

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON THE CORE-PLUS CURRICULUM

by

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ABSTRACT

This study dealt with teachers views on the core-plus curriculum. The core-plus curriculum is sensitive to the needs of the individual communities, and looks into the role that schools and teachers can play in addressing these needs. Its important role is to bridge the gap between what happens at home and what is happening in schools. It aims at fostering and promoting this relationship in a mutual way, i.e. the school should benefit the community and the community should benefit from the school as well. This kind of curriculum in fact enables the school to operate beyond its physical boundaries.

New insights were gained into teachers' perceptions about the community and the parents of the learners. An insight into the roles that the teachers, the parents, and the learners can play in closing the gap between the school and home was gained.

An important contribution of the study is that, it gives an insight into the teachers' sources of frustration and it gives more information on what are teachers' views about themselves, and their work.

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SECTION 1

INTRODUCTION

This research essay explores the secondary teachers' views on the core-plus curriculum. In the core plus curriculum

the academic, citizenship and employment roles that have always been a central component of the school's focus are complemented by a more broadly based curriculum that incorporates the development of personal skills, leadership skills and involvement activities for a range of people at all levels of school operation (Townsend, 1994: 106).

The teachers' willingness to participate in both informal and non-formal education will be explored. The study will also focus on their anticipated needs with regard to implementation, and their preparedness.

The study is also an attempt to understand the factors that made it necessary to consider the implementation of the core plus curriculum. In addition the role that can be played by the core plus framework in the present changes in education will be looked into.

The core-plus curriculum refers to a curriculum that focuses on both the formal and the non-formal education, and is divided into two parts. The core part and the plus part. The core part is mandated by the state. It is centrally controlled and its emphasis is on academic content and on development of literacy skills and numeracy skills. The school community together with the local community determines the plus part of the curriculum. Its purpose is to address the unique needs of the individual communities. (Townsend, 1994)

In order to explore the teachers' readiness for change, three secondary schools were selected in Kroonstad. Kroonstad is a town in the Free State and it is situated 252 km South of Johannesburg.

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The formal education system in South Africa has always operated in isolation. It was overly academic in content. Education took place within physical boundaries of institutions like schools, colleges, technikons and universities. They did not connect their content with what was happening in the lives of the learners. As a result it did not prepare the learners efficiently for their roles in the world of work and for their role in the community.

This type of system provided for learners with intellectual talents, while alienating learners with practical talents. For most learners formal education operated in a vacuum. According to Dewey school life and real life should be as similar as possible. Furthermore, he said that there should be as little discontinuity as possible between life in schools and life in the surrounding community. Dewey (as quoted in Anglin, Goldman and Anglin, 1982) said that teachers and learners alike were caught up in a school situation that did not address their daily needs.

In the South African education system little emphasis is given to informal and non-formal education's contribution to development. These two streams of education are neglected, and not given necessary recognition. This is done to the detriment of the country's economy and to the detriment of disadvantaged communities. This led to a situation where people who had non-formal education could not get proper jobs that acknowledged their non-formally acquired education. Most members of the disadvantaged communities are as a result confined to low paying jobs.

The failure of the previous education system as well as the collapse of communities manifested itself in the form of social problems. The country has high drop-out rates at schools, poor matric results, high rates of unemployment and an increase of teenage pregnancies. These are indicators of an education system that could not contain its learners. Education is irrelevant and it does not cater to the needs of most learners. Furthermore it

failed to provide support systems that are needed by the learners. Most learners are left with no option but to drop out of school.

High crime rate is also raising its ugly head, and schools are reflecting these problems. These problems, make it impossible for schools to function normally. The educational structures of the past will not resolve child abuse, broken homes, the youth drug and alcohol problem, a poor attitude towards continuing education and in the end, will not resolve unemployment. These current features of our society will only be resolved by a new conception of life long learning that does not equate schooling to education. (Townsend, 1994:109).

The focus in black schools was on academic content. Extra curricular activities were neglected in black schools. Teacher participation in these was based on interest and no support services were in place for teachers who participated in these activities. Teachers who did courses in human movement studies had difficulty finding employment in schools because extra-curricular activities like sports were not accommodated in the school timetables while teachers who majored in academic subjects were given preference. Learners who were good in extra curricular activities suffered tremendously under the formal education sector. They were not catered for. This is an indication of one area in the education system that failed the learners. It is an indication of talent that went unnoticed and got lost somewhere in the system. Anglin, et al. (1982: 144) state: "it is ironic that so much of our meaningful school learning occurs outside the classroom" With the school neglecting extra curricular activities, contact with communities decreased.

In the past, schools did make attempts to involve communities in their functioning and structuring. But this participation was limited to parent participation. The problem with this approach was that there was selective inclusion of the parents. Some parents became involved through the school committee. This structure was still fragmented. Teachers operated in isolation and parents operated in isolation too and as a result communication

was poor between the structures. They only communicated through the principal, and even then, concerning only academic related issues.

THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The study's purpose is to broaden the knowledge base of what teachers' understanding are of the roles that can be fulfilled by the schools in the community and those that the community can fulfil in the school. Secondly, it will also attempt to investigate the potential of the school to provide for both non-formal and informal education. Thirdly, it will investigate the teachers' commitment or readiness to implement a core-plus curriculum.

Finally, the purpose of the study is to inform policy makers on issues that teachers view as important to cope with changes in education, and on ways of involving the community meaningfully in the school's functioning.



LIMITATIONS AND DELIMITATIONS

The findings of the study rely heavily on the responses to the questionnaire. The structure of the questionnaire is such that the respondents' answers might not be reflective of what they think. Further interviews will be used to explicate any ambiguities that may arise. The other limiting issue may be the fact that the core plus curriculum framework is still a possibility and not yet a reality in the South African context.

The delimitation of this study is that the findings cannot be generalised to schools outside of the Kroonstad area, nor can these findings be generalised to white communities.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Given the background, the research will be guided by the following research questions:

1. Does the core-plus curriculum have a role to play in building communities in schools?
2. How will the teachers be empowered to fulfill a meaningful role in the communities they teach in?
3. Do the teachers feel prepared for the changes in education?
4. What are the skills that teachers feel they lack to implement these changes?
5. What are the roles that teachers see parents and communities playing in schools?

AIMS OF THE RESEARCH

With regard to the statement of the problem, the general aim of the research is to:

1. Document the views of the secondary school teachers in Kroonstad on community education with the purpose of rendering findings that are valid and conducive in the structuring of community education.
2. Investigate their views in terms of their capacity with regard to implementation.
3. Investigate the teacher views on the capacity of parents to participate in the core-plus curriculum.
4. Determine how teachers will respond to the implementation of the core-plus curriculum.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A survey will be conducted by means of a questionnaire, which will be administered to secondary school teachers of three secondary phase schools in Kroonstad. In depth interviews with a selected group of teachers who completed the questionnaire will be

conducted. A tape recorder will be used as a research tool. Data analysis will include open coding, axial coding.

SUMMARY OF THE SECTIONS

Section 2 puts the study in perspective through the study of relevant literature on change in education and the different roles that stakeholders in education can assume in the process.

Section 3 deals with the research methodology used in this research essay. A survey will be conducted by means of a questionnaire. In-depth interviews will also be conducted with a tape recorder as a research tool.

Section 4 will concentrate on the processing and analysis of the data. Findings of the study based on the collected data will be presented and discussed, and recommendation will be made on how to improve the situation.



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SECTION 2

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter costs and benefits of an education system that works hand in hand with the stakeholders will be explored. Ways of involving parents and communities will be considered and the advantages of such a situation will be looked into.

In South Africa education was used as a tool of oppression. It soon became clear, with the birth of the new South Africa that the education system has to change for South Africa to compete in the global village and to help South Africa to correct its past imbalances. It is against this background that the government is introducing curriculum 2005 and the OBE (outcomes based education). The introduction of this curriculum is in direct response to a need for an egalitarian education system. This education system is perceived as relevant and aims to address the needs of the individuals, to develop critical minds in learners and empower communities. South Africa can no longer afford to have an education system that operates in a vacuum.

South Africa's hope for salvation in the global economy is identified as its human resources. With an irrelevant education system its economy will remain incompetent. The skills crisis, which is a result of the education crisis, has far reaching implications for the future (Financial Mail, 14 August 1992). Harbison (1973) points out that: "Formal education alone does not have the capacity to provide the massive proliferation of 'continuous recurrent learning opportunities'... relevant to more productive employment, that is needed to upgrade the quality of a nation's 'human capital' ". In the emerging society, the role of education is to create the fundamental background necessary for the full participation of every citizen in the development of the new society (Freire, 1978).

Bruner (1982) states that teaching specific topics or skills without making clear their context in the broader fundamental structure of a field of knowledge is uneconomical in several deep senses. He furthermore believes such teaching makes it exceedingly difficult for the student to generalise from what he has learnt to what will be encountered later. Students do not simply memorise academic information about biology or economics or nursing, but rather face problems from their lives and society through the special lens offered by the academic discipline (Shor 1987: 31).

CHALLENGES TO THE SCHOOL AND ALL THE STAKEHOLDERS

It is against the background of education in South Africa that “ The government on the other hand, has made it clear that the problems it has inherited are so great, that they cannot be solved without the help or of the people on the ground.” (Moonsammy and Hassett, 1997: 1). Davidoff and Lazarus (1997) state that the school must not be seen in isolation from the broader society but as laying the foundation for what will happen later in society. Their approach is based on the systems theory, which sees an organisation as a living system, where all the parts of the system affect, and are affected by one another.

The above statements acknowledge the role that the community and the society can play in the functioning of schools. They serve as an affirmation that the school cannot operate in isolation. This affirmation brings us to the concept of the core-plus curriculum. The core-plus curriculum embraces different roles that the school can play in a community and the roles that the communities can play in schools. It looks into the needs of the community and the needs of the school and how the two can benefit from each other, through co-operation. For a community to exist peacefully there must be joint responsibility from its inhabitants to make it so. This would require some form of compromise from different people like maturity, empathy, understanding and some fundamental principles that guide humanity such as fairness, honesty, integrity, and human dignity. Much as a community is

made up of so many different people, it also has as many common goals to work towards. School is one such responsibility.

Many schools are like little islands set apart from the mainland of life by a deep moat of convention and tradition. Across the moat there is a drawbridge, which is lowered at certain periods during the day in order that the part time inhabitants may cross over to the island in the morning and go back to the mainland at night. Why do these young people go out to the island? They go there in order to learn how to live in the mainland (Carr in Townsend, 1994: 118) This analogy is very relevant to the school culture that exists.

Community schools differ from other schools in the borough in that they exist to provide a focal point for the whole community and to meet the educational needs of all its members, not just those between the ages of five and sixteen (Giles in Allen & Martin 1989: 38). According to Townsend (1994) the school is used 10 to 15 percent of the year seven hours a day, five days a week, forty weeks per year. He also maintains that the school can be used more through the introduction of community programmes outside normal school hours. This means that the school will be more useful to the community and will not be underutilized. The above arguments create a space for non-formal education in school buildings.

NON-FORMAL EDUCATION AND INFORMAL EDUCATION

Non-formal education is simply an organised activity with educational purposes carried on outside the highly structured framework of formal education systems as they exist. Non-formal education has extra- ordinary freedom and latitude to serve people of any age or background in virtually any kind of learning they desire. The fact that non-formal education is sponsored by great variety of organisational forms is actually a major source of strength (Coombs, 1974: 233 & 248). It normally addresses the direct need in the community. It is also inclusive in nature because qualifications of attendants of these programmes are of

irrelevance. Put differently, non-formal education is seen as a second chance for individuals who have been denied access to education.

The “currency” of NFE continues to increase in value as the ecological approach becomes more widely accepted and as the “world educational crisis “ becomes more acute (Paulston & Leroy, 1980: 340).

INFORMAL EDUCATION

Informal education is a lifelong process by which every person acquires and accumulates knowledge, skills, attitudes and insights from daily experiences and exposure to the environment. Generally informal education from the media, the family, and peer group is unorganised and unsystematic; yet it accounts for the great bulk of any persons lifetime learning – including that of even the highly ‘schooled person’ (Paulston & Leroy, 1980). Dewey and Dewey (1915) state that no book or map is a substitute for personal experience; they cannot take the place of the actual journey.

RESTORING SCHOOLS TO THE COMMUNITY

For many parents, schools bring back memories of their own failure. Some feel uncomfortable, embarrassed, and even guilty when they walk into a school. Others do not feel valued by the schools (Vandegrift & Greene, 1988). Levin (1970) states that the aura of professional exclusivity deters parents from engaging in meaningful decisions in schools. He says that the atmosphere in school buildings discourages parental presence and most parents visit the school in response to trouble.

This calls for a need for parents/community to be valued. Berewa Jommo, president of ACEN (Africa Community Education Network) believes that restoring the dignity and self

worth of the community should be the starting point of restoring schools to the community. She states that it is important to learn the community's history, the community's way of doing things and acknowledge their prior learning. The multiculturalists believe that the school, college and university curriculum marginalises the experiences of people of colour and the women. They contend that the curriculum should be reformed so that it will more accurately reflect the histories and culture of ethnic groups and women (Butler & Walters, 1991).

In the past, the school has paid scant attention to the personal and cultural knowledge of students and has concentrated on teaching them school knowledge (Sleeter & Grant, 1991a). Research and theory forwarded by Fordham and Ogbu (1986) indicates that low income African American students often experience academic difficulties in the school because of the ways that cultural knowledge within their community conflicts with school knowledge, worries and expectations.

Vygotsky and Piaget, the two well known names in Developmental Psychology mention in their work the important role played by mediation in socialisation of the individual. Vygotsky believes that there is no way you can understand an individual without first understanding his background. Piaget (1977) believes that the individual and the society are bound together by the social relations between the individuals living and past and that neither can be removed from the other.

It is ironic that so much of our meaningful school learning occurs outside the classroom (Anglin, Goodman & Anglin, 1982). Successful development of the child requires that there be no separation of academic from social, moral and emotional development (Crowson & Boyd as quoted by Adler & Gardner, 1994: 37). It requires that the school, the family and the community share a common focus on education and caring, and services be designed so as to communicate mutually reinforcing messages to children (Iann, 1989).

From the standpoint of the child, the great waste in the school comes from his inability to utilise the experiences he gets outside the school in any complete and free way within the

school itself. He is unable to apply in daily life what he is learning at school. That is to the isolation of the school – its isolation from life (T. Dewey, 1967: 75).

CHALLENGES

It is not easy to initiate change, nor can it be expected to occur overnight. Change brings with it different challenges. Adler and Gardner (1994) state that the key challenge for those promoting structural changes would be to engage the public in rethinking and delivering services for young people. Actions of this nature would play a role in discovering shared values and building communities. Schools are influenced by external political and economic forces, and changes in society pose challenges to a school's culture (Stoll & Fink, 1996). According to Mays (1962) the role of the school is to assist change by supplying school personnel that can work within the new social milieu and by also playing a part in sensitising parents and their children about the strengths of their community.

Teachers, especially, are faced with many challenges during this crucial phase in education. They are expected to assume different roles, to change their style of teaching and see their relationship with their communities differently. Anglin, Goldman and Anglin (1982) state that teacher success will depend upon their flexibility and their ability to view teaching as an ever changing process that reflects the society in which it occurs. For teachers, empowerment lies in the possibility of examining the contexts in which their voices have been silenced and establishing their inclusion in the discussion of education and school reform. It is imperative that teachers are recognised as empowered social agents who are firmly committed to collaborative struggles with colleagues, parents, students and community members. (Theory into Practice, Autumn 1996: 272).

SCHOOLS AS PROVIDERS OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The school has to address diverse needs of the community because these problems are reflected in schools. These needs can be met by retraining teachers, or recruiting trained professionals from otherservice agencies to ensure that issues relating to the development of many of the non-academic facets of the child become part of the schools' responsibility to the child and its local community (Townsend, 1994). Parents can also help with human resources in this regard. There is no doubt that most parents are willing to be involved in the education of their children but most find themselves incapacitated by a lack of skills and inexperience that stems from the fact that they were deliberately excluded in the past on matters concerning education (The Teacher, October 1997: 14).

In a core-plus curriculum parents and school staff work together to determine parents' needs and provide the necessary services. Sometimes, parents will need things that do not seem directly related to how their children are doing at school, such as help understanding immigration laws or medical care for a grand parent. Ideally the school is also a centre for community services that will help its students' families (Berla, 1992).

Linking schools and social services has become nation-wide and families and children ought to be able to access all necessary services at a centre located at a local school or some other facility in their neighbourhood. A wide variety of services should be available such as health, mental health, recreation, job development, child development and care, education and housing (Adler, 1994).

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

Critical theory does not expect learners to be passive. It does not view them as empty tins that are at school to be filled with facts. It does not view them as non-thinkers. Learners are not expected to reproduce, with or without understanding. From new information or knowledge they are expected to formulate their own understanding and be able to pull out

practical examples to show their understanding. This happens when one has reached what Freire calls praxis, that is reflection and action with the intention to transform.

Traditional education orients students to conform, to accept inequality and to accept the status quo, to follow authority. Freirian critical education invites students to question the system they live in and the knowledge being offered them, to discuss what kind of future they want including their right to elect authority and to remake the school and the society they find. Education is politics because it is one place where individuals and society are constructed. (Freire as quoted by Shor, 1987: 28).

The focus of critical thinking is the individual's response to social and economic oppression. According to Ewert, critical theory tries to understand why the social world is the way it is and more importantly, through a process of critique, strives to know how it should be. Critical theory places an emphasis on emancipation that requires both enlightenment and action.



CLASSROOMS IN THE NEW DISPENSATION

From the above theory's perspective, democracy is promoted and emphasis is put on hard work, motivation and self-discipline. According Freire (as quoted by Ira Shor, 1987: 25):

Learning is not a quantity of information to be memorised or a package of skills to be transferred to students. Classrooms die as intellectual centres when they become delivery systems for lifeless bodies of knowledge. Instead of transferring facts and skills from teacher to students, a Freirian class invites students to think critically about subject matter, doctrines, the learning process itself and their society.

Banks (1991) states that teachers should help students to become critical thinkers who have the knowledge, attitudes, skills and commitments needed to participate in democratic action to help the nation, close the gap between its ideals and its realities.

Our approach to teacher training should be changed. Teachers need to believe in the abilities and capabilities of their learners. As Freire wrote to literacy teachers in Chile in 1971, "To be a good liberating educator, you need above all, to have faith in human beings. You need to love. You must be convinced that the fundamental effort of education is to help with the liberation of people, never their domestication." (McLaren & Leonard, 1993: 26)

Henry Giroux (1983), through his notions of civic courage and a pedagogy of possibility invites teachers to become change agents in school and society, for critical thought and action, for democracy, equality, ecology and peace, against domination, manipulation and the waste of human and natural resources.

In conclusion I would like to borrow from compensatory education to explain community education. Pretorius (1990: 24), in Black Child in Crisis, says an infrastructure for compensatory education will therefore include provision of formal, informal and non-formal education. It implies an upward and downward expansion of the formal system of education, in order to create opportunities in the pre-school phase up to, and including, adulthood.

Education is a facility that must be applied to serve the nation, and it must therefore treat every child, family, culture and sub-culture fairly, otherwise it is not true to its calling and actually retards humankind's development (Le Roux, 1994).

SECTION 3

DATA COLLECTION

INTRODUCTION

A survey has been conducted by means of a questionnaire, which was developed and distributed to teachers in three secondary schools in Kroonstad. The data collection process also included in-depth interviews with a selected group of teachers who completed the questionnaire. A tape recorder was used as a research tool.

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used in the data collection and analysis in this study. Douglas (as quoted by Bryman, 1989: 86) often accredited as one of the people who has influenced the outlining of the philosophical bedrock of qualitative methodology, states that “since all research methods have costs and benefits, and since they differ greatly in their particular costs and benefits, a researcher generally finds it best to use some combination or mixture of methods.”

Rossmann and Wilson (1984, 1991) suggest three reasons why qualitative and quantitative data could/should be linked. The first reason is to enable confirmation or corroboration of each other via triangulation. The second, to elaborate or develop analysis to provide richer detail. Finally to initiate new lines of thinking through attention to surprises or paradoxes.

Qualitative and quantitative data collection methods can be used jointly and often overlap. They constantly borrow from each other. When choosing samples and when analysing information in terms of numbers we apply concepts from the quantitative approach. Quantitative approach is said to be more systematic and places a lot of emphasis on logic whereas qualitative research is mostly analytic (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

If solely the qualitative method were used, only a few teachers' views would be gathered. The reason is qualitative methods are detailed and interviews are in-depth. This consumes a lot of time.

A survey in the form of questionnaires was used as a method of data collection because it was cost-effective. It was convenient and I had hoped it will guarantee a maximum return of responses. According to Bryman (1988), the sample survey is an appropriate and useful means of gathering information, when the researcher himself has considerable prior knowledge of particular problems and the range of responses likely to emerge. Follow up interviews were used because "Qualitative research is deemed to be much more fluid and flexible than quantitative research in that it emphasises discovering novel or unanticipated findings and the possibility of altering research plans in response to such serendipitous occurrences." (Bryman, 1989: 78)

DESIGNING OF THE QUESTIONNAIRES



Quantitative studies include a substantial amount of literature to provide direction for the research questions or hypotheses (Creswell, 1994). It is the literature that informs the questionnaire. Deciding who or what to study requires that the researcher first determine which sources can provide data relevant to the research goals, where these sources can be found and how they should be selected (LeCompte & Preissle, 1993: 142).

Conceptual framework like literature study guides the researcher to the important variables. A researcher must have a conceptual framework because in every situation different variables are divided into different 'intellectual bins' in terms of their common features. Bins come from theory and experience. Bins can also be said to contain role players of any research situation. They guide the researcher as to what information is to be analysed. They also help to identify the most important variables early in the research process (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

SAMPLING

When you sample, you set boundaries. You define aspect of your cases. As a researcher you create a frame of reference to help you uncover, confirm and qualify the basic process. Choices of informants, episodes and interactions are being driven by a conceptual question, not by a concern for representation (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

Three secondary schools were randomly selected in Kroonstad to explore the teachers' view on the core-plus curriculum. All teachers in the three schools were targeted as the sample. The total number of teachers in these schools is 117 of which 92 questionnaires were completed and returned. Conscious sampling was used in the study. This kind of sampling is used when some of the sample units are purposely selected to form part of the study.

A pilot study was conducted on a different population before the questionnaires were administered to the sample. The intention was to rid the questions of any probable ambiguities. The main question was to determine whether respondents understand questions as they are meant to be understood. This proved to be an essential practice as a lot of mistakes were discovered and were later useful in producing the final document.

ACCESS TO SCHOOLS

I set appointments with the principals of the selected schools with the intention of asking permission to use their schools for the survey. The first principal I met was positive and enthusiastic. He gave me permission instantly and suggested that I should conduct the survey on the very same day, as the teachers were not very busy. He also informed me his school was due to start with exams soon and that it was best if I started then to avoid inconveniences. I got the same response from the other two secondary schools. The principals were helpful and supportive.

The introductory letters were attached to the questionnaires. In the letter teachers were invited to participate in the survey. They also carefully informed about the purpose of the survey. Teachers were urged to answer the questionnaire as the study may contribute in the structuring of schools and communities. Finally respondents were informed about the possibility of follow-up interviews and asked to cooperate if they were chosen to take part in one.

Questionnaires were personally distributed. I also thanked each teacher in anticipation for participating. I asked to have the answered questionnaire ready on the third day as I intended to fetch them then. An arrangement was made with one member of staff to collect them from teachers and teachers were also urged to give completed questionnaire to this particular teacher. This method of data collection saved a lot of time, as I did not need to remind people time and again about returning questionnaires. Lines of communication were simple and straightforward.

Teachers were randomly chosen from the teacher's lists in the staff room for interviews. Appointments were made telephonically to meet the interviewees at their homes.

PROCESSING AND CLUSTERING

Questionnaires were collected as arranged. They were then taken to STATCON (statistical consulting services) at RAU and processed. Questions were later clustered according to specific 'bins'. Responses relating to the same subject were put into the same 'bin'.

SECTION 4

SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

Analysing the questionnaires and interviews was interesting. I found things that I did not expect. Booth, Colomb & William state that research has shown repeatedly that things are not as they seem to be always and that assumptions have often been done without sufficient information and insight. These are what normally drive the research proposal. I thought teachers were demoralised and that they were disillusioned. This perception changed completely while analysing the data. They (teachers) are positive and willing to face new challenges. Teachers are prepared to be agents of change.

FINDINGS



Three secondary schools, Phephetso, Bodibeng, and Dr. R. Cingo were randomly selected in Kroonstad, to explore teachers' views on the core-pluss curriculum. Of the 117 teachers in the schools 92 participated, 66 of the teachers were male and 25 female.

Teachers generally seemed receptive to change. They were willing to reach out to the parents and communities and they seem to have confidence in their abilities and capabilities to do so. There seems to be consensus on the need for recreational facilities in the schools and in the community. Adult education is viewed as important but useless if it does not provide skills that will generate instant income after acquisition.

Another finding is that there is lack of proper consultation with teachers on the ground on issues that confront them daily. Their experiences are enormous, rich and first hand. It is only logical for them to be consulted about bread and butter issues of their profession. It is

ignorance of the minute issues like these on the part of the education authorities (planners) that negatively affect the teachers on the ground. Policy issues introduced in isolation of the reality are frustrating to implement in reality. This is the dilemma of the ordinary teacher.

TEACHERS' VIEWS ON EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

Most respondents 98.8% stated that their schools have had sporting activities and 81.5% stated that they have had cultural activities offered at their schools. According to the information gathered in the interviews, all these activities have only been held occasionally, the maximum being five activities only. The teachers were sure of one activity and that was the farewell function for the matriculants.

Although 62% of the teachers ranked sports as very important and 55% viewed cultural activities as very important, teachers were concerned about the lack of funds to introduce these activities.



TEACHER, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY CONTACT

The teachers' opinion on the schools' relationship with the community varied and the table drawn below is the presentation of the distribution.

Relationship	Frequency	Percent
Formal and distant	39	42.4
Formal and friendly	37	40.2
No relationships	14	15.2
Total	90	97.8
Missing answers	2	2.2
	92	100.0

According to the findings table 39 teachers (42.2%)of the 92 think that the relationship between the school and the community is formal and distant. Only 15.2% of the teachers think that there is no relationship at all between the school and the community. Most teachers conceded that they only met parents during school functions although they said in interviews they would like to see parents' more. They seemed aware also that they see parents when there is trouble with the learners at school, otherwise 18.5% of those who have answered see them (parents) as members of the PTSA, and 16% agree that they see parents by accident.

PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT

One of the questions measured the teachers' opinion on parent participation.

The findings indicate that most parents are either not involved or minimally involved in the school structuring and functioning. Only 7.6% of parents are believed to be very involved. They (the teachers) were then asked to provide an indication of the envisaged level of parent participation and 85.5% of the teachers indicated that they would like to see parents as very involved. Information from the interviews pointed to the fact that teachers were aware that some learners come from single parent homes and that their mothers are breadwinners and are not available most of the time. This was cited as one of the reasons why parent participation was so low.

Many issues were raised in all the four interviews that I conducted. An insight into the different roles that parents and teachers can play was shown. Teachers see parents as carriers of enormous experience that can be shared by both the students and the teachers. An example of this view is illustrated by a teacher who believes that parents who work in the hotel and restaurant business have got a lot to share with the learners of home economics. They can learn from each other and teachers can also gain from this. To help the school they can work together in catering for communities at their occasions for example weddings, and parties. This will bring extra money to the school and relationships within the

school will be built and will also reach out to the local communities. This is what we call going beyond the physical boundaries of our schools.

Considering information gathered in the interviews and the questionnaires it is obvious that teachers can welcome the opportunity of working with the parents. Teachers cannot work on their own in building the disintegrating communities that are reflected in the schools. Remember that schools are seen as a micro reflection of the bigger picture which is the community in this case. The big problem seems to be who is responsible for initiating this mutual involvement. The answer to this question could be found in the core-plus curriculum.

THE SCHOOL AS RECREATIONAL FACILITY

Teachers think that recreational facilities in their community are more important than adult education. 58.7 % of the 85 teachers who responded think that recreational facilities are important and only 30.4 % think that adult education is important. In fact two teachers went as far as saying adult education without skills is useless. Only when it (adult education) is coupled with skills does it become important because it alleviates the problem of unemployment. The teachers agree that there is a high rate of unemployment but that adult education is presently not the solution. On the other hand they think that recreational facilities will give everyone (the community and learners) something to do and keep them away from trouble.

Provision of recreational facilities is one area in which schools can play a role. De-Waal (1988) in her article on national health and population development states that recreational facilities in especially rural areas are lacking resulting in youngsters often not having sources of amusement. This reflects itself in the high rate of teenage pregnancies.

Moroka Zama a dedicated sports teacher whose tremendous work earned him more than five recognition certificates from companies in the private sector for his work in sports,

states that sport is one of the most effective crime fighters. He believes that teachers must not expect financial compensation all the time because their pupils come from disadvantaged communities and that they need to help them if they can. (The Teacher, September 1997).

On the question of the community's potential to use the schools' facilities responsibly, 67% of the teachers seemed to be of the impression that the community can use the schools' facilities responsibly. 30% did not agree and 3% did not answer the question. The reflection of the statistics is a good indicator of a potential good relationship between the teachers and the community.

TEACHERS' WILLINGNESS TO COMMUNICATE

The teachers were also questioned on their commitment to their respective communities and learners. Most teachers, 72% belong to organisations in the community. Most of these organisations are burial societies and savings societies. Teachers find an opportunity to interact with parents at these gatherings/clubs and they believe that together with parents they can help the schools to build communities, and to establish relationship with the community, promote relations between schools and the parents.

The teachers were very optimistic about taking part in a programme that caters for the community needs. According to the findings 90 teachers (97.2) of the teachers believe that they will participate in a programme that will address the community's needs if such a programme is developed. This means that there is 97.2% probability that teachers will participate and only 2.2% chances that teachers will not participate if such a programme is introduced. This opinion was reiterated in the follow up interviews.

Teachers are generally receptive to the idea of change. The finding from the questionnaires indicates that fifty seven percent of the teachers considered themselves as very prepared for

change. This juxtaposes the findings from the interviews that were conducted. In explaining this contradiction most teachers said that they were prepared to change when changes are introduced, but that they were not ready. The following extract from an interview with a teacher reflects many teachers' opinion on the subject.

The implementation of curriculum 2005 is supposed to start at two levels next year, I am not sure which ones, but the point is, no new textbooks have arrived to show that the curriculum is really changing. Only two teachers went to the workshop of curriculum 2005. I have never been able to attend any. I do not even expect to be workshopped by a teacher who has been to a single workshop. I mean it is ridiculous. The best they can do is to require each school to send two delegates who will later act as facilitator to attend a comprehensive workshop not a crash course. On completion these teachers can facilitate workshops for the staff members.

One teacher said that there is a good programme about changes in education in South Africa on T.V on Sunday mornings. But she was worried that only a few people can watch that because of its awkward time slot. She further said that she is prepared for changes in education but the manner in which it is done breaks her heart.

Asked on what she means by being prepared, she said that she means that she is not against change and if she is trained she can try and implement it. The problem is what is there to be implemented and how to do it. She said she is prepared but then she needs training.

SUMMARY OF THE FINDINGS

1. Teachers are enthusiastic about the possibility of working with parents and communities.
2. They regard parents as possessors of enormous experience.

3. They have ideas on making the relationship between schools and communities work, i.e. they are prepared to go beyond the physical boundaries of the school and are prepared to build bridges right across the communities.
4. They are optimistic that the communities have the potential to use school facilities responsibly.
5. They are willing to participate in projects that can help the communities provided that they are trained.
6. Changes that happen in isolation lead to uncertainties.
7. Teachers seem to have a problem with lack of consultation though that is not a deterrent to their enthusiasm.
8. Lack of facilities, e.g. sports, seems to be of concern.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on data collected and the findings the following recommendations are made:

1. Programs should be designed to empower all the stakeholders in terms of their functions, their role and the legal parameters within which they can operate before they resume any office.
2. There should be clear lines of communication between the authorities and the teachers on the ground. This will encourage teachers to embrace and be proactive in the implementation of the changes.
3. An advantage should be taken of the teacher optimism and enthusiasm by encouraging them to be innovative and critical of the changes. This can be done by inviting the teachers to workshops where they can contribute and be informed of the changes that are taking place at that moment.

4. Certain realities such as lack of facilities should be taken into consideration while planning.
5. Massive awareness campaigns should be included in the planning, to ensure that teachers are not left behind in the proposed changes. This is one area that has been frustrating to teachers and that reflects badly on the teaching profession.
6. The core-plus curriculum should be given serious consideration. It has the advantage of creating a space for teachers to exploit their potential. It does not limit teachers to formal education programmes only. It encourages them to take part in the designing of non- formal programmes. It will also encourage them to undergo different forms of training as they will be expected to assume different roles in helping the community.

CONCLUSION



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It has been personally enriching to find all the teachers' interpretation of their situations and how they see things. I could only come to one conclusion that without the direct input of the teachers on the ground, little can be changed in education. Teachers need to feel that their opinions and experiences matter. This is empowering to them as Berewa Jommo president of of ACEN (Africa Community Education Network) has explained.

An attempt should be made in Education to inform teachers, parents and communities about changes being implemented in education. Parents, learners and communities should be included in the process of change and they should be made aware of the implications of these changes to them. Involving stakeholders at a later stage causes problems of implementation. It often results in resistance, confusion and sometimes the process of implementation is sabotaged by those who are unhappy about it. Education is not the only structure that can restore disintegrating communities. It is everyone's responsibility.

A new curriculum can be introduced but without addressing the basic needs of the learners in the classrooms it becomes a little irrelevant and insignificant. The point is to create a conducive atmosphere in the school for learning to occur. This does not mean that either the schools or the teachers should act as social workers. Not all needs might be able to be met by the school but for those that cannot the school might act as a broker or an intermediary between community members and the services they require (Townsend, 1994).



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APPENDIX 1

Please answer as many answers as possible

Please complete the following questions by circling the appropriate code (on the bottom)

For example :

1. Gender:

Male	Female
1	2

DEMOGRAPHIC DATA**1. Gender:**

Male	Female
1	2



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2. Marital Status:**3. Age group:**

20-30	31-40	41-50	51-60
1	2	3	4

4. Qualification:

Matric	Diploma	Degree	Honours
1	2	3	4

**5. Size of family
(Wife and Children):**

- 2
 4
 5

More (specify) _____

6. Where do you live?

Township	Town	Another Town
1	2	3

7. How do you get to school:

Walk	Taxi	Drive
1	2	3

PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

8. How long have you taught in this community?

1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21-25
1	2	3	4	5

9. Where do the learners served by your school mostly come from?

Township	Town	Farms
1	2	3

10. Are you a class teacher?

Yes	1
No	2

11. Were there any sporting activities offered at your school this year?

Yes	1
No	2

12. Were you involved in any?

Yes	1
No	2

13. If yes, In what capacity? (shade the relevant box)

- Organiser
 Coach
 Other (specify) _____

14. If not, what is your reason for not participating?

- Sporting activities are not compulsory
 Not interested in sport
 Sport is not important
 Other (specify) _____

15. Were there any cultural activities offered at your school this year?

Yes	1
No	2

16. Were you involved in any?

Yes	1
No	2



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17. If yes, in what capacity? (shade the relevant box)

- Instructor
 Organiser
 Other (specify) _____

18. If not, state your reason for not participating

- Cultural activities are not compulsory
 Not interested in culture
 Cultural activities are not important
 Other (specify) _____

19. How important are sporting activities in your opinion?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important				Extremely important

20. How important are cultural activities in your opinion?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Important				Extremely important

21. Which of the following do you view as your community's needs?

- Recreational facilities
- Adult education
- Other (specify) _____



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22. How did you learn of these needs?

- Through interaction with learners
- Observation
- Through participation in the community
- Other (specify) _____

23. How would you rate the *relationship between the school and the community*?

- Formal and distant
- Formal and friendly
- No relationship
- Other (specify) _____

24. Do you think that the school is capable of addressing the needs of the community?

Yes	1
No	2

25. If yes, how can the school get involved?

- Design programmes that involve the whole community
- Offer literacy and numeracy programmes
- Offer informal programmes for the unemployed
- Other (specify) _____

26. If not, choose a reason for your answer

- Lack of financial resources in our school
- Lack of human resources in our school
- Lack of facilities in schools
- Other (specify) _____

27. If a programme that addresses the community needs in your school is developed, will you be interested?

Yes	1
No	2

28. If not, state a reason for your answer (shade in the relevant box)

- I Do not have time
- I will do it only if I am remunerated (paid)
- I do not regard it as part of my job
- Other (specify) _____

29. Are you an active member of any organisation?

Yes	1
No	2

30. What is your role in the organisation? (shade in the relevant box)

- A member
- An office bearer (specify) _____

31. Does the organisation's activities affect your school work?

Yes	1
No	2

32. If positively how?

- Gives me more insight into my work
- Gives me more insight into the community's background
- It is personally enriching
- Other (specify)

33. If negatively how? (shade in the relevant box)

- Takes a lot of my time
- There is totally no connection between what the organisation does with what is done at school.
- Other (specify) _____

34. How involved are parents in the school structuring and functioning?

1	2	3	4	5
Not involved				Very involved

35. How would you like them to be involved?

1	2	3	4	5
Not involved				Very involved

36. In what other capacity do you wish to see parents? (shde in the relevantbox)

- As providers of human resources (help schools with their experiences)
- As volunteers
- As active supporters of learners both at home and at school
- Other (specify)

37. In what capacity do you meet parents? (shade in the relevant box)

- As a member of PTSA
- At school functions
- By accidents
- Other (specify)

38. Do you think the communities have the potential to use school facilities responsibly?

Yes	1
No	2

39. Is your school presently utilised by any community organisation or church group?

Yes	1
No	2

40. Does the school have a functional PTSA?

Yes	1
No	2

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41. Are you an active member of PTSA?

Yes	1
No	2

42. Do you teach part time at adult learning centre?

Yes	1
No	2

43. Do you tutor/ teach part-time in any organization?

Yes	1
No	2

44. Which are other skills that you think you need to prepare for changes being implemented in education? (shade in the relevant box)

- Curriculum development process
- Training in adult education
- Research skills (needs analysis skills)
- Other (specify) _____

45. How would you rate yourself in terms of preparedness to implement new changes in education?

1	2	3	4	5
Not Prepared				Very Prepared

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire.



APPENDIX 2

Dear Participant

I am a Masters student in Community Education at Rand Afrikaans University (RAU). Presently I am doing research on Community Education in the Kroonstad area as part of my studies.

You are invited to be part of my research by completing the attached questionnaire. You may also be asked to participate in an interview as a follow up to this questionnaire.

As educators you are aware of the importance of research and the valuable contribution it can make to the restructuring of schools and communities. As such, I urge you to agree to be part of this process.

Thanking you in anticipation
K.E. Matshai

