classes for learners and ultimately improved results for the school without management acknowledging or appreciating their efforts.

In some schools, teachers and management did not hesitate to describe the level of motivation in their schools. These were schools where teachers and school management worked together as a team. In one of these schools, which had a long history of scoring between 90 and 100% matriculation pass rate every year, teachers and management said that they were also faced with similar problems facing other schools. These were problems relating to redeployment, discipline among learners and a shortage of resources. However, teachers further indicated that due to the cooperation of stakeholders in the school, i.e. school management, parents and the LRC, they had been able to overcome many of these problems. According to teachers, staff meetings in the school were used as a platform for teachers to raise concerns so that they were addressed. Teachers in the school felt that their opinions were valued because they were involved in many of the decisions that management took and according to the teachers, that kept them motivated. According to the principal, the good results that the schools had been getting with matriculation learners, could be attributed to high motivation among teachers and learners.

LEARNER NEEDS AND SUPPORT

This section explores firstly needs of learners as articulated by teachers and by learners. The section also examines some of the problems that learners are faced with both in their schools and in their homes. It also looks at support structures which learners have at their disposal and those that need to be established.

Learner Needs

In our interviews with principals, teachers and learners in the former KwaNdebele area, we also wanted to understand if institutions took needs of the learners into cognisance. It was evidently difficult for some of the schools, including learners themselves, to say exactly what some of the needs of learners were. Those who could mention such needs, did not have formal mechanisms put in place to identify and address them.

In some schools, the following were identified as needs of learners:

- Transport – This was mainly a need for learners in farm schools. Although four of the five farm schools that were visited are next to the main roads, some learners were required to walk for long distances to get to school.
- Enrichment of educational background – This was also a problem facing many rural mainly because they did not have access to resources which could enhance their, general knowledge, feed them with information and improve their vocabulary. According to one teacher, for example, some learners did not know what a computer is, and those who knew a computer did not know what it could do.
- Extra lessons – Some learners were struggling and there was a need for teachers to organize extra lessons to help such learners.

- Parental care – In all the schools that were visited, teachers raised concerns that lack of parental care was a serious problem. We were told of instances where, because of job commitments, parents left their children alone at home. In such instances, the older siblings were required to look after the young ones, and often there were no older people to monitor the children.
- Time management skills – Some teachers indicated that learners needed to be trained in managing time so that they were able to allocate time for their studies and home chores.
- Support and counselling – As we will see later, some learners experienced problems that affected their learning enormously. The problem was that teachers in schools did not have skills to counsel the learners to cope and deal with problems they encounter on a daily basis. Some learners also felt that confiding their problems to teachers did not really help because some teachers often disclosed such problems to other learners.

Some Family Problems Faced by Learners

Many learners faced problems in their homes that affected their learning. One of the major problems that was mentioned frequently in the interviews related to the breakdown of family structures. Such breakdown was often caused by divorce, death of one or both parents, or parents leaving their children alone as a result of job commitments. These situations often resulted in learners staying alone or with people who were not their biological parents. The following case studies have been compiled to capture and illustrate some of the problems facing learners that affected the learning process. In some of the cases mentioned below, teachers and the school management were able to help the learners while in others they could not. As a result of the problems they face, some learners quit schooling:

Case 1: The learners' mother had passed away and the learner went to stay with her aunt (sister to her mom). The aunt's husband did not want the learner to stay with them and this caused a serious problem. The learner felt deserted and her performance at school went down dramatically. The learner became withdrawn and was no longer active in class. One teacher noticed this and called the learner to find out about the problem. The problem was identified and some teachers from the school were sent to ask her aunt to come to school where she was advised to pay attention to the learner and give her the support she needed. The aunt was also advised to talk to her husband to make him understand the learner's problem and support her so that she would feel at home.³⁷

According to teachers who shared the story with us, their intervention seems to have worked because the learner is still at the school and her performance in class is steadily improving.

Case 2: The learner's parents were divorced. The learner stayed with her biological father for sometime. Her mother got married to another man and the learner left her father to stay with her mother and stepfather. Apparently, the learner was bitter and emotionally distressed by the fact that her mother had married another man. Because of her bitterness the learner lost respect for her mother and there was serious conflict between them. She decided to leave her mother and go and stay with relatives. She went to the school to ask for a transfer but in terms of the school policy, only parents of learners have the right to collect transfers for their children. The school insisted that she bring her parent. She went to ask another woman to go to the school to ask for her transfer. Fortunately the teachers in the school knew her

³⁷ Interview with School Management at Hlanganani Secondary School, 31/01/2000

biological mother. They became suspicious that something was not right and they still insisted that she bring her mother. Eventually her mother came and during discussions teachers realized that there was a huge gap between the learner and the parent and that the child was bitter that her mother married another man. Teachers tried offered advice and they also recommended that the family should consult with social workers.³⁸

According to teachers it seems that their intervention was helpful because the learner was back at school and the problem seemed to have subsided.

Case 3 –The learner’s parents got divorced. The mother was a nurse while the father was not sure what to do with his life. Both the father and mother remarried. The child was left to stay with the grandparents. He could not visit his parents and he felt neglected. The child identified with his father who was not very successful.. At some point he took a gun to try and shoot his mother. He was not able to sit for his examinations because the police were looking for him. Teachers said that they had not heard of him since.³⁹

Case 4: One teacher was called to a class where a learner had collapsed. He was rushed to a local doctor and it was discovered that the he had collapsed from hunger. The teacher pursued the matter with the learner’s family and they found that he did not have stable parents. The mother has passed away the father had remarried and the wife did not take care of the child.⁴⁰

Case 5: The school had three learners from a Makibane family who had been brought to the school by their mother. She later had problems with the husband and she decided to take the learners elsewhere in Johannesburg. In 1999, she went back to the farm to stay with the same man she had problems with. She went to ask for re-admission for the learners but did not have their transfer letters. She asked the principal to make a plan in the meantime while she was trying to get some money to go back to Johannesburg to get the transfer letters. The principal decided to keep the children without formally registering them, assuming that the mother was fixing the transfers. As the principal articulated it “I felt for the kids, apart from the fact that it is illegal to admit a child without transfer letter. We do a lot of things under the pressure of circumstance.” Ever since then the woman never went back to the principal with the transfers, whilst on the other hand the children looked committed to school. The principal was left with no option formally register the children in the previous grades.

In 1999, woman fought her husband again. The principal later learned from the learners that their mother had gone back to Johannesburg and the father is around and sick. The learners were not taken care of. Sometimes they slept at their grandmother’s place and sometimes at their father’s. They had a conflict with their father and they started sleeping anywhere around the farm. Their clothes were found hidden somewhere in the bush, showing that they were sleeping in the bush.⁴¹

³⁸ Ibid, 31/01/2000

³⁹ Ibid, 31/01/2000

⁴⁰ Interview with School Management at Ekuphakameni Primary School, 09/02/2000

⁴¹ Interview with Principal and Teacher at Aquaville Primary School

In this case the intervention of the principal did not really help because for the this year the learners did not come back to the school and the principal does not know what happened to them.

Case 6: A learner stopped schooling because her father used to stay for the whole year without coming home. Her mother is also not working and another problem is that her family is big. So she decided to leave school to look for a job. As of now she is known to be living with a man in Mamelodi and she already has a kid. She is also able to assist the other siblings with clothes. Apparently she wants to go back to school but when she imagines the pain she would endure if she went back to school she gets discouraged.⁴²

Case 7: A another learner who is gay left school. When he was at school, boys used to follow him around to see whether he would use male or female toilets because although he was a man, he behaved like a woman. He felt harassed and whenever he came from school, he used to cry everyday because of the attention he attracted with the boys. He ended up quitting the schooling.⁴³

Learners also informed us of some female learners who, because of problems that they were experiencing, quit schooling to become prostitutes.

In another school two learners told us that because of the problems they encountered in their homes, they were admitted to hospital for attempting to commit suicide. There were also cases where female learners had to quit school because of pregnancy.⁴⁴

From the cases mentioned above, it is clear that some learners have problems and that school based learner support systems are necessary. In some of the cases that were mentioned, teachers were able to intervene successfully by counselling learners and some parents, thus ensuring that learners stayed at schools. However, there were also cases, as we have seen, where learners ended up dropping out of the school system because they could not get the necessary support.

Other Forms of Support for Learners

Besides support which learners received in their schools and from their teachers, there are NGOs operating in the area which were set up to assist and support learners in the learning process. We managed to visit the Siyabuswa Education Improvement and Development Trust (SEIDET) which is based in Siyabuswa, and the Masifundisane Community Literacy Projects, which is based at Dennilton. With regard to schooling, the Masifundisane Community Literacy Project plays a minimal role, acting mainly as an advice centre for all members of the community. The major focus of this project is literacy and adult education in general.

On the other, SEIDET is an important project in the area of schooling. Although the project does offers adult basic education and training and intents to introduce other educational programmes to assist in the development of the community, the project is already playing an important role as support base for learners in schools. The project has established three

⁴² Interviews with learners at Foctetot School, 08/02/2000

⁴³ Ibid, 08/02/2000

⁴⁴ Ibid, 08/02/2000

centres, which are at Siyabuswa, KwaMhlanga and Vaalbank. SEIDET offers extra tuition, through Saturday classes, in subjects such as Mathematics, Science, Biology, Accounting, Business Economics, Economics, Geography, History and English. Learners attend classes every Saturday at the SEIDET centres. In addition to these subjects, SEIDET has also introduced Career Guidance, which is aimed at making 'learners responsible for their studies and get them motivated.'⁴⁵ They have also introduced a computer skills programmes for learners.

According to the project's public relations officer, SEIDET does not only offer tuition to the learners, but also organizes sponsorship and bursaries for learners who have passed their matriculation examinations. They also facilitate admission for their learners into institutions of higher learning.⁴⁶ Since SEIDET has a close relationship with the University of Pretoria, most of the learners who pass matric through SEIDET go to this university. These learners have also formed the SEIDET Students Project (SEISPRO) which also aims at supporting students who are admitted into the university to adapt to university life.

Learners are expected to pay R300 for admission into Saturday classes. This makes it impossible for SEIDET to reach out to as many learners as the project management would have loved to. Given that the project is operating in rural areas where many people are unemployed, many learners who would benefit from the project are unable to attend because of money. Although SEIDET does get sponsorship from various companies, it needs more money to run programmes effectively.

Learners with Disabilities

Interestingly in all the schools that we visited, management indicated that they complied with policies of the department of education in not refusing admission to learners with disabilities. However, as one principal clearly articulated, the major problem that schools faced is that the buildings in many schools in the area were not conducive to learners with disabilities who would find it difficult to access classrooms. Furthermore, most teachers were not trained to teach learners with disabilities. The other major problem is that there are few special schools in the area that was visited, that specifically cater for learners with disabilities. However, a number of projects have been established with the sole purpose of taking care of and trying to expose learners with various disabilities to some form of education. These projects include Vukuzenzele Protective Workshop and Stimulation Centre (Kameelrivier B), Busisiwe Day Care Centre (Kameelrivier A) and Kusile Self-Help Association for the Dis-abled (Siyabuswa). Due to time constraints only the former two projects were visited.

Both projects are managed by a group of volunteers. In both centres, interviewees maintained that the centres were started when people realized that there were many disabled children of school going age who could not enter mainstream education and, as a result many of these children stayed at home doing nothing. They also realized that some of the parents who had disabled children kept such children in the back of their yards and so they wanted to offer assistance not only to the parents but to the learners themselves. Both centres argued that when they started, many learners came to the centres. However, for various reasons the numbers went down. For example, the Vuzenzele Protective Workshop and Stimulation

⁴⁵ SEIDET. 1996. Annual Report: 1995/1996: 18

⁴⁶ Interviews with Public Relations Officer of SEIDET, 02 February 2000

Centre, had had about 110 children but then they were left with 8 children and 12 adults. At Busisiwe, there were only 14 learners.⁴⁷

According to management in both centres, the major reason why many learners dropped out was that the centres did not have transport to collect children on a daily basis. Parents were also unable to bring their children to the centres daily. Besides transport, Vukuzenzele had a problem with its building, which is smaller and therefore unable to accommodate many children. In fact the building was initially intended to be a hair salon and not a learning site. Attempts to negotiate with the owners so that they could extend the building were fruitless. However, the project management has plans to find another site where they intend to build a structure which will have classrooms; workshops for training learners in welding; woodwork; fencing and other skills; hostels for boys and girls; and other facilities. Busisiwe Day Care Centre has a building which was donated by the National Nutrition Support Programme in 1986. The building is also small. According to management at the two centres, their ultimate goal is to keep the learners in the centres and provide them with accommodation so that they don't have problems with transport.

These projects were having financial problems because they did not have sponsors. They depended on grants from the government. These grants were also made with clear stipulations, for example, the money may only be used for buying kitchen equipment, furniture, and stationery and for manufacturing fence and bricks. According to the project managers, these grants were not sufficient because their projects also provided food for learners. In order to supplement the grants and to carry out their vision to build a new centre with all the necessary facilities, Vukuzenzele manufactures and sells fencing and bricks to community members.

In the two projects that were visited, learners were taught basic literacy. On the advice of social workers with whom management at Vukuzenzele collaborates, these learners should not be given tests. For this reason the focus was more on teaching them skills. The other problem faced by these projects was that among the volunteers running the projects, none had been trained to teach learners with disabilities. However they did get some support from social workers who visited the centres or invited them to workshops where they were taught skills to handle learners with disabilities.

SCHOOL FEES

In all the schools that were visited, learners were required to pay school fees. Most schools in the area charged fees varying from R30 - R50 per annum. Of the 11 schools that were visited, only St. Joseph Comprehensive School charged learners more than R200 depending on the stream they were taking. For example, learners in the commerce stream paid R211, Science R201, while those doing technical subjects paid R291. According to the principal, the school had had to raise fees from R50 to more than R200 mainly because the it offered technical subjects such as welding and metalwork, woodwork, motor mechanics and typing. These subjects required the school to buy equipment which is very costly to maintain.

In terms of the South African Schools Act of 1996, schools must not refuse learners admission because of fees. However, some of the schools that were visited had deliberately

⁴⁷ Interviews with management at Busisiwe Day Care Centre and Vukuzenzele Protective Workshop and Stimulation Centre

developed strategies to force parents to pay school fees. In some cases, parents had to come to the school to explain why they could not pay and to give assurances as to when the money would be paid. Parents were also allowed to pay in instalments. Some schools withheld learners' progress reports as a mechanism to force parents to pay. Since the school governing bodies and parents decided on fees, some schools worked with the governing bodies to ensure that parents paid whatever amount had been agreed upon. Although schools indicated that there were parents who had been exempted from paying as the Schools Act requires, they had been very sceptical about this because governing bodies did not have mechanisms for determining who qualified for an exemption and who did not. As a result, some parents took advantage of the law and refused to pay for their children even if they could afford it.

Some schools gave a number of reasons why they forced parents to pay the fees. These included: money needed for transporting teachers to workshops; for participation in various sporting and extramural activities; and for buying stationary and teaching aids. In the case of St Joseph Comprehensive school, where learners paid more than R200, money was also used to pay the three additional teachers that the school had had to hire, and for maintaining the machinery in the workshops.

This section has shown that although some schools do not have necessary resources and facilities, there are cases where facilities are available but not used. Clearly, keeping those facilities not used is a waste of taxpayers' money. The government and private sector need to help the schools by providing necessary materials to not only ensure that those facilities are operational but also that there is security to prevent stealing and vandalism. These study has also shown that disabilities are still are barrier to learning especially in communities that do not have access to special schools. Clearly, the argument that learners with disabilities must be admitted in normal schools is flawed because buildings in many of these schools are not conducive for disabled learners. Furthermore teachers do not have necessary skills to teach such learners. These matters need to be attended to expeditiously if disabled learners are to have equal access to learning as other learners.

FURTHER EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET) IN THE FORMER KWANDEBELE AREA

The CN Mahlangu Technical College is the only institution offering Further Education and Training outside schooling. According to the acting rector, the college was established in 1962.⁴⁸ The mission, vision and aims of the college are as follows.

Mission:

- To offer convenient, high quality, relevant affordable and accessible education and training to a broad spectrum of the community.

Vision:

- To see the college become an attractive and recognized educational institution meeting the needs of the community by producing competent resourceful people who make a positive contribution to all facets of society

⁴⁸ Interviews with the acting rector, 02 February 2000

Aims:

- Contribute towards the development of human resources up to the middle management level;
- Make a positive contribution towards the successful implementation of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP);
- Significantly contribute towards economic growth by providing skilled and motivated employees;
- Provide learners with the necessary entrepreneurial skills for self-employment; and
- Enhance the student's career path opportunities, achievements and personal development.⁴⁹

PROGRAMMES AND COURSES

The college has two main divisions, Business Studies and Engineering Studies. The Business Studies division offers the following programmes and courses:⁵⁰

National Interim Certificate (NIC)

This programme takes 12 months of full-time studies to complete and the following courses/subjects are offered:

- Applied Accounting, Business English, Introduction to Computers
- Business Practice, Introduction to Marketing
- Computer Practice and Typing Technique

National Introductory Certificate N4

This programme takes 6 Months of full-time studies to complete and the following courses/subjects are offered:

- Introductory to Accounting, Introductory to Communication
- Introductory Computer Practice, Introductory Entrepreneurship
- Introductory Information Processing, Introductory Marketing

Management Assistance (MA)

This programme is offered at N4 Level, N5 Level and N6 Level. In each of the Levels, it takes 6 Months of full-time studies to complete and the following courses/subjects are offered:

N4 Level

- Communication N4
- Computer Practice N4
- Information Processing N4
- Office Practice N4

N5 Level

- Communication N5
- Computer Practice N5
- Information Processing N5
- Office Practice N5

N6 Level

- Communication N6

⁴⁹ Mission Statement of the CN Mahlangu Technical College

⁵⁰ 1999/2000 Business Studies pamphlet of the CN Mahlangu Technical College

- Computer Practice N6
- Information Processing N6
- Office Practice N6

Financial Management (FM)

This programme is also offered in N4 Level, N5 Level and N6 Level. In each of the levels, it takes 6 Months of full-time studies to complete and the following courses/subjects are offered:

N4 Level

- Computerized Financial Systems N4
- Entrepreneurship N4
- Financial Accounting N4
- Management Communication N4

N5 Level

- Computerized Financial Systems N5
- Cost and Management Accounting N5
- Entrepreneurship N5
- Financial Accounting N5

N6 Level

- Computerized Financial Systems N6
- Cost and Management Accounting N6
- Entrepreneurship N6
- Financial Accounting N6

Marketing Management (MM)

This programme is also offered at N4 Level, N5 Level and N6 Level. In each level, it takes 6 Months of full-time studies to complete and the following courses/subjects are offered:

N4 Level

- Marketing Management N4
- Management Communication N4
- Entrepreneurship N4
- Financial Accounting N4

N5 Level

- Marketing Management N5
- Entrepreneurship N5
- Financial Accounting N5
- Sales Management N5

N6 Level

- Marketing Management N6
- Marketing Communication N6
- Sales Management N6
- Marketing Research N6

The division of Business Studies also offers Community Courses such as Computer Literacy, which is offered on Saturdays from 8h00 to 12h00. According to the college pamphlet, ‘this course is designed to uplift the community with the necessary computer literacy and basic computer usage in their office and at home.’

The Division of Engineering (also referred to as the technical section) offers the following programmes and courses:⁵¹

Mechanical Engineering

This programme is offered at N1 Level to N5 Level and the following courses/subjects are offered:

N1 Level

- Fitting and Machining/Welding and Metal Work/Panel beating and Motor Trade Theory
- Mathematics
- Engineering Science
- Engineering Drawing

N2 Level

- Fitting and Machining/Welding and Metal Work/ Panel beating and Motor Trade Theory
- Mathematics
- Engineering Science
- Engineering Drawing

N3 Level

- Mechanotechnology
- Mathematics
- Engineering Science
- Engineering Drawing

N4 Level

- Mechanotechnics
- Engineering Science
- Supervisory Management
- Mathematics

N5 Level

- Mechanotechnics
- Engineering
- Power Machines
- Supervisory Management
- Strength of Materials

According to the pamphlet, courses that are offered at N Levels 4 and 5 are also presented on part-time bases depending on the number of students. For these courses to be offered part-time, at least 8 learners are needed.

Electrical Engineering

The programme also consist of N Levels 1 to 5 and the following courses/subjects are offered:

N1 Level

- Mathematics
- Engineering Science
- Engineering Drawing
- Electrical Trade Theory
- Industrial Electronics

N2 Level

⁵¹ Information drawn from the 1999/2000 pamphlet of the Division of Engineering on CN Mahlangu Technical College

- Mathematics
- Engineering Science
- Engineering Drawing
- Electrical Trade Theory
- Industrial Electronics

N3 Level

- Mathematics
- Engineering Science
- Engineering Drawing
- Electrotechnology
- Industrial Electronics

N4 Level

- Mathematics
- Industrial Electronics
- Supervisory Management/Engineering Science
- Electrotechnics

N5 Level

- Electrotechnics
- Industrial Electronics
- Power Machines
- Supervisory Management

As with the Mechanical Engineering programme, courses in N levels 4 and 5 of the Electrical Engineering programme are also offered on part-time provided there is a minimum of 8 learners.

Civil Engineering

This programme is offered N Levels 1 to 3 and the following courses/subjects are offered:

N1 Level

- Mathematics
- Building Drawing
- Building Science
- Woodworkers Theory/Bricklaying and plastering and Sheet metal- Workers Theory

N2 Level

- Mathematics
- Building Drawing
- Building Science
- Woodworkers Theory/Bricklaying and plastering and Sheet metal- Workers Theory

N3 Level

- Mathematics
- Building Drawing
- Building Science
- Building and Civil Technology

The Division of Engineering offers additional programmes entitled, Non-Formal (Skills Practical) and Formal Programmes (Practical). In the Non- Formal section, the following courses are offered: Welding and Metal Work; Panel beating; Bricklaying and Plastering and Carpentry.

In the Practical section the following courses are offered: Welding and Metalwork; Motor Mechanics'; Electrical; Fitting and Machining and Sheet metal work. These courses are MEIETB accredited. The section also offers Panel beating; Carpentry; Bricklaying and Plastering and Electronics for which learners receive college certificate.

All these additional programmes and courses take 11 weeks of full-time study to complete.

ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS

Admission requirements for programmes offered in both the Business Studies and Engineering divisions are clearly stipulated in the divisions' pamphlets. Both divisions offer introductory courses leading learners to their main studies. For an example, for a learner to be admitted into the N4 Level of Management Assistance (MA) programme offered in the division of Business Studies, he/she must have completed either the National Interim Certificate (NIC) or National Introductory Certificate N4. To be admitted into N5 level of MA, the learner must have completed N4 MA Certificate; and to be admitted into N6 level of MA, the learners must have completed N5 MA Certificate. Most of the programmes in both divisions are structured so that for a learner to be admitted into a programme, he/she must have completed the introductory courses, and to continue to the next level, the learner must have completed the preceding N level.

For admission into the college, learners are required to write a selection test.⁵² Those who fail the test are compelled to do NCOR which is an Orientation Course covering Mathematics, Engineering Drawing, Engineering Science, Engineering Technology and Industrial Communication before registering for N1 in any of the programmes offered by the Division of Engineering. The basic admission requirement into N1 in the Division of Engineering, as stipulated in the divisions' pamphlet, is Standard 7 with Mathematics and Science, NCOR or Standard 10.

According to the acting rector, the total number of learners registered with the college was 600. Nevertheless, enrolment numbers changed continuously throughout the year because registration, particularly in the division of Engineering, takes place after every three months as most of the programmes in this division are offered over three months. An interesting trend has been that most of the learners registering in the technical/engineering division are male while those registering in the business section are female.⁵³ The Fitting and Machining lecturer also supported this observation by stating that since he joined the college in 1987, he had only had one female learner in the course.⁵⁴

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The management structure of the college is currently comprised of an acting rector, acting head of department (HOD) technical, head of administration section (Students administration officer) and the financial clerk. According to the acting rector, the management of the college had been getting all necessary support from the department of education so far. The kind support from the department pertained to responding to queries from the college. The college

⁵² Interviews with Principal and Learners of CN Mahlangu Technical College (2000-02-02)

⁵³ Ibid

⁵⁴ Interviews with the Fitting and Machining lecturer at CN Mahlangu Technical College (2000-02-02)

also got financial support from the department whereby about 50% of their funds came from the department. The only problem management of the college had experienced so far which, according to the acting rector, seriously affected the normal running of the college, related to a failure by the department to appoint a full-time rector, HOD for the technical section and additional lecturers; this is despite the fact that candidates had already been interviewed.

In addition to the management structure, the college also has a governing council, which is composed of people from the unions, local government and representatives from the local area. The council is the structure governing all activities of the college. As the acting rector put it, everything should go through the governing council and should be given a go ahead by them before it can be implemented.⁵⁵

The acting rector was adamant that, so far, the governing council had not been able to carry out its responsibilities as required. For example, the council was supposed to have had its first meeting already, but this had not happened. According to the rector, the reason for the council not being able to carry out its responsibilities seemed to be that people on the council had other commitments.

TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Delivery Modes

The CN Mahlangu Technical College is a traditional full-time, residential, and face-to-face institution. Courses are delivered largely through print media. As indicated earlier, part-time studies are also offered in some programmes depending on the number of learners. In the Engineering section in particular, the college registers two groups of learners i.e academic and the workshop learners. According to one of the lecturers, the academic students did 3 months theory and the next 3 months they went for practical work in the workshops and then back for theory. On the other hand, the workshop group focused mainly on practical work which was offered over 3 months and then learners got a practical certificate from the college, while those who were in academic programme got a certificate from the department. The career paths of the students differed. This explanation suggests that practical work is one of the main delivery modes.

Facilities and Resources

The college boasts some of the best facilities in the area that we visited. Resources such as computers (there are four computer centres with 25 computers each), printers, overhead projectors, photocopiers, tape recorders, a satellite dish, television, video cassette recorders are available at the college. This technology is also used to support teaching and learning. For example, lecturers sometimes show videos relating to the courses. Furthermore, some teaching and learning also takes place through computers.

Necessary equipment for practical work in the workshops is also available. The only problems faced by the college, which emerged several times in our conversation with the rector, is that although the rest of the premises, facilities and equipment were excellent, the fact that there were no lecturers meant that some of the workshops remained closed. For example, the electronics and electrical workshops were closed for sometime until temporary

⁵⁵ Interviews with Acting Rector of the College, (2000-02-02)

staff were recruited to run the workshops. The shift metalwork and plumbing workshops were closed because there were lecturers.

Assessment Strategies

The college assesses learners through tests. Learners write monthly tests and term tests from which the college compiles year marks. These are then sent over to the department of education. The department of education administers and marks final examination before compiling a final mark for students. Learners who successfully complete their studies with get certificates certified by the South African Certification Board and issued by the Department of Education..

The college administers examinations and issues certificates to learners registered for non-formal courses and some of the formal programmes such as Panel beating, Carpentry, Bricklaying and Plastering and Electronics.

Quality Assurance

As indicated earlier, staff shortages affect the normal running of the college in many ways. Issues of quality assurance have also suffered under the circumstances. The acting rector is the HOD of the Business Section who, because of his focus on administration matters does not have sufficient time to monitor the performance of lecturers and junior lecturers in the department and ensure that their work is of good quality. At the same time, the HOD for the Technical Section is also involved in teaching which means that he also does not have sufficient time to monitor lecturers in his department. The college has also never had any external experts come to evaluate their work to ensure quality.

According to the acting rector, learners also played an indirect role in evaluating teachers/lecturers. If learners had problems with a lecturer they raised the matter with him so that the problem could be attended to immediately. According to some lecturers, they sometimes tried to get learners to give them feedback and to comment on their performance, but this was done informally.

DESCRIPTION OF EDUCATOR NEEDS

According to the acting rector, all lecturers in the college were qualified to teach in a technical college. Currently the lowest qualification held by some of the lecturers is the Trade Certificate and the highest qualification is a Masters degree. Most of them were teaching the courses they were trained to teach. The basic need of some lecturers in the college was support at classroom level.

The lecturer in the Electrical course confirmed this by saying that although he had some training experience and basically knew how to work with people, he felt that he lacked knowledge of theories of teaching. Lecturers in the Electrical and Fitting and Machining courses also indicated that they had never had workshops to build their capacity around the subjects they were teaching and methods they could use for teaching. They only got support when they held meetings together to discuss of the problems they were experiencing and to share ideas.⁵⁶ The lecturer in Fitting and Machining also indicated that he had established networks with some of his friends with whom he had trained and who were lecturers at

⁵⁶ Interviews with Lecturers in Fitting and Machining and Electrical courses. (2000-02-02)

Atteridgeville College and Pretoria College for Engineering. They contacted one another when they experienced problems.

DESCRIPTION OF LEARNER NEEDS AND SUPPORT

Learners' Reasons for Attending a Technical College

Historically, Technical Colleges have not been very popular institutions among the youth. Many young people have preferred to study at technicons and universities as institutions of higher status as compared to technical colleges. For this reason, we spoke to learners in an endeavour to understand some of the reasons that made learners choose technical colleges rather than the more popular technikon and universities. This is what learners said:

- **Learner 1:** *"Lack of funds. Technical college is cheaper than other tertiary institutions."*
- **Learner 2:** *"I learned that many people studied through universities and colleges but are unemployed. I also heard that there is a shortage of engineers, so, I decided to come to the college. My dream after completing my studies is to look for a job and get money to start my own business."*
- **Learner 3:** *"I came to the technical college because I want more exposure to practice."*
- **Learner 4:** *"I came to the college because I am in hurry to work. Technical is short cut. In three months I will be completing my studies. A person at university takes about 4 years to complete. I am going to take at the most 2 years to get N6 and then I will be ready to work and I will be having more practical experience than them."*
- **Learner 5:** *"For me money counts but am also looking at practice. When I leave here I may go to university or technikon and I will be having a lot of practical experience from the technical college."*

According to learners their expectation in coming to a technical college was to get exposure to more practice than theory. As one learner articulated "If after studying with a technical college you decide to go to university or technikon, because of the practice you have been exposed to, you will be at a better position than other learners. For an example if you complete N6 when you go to a technikon you will start with T3." This suggests that gaining practical skills to do work was one of the driving forces that made learners choose to attend technical colleges.

Learners who were interviewed, were all from the Fitting and Machining workshop. They were positive that they were learning many things: they had access to machines and therefore were learning practical skills as they had expected. Nevertheless, according to one learner, not all learners had their expectations met. He maintained that learners in other workshops were not learning much. In his words "the problems is that from my observation, they are not taught how to do the work. They just attend in class. It is important that this is taken care of by the college to ensure that white lecturers do their work. For example a white lecturer used to run the electricity workshop. If you were to call one of the learners to fix a bulb for you, they wouldn't do it for you."

Learner Needs

According to the acting rector, the college had not been proactive in identifying learner needs. This was because the college had not put in place any formal mechanisms to do so. Despite this limitation, the rector mentioned the following as some of the learners' needs at the college:

- First, there is the issue of transport. According to the rector, the college sometimes wanted to organize trips for students to visit firms to get practical experience especially with trades and also in the business studies. There was no transport available at the college. When learners got sick in the hostels there usually was no transport to take them to the clinic.
- Second, the college has limited study facilities where learners can sit and study e.g. a library. Their library which is small and not well equipped.
- Third, there is a need for recreational facilities for sports to make sporting more attractive and interesting.

In addition to needs mentioned by the lecturer, learners raised concerns about lecturers not organizing trips to firms and factories to expose learners to the real world of work as they had expected.

Other Important Needs

Besides the specific needs of learners, there were other general problems that needed immediate attention because they sometimes interfered with teaching and learning processes. Firstly, there were problems with power supply. When power goes down computers and equipment in workshop could not be used. There was a need for a back up for power supply. They also had a water pressure problem which affected the supply of water to the college. Big tanks were installed in hostels where students lived so that water would be pumped into the tanks to prevent any unforeseen shortages but this did not really help especially when water was low in the tanks.⁵⁷

Other Problems Affecting Learners

Payment of Fees

The inability of learners to secure sponsorship was, according to the rector, the major reason causing some of the learners to drop out of the college. He also indicated that such dropouts happened shortly after registration, where after a month some learners realized that they couldn't continue because they couldn't get money to pay their fees.

Personal and family problems also had a bearing on learners dropping out. As the rector argued, some learners had to dropout because their parents had died, or those who had promised to pay their fees suddenly terminated the commitment. In one case, which the rector could recall, one lady who was a good student was being sponsored her boyfriend, when he left her, she could not continue. Among the learners who were interviewed at the college, none of them indicated that they had any family problems or that they knew any learner who dropped out of the college.

⁵⁷ Interview with acting rector of the CN Mahlangu Technical College

In order to alleviate the problem relating to inability of learners to pay their fees, the college has made arrangements for learners to pay fees in installments. A loan scheme has also been introduced to help learners pay their fees. Since the loan scheme was only introduced earlier this year when many of the learners had already registered, it was not yet clear to what extent learners were using the service. It was expected that many students would use the service during March registrations.

Relationship between Lecturers and Learners

According to those who were interviewed, the relationship between lecturers and learners at the college is generally good. The only case narrated by one of the learners who were interviewed, which according to him showed that some of the lecturers are impatient with learner, related to a lecturer who was administering a test to NCOR and N1 learners at the same time. According to the learner, the lecturer mistakenly mixed the question papers. One NCOR learner took an N1 question paper by mistake and wrote the test only to realizing later that she had written the wrong test. When she approached the lecturer to explain the situation the lecturer refused to understand. This affected the morale of the learner who wanted to transfer and leave the college. Other learners had to console and convince her not to do so.

Learner Support

According to the acting rector, when learners come to register at the college, most of them do not have a clear idea of what is it they want to do. Most of them come to the college knowing very little of what the college offers. Under these circumstances, it would be ideal for the college to have structures to support and guide learners. Nevertheless, as the rector indicated, there is no programme structured for learner support at enrolment stage. He maintained that support offered during registration is usually informal, involving conversations between lecturers and prospective learners. Some of the learners who were interviewed also agreed that they came to the college not knowing what the college offered and observed that no guidance was offered to them during registration. One learner further lamented that ‘during registration you find that queues are long and there are few staff helping learners. Many prospective learners end up going back home.’

Interestingly, the acting rector, lecturers and learners who were interviewed, never commented on the extent to which pamphlets may offer some form of support and guidance. It would seem that the college does offer a lot of guidance through pamphlets. These pamphlets outline in details programmes and course that are offered at the college, admission requirements, some information about registration and examination cycles, processes of certification, some information about hostels, student representative council and recreation and sport facilities.

Another form of support mentioned by the acting rector related to the induction programme which takes place after registration, where lecturers are available to explain to learners what programmes consist of and opportunities the course might offer. According to the rector, the length of the induction process varies depending on the enrolment period. There are five enrolment periods at the college. Business Studies section enrolls in January and in June while the technical section (Division of Engineering) enrolls in January, March, June and August.

Another form of support which learners and lecturers felt that they do get from management relates to the availability of workshop material and equipment. According to one lecturer, despite the fact that the department of education has declined some of the college’s

quotations for workshop material and equipment, college management has been very supportive in making sure that all the necessary material and equipment is available and that workshops run smoothly.

Although this was also not mentioned as support by either the management of the college, lecturers or learners, from my observation, it would seem that learners, particularly those in workshops, get a lot of support from their lecturers. In all the workshops, Fitting and Machining, Electrical, Electronics, Bricklaying, Panel beating and Welding, there were lecturers either working closely with learners or monitoring what learners were doing.

It would also seem that learners get some support from their colleagues. In all the workshops that we visited, including the computer centre, learners were seen working and learning together and sharing ideas.

Learner Choice

In both the Division of Engineering and the Business Studies section, the college offers prepackaged programmes, which limit learners' ability to choose. According to the rector, when learners enrolled, they were able to choose among the programmes. However, if for example, a learner chose to do Marketing Assistance, then he/she had to proceed on that path. The rector indicated that it was not impossible to switch over to another path, for example Electrical Engineering but it was going to be difficult because there might be certain subjects that the learner would have not done or would not do anymore.

Motivation and Discipline Among Learners

Except for some of the problems and learner needs identified above, the rector, lecturers and learners were all positive that learners were highly motivated to learn and obtain their qualifications. According to the Rector, reasons for high learner motivation might be attributed to the fact that 'learners come to the college because they want to. Secondly, it is expensive for them and thirdly, it is not a school so learners can't play.' Learner motivation could also be deduced from the attitude of the SRC which, according to the rector, was very positive. For example, the SRC and learners had embarked on a cleaning campaign the previous year to ensure that their campus was clean.

Discipline was also said not to be a problem. According to the rector this was because the learners were older and behaved like adults. However, one lecturer raised a concern that because lecturer stayed in the same hostels as learners, learners became used to them and sometimes wanted to take advantage of this situation. As a result, he had had learners coming to class very late or even intoxicated. To maintain discipline he reported such learners to the rector to be reprimanded.

Learners with Disabilities

As the rector clearly articulated, the college did not specifically cater for disabilities but they did not chase anybody away because of disability. However, it seemed that admission of learners with disability depended largely on the form of the disability. For example, learners in wheelchair were admitted and an effort was made to keep them in the bottom classes. This was because the college buildings were not suited to learners with disabilities, i.e. it would not be easy to move with a wheel chair between classes especially if the classes were on the upper floors. However, it would not be practically to admit blind learners. According to the

acting head, he did not know of any Braille existing in many of the courses offered by the college. So it would not be possible to admit blind students.

FUNDING

The college does not have any sponsors. Its main sources of income are the department of education, which contributes about 50%, and learner fees, which also constitute about 50% of college funds. A proposal presented to the Financial Committee of the college suggested that fees should increase by at least 10% per year over three years (1997-2000). The need to increase fees arose as a result of a document, which the college received, from the department of education. According to the proposal, the document stressed that State Colleges were to become State aided colleges within three years (January 1997 to December 1999). Accordingly, the college is moving towards becoming a State-aided institution meaning that it will depend largely on its own funds than those provided by the department.

Besides getting financial support from the government and from fees paid by learners, it also gets a small income from renting out facilities especially kitchen and dining halls. Local people normally use facilities such as the hall for church activities. Hostels are also used for big gatherings during December. The amount for hiring the facilities is normally decided upon in financial planning meetings.

PARTNERSHIPS

Although the college used to take students to Witbank and to companies such as Middleburg Steel and the Johannesburg Stock Exchange for exposure to the work place, there are no specific companies that the college has entered into partnerships with. This means that the college does not get any income from any other company and that there are no arrangements made for learners who complete their studies at the college to be automatically absorbed into certain companies. According to the rector, many learners tried to get jobs when they completed their studies. The college had not established systems to track down their learners to check if they did get jobs or if they opened up their own businesses. Nevertheless, management had been getting informal feedback from lecturers that their students had been very successful especially those who left with N6 in the Business Studies side.

The college has also not established any partnership with other institutions of learning such as technicons or universities.

According to the rector possibilities for partnerships were not completely closed. His hopes were raised by the fact that a week before we visited the college, visitors from National Business Initiative (NBI) had come to interview lecturers on issues of capacity building. There was also a meeting organized by the department to discuss learnerships and to give colleges more information in this regard. The rector also indicated that someone from the University of Pretoria was trying to get hold of him to discuss clustering.

STRATEGIC PLANNING

The rector was adamant that delays in appointing a full-time principal were seriously affecting issues of planning as well because the current management was unable to plan for

long term. His concern was that the college might fall behind since many institutions are introducing distance education to reach out to more learners.

ADULT BASIC EDUCATION AND TRAINING

It is well documented that South Africa has a high percentage of adults who for many years were denied access to education. This has also been admitted by the Minister of Education who, in his 'Call to Action' declared a need to break the backbone of illiteracy, as one of the priorities of the Ministry of Education. According to Statistics South Africa, Mpumalanga has a literacy rate of 75,5%. Attempts to locate statistics relating specifically to the former KwaNdebele region were fruitless. However, according to people involved in adult education in the area, the level of literacy is very low among adults.

There are many adult education centres in the area and we managed to visit three of these. One of the centres operates under the Department of Education, while the other two centres are part of the four centres that are run by the Masifundusane Community Literacy Project. In all these centres, lessons are held in schools. Classes start at 2h30, when schools are out. Both government centres and centres run by NGOs experience similar problems except that the Masifundisane Community Literacy Project, as an NGO, faces more serious problems as a result of insufficient funds.

In the centres that were visited the major problem experienced by learners and facilitators related to lack of learning materials relevant for adults. Facilitators use readers and textbooks that are used by school children to teach adults, meaning that these centres still operate more like old night schools rather than ABET centres. At the government centre at Kameelrivier they indicated that they even used the school syllabus. According to facilitators and a coordinator at the centre, the district coordinators have not fulfilled their promises to provide the centre with relevant learning materials. However, facilitators in both the government and NGO centres were satisfied with training and support they had had. Besides the fact they were all qualified ABET facilitators, they had also received ongoing support through workshops. At the government centre, facilitators indicated that in 1999, they had attended three workshops.

The other major problem that adult centres have been experiencing relates to dropouts. In all the centres that were visited, facilitators and coordinators indicated that attracting and keeping learners in the centres had been one of the major problems. Often centres register many adult learners, but by the middle of the year many of those learners have left. For example, in one of the centres run by Masifundisane at Marapong, they had 38 learners at the beginning of the year in 1999. By the end of year they were left with 29. At a government centre at Kameelrivier, they had 54 learners in 1999, of those learners about 10 dropped out. The 2000 statistics could not be confirmed because registration was still in progress.

According to learners who were interviewed, there are many reasons that make adult learners drop out. These are some of the reasons:

- Unemployment – Some learners drop out to sell brooms and maize in the cities or Marula beer along the roads, to get extra income. Some of these learners undertake such

activities for months then come back to classes in the middle of the year while others drop out completely.⁵⁸

- Family matters – These include cases where learners have had to leave classes to take care of their children. For example, one the family had a child who is mentally retarded. The mother was attending classes and the father of the child started complaining that the wife was not taking care of their child because of her afternoon classes. The mother was forced to quit the classes.⁵⁹
- Poor facilitation skills – According to one coordinator, some learners quit the classes because facilitators do not have the skills to teach adults.⁶⁰
- Ignorance – As one facilitator articulated, people in the area that was visited are still traditional. Some do not understand why they should learn and so they discourage those who are trying to learn.⁶¹
- Adult education not meeting the needs of the learners – This point was mentioned several times in the centres that were visited. While most of the learners indicated that they went to the centres because they wanted to be able to read and write, some felt that that was not enough. Centres should also equip them with marketable skills that would enable them to find jobs or open up their own business, for example, train them in welding, dress making, knitting, pottery etc.⁶²

It is very clear therefore that in order to break the backbone of illiteracy as the Minister of Education suggested, much more commitment will be needed from the government particularly with regard to providing resources. It is also very clear that for the campaign to be successful it will have to take into consideration the needs of adult learners. For adults, it is very important that they are taught skills that would help them get income rather than just be able to read and write.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This report has shown that, although many rural communities are deprived of many resources and facilities, there may be institutions within those areas that have basic resources and facilities. With good thinking and proper planning these facilities and resources could be used to the benefit of the communities around those institutions, and with an element of distance education and open learning, they could serve more people than they currently do. In response to the Minister of Education's call that schools and other institutions of learning should become centres for community learning, we propose the following:

- Identify institutions such as the technical college and St. Joseph Comprehensive School that already have machinery and workshops for welding, woodwork, panel beating, plumbing, typing, motor mechanic, fitting and turning, electronics, electricity. Where these facilities exist, open them up to members of the community by offering afternoon and Saturday programmes to accommodate those who cannot attend during the day or during the week.

⁵⁸ Interviews with adult learners at Kameelrivier B

⁵⁹ Interviews with facilitator at Marapong

⁶⁰ Interviews with co-ordinator at the Masifundisane Community Literacy Project

⁶¹ Interviews with facilitator at Marapong

⁶² Interviews with director of Masifundisane Community Literacy Project

- Introduce other programmes for knitting, sewing, pottery and agriculture-related programmes such as chicken breeding, egg production, Marula beer brewing etc. Such programmes would attract adult learners as well.
- Remove current admission requirements to these institutions where, for example, to be admitted to the college you need to have passed matric or write a selection test, or to be admitted at St. Joseph Comprehensive School you must be below 19 years of age. This would mean that whoever wants to be admitted into the programmes should be admitted. Bodies such as SAQA would have to be utilized to ascertain prior knowledge before learners are admitted into programmes.
- Remove time as a barrier by employing trainers to conduct training sessions up to around 21h00 in the evening. This is to ensure that those who do not have time during the day may come late in the evening.
- Where the facilities mentioned above do not exist, it is not necessary to build new structures. As we have seen earlier there are schools that have libraries, home economics centres and laboratories that are not used. In such cases, the functioning of these facilities needs to be ensured. Members of the community need to have access to these facilities.
- These centres need not be built in every village. But there has to be reliable public transport to where the centres are.
- Strong security will be needed at the centres to prevent stealing and vandalism.

APPENDIX SIX, SECTION TWO

Case Studies of Schools in Mpumalanga

HLANGANANI SECONDARY SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mr. Ngomane (Deputy Principal)
Village : Kameelrivier B
Telephone : (013) 941 0034

DESCRIPTION

Hlanganani Secondary School is situated on the outskirts of a rural village of Kameelrivier in the former KwaNdebele homeland. The school was built in the late 1970s. Currently the it caters for learners in grade 10 to grade 12. Hlanganani is a big school. It consists of 16, classrooms, a block of administration offices, library which is not used, laboratory (also not used, a home economics centre (also not used) and flush toilets for teachers and learners. The only ground available for sport is a soccer ground which is not in very good conditions. Initially, the school had been provided a big yard which could accommodate many other sports. Due to shortage of funds to develop the yard and the fact that people stole the initial school fence, the school management decided to erect a fence closer to the school buildings. The problem is that people seeking stands to build houses are occupying the remaining part of the school yard which had not been fenced. Generally, the school is easily accessible by both public and private transport.

Although enrolment records were not check by the researcher, the school management indicated that for the current academic year (2000) 400 learners are registered with the school. The lower enrolment numbers are attributed to the fact that, Hlanganani competes for learners with Tholulwazi Secondary School which is situated at the centre of the village is more accessible and closer to many learners than Hlanganani. Secondly, although admitting Sepedi speaking learners would necessarily increase enrolment numbers by a big margin, the fact that the school does not offer Northern Sotho does contribute to the school having lower enrolment numbers.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE OF THE SCHOOL

The principal, deputy principal and two HODs are the management of the school. A governing body has also been established as stipulated by the South African Schools Act of 1996. Teachers at the school were optimiztic and positive that the governing body has being carrying out its responsibilities as required. However some of the teachers expressed reservations on the extent to which the school management has been involving and consulting teachers before it takes decisions. According to some teachers, issues are brought to staff meetings for discussion when the management has already taken a decision meaning that consultation is done for formality rather than for soliciting different opinions from teachers.

Teachers also complained that that the school management does not appreciate good practices from staff.

LEARNER NEEDS AS IDENTIFIED BY MANAGEMENT AND TEACHERS

Some of the problems that management and teachers have been able to identify relate to problems which learners normally have in Mathematics and Science. Consequently, both Mathematics and Science teachers have decided to offer morning and afternoon classes to learners.

Some of the problems that have been identified emanate from home and according to teachers and the school management, they impact negatively on teaching and learning. The management shared these stories with us in order to illustrate the impact of family problems on learners.

Case 1: One child her mother and her to stay with her aunt (sister to her mother). Her aunt's husband did not want the learners to stay with them. Under these circumstances the learners felt deserted. From her poor performance in class and her reserved behaviour, teachers were able to notice that something was not right. One teacher called her to find out what the problem was. Her aunt was called to the school where teachers discussed the matter and advised her to pay attention to the learner and to give her the necessary support. She was also advised to talk to her husband to accept the child and make her feel at home. According to teachers, it seems that their intervention was successful because the learners concerned is still at the school and her performance is improving.

Case two : In this case, the learner's parents got divorced. The learners stayed with her father some time. After her mother got married by another man, she left her father to stay with her mother and step-father. She got emotionally distressed with the situation and lost control and respect for her mother. This strained her relation with her mother and she decided to leave to stay with relatives but then she had to get a transfer from the school, which she wanted to do without permission from her mother. She sent a lady she was staying with to the school to get a transfer for her but the school insisted that they wanted to see her mother. The mother came to the school and from the discussion with teachers it became clear that there was a big gap between the mother and the child. The child was still bitter that her parents divorced and that her mother was married to another man. For this case, teachers felt that they needed expertise of social workers so, social workers were involved. The matter has since subsided and the learner is still at the school.

In another case, parents separated and the learners had to stay with his grandmother. Because the parents are not there to support the learner, he has joined gangsterism.

SCHOOL FEE

Learners pay R40 school fee. The governing in consultation with parents agreed on this money as the South African Schools Act requires. The money is used mainly to affiliate for participating in sports, buying stationery for administration and transporting teachers to workshops.

RESOURCES

The school has a telephone. It is also electrified but due to burglaries, plugs have been stolen. The school has also bought a television set, and a video cassette recorder (VCR). For these resources to be bought, parents were requested to pay some money separately from the annual schools fees. Teachers use these resources for some of their lessons. The school is affiliated with the National Film Library, which produces video materials for various school subjects. According to teachers and learners at the school, textbooks are available. They have only experienced shortage in accounting since it is a new subject in the school.

FACILITIES AND CONDITIONS

Hlanganani is one of the biggest schools in the area in terms of its building which are also still good. As indicated earlier, it consist of 16 classrooms, a administration block consisting of about 9 offices including staff room. The schools also has a library, laboratory and home economics centre all of which are not used. The major problem is lack of resources and necessary equipment in these facilities. This is exacerbated by lack of security and criminal activities in the area. During our visit, a toilet roof at the school had been stolen.

According to the principal, they are currently thinking of converting the home economics centre into a computer centre but there is fear that computers will be soten unless the department of education provides security.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

Hlanganani offers the following three programmes. The Science programme is comprised of, Physical Science, Mathematics, Biology and Geography. The Commerce Programme consists of Accounting, Business Economics, Economics, and Mathematics and the Social Sciences programme consist of History, Agriculture, Geography. English and IsiNdebele are compulsory in all the programmes. The school is currently facing out the Social Sciences programme because according to teachers, learners doing this programme struggle to get admission into institutions of higher learning.

Assessment is done through oral work, tests, classwork, Monthly tests, Half yearly examinations, Mock examinations for grade 12 and final examinations. School policy does not stipulate how many classwork assignments must be given to learners, however, for Mathematics homework is given daily while in other subjects it depends on teachers' work load.

MANDLAKABABA PRIMARY SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mrs. Nene (Principal)
Village : Watervaal B
Telephone : (013) 944 7098

Mandlakababa is a primary school situated on the outskirts to the east of Watervaal B village. Although the conditions of streets in the village are bad, the school is accessible by car. The school building are not very bad.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school management team is made up of the principal deputy principal and 4 HODs. Their responsibility is mainly to take care of registrations, ensure that teachers do their work, allocate duties and generally ensure the smooth running of the school. Teachers were positive that the school management has been carrying out its responsibilities as required. They also positive that the management does not impose on them rather, they are always consulted before decision are take. According to teachers this has kept them motivated do their work.

The school governing body has also been established as is required by the South African Schools Act of 1996. Some teachers in the school expressed reservation about the SGB arguing that this body sometimes interfered on matters that do not need them. For example the SGB sometimes wants to interfere on matters of academic nature.

TEACHER PROFILE

The school has a total of 18 teachers. Most of the teachers posses the necessary qualifications to teach in a primary school. One teacher has M+2 and is busy studying with Luceum College. Some teachers have Secondary Education Diploma while one has Senior Teachers' Diploma. Teachers also indicated that they have also been getting support through workshops organized by the district office.

LEARNER PROFILE

For the academic year 2000, Mandlakababa, has registered 670 learners of which 360 are boys and 310 are girls. In comparison with last year, enrolment figures at the school have gone up by 16 learners. The increase is attributed to the fact that the school has had to admit learners who are doing Northern Sotho. Despite the slight increase, the effects of the national admission policy that stipulates that only learners who are seven years old or six turning seven must be admitted are visible in that intake for grade 1 learners has gone down from 102 last year to 94 in 2000. According to the principal there other way of explaining declining intake in grade 1 is that the village is old. There are no new people coming into the village most households are owned by old people who can no longer bear children. In the younger generation, many are professionals and most of them take their children to private or better schools.

LEARNERS WITH DISABILITIES

According to the principal the school does admit learners with disabilities. This is done mainly to encourage parents to bring disabled learners to school rather than keep them at home. The school does not have facilities to cater for learners with disabilities. However according to the principal, she always encourages parents to bring such learners to the school so that she will see what to do with them. Where learners are for example blind or deaf, she involves social workers and attempts are made to send such children to relevant school.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

The school offers the following subjects, general science, Mathematics, History, Geography, Guidance, Vernacular (IsiNdebele and Northern Sotho), English, Afrikaans (optional), Health Education, Religious Education and Art Craft. Learners are assessed through classwork which in terms of school policy is to be given twice a week, oral work/presentation, monthly tests and examinations for other grades except for foundation phase where learners are not required to write examinations. To assure quality, HODs, have to check that teachers are always prepared for their lessons. They also check learners books.

RESOURCES

The principal indicated that in other grades they do not have problems with textbooks and readers. Their only problem is in grade 5 where the number of learners has increased from 79 last year to 101 in 2000. This means that learners have to share textbooks. The school had a radio but it was stolen. According to the principal, in the 2000 budget she has asked for the following resources to be bought, photocopiers, radio, television and video cassette recorder (VCR). The principal also indicated that school needs these resources because, last year they spent about R1000 photocopying material for learners. They are also aware that there are lessons presented on radio and have also received a television lesson broadcast plan.

FACILITIES AND CONDITIONS

The school does not have facilities such as library, laboratory or media centre that would support learners in their learning process. There are also pit latrines for both teachers and learners. Those for learners are not in good conditions and pose a danger to learners. For this reason most learners in the school opt for the nearby bush.

KWANDEBELE SCIENCE SCHOOL

Contact person : Mr. Philip
Village : Siyabuswa
Telephone : (013) 973 1674

DESCRIPTION

The KwaNdebele Science School was established in 1993. The school is situated in Siyabuswa in an area intentionally marked for educational institutions and small industries. In this area you find the Ndebele College of Education, CN Mahlangu Technical College, a centre for the Siyabuswa Self-Help Association for the Disabled, a centre for the Siyabuswa Education Improvement and Development Trust and a number of small industries. Although the school and the area itself is accessible by transport and has good roads, it is situated about 3 to 4 kilometres outside the feeder population, which is mainly the rural township of Siyabuswa. Walking from the township to the school is strenuous. However, many learners walk to the school.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school management team is made up of the principal, and two heads of departments (HODs) and their responsibilities include administering registrations, ensuring attendance, ensuring availability of teaching and learning materials and generally ensuring that everything goes smoothly. A governing body has also been established as is required by the South African Schools Act of 1996. According to the principal and teachers who were interviewed, their governing body is carrying out its responsibilities as required. Some members are working and most cases, the body is unable to hold meetings because most members can not make it meetings. Teachers also indicated that the governing body normally do things without consulting teachers and that the law which says that governing bodies

There was also a general dissatisfaction among teachers about parental involvement in the education of children. This is mainly because some parents are working and they leave their children alone.

TEACHER AND LEARNERS PROFILES

The science school offers grade 8 to 12 and has registered 610 learners for the year 2000. There are 15 teachers in the school and all the teachers possess necessary qualifications (M+3). According to the principal, they could not admit more learners because they have a serious shortage of teachers. This has also forced the principal to teach because the school does not have a science teacher for grade 12.

The principal indicated that teachers in school are motivated. His argument was based on the fact that teachers in the school do organize extra classes and that they work with learners in science project until very late in the afternoon. On the other hand, teachers who were interviewed were adamant that motivation amongst teachers is not high. They argued that teachers have been to do work on their own. According to teachers, prior to 1990, they

always had inspectors coming to check on their work but this has since stopped. Teachers felt that due to insufficient supervision and support their moral is low.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT PRACTICES

Since this is a science school, the curriculum is science oriented. Subjects offered in the school are: Physical Science, Mathematics, Biology, Agriculture, Afrikaans, IsiNdebele, Northern Sotho and English. The only choice that learners is that those who do not want to learn Agriculture can take Afrikaans. Learners are assessed through classwork, homework, assignments, monthly tests, examination written in June and December. According to teachers, in terms of school policy, Mathematics classwork and homework are given daily, for languages, learners are given one classwork per week and for other subjects it depends on teachers. Learners are also required to complete one assignment per month.

Like in many other schools, there are no formal processes through which learners are able to evaluate their teachers. According to teachers evaluate teachers informally by raising complaints if they are not happy about a certain teacher.

SCHOOL FEES

Learners in the school pay R90. According to the principal, the SGB decided on the fee as is required. The school has opened a Standard Bank account where parents are supposed to deposit the money and bring slips to the school. According to the principal they do experience problems where parents pay late in the year. In order to ensure that all the parents do pay, the school normally threatens not to allow learners to write examinations and tests until school fee has been paid.

FACILITIES AND CONDITIONS.

In terms of building, the KwaNdebele Science School is one of the biggest schools in the area, with double storey buildings, has two science laboratories, one for chemistry and the other for biology, library, home economics centre, Hall, typing centre, administration block, flush toilets. The buildings are still in good conditions. However, the library, the home economics centre and the typing centre are currently not used because the school does not have money to purchase necessary equipment.

LEARNERS NEEDS AS IDENTIFIED BY THE SCHOOL MANAGEMENT

There are no formal processes of identifying learners' needs. However, the principal and teachers have identified the following which are general needs of the school but also impact on learners.

- Textbooks
- Qualified teachers
- Transport
- Fully equipped laboratory
- Library

In addition to these needs, teachers have also indicated learners also needs extra classes especially because most of them lack basic foundation that would enable them to understand science subjects.

DISCIPLINE AMONGST LEARNERS

Teachers in the school also expressed serious reservation against the banning of corporal punishment. They feel that that the department of education banned corporal punishment without giving teachers alternative ways of enforcing discipline amongst learners. They felt that all other mechanism such as expelling learners from classroom, closing gates, giving learners manual work are also a violation of learners right to learn. According to teachers in the school maintaining discipline in the school is very difficult especially with parental involvement so shaky.

While learners who were interviewed at the school also admitted some of their colleagues do not respect teachers, other indicated that there are teachers who are not respecting teachers.

GENERAL PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED BY LEARNERS

Learners indicated that some of them stay a distance of about 10 kilometers away from the school and they have to use public transport which is in many cases not reliable. Some learners have experienced situations where taxis have driven around with them looking for more passangers. This often results in learners being late only to find gates closed at the school. Some of the problems learners experience emanate from home. These are some of the problems learners face at home:

My parents have divorced. My father is now staying with another woman. He ill-treats and hit me for nothing. This is really affecting me. Sometimes when I think of it, I just cry in class.

As learners we sometimes form study groups to help one another. My parents do not want me to participate in such groups. They want me to come home early. When I arrive home a little bit late because of group discussion, they accuse me saying that I had gone to see boys. I find this very disturbing.

I am now having financial problems. I was brought up by my grand-mother because my biological parents parted. I can feel that I really miss the love of parents. I struggle to get things that I need. I approached my father and he told me that I am no longer part of his life despite the fact that blood tests were carried out to confirm that I am his daughter.

According to learners the main traditional practice in the area which is initiation is a serious problem especially because parents value initiation more than school based learning. Learners told us of their friends who have left school after undergoing the process. As one learner puts it:

My father asked me one day, “When you finish matric you want to go to university, isn’t it.” I said yes/ He asked, “What about initiation because I will not leave with a boy⁶³ in my house”

⁶³ Grown up males who have not been to initiation schools are referred to as boys while those who have been to initiation schools are referred to as men)

ST. JOSEPH COMPREHENSIVE SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mr. Vilazazi
Village : Dennilton
Telephone : (013) 983 0085
Fax : (013) 983 0413

DESCRIPTION

According to the principal, St. Joseph was established in the early '80s, around 1981. It was established as a church school. However the church could no longer the institution alone. As a result, an agreement was entered into with the then Dept of education in which the department was to help in running the school. Later, the department assumed 100% ownership of the institution meaning that manpower is provided, maintenance, and the daily routine became the responsibility of the government.

St. Joseph is a very big school which offers academic and technical subjects. It has workshops for technical subjects such as Motor Mechanic, welding and metalwork, woodwork and typing. These workshops have machinery which according to the principal is very expensive to maintain.

Currently the school has 30 qualified teachers who are paid by the department. However there was still a problem of shortage of teachers and because the redeployment is slow pace, the school decided to employ additional teachers. According to the principal this is a problem because the school has to pay for the additional teachers meaning that money that was budgeted for other things is now channeled into where it was not meant. As a comprehensive school offering technical subjects as well, some of the subjects require an educator: learners ratio of 1: 15 due to the equipment that are used and the nature of the workshop.

As a result of shortage of teachers, some of the teachers have to be in workshops conducting a range of experiments, within one period of 40 minutes. In the next period the same teacher is expected to be in another class where he/she is teaching a different subject all together

According to the principal, the other problems is that there are officials who seem not to care about what is happening in the institutions. Among other things the school has been asking for security to ensure the safety of the equipment that are in the school because they are worth millions. Apparently the then MEC for education in the province (Mr. Mabuza) together with father Mkhathshwa visited the school where concerns were raised department could not live an institution that is isolated from the community unguarded. The common understanding was that the securities would be organized but this has not yet been done.

Subsequent to failure to provide security, people broke into the workshops and stole equipment to the value of R70.000.00, which the department cannot replace. This was exacerbated by the fact that most of the equipment in the school has been acquired through donations. According to the principal, it is very disappointing that while the trend of education in our country is putting more emphasis on vocational rather than academic education, the official are not doing anything to ensure that the institution survives.

The other problem has been that the workshops use consumables that get finished every year. The school has sent requisitions for such consumables 3 - 4 years ago but there have not been

deliveries. The school has had to purchase some of the equipment and necessary consumables to ensure that workshops run smoothly. However the concern is that due to shortage of necessary equipment end up not producing the necessary results.

Despite these problems, the principal and teachers sounded positive about the motivation amongst teachers. According to teachers, motivation amongst their colleagues could be attributed to the fact that staff meetings are used to address concerns that teachers may have. Teachers also felt that school management does not take decisions with consulting meaning that their opinions are valued. This keeps them motivated. According to teachers and the principal it is due to this high motivation amongst teachers and learners that the matric pass rate in the schools has always been between 90 and 100% every year.

SCHOOL FEES

According to the principal, parents and the school governing body realized that waiting for the department was not going to help so they agreed to raise school fees from R50 to R200 in an endeavour to show commitment to quality education. The principal further indicated that the money is far from making the institution to run adequately, because the maintenance of machinery in the workshops is very expensive. According to the principal, it takes about R 15,000 – R 18 000.00 to repair one machine.

Besides having to maintain the workshops, the schools is also experiencing shortage of textbooks. The school has started buying books, from their budget for this year already. According to the principal they have already put R 20 000. 00 to buy textbooks. Even more frustrating has been the fact that some of the workshops are not working, because some components were blown by storms. To buy tone of the components would cost R100 000 each and the school needs three of those component and the other hand they have to purchase textbooks.

The governing body in the school has been very cooperative, well functional and very supportive to the principal and teachers. In agreeing to raise the school fee to R200 the governing body was confronted with a problem of parents who could not afford the money. Such parents were requested to present themselves to the principal who would then take their issue to the governing body and according to the principal. In accordance with tenets of the South African Schools Act of 1996, some parents have been exempted from paying school fees.

LEARNER NEEDS

According to the principal the school had a box for suggestions. The box was used as a mechanism for facilitating communication between learners and school management and to help management know of the needs of learners. However, it was noticed that learners were not eager to use the box. Currently when learners have problem or suggestions, they raise those with the class representative who them takes the matter to the Learners Representative Council which then addresses the matter with the school management.

Teachers, principal and learners who were interviewed, the following are some of the needs of learners:

- Extra classes

- Educational tours
- Transport –because the school is between 10 and 15 kilometers away from the main feeder village.
- Time management skills – to be able to do their home chores and their school work.
- Support for problems emanating from home.

Many of these needs are already catered for. The school has extra lesson, some learners have organized their own transport that brings and fetches them from school, teachers are trying to help learners draft study time tables to accommodate home chores and the school has a counseling department which has been established to help learners who have problems. Learners who were interviewed, expressed satisfaction with management and teaching in the school.

The SGB has been established as is required by the South African Schools Act of 1996. Unlike in many other schools, although the governing body is comprised mainly of parents whose children attend in the school, one business man and the local Father of the Catholic Church have been coopted into the SGB. The father was coopted on an understanding that the Catholic Church contributed enormously to the founding of the school. On the other hand, the business man was coopted with an understanding that he would help the school financial. However the two ex-officio members have limited powers in that they can only take part in discussions but not in decision making. For example, if members have to vote they cannot.

SUPPORT FOR MANAGEMENT

Although the principal was positive that there have been several workshop that were organized to train principal and that the workshops were useful, he was adamant that support from districts and regional officers is inadequate? According to the principal:

Support you get from the circuits and district is that they will provide you with or bring documents to the school. They will take the documents, sympathising with you but they would not be assisting you in the problem that you are having because they will take all the things that need to be signed, like the requisitions for books. They will take those forms, approve them and take them to the district which will also approve them and then they will be taken to head office where they will stuck and get lost. The next thing you have to start from scratch, so on and so forth. To us, unless these structures are given powers, they are very much ineffective in a way. To be honest, it becomes a waste of tax payers money to have the circuits and districts because they serve as post offices.⁶⁴

DISCIPLINE AMONGST LEARNERS

Teachers complained that lack of discipline amongst learners is also exacerbated by the fact that in most cases parents are not there to help the learners. Some parents send the childre to school as a disciplinary measure, when teachers report the misbehaviors to the parents, they find that the parent is encountered similar problems. In some cases, parents themselves can not deal with their children yet they expect teachers to. Due to lack of discipline there are learners who want to arrive and depart at the time of their choice at school

⁶⁴ Interview with a principal in a school in the former KwaNdebele (04 February 2000)

SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

Teachers at the school raised concerns about utterances that have been made by some of the prominent political leaders at teachers. The concern is that the government blames teachers for the poor performance of learners in matriculation. On the other, teachers blame the government for not providing them with necessary teaching materials and resources. According to teachers in the school such accusations and counter accusations are not helping any one and children will continue to suffer.

EKUPHAKAMENI PRIMARY SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mrs. Mokone
 Village : Vaalbank
 Telephone : (013) 973 5411

DESCRIPTION

Ekuphakameni primary school is situated to the west of the village of Vaalbank. It is not a very big school. There are 12 classrooms of which one is has been divided into staff room, principals office and clerk's office. Generally the school buildings are good and the school is accessible by car or public transport. Like many other primary schools in the area, the school does not have facilities such as library, laboratory and media centre. However they do have a type write, telephone and a duplicating machine.

CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT STRATEGIES

The school offers the following subjects general science, Mathematics, History, Geography, Guidance, Vernacular (IsiNdebele and Northern Sotho), English, Afrikaans, Health Education, Religious Education and Art Craft. Learners who are doing Curriculum 2005 are given tests ever month. According to teachers their assessment strategies focus on language development, activity, reading and writing and generally perceive the school as practising continuous assessment.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school management team is made up of the principal, deputy and HODs. A governing body has also been established as is required by the South African Schools Act of 1996. The governing, in consultation with parents has decide that learners should pay R30 per annum. According to the school management, most parents do pay except for a few who misunderstand the notion of free education.

School management also indicated that they also have problems with a group of parents who have formed a committee outside the SGB who seem determined to undermine the school management and the SGB. Apparently this group of parents have held meetings with the government official and have alleged that the SGB has mismanages the financial resources of the school without presenting any concrete evidence.

LEARNERS PROFILE

Enrolment figures since 1995 are as follows:

YEAR	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	PASSED	FAILED
1995	440	411	851	745	106
1996	419	397	816	716	100

YEAR	BOYS	GIRLS	TOTAL	PASSED	FAILED
1997	396	350	746	655	91
1998	398	342	740	642	98
1999	375	348	723	572	138
2000			607		

According to the statistics, the numbers of learners at the school has been going down over the last 5 year decreasing from 851 in 1995 to 607 in 2000. It is not known why there has been such a decline. Between 1999 and 2000 there has been a decline of 116 learners which is the biggest in the five year period. This is attributed to the new admission policy which stipulates that only learners who are 7 years old or 6 turning 7 may be admitted.

LEARNER NEEDS

Learner support, particularly with regards to problems that learners experience at homes is one of primary needs for learners. According to teachers, there are cases where parents go to work for a long time leaving learners on their own. This is what teacher said.

Last year, one child collapsed in class and I was called by other learners who thought that the learners was dead. I organized for the learner to be taken to a doctor. The doctor diagnosed that the learners had collapsed because of not starvation. I pursued the matter with the family and I found that, the biological mother of the child had died and his father married another woman and the woman was not taking care of the child. I don't know what happened after that but the child is back in the school this year.

I used to have the case of a learner who looked extremely fearful. All the time when I spoke to her I she seemed frightened. I called the mother. When I asked her what the problem could be with the learners, she cried. She informed me that they leave with a stepfather who abuses the children by locking them in the house and hit them for no reason. I asked her why she is not looking for the social workers interventions. She said she did not want to involve social workers because her intention is to kill the man.

LEARNERS WITH DISABILITY

According to the school management, the school does admit learners with disabilities however, the problem is that they do not have qualified teachers teach such learners. According to management at Ekuphakameni, "parents do not tell us when their children have hearing or what ever problem. There used to be nurses who coming to check on learners and identify some deficiencies among learners, and now they are no longer coming, we do not know who told them not to. As a result we have a problem with the parents who say we cannot judge their kids as we have no competence. We are able to see a child, when he is not very well"

“The other problem the we have in the community which affects learners is with mosquitoes. Children cannot sleep in the evenings. Not only are the kids affected, even ourselves cannot sleep properly. And nothing has been done to control misquotes.”

“Control of water supply in our area is also a problem. Sometimes we find that there is no water and children can not come to school. Sometimes there is no water during weekends and so learners can not wash their school clothes. Some parents wake these children at 3am and send them to the rivers to fetch water at 8 the kids are tired and want to sleep.”

“Electricity is not that of a big problem as there are other souces of fire. However, the problems is that sometimes government does not pay its bills and as such the electricity gets cut. In the school it affects us severely as the kids have to be fed. Then we never know how to prepare the milk as it needs electricity to warm water. When we don’t have electricity we sometimes give learners milk with cold water. In such cases learners often complain of stomachache.”

RONDEKOP FARM SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mr. Mmotong
Telephone number : (013) 262 2370
Area : Groblersdal

DESCRIPTION

Rondekop Farm School is situated between 30 and 40 kilometers to the south of the rural town of Groblersdal. The school was established in 1996. The gravel road leading to the school passes through a number of farms and it is not in very good conditions particularly in rainy conditions. The school building is good but very small in that there is only one classroom and a storeroom. The fence around the school looks strong and this is probably although the school is situated in a farm, it is isolated from the community that it serves. Most of the learners attending the school have to walk for long distances because there is no transport provided by the department. Sympathetic farmers play an important role in that they have offered their “bakkies” to transport learners living in their farms to and from the school.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Mr. Mmotong, who is the only teacher and principal of the school carries out management responsibilities. He indicated that he had written a letter to the circuit office explaining his predicament and requesting that they should hire another teacher for the school but this has not happened. This is giving him a serious problem in that when he has to attend meetings or teacher training workshops the school literally closes that period. Sometimes he has to focus on administration issues such as filling in forms. He has to keep learners busy with some work. Unfortunately, the school does not have resources such as television, radio or computers and there are no facilities such as library, laboratory, or media centre which could keep learners busy. There is also no photocopier to produce worksheets to keep learners busy. These issues confirm that when the principal is busy with some other work learners suffer.

A governing body has been established as required by the South African Schools Act of 1996. However, according to the principal and the two parents who were interviewed, the SGB is not functional mainly because it is constituted of parents who are not literate and who do not know their responsibilities. Parents have decided that they will pay R20 for school fees. The problem is that not all parents can afford the money since some of them are not working. According to Mr. Mmotong non-payment is a problem because often it means that the school will not have enough money to run effectively.

The principal indicated that as principals they do get support from government officials. They often attend workshops to be trained in various aspects.

LEARNER PROFILE

Although the principal did not have statistics with him, he indicated that the school has 80 learners who are in grades 1-7. They all attend in one classroom and he teaches them alone. Enrolment in the school is also not consistent in that some farm workers move to other farms

during the year, taking their children with them while others arrive in the farm bringing with them children who need school. So they always admit or de-register learners when necessary.

According to Mr. Mmotong his survival strategy has been to give the older grades work to do in groups so that he would devote his attention to the foundation phase group that requires more attention and good foundation.

LEARNER NEEDS

According to Mr. Mmotong, the introduction of feeding scheme was a good intervention in that, learners used to be very hungry and some parents could not afford give their children something to eat. He also indicated that since the introduction of feeding scheme, attendance has been very good.:

Both learners and the principal felt that currently the basic need for learners are

- Need for transport - the majority of learners have to walk for a long distance to the school. The two parents who were interviewed informed us that the owner of the farm where the school is situated requested parents to pay R50 so that he would purchase a bus to transport the children. The bus has not yet been bought.
- Need additional teachers – since the school is run by one person, it is a problem for learners because when he is not there, no teaching takes place.
- Need for additional classrooms – currently learners from grades 1-7 are cramped in one classroom. Senior learners in the school complained that attending in the same classroom with the junior phases is problematic because learners in junior phases make noise.
- Need for furniture -there are no enough chairs and tables for everybody. Some learners sit on the floor making it very difficult for them to write.

According to the principal there are learners who have either left the school or dropped out. He asserts that

here at the farm, most of the learners are children of the farm labourers. Their parents are working on the farm. The problems is that they sometimes work seasonally. Say for instance, they are working with tobacco, if they finish, it means that parent must proceed to look for further employment, as a result they take their children. Some labourers may be fired for reasons that are not known to me, and then they take learners to look for a place or work elsewhere.

AQUAVILLE FARM SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mrs B. Mogale
Area : Groblersdal
Telephone : None

DESCRIPTION

It is situated about 20kilometers to the south-west of the rural town of Groblersrsdal along the Groblersdal- Brokhorssspruit road. The school is situated on a farm owned by the Department of Water affairs and Forestry. According to the principal, the school was established around 1972. The school building is in good conditions and there are only two classrooms housing 64 learners. The school does not have facilities such as library, laboratory, media centre or resources such as telephone, computers and photocopiers. The conditions of ablution facilities are also appalling.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school has only two teachers and one of them is the principal. The teacher and principal had mixed fillings about support they get from the district office. According to the teacher several workshops have been organized to train teachers in Curriculum 2005. On the other hand the principal although the principal acknowledged that principal do share some ideas through their meeting, there is not enough in terms of workshops to train them on how to run schools. They do get some training when they go to give statistics and schedule. Last year they had one workshop focusing on labour relations.

They have also established a governing body as is required by the law. In consultation with parents, the governing body has raised school fees from R20 to R 35.00. Understanding that parents in farms do not have enough money, the governing body has agreed to let parents pay in installment. Provision has also been made that parents who have, for example 5children in the school, should have paid for at least 2 by end of the first term.

According to the principal although they have governing body, it is not effective and this is mainly because members of the SGB are not literate. It is only the chairperson who able to write his name and surname only and he can't read. However, there have been workshops to empower SGBs and to make them understand their roles and responsibilities.

Except for the dysfunctionality of the governing body general parental involvement has also proven to be a serious problem in that parents do not come to meetings

ENROLMENTS

During our visits, there were 64 learners registered for grades 1-7. As a result of the agreed upon teacher ratio of 1:40 in primary schools, two teachers are enough for the school. However, the means that learners from different grades have to be put in one classroom. For example in this school, the principal teachers grades 1-3 and the other teacher takes grades 4-7. Further more enrolment at the school is not consistent through out the year. According to the principal, they usually have bigger numbers of learners in the first quarter but this

normally goes down in the second quarter. This is mainly because parents register the learners in the school and two months later you find that the parent does not have job anymore, and therefore takes the children back home or move to another farm with them.

According to the principal learners have also for various reasons dropped out of school. Some drop out because the mother has just had a baby and learners are forced to stay home and take care of the baby when the mother goes to work. This situation affects learners from as early as 7 years of age upwards and it cuts across the sex divide.

SPECIFIC PROBLEMS AFFECTING LEARNERS

Unlike in some of the farm schools in that area, learners at Aquaville have a school bus which is subsidised by the department of education. According to the principal, the provision of transport has gone a long way alleviating some of the absenteeism problems that they had. Apparently many learners used to come to the school tired but since transport was provided they no longer have to walk for long distances and the absenteeism is no longer that high.

Some of the learners who were interviewed and the principal indicated that learners do have problems in their families which affect their learning processes. As the principal articulated:

We are working under abnormal circumstances that give us headaches. We sometimes teach children without parents. You find that parents would just leave and look for work elsewhere leaving children alone. You find that even after finding a new job, the parent does not come back to take care of children. In some cases parents will just separate and the wife would leave the children with their father. Some men do not care. You find that children do not have stable accommodation. They sleep everywhere. We are able to notice such children because, when they do not have stable homes, they come to school very dirty. They dress a white shirt for 2 weeks without changing it.

We had a case of three children who could not come to school this year, we do not know the reason yet. Last year they did not have a permanent place of stay. Their mother came here, in 1995 she had a problem with the husband and she decided to take the children elsewhere in JHB. In 1999, she came back to ask for accommodation, she went back to the same man she had a problem with. She came to ask for admission for learners in this school. When I asked for transfers, from previous school, I could not find them. She said she had a problem of money to go back to fetch the transfers. She asked if I could not have a plan to make in the mean time. I kept the kids without registering them, assuming that she is fixing the transfer. I felt for the kids apart from the fact that it is illegal to admit a child without transfer letter. We do a lot of thing under the pressure of circumstance. Ever since then the woman never came back to me with the transfer, whilst on the other hand the children looked committed to school. She still insisted that she did not have money. I checked the schedule and put the children back in grades they were supposed to go when they were still in this school. Again in 1999, she fought again with the man, when I asked the kids they indicated that the mother has gone back to Gauteng. The father is around and sick. They are not being taken care of. Sometimes they sleep with their grandmother and sometimes with the father. They have not been having a stable home and have been sleeping anywhere around the farm. We once found their clothes the bush. This year they are not around.

According to the principal the problem they are facing is that some of the parents of children in farm schools do not understand that the importance of education. They do not motivate their children to go to school, they drink beer all day long and they just do not care. When a child absent him/herself from school they don't worry because they know the child will help in the farm.

SUPPORT FOR LEARNERS

According to teachers in the school they have requested learners to come and speak with them every time they have problems so that they will try to help. They have successfully intervened in some instances. For example the principal had another learner coming to tell her that her mother had told her that the dress she wears is the same sizes as hers (mothers') and she must quit schooling and look for a job. The problem is that learners had only passed Standard 5. The principal called the mother to school and advised her that she should support the learner as much as she can because the learner might be helpful to her tomorrow.

SECURITY AND SAFETY IN THE SCHOOL

According to the interviewees, there is no serious crime on the farm however, the school has experienced 3-4 break-ins where food for children was stolen.

FOXTEOT SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mr. Mahlangu
 Area : Jakkalsdans
 Telephone : None

DESCRIPTION

Foxteot is a small school situated opposite the Jakkalsdas Filling Station along the Pretoria-Moloto road. It is on the border of Gauteng and Mpumalanga and although it caters mainly for learners coming from Moloto, the school falls under Gauteng Province. Foxteot is a very small school for its population. In terms of enrolment statistics, there were 198 learners in the school in 1999 and the school has only 2 small classrooms. The school is easily accessible in that it is on the main road. School buildings are still in good condition.

MANAGEMENT AND GOVERNANCE

The school does not have principal or deputy principal it is managed by the acting principal and his assistant. There are five teachers in the school and only two have been appointed on permanent basis. It is these two teachers who are currently the acting and deputy principal respectively.

A governing body has been established as is required by the South Africa Schools Act of 1996. However, the acting management and teachers who were interviewed were adamant that the governing body is not functional. According to teachers the problem is that there is one person who wants to dictate activities of the SGB and so it has been ripped by internal conflicts. As a result it has not been able to carry out its duties. For example, teachers told us that they new of R14000 which belongs to the SGB but is currently in the hands of the local farm manager. The money was given to the SGB to build additional classrooms in the school but there has since not been used because there is no agreement in the SGB on how the money should be spent.

LEARNER PROFILE

Enrolment figures at the schools are as follows:

YEAR	SEX	ENROLLED	PASSED	FAILED
1995	Girls	46	40	6
	Boys	67	63	4
1996	Girls	67	61	6
	Boys	66	59	7
1997	Girls	81	78	3
	Boys	84	77	7
1998	Girls	87	80	7
	Boys	93	86	7

YEAR	SEX	ENROLLED	PASSED	FAILED
1999	Girls	80	73	7
	Boys	118	113	5

These statistics show that the numbers of learners in the school has been increasing every year since 1995. The problem is that the school is too small for the number. Hence there is a problem of overcrowding.

LEARNERS NEEDS

Like in other schools the school does not have formal mechanisms to identify learner needs. However, learners and teachers identified the following as learner needs.

- Classrooms – there is a shortage of classrooms. This has resulted in learners from different grades sharing classrooms.
- Need for water – there is no water in the school premises. Learners have cross a busy Pretoria-Moloto road to fetch water at the filling station opposite the school.
- Need for teachers – currently the school has 5 teachers. Only 2 of them have been appointed on permanent basis. The other three teachers are temporary and this impacts on their morale and their performance in class. The problem is that their future is not certain.
- Support in the form counselling – many learners in the school indicated that they have serious problems in their homes.

SOME OF THE PROBLEMS THAT AFFECT LEARNERS IN THE SCHOOL

According to teachers, conditions in which learners live in their homes are bad and they affect the performance of learners. The Moloto settlement where most of the learners come from is new and most of the people have not yet built decent houses. Often learners share same rooms with parents. According to teachers, this exposes learners to problems because they see things that they are not suppose to see. In one example, a teacher informed us that one day he asked learners to draw anything they could think of and one learner drew a picture of old people have a sexual intercourse. These are some of the stories that learners related to us:

I use a bus normally my mother is not home then I have to wash my young sibling and by the time I wash it is already late and the bus leaves me. As a result I walk the distance and it is already late.

I stay with my sister, my mother and father; before we come to school we clean the house and cook and then we could come to school. Above all we wash the napkins and we are released.

Teachers send us to the shops and by the time you come back break is over you have to go back to class without food.

I have a problem with the father who left me when I was four years. I went to see him in 1997, he chased me away with a firearm. I reported him to the police. They said I must ask

him if the fire arm is legal or not so that they could arrest him. Then I went to child welfare. They said my mother should come and fill in some forms. She says she does not have the time. I need help because my mother has not been supporting me throughout.

I have a problem because I live alone at home; my mother is working. My father has just vanished to live with the other woman in town. He left my mother when she was pregnant with me. My other sibling is very troublesome and she once got my mother fired, hence is staying with me. My mother took my brother out school and took him to work. My mother support me under difficult conditions, she is a sick woman with heart problems

I have a problem at home, my father died a long time ago. Now I live with a stepfather. He does not like us. He once fought with my young sibling as of now my sibling was chopped with an axe on the shoulder. After that things are not the same.

I have a friend who has stopped schooling because the father used to stay for the whole year without coming home. The mother is also not working and their family is big. So my friend decided to stop schooling to look for a job. As of now she lives with a man in Mamelodi and she already has a kid. The issue is that she is still able to assist the other siblings with clothes. She says she will not be able to come back to school as that will mean more suffering.

There is another boy who is bisexual. He is a boy but acts like a woman. He was schooling but the problem is that when he was at school, boys followed him around saying that they wanted to see whether does he go to male or female toilets. He ended up quitting the schooling. Whenever he came from school, she used to cried everyday because of the attention he attracted.

My friend used to stay with a boyfriend, when she became pregnant the boy refused to take responsibility. Now, she is now a prostitute in Johannesburg.

Stories that learners related about problems that they experience in their homes and the extent to which such problems affect their learning process are very important because they point to the significance of having support systems in schools.

RAKEDIWANE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mr. Ramoshaba
Area : Groblersdal
Telephone : None

DESCRIPTION

Rakediwane Primary School is situated about 15 kilometers to the north of Groblersdal along the Groblersdal-Mable Hall road Rakediwane is a small school consisting of only two classrooms, principal's office and a small storeroom. The school also has only two teachers-one of them is also the principal. Currently the school has registered 74 learners of which 43 are in grades 1,2 and 3 and 31 are in grades 4,5,6 and 7. Given that few numbers of classrooms and learners, grades 1,2 and 3 share one classroom while grades 4,5,6 and 7 also share a classroom. According to the teachers teaching the multigrade classroom is a serious challenge especially because some of the learners are already doing Curriculum 2005 while other are not. However, teachers indicated that they do try to cope with the situation by using a lot of group work.

According to teachers learners in the schools have to walk a distance of up to 6 kilometers to the school. This makes need for transport one of the basic needs because most of the learners arrive at the school already tired and this affects their education. Some farmers in the area do try to help by transporting learners who live in their farms to school. Other needs include additional classrooms and sporting facilities.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The schools is managed by the principal who works together with the other teacher in the school. A governing body has also been established as is required by the law. According to both the principal and the teacher the governing body is functional but membership to the body is not consistent because some of the parents get expelled or move to other farms during the year. For example last year they had a problem where another farmer bought the farm one of the farms in the area. He immediately reduced salaries of workers and started harassing the labourers. Many parents left with their children. However, there is a new farmer who has bought the farm, who appears to be kind to workers, and according to the principal that is the reasons why their enrolment has gone up.

OTHER PROBLEMS THAT AFFECT LEARNERS

The principal and teacher in the schools raised concerns about farmers who use the young kids to work in the farms. The school was already thinking of getting a court interdict to restraining the usage of the child labour. They have since not moved after they were advised to deal with the matter through the circuit office. Another problem is that parents keep children at home making them look after their young siblings.

Some of the cases refer to misbehaviour of learners. In one such case a learner left her mother and went to stay with a man. She spend two weeks absent and then the principal sent the learner's younger sister to tell the parents that he wanted to see the learner. The mother said

the principal must go and fetch the learner from the man she was staying with. According to the principal, he went and her washing the man's clothes and cooking for him. When he told her that he wants her in school she said she would come the following day. the principal indicated that he wanted her immediately and so the learner had to go to school with him.

In another case the learner told the mother for a long time that she was being sexually abused by the mother's boyfriend. Then the mother told us. We phoned child protection unit in Middleburg who came after 3 days. They took a statement and the girl was taken to hospital and then certified. The man was arrested. The father wrote a letter to the mother persuading her to drop the case. The mother in turn influenced the child to drop the case and it eventually was dropped and the mother's boyfriend was free.

MOOISRIVIER PRIMARY SCHOOL

Contact Person : Mr. Madileng
Area : Schoeman Village (Between Groblersdal and Marble Hall)
Telephone : None

DESCRIPTION

Mooisrivier Primary School is situated in farm owned by Schoeman popularly known for oranges. It is situated about 25 kilometers to the north of Groblersdal between Groblersdal and Marble Hall. The school is easily accessible in that it is along the main road between the two town. Although the school caters mainly for learners living on the farm village that has been built for farm workers, there are learners travelling from other neighbouring farms to attend school at Mooisrivier. There are about 8 classrooms catering for learners from grade 1 to grade 10.

Many of the problems experienced by learners in this school, are in many ways, similar to those experienced by learners in other farm school. However, some of the specific problems raised by learners in the school relate to instances where learners have problems with some teachers who are said not be giving them class work. According to learners this affects their performance in test. Some learners also complained that in their school, there are learners who are older and therefore harass the young ones.

On the other hand teachers also indicated that most of learners in the school lack a reach educational background, which makes teaching very difficult. This came up when teachers were asked if they do admit learners with disabilities. As one teacher put it, “disabilities, should not just be understood in terms of being cripple, blind or deaf. It include a lot of them, we have learners who are very slow in learning or who are far older than the grades they are in. Learners who need special attention. We do not have anyone who has given the learners any attention. Parents do not acknowledge it because it is a disgrace to them. They also do not want to send their children very far from them, they have lived as a family. It is completely strange idea to send learner to a special school. They always fear the financial implications. They basically stay here with those kids. That is why we have 20 year olds in grade 1 and 7. We accommodate such learners within the norms that the department is giving to us, if the department says it is 14 years of age for a particular grade cohort we add another 2 or 3 years. However there learners who are 7 to 8 years older than the norm of the grade.”

According to teachers, there are many children of school going age in the neighbouring farms who do attend school. Some of these learners indicated that they speak Setswana or Seswati, and that is why they are not in school because the schools in the area do not offer these languages. Besides language, the issue of distance and lack of transport to the school was identified as another problem that prevents other learners from coming to school.

The other problem identified by teachers which was however not mentioned by learners is that conditions under which most of the learners leave in their homes are unbearable. For example some of the learners live in families where both parents are drunkards or where both parents are not working. All these problems affect learner. According to one teacher, learners would not mention these as problems because these are conditions under which they have lived for years and they do no see these as problems.