TEACHERS, PARENTS AND SCHOOL LEADERS WORKING TOGETHER TO IMPROVE LEARNERS’ EDUCATION

Deep dive report

RESEARCH UNDERTAKEN BY WITS SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE (WSG) AND BRIDGE

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<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACE</td>
<td>Advanced Certificate in Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANA</td>
<td>Annual National Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CAPS</td>
<td>Curriculum Assessment Policy Standards</td>
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<tr>
<td>CLE</td>
<td>Collaboration and Learning Environment</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMS</td>
<td>Course Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CoP</td>
<td>Community of Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSATU</td>
<td>Congress of South African Trade Unions</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPD</td>
<td>Continuing Professional Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DBE</td>
<td>Department of Basic Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DD</td>
<td>District Director</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DoE</td>
<td>Department of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EC</td>
<td>Eastern Cape</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECD</td>
<td>Early Childhood development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>Employment of Educators Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELRC</td>
<td>Education Labour Relations Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMD</td>
<td>Education Management Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMDI</td>
<td>Education Management Development Institute</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMDO</td>
<td>Education Management Development Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>Education Management Information Systems</td>
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<tr>
<td>EMS</td>
<td>Education Management Service</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FS</td>
<td>Free State</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GPLMS</td>
<td>Gauteng Primary Language and Mathematics Strategy</td>
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<tr>
<td>HoD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
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<tr>
<td>HRDC</td>
<td>Human Resources Development Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDS</td>
<td>Institutional Development Specialist</td>
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<tr>
<td>IDSO</td>
<td>Institutional Development and Support Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDE</td>
<td>Limpopo Department of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>LMS</td>
<td>Learning Management System</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTSM</td>
<td>Learner Teacher Supply Materials</td>
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<tr>
<td>LTSM</td>
<td>Learning and Teaching Support Materials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MGSBLG</td>
<td>Matthew Goniwe School of Leadership and Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAPTOSA</td>
<td>National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>NATU</td>
<td>National Teachers Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDP</td>
<td>National Development Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>NECT</td>
<td>National Education Collaboration Trust</td>
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<td>NEEDU</td>
<td>National Education Evaluation and Development Unit</td>
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<td>NEPA</td>
<td>National Education Policy Act</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NQF</td>
<td>National Qualifications Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>NRF</td>
<td>National Research Foundation</td>
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<tr>
<td>NSC</td>
<td>National Senior Certificate</td>
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<tr>
<td>NES</td>
<td>National School Effectiveness Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OSD</td>
<td>Occupation Specific Dispensation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAM</td>
<td>Personnel Administration Measures</td>
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<tr>
<td>PED</td>
<td>Provincial Education Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PEU</td>
<td>Professional Educators Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>PIRLS</td>
<td>Progress in International Reading Literacy Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>PLC</td>
<td>Professional Learning Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMDS</td>
<td>Performance Management and Development System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSA</td>
<td>Public Servants Association of South Africa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PSPPD</td>
<td>Programme to Support Pro-Poor Policy Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEP</td>
<td>Research on Socio-Economic Policy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RISE</td>
<td>Research on Improving Systems of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>Subject Advisor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SABER</td>
<td>Systems Approach for Better Education Results</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACE</td>
<td>South Africa Council of Educators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACMEQ</td>
<td>Southern and Eastern African Consortium for Monitoring Educational Quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADTU</td>
<td>South African democratic Teachers’ union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SAOU</td>
<td>Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SASA</td>
<td>South African Schools Act</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SGBs</td>
<td>School Governing Bodies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>School Management Team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>StatsSA</td>
<td>Statistics South Africa</td>
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<tr>
<td>TIMSS</td>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
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1 Introduction

*We know how important basic education is to a nation’s current and future prosperity, development and growth.* (Minister Angie Motshekga: Basic Education Budget Vote, 6 May 2015)

**We know that**

- Education has a pivotal role in achieving the National Development Plan’s (NDP) goal of eliminating poverty, reducing inequality and creating employable people.
- Education is a means to move people out of poverty and inequality and to grow and sustain development and democracy.
- Education does not prepare many young people to be productive citizens.

**Regarding the report that follows**

- The insights provided here are not new but the perspectives on root causes and levers for change are.
- The primary focus is on government school systems.
- Inclusion and technology in education are complex systems in their own right so we focus rather on collaboration.

The majority of South Africa’s children cannot read for meaning in any language at the end of grade 3. Patterns of under-performance are established in the foundation phase. A child’s performance in grade 4 correlates to their matric results (van der Berg, 2016). The unemployment rate is close to 27% and is higher for black youth at 39%. The percentage of skilled workers has increased (favouring white and Indian) except for blacks between the ages of 25 and 34 (StatsSA, 2016).

We know that the *education system needs urgent action* (chapter 9 of the NDP), but substantial public and private investment, policy change, and large scale reform interventions, have not significantly altered the further learning or work prospects of the majority of black children. No matter how you read the statistics - quantity or quality – South Africa performs poorly in terms of efficiency (getting learners through) and effectiveness (enabling them to be socially engaged and productive adults).

This deep-dive into ‘school leadership-teacher-parent relationships to achieve positive education outcomes for learners’ forms part of the ‘Art of Teaching and Learning’ bucket of systemic interest. The research is about practical steps that can be taken to improve collaborative relationships in school communities to improve the quality of basic education.

There is a mountain of international and local research, evaluations and interventions on strategies to improve the quality of education. The challenges are well-examined and seem clear (socio-economic context, historical legacy, weak institutions, low capacity), but
interventions in education improvement seem to have had limited, or localised, effect. Established relationships are difficult to shift and more targeted, society-driven interventions are required.

School leadership, teacher, community relationships are a critical part of school change. This is the reasoning behind the commitment to school governing bodies (SGBs) and attempts to improve the quality of education delivery through structured democratic organisation and development. However, there is limited understanding (and innovation) about how ‘working together’ improves learning.

The first part of the deep dive process – position – is a mapping of the resources, regulations and relationships that restrict or enable change, combined with an analysis of existing research about leadership-parent-teacher-school interactions that support positive learning outcomes. Very little of the research focuses on the interaction between parents, teachers and leaders in schools. There is, however, information on individual stakeholder contributions to improvement.

The extended research process, depicted in Figure 1, filled the research gap, using school case studies, focus groups interviews and scenario planning, to provide fresh and practice-based perspectives on working together relationships, as well as identifying possible levers of change – perceive to push.

Figure 1: Deep dive process

Systems comprise interactions (formal and informal) between stakeholders in a particular context. These relationships shape interactions between leaders, teachers and parents by establishing boundaries for acceptable practice and action. Systems produce outcomes based on agency and interaction within a particular context in which there is no single point of control (Smit, 2016, Carr-Chellman, 1998).

Extensive research has been undertaken on how education systems actually work. Two notable projects are the Research on Improving Systems of Education (RISE) funded by DiFD, a multi-country research programme on transforming education systems, and the World

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1 See, for example, N. Besharati, N. Spaull; S. Taylor; N. Taylor or B. Fleisch on successes and limits of change interventions. Also, the National Development Plan and the DBE’s Education Action Plan to 2019.
Bank’s Systems Approach for Better Education Results (SABER), which uses education systems knowledge to support and implement effective reforms\(^2\). The research from these programmes, and related projects at UNESCO, provides insights into the kinds of relationships that support learning quality.

In South Africa too, there is a growing interest in ‘system change’ and what this means. The National Development Plan (NDP) includes a system-wide diagnosis of the successes and challenges facing education. Successes include the integration of an apartheid education system comprising 27 different education departments, organisational systems and regulations into one national and nine provincial departments.

What the NDP and other system assessments have in mind is an ‘ideal-type’ system which produces “learners with an excellent education, especially in literacy, mathematics and science” (NDP, 2011, p. 264). A graphic representation of an ideal system in which school leadership, teachers and parents work together to improve and sustain the quality of learning is mapped in Figure 3.

In South Africa, the combination of resources and ability to use them, is strongly mediated by the physical, social and political context. Since education systems are complex, the deep-dive focuses on interactions between leadership, parents and teachers, which is primarily the school governance system. This focus on governance system is not limited to formalised school governing body (SGB) structures. It also maps the combination of political, social and institutional power in schools that affect learning outcomes.

### 2 Position: mapping working together systems

The mapping process involved identifying the components of the system, the processes that characterise their interaction and the nature of their relationships. Exploration was guided by the following questions:

- What regulations bound or enable quality education? Regulations comprise formal and informal authority and ‘rules of the game’ outlined in law, or evident in routine practice (as in ‘that’s how things work here’).
- What resources or components enable or constrain relationships that support learning? In other words, what are the financial, leadership or support resources that define operational capability and ability to implement or sustain policy and change?
- What are the relationships of voice and response that define the system? Who are the stakeholders and how do they interact? This involves an analysis of the institutions that pattern access, engagement and accountability.

South Africa has an almost universal access to primary education and high participation rates (85%) in further education and training. As per a historical legacy related to migrant labour, gender parity exists with small differences that favour girls. According to Deliwe (2016, see Figure 2, p.2), disabled children are integrated into mainstream school with high participation rates, but slightly less than 10% of black and coloured disabled learners are not in schools.

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\(^2\) The research team presented the results of this deep-dive at the RISE global conference in Oxford in June 2016.
There are 25,720 schools and 12,489,646 learners in the system (DBE Education Statistics, 2014).

Figure 2: Numbers of disabled children in educational institutions, 2014

There are a number of stakeholders in the school system who contribute to learning achievement in schools as setters of policy, providers of support or collaborators listed below. These interactions between stakeholders vary in relation to national, provincial and local socio-economic, political and institutional contexts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholders</th>
<th>Ideal role</th>
<th>Current influence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Media and civil society</td>
<td>Monitor and report</td>
<td>Highlight corruption and failure but not achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government departments</td>
<td>Efficient administration and appropriate support</td>
<td>Tendency to instruct rather than support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Districts</td>
<td>Support for teaching and learning</td>
<td>Limited by lacks of skills and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unions</td>
<td>Promoting the professionalism of teachers and supporting the profession</td>
<td>Uneven, sometimes destructive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NECT</td>
<td>Implement to scale improvement projects</td>
<td>Supports innovation in the system.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SACE</td>
<td>Set and maintain standards of professional qualification and conduct.</td>
<td>Compromised by a range of issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associations of principals or SGBs</td>
<td>Professional development and knowledge sharing</td>
<td>Insufficient collaboration and commitment to share knowledge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Both supporting implementation and challenging/holding to account of government</td>
<td>Weakening. The NECT commissioned report of 2016 outlines reasons for that.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Create jobs and learning opportunities for learners.</td>
<td>Fragmented and ineffective spend because of silos.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local and traditional authorities</td>
<td>Support schools, safety and encourage them to push children to achieve.</td>
<td>Both positive or negative but there is a tendency to pursue own interests.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The ‘big picture’ in Figure 3 provides an overview of the components of the education system. Spatially, educational performance tends to reflect old boundaries. Rural and township schools are predominantly black and mostly no fee under-resourced schools in terms of teachers, community support, infrastructure and leadership. Mary Metcalfe (DBSA, 2012) confirms Nick Taylor’s (2007) view that attempts to improve schools seem to more deeply entrench these differences. Class and race define access to resources and socio-economic status.

In South Africa, the combination of resources and ability to use them are strongly mediated by the physical, social and political context. The specific way in which each school system works is dependent on its context, location and initial conditions. School governance systems are diverse and tend to work well where they work (usually well-resourced public or independent schools) or are fragmented where they don’t (the majority of schools).

Figure 3: Overview map of the working together system

In institutional terms, **authority**, the right to make decisions, and **voice**, the right to participate in decision-making, are defined by routines that either support or undermine collaboration. For example, lack of trust, adversarial relations and unprofessional practice cause stakeholders to work apart from each other. There is minimal accountability leading to fragmented control. These types of systems are characterised by anomie and a lack of values that are child-focused and learning oriented.

**Some school communities work together**

- Working together is when parents, teachers and leaders (in schools as well as districts) collaborate to set goals, monitor and manage progress and provide support and resources relevant to context.
Working together requires minimum learning conditions: operational infrastructure (water and sanitation); clean and safe environment; adequate space, materials, and time.

Working together requires shared accountability; professional collaboration; distributed leadership and collegiality.

Sharing resources, experience and accountability, enables school communities to create basic conditions for learning in spite of the context.

Shared responsibility and goals can and do influence learning quality.

An estimated 20% to 30% of schools show evidence of working together, mostly through SGBs, but also in principal-led collaborations with local business, NGOs and the community.

Unequal contexts and poverty impact on learning in terms of family and community resources to support learning, and school resources for learning.

The learning effects of poverty and marginalisation can be mediated by what resources and support exist, how they are used, and what teachers and leaders do, but it adds a burden of care.

Sharing resources, experience and accountability, enables school communities to create the basic conditions for learning in a school in spite of the context.

Shared responsibility and goals can and do influence learning quality.

Effective working together relationships rely on trust (see Figure 4 for the ideal-type working together system). Bryk (2010), using research based on the Chicago School Improvement Project, argues that schools need five supports for change:

- Clear instructional guidelines (such as Curriculum Assessment Policy Standards - CAPS);
- Professional capacity in the form of capable teacher, leaders and district support;
- Strong parent-community ties;
- A child-centred learning environment so that students feel safe and at home; and
- Leadership that actively drives change. Principals build relationships across the school community.

Bryk suggests that relational trust smooths organisational change processes and provides moral fortitude for the graft of improving learning in schools. In addition, the research shows that trust positively influences learning by creating the right conditions. Principals are key to building trust especially when power dynamics are uneven.

*Relational trust can emerge only if participants show their commitment to engage in the hard work of reform and see others doing the same. Principals must take the lead and extend themselves by reaching out to others. (Bryk, 2010, p. 28)*

The vital role of principals in building relational trust is evident in the focus groups carried out as part of this deep dive as well as in the case studies. A key ingredient of building trust is a sense of care and commitment not only to children but also to the local community. The cases show that characteristics of trust are compassion and good will, reliability, competence, honesty and openness. These characteristics, built into school relationships, enable problem-solving, sharing and the building of an ethic of care.
Figure 5 provides a graphic of what trusting working relationships might look like as a system. Relationships of **shared accountability** are built on agreed goals and expectations, monitoring and review, evidence, shared decision-making, respect for different views, mutual support, communication, consequences and a sense of community and belonging. Most important is a sense that all partners care about the school and its performance.

**Professional collaboration** is what underpins successful classroom practice. Teachers are empowered to make instructional decisions. Supportive teaching practices focus on achievements rather than deficits. Teachers and leaders plan together and discuss instructional learning. There are high expectations of teachers and students, as well as shared norms on discipline and praise. Teaching supports social, emotional, and ethical learning as well as academic achievement. Professional development is shared, systematic and useful.

**Distributed leadership** is open to discussion and engagement on challenges and solutions. They share and use data, and encourage problem-solving and joint decision-making. Leaders usually have a compelling and clearly communicated vision; a love of teaching and learning; management competence; an open door; and can provide instructional and collegial support. An important characteristic of leadership is courage to make changes, deal with resistance and enforce consequences.

**Collegiality** is built on shared values backed by school stories. All stakeholders feel as if they belong and have an interest in the school and its children. There is a willingness to problem solve and fix things that go wrong. Frequent communication, rituals and celebrations build collegiality and commitment. The school is value-driven, child centred and recognises the value of stakeholder and how they contribute.
In working together schools:
- Stakeholders have equal voice and authority.
- Stakeholders have common goals, monitor progress, celebrate success.
- Leaders communicate goals, inspire and provide support.
- Teachers work in teams, learn, review, innovate, and enable parents and leaders.
- Parents show interest in their children’s learning, use voice, and are responsive.
- The district provides space and support.

For example – a working together school

Parktown High School for Girls – Parktown Girls – has systematically produced excellent results for over twenty years. The former model C government school is situated in a leafy suburb in Johannesburg. The school is the biggest feeder of learners to the University of the Witwatersrand, and has enjoyed not only a 100% matric pass rate for several years, but also a near constant 100% bachelor pass rate.

“We have a vision of confident and courageous young women, ready and willing to meet every challenge on the way to achieving their dreams”

Despite its location, the school attracts students from across Johannesburg – all classes and races. The school encourages young women to ‘reach for the stars’ using a value code referred to as ‘habits of the heart’ (honesty and integrity, respect for self, others and the environment, faith and spirituality, and courtesy and graciousness). This honour code is used by teachers and students to maintain discipline and resolve problems.

Common cause holds that the principal is the key to the success of the school, and Parktown Girls’ principal has indeed led its instructional performance over many years. What is striking, though, is how she has been effective in securing the engagement of the parents and learners at the school, who speak of teachers who lead by example and who respond to the values and
habits that the school promotes and exemplifies. The parent community is active as part of the SGB, but also in other activities, such as fund-raising and support.

Parents, learners and teachers express a sense of belonging and pride in the schools and in its ‘products’. Being a ‘Parktown Girl’ is a label of pride. Student are articulate, aware of the unequal world they live in and eager to make their mark on it. They are also independent learners and leaders. A striking anecdote, which makes the point, is that on their last day of matric exams, learners leave behind their shoes, in order that they can be given to less privileged children.

Leadership skills are developed through opportunities to participate in the Representative Council of Learners (RCL), Youth Community Development programme (YCD), Community Outreach projects and school committees. Entrepreneurship is encouraged through participation in activities such as the traditional Potted Sports (which raises funds for charity), School Fun Day and the annual Market Day.

👉 The distribution of resources, voice and authority reflect apartheid patterns of privilege and performance.
👉 Relationships between parents, teachers and leaders in schools are often dysfunctional.
👉 There is a deep-rooted anomie and a sense that no one cares about the children.
👉 A lack of collaboration, mutual accountability and trust inhibits implementation of policy and the achievement of learning outcomes.
👉 Material socio-economic conditions influence learning outcomes and, although they can be mediated, are hard to change.
👉 Ineffective and weak institutions, stress and limited capacity are daily challenges in most schools.

**In schools that work okay:**
- Stakeholders have uneven voice and authority.
- Stakeholders comply with targets under pressure.
- Districts are bureaucratic.
- Leaders are often authoritarian and instruct.
- Teachers work to rule, are unionised, fragmented, and operate in cliques.
- Parental participation is limited with some home support, and a tendency to respond if called upon.

For example – a working ok school

A primary school in a peri-urban farm area has children who attend from the local farms and travel long distances to come to it. It has brand new buildings, beautiful and well-kept gardens, a disciplined staff, and a committed governing body. The classrooms have all the basic resources but no extras. The staff struggle to implement learning in contexts where many of the children have never held a pencil or used a flush toilet. The class sizes are large and despite current policy, many of the Grade One learners start school at eight or nine. They have to be big enough to walk to school.

It has an active governing body although all of the parent members are illiterate, including the chair. However, the chair feels that parents have a valuable role to play in moving the school forward by keeping the toilets functioning and the gardens neat. But they have very limited voice in decision making about the school and its results.

The principal, a strong woman with a clear vision, tries to work with her staff and the SGB to build the best school they can in local conditions. She has to fill in gaps left by the uneven capacity of parents, learners, and teachers. She is too busy to provide enough support to improving instruction or professional development.

The new buildings and other resources are a testament to her determination and constant haranguing of local businesses. While I am there I receive tea and lunch organised and paid for by members of staff - the catering committee. Neither the members of staff nor the SGB feel that the principal dictates. They all emphasise that they work as a team together to make the school work. And they stress that they are working for the children.

However, the school is under constant pressure from the district about compliance and results. The school does not keep up with the CAPs coverage and does not perform effectively. Language of instruction is an issue, in the switch from Grade 3 to 4, and some of the teachers deployed to the schools are white and only speak Afrikaans.

In working apart schools:
- Stakeholders have limited voice and authority.
- Stakeholders lack binding values or goals and work at odds.
- Leaders are in crisis, isolated, and do not engage.
- Teachers are absent or unpunctual, poorly prepared or abusive.
- Parents struggle, with limited home support and little interaction with the school.
- Districts avoid dysfunctional schools.
- Most learners experience "a lack of care".

For example – working apart school

Focus groups from rural government schools in Limpopo province show that learners cannot read and write with proficiency by the end of Grade 3, the academic performance of learners is woefully inadequate, and the relationships among teachers and learners can be characterised as uncaring and toxic.

Another story reinforces a sense of anomie. "100 youth volunteers were asked in about 13 groups to do an innovation project on the challenge of a poor learning culture in schools. The
ones that came first made their projects revolve around the refrain "No-one cares" - the learner feels no-one cares. With this no-one cares statement, they referred to a range of things: no one cares if the learner is present or not; no one cares in the sense that the learner feels no one has any expectations from him; no-one cares as there is a lack of psychosocial caring; no-one cares enough to keep drugs out of the school; no-one cares in the sense that it often did not seem to matter either way to those in charge if one teacher was diligent and the other slapgat. In terms of their findings, "no-one cares" could refer to those in charge of the school overall, to teachers, to parents and to community. In terms of the latter, the volunteers noted that learners felt they could walk in the streets during school hours and community members generally responded as if this was normal." (Story from Frank Meintjes.)

3 Perceive: finding root causes and levers for change

The root causes of school system dysfunction can be split into two categories: material and institutional. Material root causes are structural and difficult to shift and include the effects of poverty, inequality, and social deprivation. Socio-economic and spatial inequality affects policy implementation and parental roles. Many schools in South Africa are located in rural or urban contexts characterised by social fragmentation, unemployment, substance abuse, violence, single or child headed households, hunger and poverty.

The purpose of schools is teaching and learning, and being located in traumatised communities adds an additional burden of social care to schools already struggling to perform with poor conditions for learning (poor infrastructure and teacher capacity, large classes and limited resources). Teachers take on the task of caring for children’s social needs. For example, teachers in fee-paying schools located near informal settlements bring sandwiches to school for hungry children so they are able to learn.

The primary task of any system is to set goals, monitor progress and provide support where needed. One of the challenges in the South African system is insufficient support. While (sometimes unrealistic) goals are set and monitored (sometimes obsessively), provinces, districts and schools do not always have adequate resources or support to implement. This
places additional pressure on schools and school communities to meet expectations that are not always achievable, even in well-resourced contexts.

Race and class inequality have a profound effect on school communities, but institutionalised practices are the root causes that are difficult to identify. This is due, in part, to the way in which the system produces types of conduct that become part of the daily routine of schools. Despite policy directed towards equity and improving quality, existing patterns of interaction replicate themselves.

Institutionalised practices are evident in a lack of achievable goals with timelines from the national department to the school. A lack of realistic planning, with achievable outcomes, is a root cause of dysfunction across the system, creating expectations that can’t be met and an enduring sense of failure. Compliance monitoring is often routine, a process of ticking off, without review of evidence or consequences. Teaching quality and knowledge varies and accountability and collegial values have been eroded by distrust and conflict.

Attempts to control outcomes through regulation tend to further undermine professional agency creating cycles of compliance activity with no effect on outcomes. Values, accountability and commitment to do the work seem to be the most difficult root causes to address, as they pattern authority, voice and response (see Figure 6). This combined with limited capacity to deliver make the prospects for system-change seem bleak.

However, there are a number of schools and districts that enable learning despite system conditions. The lessons from these cases suggest that levers for change need to change routines and practice (the yellow boxes in Figure 6). These levers should be flexible enough to accommodate the variety of school systems that make up the education system. The challenge is how to take these to scale in the 24 400 schools that really need support to improve learning.

Figure 6: Perceive: root causes and levers for change

Source: adapted from Mc Lennan,
Authority, responsibility and delivery capacity is activated by leadership when stakeholders a) want to change (will); b) work in contexts or institutional spaces that allow change (support); and c) have the knowledge and skills to be able to change (skills). Institutional capacity enables stakeholders to exercise agency in context. Structures and practices do not become new system routines until they are able to regulate behaviour to achieve outcomes.

In this project, we used scenario planning as a way of understanding possible futures and what inputs would lead to them. Scenarios are stories about how the future may unfold and a scenario thinking process selects some of the strategic choices that drive possible futures. The #ParktownScenarios were hosted by BRIDGE and the Wits School of Governance in May 2016 as a key part of this project (see Figure 7).

The team selected institutional capacity to deliver and the inclusive capacity of the economy as two key drivers for change in the system. Four scenarios were proposed:

- **Working together**
  - an ideal future with high institutional capacity and an inclusive economy.
- **Working aside**
  - an impotent future with no institutional capacity and an inclusive economy.
- **Working apart**
  - a wasted future with a lack of institutional capacity and an exclusive economy.
- **Working OK**
  - an elite future with high institutional capacity and an exclusive economy.

![Figure 7: Corridor of possibility](image)

**Moving from working apart to working together**

- The child must be seen as central to the educational mission. Specifically, the focus must be on caring for children, as well as ensuring their ability to read for sense and meaning by Grade 3.
- Leadership is key to change. In the school governance relationship, school principals are vital agents of change. They make the difference between function and dysfunction in schooling.

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See Mc Lennan, 2011 for a more detailed exploration of institutional capacity.
The values of stakeholders, which drive accountability and which determine the level of care provided to children, cannot be overemphasised, and are supported and driven by quality leaders.

Collaboration, common purpose, peer support, sharing resources and working together are fundamental to change journeys.

We build trust and institutional capacity, that is, skills, will and supportive enabling environments.

We recognize that a lot of the current state of the education system would fit into the working apart scenario. Initially, it was difficult to think through how to get from working apart to working together. This is because the economy is difficult to predict or manipulate.

But there is a corridor of opportunity that allows for movement from where we are to where we wish to be. This corridor of possibility is building and enabling institutional capacity:
- Leadership and relationship capability – we can (skills).
- ‘Working together’ cultures such as trust, commitment and care – we want to (will).
- Basic conditions for teaching and learning – we are enabled (support).

The findings of this research, provided in more detail under each of the levers for change, confirm that the education system continues to show dependency on its initial conditions and that apartheid patterns of privilege and performance are being maintained in it. Our interest is in how the horror of dysfunction can be changed into performance for the good of children’s education and futures.

We looked for examples of schools that have been turned around, and where effective governance relationships and performance are being achieved in spite of the socio-economic realities or histories of the school. We found two types of this sort of outlier, but there are more. Focus groups and case studies of exceptional change, where underperformance has been reversed, led us to key observations as to how change is driven through a corridor of opportunity.

The theory of change implicit to this deep-dive is that, in a context in which unions are committed to increased teacher professionalism and districts capable of support, well-developed institutional capacity and support will enable each school to develop working together relationships that contribute to the improvement learning quality for learners.

4 Push: Levers for changing relationships

The majority of schools in South Africa (estimates shift between 75% and 80%) are weak institutions located in poor communities with poor learning outcomes. Poverty and socio-economic conditions can and do affect learning outcomes, especially in South Africa given apartheid legacies. But this does not have to be the case. Students from equivalently poor households in Vietnam learn more than those from Peru (Crouch and DeStefano, 2015). We also know that many schools in South Africa have learners who perform well, even exceptionally, despite their local context or conditions.
Context is critical to understanding and managing a collaborative change process. One of the first tasks is to develop an understanding of the schools, stakeholders, organisational capacity, regulatory environment and socio-economic conditions that impact on the achievement of improved teaching and learning. The local context comprises political, economic and social frameworks and requires an understanding of the key stakeholders and other factors that determine needs and challenges.

Focus group insights – context matters

Teachers from 5 different schools in Limpopo note: “there are many shebeens and taverns in the areas around all our schools and learners go out at odd times to drink and then we start having discipline problems. There are also drug dealers in all the schools who sell to even primary school leaners, it’s bad. Almost 62% of learners are pregnant as they are either raped or looking for sugar daddy’s to support them.”

The unequal context and poverty impact on learning in two ways, firstly, in terms of family and community resources to support learning, and secondly, in terms of school resources for learning. The consequences of poverty and marginalisation are mediated in the schooling environment in terms of what resources exist, how they are used, and what teachers and leaders do in classrooms. In South Africa, the combination of resources and ability to use them, is strongly mediated by the physical, social and political context.

System change depends primarily on the political will and institutional capability of government support institutions. Within schools, a champion (individual or collective) is needed to drive change. Champions are most often principals, working with SMTs, heads of department and stakeholders. Some the strategies used to introduce and sustain change are to:

- Find a way to shift learners, teachers and the school community into a different mind-set in which the school is seen as successful and the children are the primary focus;
- Use an event or collective resource (like a mobile lab, or a library, or a reading drive) to introduce new instructional practice and motivate teachers and build a “we care about our school” culture;
- Support parents to support their children and call on those parents who are keen to help, often and with gratitude;
- Build trust, values and commitment;
- Care about the children and the local community; and
- Use partnership, collaboration and other strategies to make the most of limited resources.

Home and family play an important role in support learning. This role is more significant in terms of creating a learning environment at home and supporting and encouraging children to learn. Research shows, for example, that children with books at home are more successful learners. In some contexts, especially where communities are better resourced, parents play an active role in school activities from reading to children to fund-raising for new facilities and teachers. This collaboration has a positive effect on learning as children see that parents care about the school.
The involvement of parents is more challenging in very impoverished or marginalised communities with high unemployment and psychosocial problems. Schools in these localities have to work hard to involve parents by running classes on school work and learning support, and offering counselling. Parents can pressure schools to improve learning, but many lack the confidence to engage. Principals and teachers often undermine or dismiss parent input.

Teachers and how they teach are critical to learning achievement. However, many teachers in South Africa lack the subject knowledge and instructional skills to deal with large classes of multilingual learners with different learning abilities. In addition, many seem to lack commitment and grit. Unions often have an undue influence and ‘control’ schools without consideration of the learners. Sustainable system change is not possible without the support and commitment of unions at a national level, but especially at school level.

A key challenge here is a deep-rooted anomie and weariness about the work of a teacher. Building the status of the teacher and the important work they do may shift perceptions about it being a career of last resort. High performing schools work because the teachers are on board and care about the learners and their success. Some successful strategies include:
- School based initiatives that work with teachers and their heads of department on learning strategy and instructional techniques (supported by the principal, school and district);
- Communities of practice, peer learning and professional learning communities, all of which develop professional autonomy and shared knowledge;
- Recognising and rewarding professional conduct and small victories and dealing decisively with misconduct and poor performance;
- Building professional independence and an ability to work in any socio-economic context.

**Levers for changing working apart relationships**

- Develop the collaborative capacity of districts and leadership to build trust, motivate, support and drive learning improvement through partnerships and teamwork.
- Enable principals and school management teams to be agents of change and collaboration and build will, parent, school, and community connections, trust and commitment.
- Build the professional capacity of unions in schools so teachers commit to professional growth and support school performance.
- Catalyse and share resources (teachers, finances, supports and infrastructure) to create the conditions for teaching and learning.
- Activate value bases to address the eroded culture of teaching and learning and build an ethic of care and commitment to children and their futures.
- Share accountability and responsibility by improving the capacity of all stakeholders to play their role regardless of context and by heightening expectations.
The first three levers (Figure 8) relate to the development of supportive environments for initiating and sustaining change. The next three enable the building of value bonds and productive relationships within schools and between teachers, parents and leaders. All these levers apply to the crosscutting issues of technology in education and inclusion. Without skills, will or support, schools cannot produce learning; much less manage inclusion or technology effectively.

**Figure 8: Levers for change**

- **Develop the collaborative capacity of districts**
- **Share accountability and responsibility**
- **Activate value bases to build an ethic of care**
- **Enable principals and SMTs to be agents of change and collaboration**
- **Build the professional capacity of unions**
- **Catalyse and share resources**

### 4.1 Develop the collaborative capacity of districts

*Teaching in schools can be improved through targeted support by district offices. District offices should also ensure communication and information sharing between the education authorities and schools, and also between schools. (NDP, Chapter 9, p. 303)*

International best practice (Bates, 2013; Glewwe & Muralidharan, 2015, Pritchett, 2013) suggests that districts are catalysts and supports for learning improvement. District support has become a priority as countries adapt to the changing demands of education in a globalised and integrated world. Increased school autonomy and localised decision making has required a rethink of district support in relation to school leadership and learning improvement.

Changing school contexts require different kinds of support and leadership skills and abilities to ensure quality education outcomes. These need to be located within districts and schools as institutions, but also across the education system, linking into schools and districts (Pont, Nusche, and Hopkins, 2008). If districts are seen as the driver of reform, the capacity and level of influence of the district should be indirectly proportional to the number of effective schools.

Districts are important supports for learning improvement, but bureaucratic, compliance approaches are less successful than school driven and school needs-based approaches. In
South Africa, however, many districts lack the knowledge, capacity and resources to support learning. Building the capacity of the district, with provincial departments, local business and communities (like traditional, business or religious leaders), can catalyse resources and build a commitment to learning improvement.

The research findings suggest that given the uneven capacity, resources and socio-economic inequality, building the collaborative capacity of districts and leaders will enable them to provide the necessary support for change in dysfunctional schools. Districts and leadership will be able to initiate and support change that favours working together if able to build networks and work collaboratively.

**District working together challenges and opportunities**

- District policy makes districts the intermediary between schools and the province, but most district offices do not have the resources, capacity or functional organisation to provide adequate support.
- Historically, districts officials, have a negative association with the inspectorate and a biased process of performance management. This association undermines relations of trust between district officials, principals and teachers.
- District capacity and operational skills to support learning is uneven, within provinces and across provinces, entrenching inequality.
- Poor resourcing and an unequal distribution of professional knowledge limit district ability to provide support.
- There is a tension between the district roles of support and compliance regulation which can undermine working together relationships.
- There are numerous district and leadership development programmes and interventions show evidence of capacity development but not necessarily of system impact.
- Experiences with communities of practice suggest that if districts have the skills to facilitate collaborative interactions and ‘professional conversations’, they may be able to drive change in relationships within their own contexts.

South African policy on education districts mimics international trends in functions and responsibilities. The districts are seen as intermediaries between national and provincial departments on the one hand and schools on the other. District officials play a role of overseeing the implementation of policies developed by the DBE but district officials’ capability and reality issues are some of the factors that are likely to determine the success or failure of reforms (Bantwini and Diko, 2011).

The DBE developed Guidelines for the Organisation, Roles and Responsibilities of the Education Districts in February 2011. These Guidelines became policy in February 2013 in terms of National Education Policy Act (300 of 2013) (NEPA). The policy views districts as key to the day-to-day delivery of education services (both administrative and professional) outlined in the national and provincial policies and programmes.
The policy is an explicit attempt to respond to current inequality and uneven capacity by providing norms to guide the role of the districts, their scope in terms of authority, their resourcing, geographic coverage and the number of schools and circuits that should fall under their jurisdiction. However, it is not clear if districts as currently configured, or as per DBE policy, have the capacity to become key players in the education system improvement process.

Section 20 of the policy notes the following of districts:

*Subject to provincial plans, their task is to work collaboratively with principals and educators in schools, with the vital assistance of circuit offices, to improve educational access and retention, give management and professional support, and to help schools achieve excellence in learning and teaching.*

The Act outlines four main roles:

1) planning (collecting and analysing data, school improvement and district plans);
2) support (implement policy, improve quality of learning, provide information, connectivity and professional development);
3) oversight and accountability (holding principals to account and accounting to PEDs); and
4) public engagement (keeping the public informed). The policy provides guidelines on the optimal size and staffing for districts.

The National Development Plan also recognises the role of the districts, noting that: *teaching in schools can be improved through targeted support by district offices. District offices should also ensure communication and information sharing between the education authorities and schools and also between schools (NDP 2011:303).*

The district level is a complex tier of the education system in South Africa. Districts are mini-departments of education as they are required to implement all policies and programmes adopted at national and provincial levels. Although the PEDs define school outcomes, districts are responsible for implementing all aspects of education operations, including curriculum, finances and resourcing.

Districts are recognised as a critical part of the process of supporting learning, but lack the operational skills and capacity to do so. South African school improvement literature shows that districts and their officials receive limited attention (Chinsamy, 2002). It is for this reason that the Foundational Learning Technical Task Team, a Task Team of the Human Resources Development Council (HRDC), was established to identify blockages in the schooling system and propose measures that can be used to support the DBE.

The research, conducted by JET Education Services in 2013, notes that districts will need to be supported to successfully perform the roles of planning, support, oversight and public engagement specified in policy. Districts are caught between their responsibility to ensure policy implementation within a bureaucratic structure that requires them to work and report upwards to the PED, and to provide critical support to schools challenged by poverty and poor teaching and learning practice.
Some districts are able to provide support to schools despite inadequate staffing, high vacancy rates and limited resources because of committed and experienced district staff, and a focus on planning, monitoring and support (Figure 9). Innovative planning seems to enable district staff to pool limited resources in order to get ‘more bang for your buck’. A collaborative culture seems to be an important aspect of achieving outcomes.

Further findings of the research in relation to collaboration are:

- Districts do planning, budgeting, finances and supply chain through bureaucratic procedures, but rely on more collaborative cultures – workshops, networks, communities of practice – for curriculum and school management work.
- Human resources seem to be the major challenge in terms of district capacity. Working collaboratively with the PED and with schools seems to be a useful strategy for managing limited resources and staffing gaps.
- The tension between monitoring and support roles is evident in the curriculum areas. District staff note the difficulty of having to account for and enforce policy while at the same time enabling schools and educators to improve.

![Figure 9: Percentage of Foundation Phase and FET phase teachers visited by a subject/curriculum advisor during 2011 by province](image)

Source: van den Berg et al, Binding Constraints, 2016, p. 17.

The focus groups revealed a difference in the nature of relationships between schools and districts in better resourced areas. Schools in rural areas feel that districts do not provide adequate support. This is evident in Figure 9 which suggests that the average percentage of teachers visited in the KwaZulu-Natal (KZN), Eastern Cape (EC) and Limpopo is less than 50%. In addition, there are less visits at foundation phase than FET.

In contrast, many of the other provinces seem to reach the majority of FET schools (about 75%) but far less foundation schools. This reflects a tendency to priorities school leaving
grades. More independent schools seem to need district support less, as they perceive district visits as enforcing compliance, rather than supporting learning innovation.

*Sometimes we have to break the rules in order to change. If we follow the syllabus, its touch and go [for learning]. We decided not to cover the syllabus. We stood together as a team when the district complained about content coverage.* (Principal, 26 April 2016)

**Focus group insights - districts**

Parents from the schools in Limpopo believe that district circuit managers do not know their work. Circuit managers take advantage of principals who do not understand their work. Principals and circuit managers need to be trained on ethical leadership. The government policies are good on paper, but when parents approach the circuit and district office for intervention, the processes are slow and unhelpful.

For example, the new policy no longer allows parents to contribute to and build schools. Parents can only maintain or renovate buildings. When parents approach the district to help with rebuilding of dilapidated schools, the district is very unhelpful. Parents and SGBs never get clear answers regarding when services will be delivered.

Principals feel that their district provided no support whatsoever, and only came once a year to check how far they were with the curriculum. In contrast, many of the schools in the focus groups in East Gauteng avoid the districts or knowingly challenge district policy.

Teachers stated that the district only comes once in the year to see how far they got on with the syllabus. No messages were ever sent from the district, like the districts in Gauteng, they really do not care. Teachers felt that perhaps it was because their district did not have the means or resources to come to the rural areas.

Numerous studies (see for example, Togneri and Anderson, 2003 or Murphy and Hallinger, 2001) cite the potential for the district office to support learning if correctly configured. Many, however, note the tendency for district offices to limit change due to over-bureaucratisation of work processes, internal politics and weak capacity (Narsee, 2006, Ouchi, Cooper and Segal, 2003). These distance the district from providing the much-needed support, assistance and effective collaboration with schools, teachers and principals.

Research suggests that effective districts:

- Have a committed focus on learner achievement;
- Emphasise instructional support and coherence;
- Use monitoring data to enable schools to improve and identify those that need support;
- Balance compliance and support; and
- Involve local communities.

Many districts have historically not been well suited to play a significant role in raising learner achievement. The myriad of other demands on the district have contributed to the difficulty faced by many in leading transformation. The frustration inherent in this role has shaped how district staff view their ability to contribute. There is a tendency among districts to employ short-term bureaucratic remedies to solve longstanding problems.

There is a strong emerging literature about the role districts can play to transform education. Districts should play a strong supporting role, act as gatekeepers and capacity builders and
encourage schools to make their own decisions (Massell, 2000). Research suggests numerous possible roles for districts of which three are relevant for this deep dive:

- Set expectations with schools about performance and targets based on school data;
- Team staff from high-performing schools with low-performing schools for peer mentoring;
- Create intervention capacity in four areas: school organisation and management; culture and climate; curriculum and instruction; and parental involvement.

In South Africa, Prew (2012), argues that district offices should be using data to help schools improve their performance, as well as create conditions in which learners can access quality education and teachers can access support. Fleisch (2002) suggests that the district office should be the main point of contact between schools and government and should therefore sustain and expand the scale in school improvement.

Fleisch (2002) argues that districts’ officials can use tools of pressure and support to focus on change. Accountability measures should be used sensibly as tools of change. According to Roberts (2009), the district’s potential to be a force for change is linked to its proximity to schools, allowing it to be responsive to local needs, yet able to introduce changes linked to system-wide reform efforts.

The literature suggests that education districts need to combine administrative and governance responsibility, as an interlocutor between schools and provincial departments, with a strong focus on supporting schools and educators to improve learning. Other lessons are that:

- Bureaucratic, compliance-focused approaches are less successful than school-driven and school needs-based approaches.
- Districts are political and organisational institutions. District personnel should assist schools to interpret and mediate school responses to policies, rather than expecting blind compliance without contextualisation.
- A more curriculum-and-instruction-driven approach is needed, which includes consistency in curriculum content, curriculum delivery and curriculum materials. The quality of learning is highly dependent on the quality of instruction at school and classroom level.

Some district improvement projects include:

- SEED – Systemic Enhancement for Education Development, which focused on a learning organisational model;
- DDSP – District Development Support Programme, which intended to build strong partnerships using data;
- DIP – District Improvement Programme, which earmarked teacher development in the Brakpan/Benoni district;
- QLP – Quality Learning Project, which focused on systemic changes in all nine provinces;
- SQIP – School Quality Improvement Project, which focused on school audits;
- Delta Foundation District Initiative, aimed at developing a district model for the Eastern Cape education department;
SSDP – Soshanguve School Development Plan, which was aimed at following a backward mapping, bottom-up approach to district development.

Many of these programmes are small scale. The NECT programme on district development is being rolled out by different providers, each with slightly different strategies, in 8 districts in 5 provinces. Most of these programmes do not focus specifically on enabling districts officials need to work in collaboration with school teams to shift the culture of surveillance and compliance. A focus on collaborative relationships would complement the work of the NECT, which has a nascent programme on building collaboration.

The first 6 months of 2016 have focused on getting Circuit Managers (CMs) to visit schools and engage using the Circuit Manager tool. This push has definitely been met with success. These visits introduce a new relationship and way of working between CMs and School Principals ... (NECT Report 1-30 June 2016)

For example - building collaboration (Jika Imfundo)

The Jika ‘iMfundo programme is a systemic change management programme at scale aimed at district officials, school management teams and teachers in 2 districts (uThungulu and Pinetown) in KwaZulu-Natal. It is facilitated by the Provincial Initiative to Improve Learning Outcomes (PILO) for the NECT. The focus is on changing behaviours and management routines that will result in increased curriculum coverage in languages, mathematics and science so that learning outcomes improve across the system.

Jika ‘iMfundo provides officials and schools with the tools and training so that professional, supportive and evidence-based conversations about curriculum coverage take place between teachers and the SMT, and between the district officials and the SMT.

The Jika iMfundo campaign to improve learning outcomes is a campaign of the provincial department supported by the unions. It is based on, and attempts to embed, the following practices:

- Locating responsibility where it must be maintained in order to be to be sustained in districts and schools.
- Improving agency by providing tools for teachers, training for SMTs and leadership alignment for districts) and aligning responsibility along the ‘line of management’ to drive reciprocal accountability for improvement.
- Affordability within the resources of the system. External funding funded the change process, and the materials have been designed to be scalable.

The objective of working with the districts is to improve the quantity and quality of curriculum management through building a support relationship with schools and improved problem solving ability using good data. The role of the district is to provide a support system to help the schools achieve better learning outcomes. The District work is a key cornerstone of this system wide intervention. Early indicators suggest that the programme is showing success.

Communities of practice are not just gatherings of people with similar interests. They are groups of practitioners who share an interest in a field and who collectively learn how to perform better in that domain as they work together and regularly engage. Communities of practice have three vital characteristics:

- a domain of shared interest, linked to a common purpose in relation to sharing collective knowledge;
- a community based on relationships and networking;
and there needs to be a practice, in that members’ act and exercise competence in the context of their domain.

The community of practice as a tool of innovation provides three main levers of change to its members; it develops confidence, trust, and a sense of belonging and shared identity. Communities of practice assume that learning is collective, social and comes from our experience of participating in daily life rather than from an isolated or academic pursuit.

CoP activities such as problem sharing and problem solving, drawing on the experience or expertise of others, sharing assets or providing support, enable new and better practices can be implemented in the relevant context of the members. There are two vital characteristics of functioning CoPs: members set their own agendas; and trust has to be built up between members before discussion results in activities that can affect schools or learning outcomes.

4.2 Enable school leadership to be agents of change and collaboration

Learners from the Limpopo focus groups said the role of the principal is the most important in the school. If the principal was to monitor whether teachers are doing their work properly or treating the children right, this will be a big achievement. They would like to see principals and teachers do more to enforce discipline. Teacher absenteeism must be addressed.

Although South Africa, like many other African countries, has not developed regulated approaches to school leadership as yet, the provisions of White Papers 1 and 2 (DoE, 1994 and 1996a), the National Education Policy Act (NEPA) and the South African Schools Act (SASA, 1996) (DoE, 1996b/c), as well as provincial legislation, has created a framework for a school-based system of management within a centralised policy system. The central features are a core curriculum and assessment, norms and standards for funding (DoE, 1998) and quality assurance to ensure redress and improved access to quality schooling for all.

Education delivery is devolved as a concurrent power to provincial (and, in practice, district) levels. The establishment of school governing bodies (SGBs) and with a majority of South African schools holding one or more Section 21 powers (SASA,1996c), substantial decision-making authority and responsibility has moved to the school level, with an expectation of support from provincial and district offices. These policies suggest the need for an adjusted set of knowledge, skills and competencies for school leadership, away from the bureaucratic post-box orientation of the apartheid system, towards a more active, engaged role in securing developmental outcomes and accounting upwards to government and outwards to governing bodies.

School leadership can be broadly defined as the combination of knowledge, skills, attitudes and action which enable effective learning to take place. Leadership may be distributed in a school across principals, deputies and heads of department, who have formal authority for leadership (and management) tasks, as well as those teams (district, governing bodies, teachers, parents) who take responsibility for aspects of the learning support process.

The NDP highlights the role of leadership (principals in particular) in improving learning outcomes, including introducing entry qualifications for school principals, greater administrative powers and performance management. It was recognised early on that a school
based system requires skilled leadership and management to ensure improved outcomes. There is, however, a tendency to focus on school management compliance (the formalities of planning, budgeting, tracking) rather than leadership.

The success of a school is almost always dependent on the quality of the principal and school management team (SMT). There are, of course, many other factors in the making of an adequate school. A good principal will make the most of these factors, whether enhancing them or dealing with them when they are problematic. A poor principal will frustrate the potential even of strong factors in a school. International and local research and experience provide strong support for appreciating the importance of effective school leadership (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; Bush 2008, 2010).

School leadership working together challenges and opportunities

- School leadership straddles the responsibilities of management control and instructional support but tends to focus on compliance which is seen as easier to do.
- Leadership roles are not clearly defined and generic technical approaches create unreal expectations (Christie, 2010).
- Skills and capacity to build networks and partnerships are limited.
- Many principals lack change leadership and collaborative skills having been ‘schooled’ in a bureaucratic, sometimes authoritarian, system where the line rules.
- Some leaders have little experience beyond teaching.
- There are many management development programmes and interventions but few focused on change leadership and building partnerships. There is a growing emphasis on instructional leadership.
- Most programmes work on an individual level and focus on planning, data management and compliance rather than relationship building.
- There is some evidence that programmes which build-in change leadership and support, through peers or mentors, are successful. These could scale-up and have a systemic effect.

For example - Actonville Primary School

Principal of Actonville Primary School, Venessa Moodley, took over a failing school in Gauteng East three or four years ago. Actonville is an impoverished working class suburb with high levels of unemployment and drug problems. Within three years Grade 3 ANA Maths and English scores went from 23% to 67%. Part of her strategy was to build trust by showing parents and the community that school children come first. The first half an hour of school is used to ‘bring the children to school” and make them feel ‘loved’. One of the teachers, whose child attends the school, said “You can’t enforce something; you have to change their mind-set. As soon as parents see that their kid is loved by the teacher
then they are on board.” The principal also established a bicycle riding clinic on Saturday morning so children can learn how to ride and the rules of the road.

Venessa raises funds through partnerships and to make the school a place to be proud of, at the same time helping teachers to improve their teaching methods and content knowledge. None of the funding went directly to the school but was provided through partnerships who managed the investments and projects. This resource activism enabled her to paint the schools, install a maths centre and a library (stocked by books that people donate to a child in the school), provide Saturday counselling sessions for the parents who get food after they have attended two consecutive counselling sessions, and extend an invitation to the Prince of Monaco to donate solar lighting for the soccer field. The Prince attended the opening ceremony.

In addition, she introduced a values-based approach around learning in the school for children and staff alike, which was adopted by the Districts. She has also helped and supported all staff to improve their teaching practice and the children are showing better results all round. In a Community of Practice meeting in August 2015, Venessa spoke about her journey in transforming the school. The school was a case of ‘leadership gone wrong.’ There was no team building and staff members were highly demotivated and depressed, leading to major health problems. There were also a number of cases of financial maladministration. Venessa lists ‘keys to successful partnerships’ in the areas of parent and community relationships as follows:

- **Parenting:** the school needs to assist with parenting skills and setting home conditions to support children as students. Schools in turn need to be assisted in better understanding children’s home conditions.
- **Communicating:** there need to be effective communications from school-to-home and home-to-school about school programmes and student progress.
- **Volunteers:** organise volunteers and audiences to support the school and its students. Provide a range of volunteer opportunities for different purposes, at different times and in different locations.
- **Learning at home:** involve families with their children on homework and other curriculum-related activities and decisions.
- **Decision-making:** include families as participants in school decision making, and develop parent leaders and representatives.
- **Collaborate with the community:** coordinate resources and services from the community for families, students and the school, and provide services to the community.

The terms and conditions of appointment for educators, deputies and principals are outlined in the Employment of Educators Act (EEA) and its corresponding Personnel Administration Measures (PAM). These are similar, although slightly amended, to the competencies identified in the draft Standards for Principals (DoE, 2005). Annexure A of the Occupational Specific Dispensation (OSD) negotiated and agreed in the Education Labour Relations Council in 2007 reinforces these competencies.

The focus on school leadership and leadership development is linked to research on self-managing schools and whole school development which emerged in the nineties and is associated with a growing literature on school improvement, quality and performance. This
research suggests that school leadership (principals and their teams) play a pivotal role in enabling schools to improve learning outcomes⁴.

The shift to decentralise management and authority to school level reflects a concern to improve effectiveness and efficiency in school outcomes. School leadership is located at the centre of this process, initially as managers, or management teams, but increasingly as distributed leadership (Harris, 2004). This places increasing pressure on schools to account upwards and outwards, as well as improve the quality of learning.

Dealing with today’s challenges requires a notion of ‘top-down, bottom-up’ leadership where acting responsibly and getting the job done is everyone’s concern. In an ideal context, it means serving by understanding the impact of one’s leadership on others and contributing to a larger purpose. Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008: 18) argue that:

Leadership is a broader concept where authority to lead does not reside only in one person, but can be distributed among different people within and beyond the school. School leadership can encompass people occupying various roles and functions such as principals, deputy and assistant principals, leadership teams, school governing boards and school-level staff involved in leadership tasks.

This leadership approach focuses less on behaviours and more on how leaders adapt to changing environments. Leading schools requires working with limited resources, in challenging environments, to solve complex and systemic problems. Ensuring that learning takes place in sometimes unpredictable environments, and fragmented social contexts, requires a different approach.

School leadership needs to be connected and people focused. They need to see the big picture. Such transformational leadership involves an ability to change activities and relationships within school, to motivate and mobilise. Christie (2010, p. 696) argues:

Having distinguished between the concepts of leadership, management and headship, I would argue that ideally, the three should come together in schools. Ideally, schools should be replete with good leadership, at all levels; they should be well managed in unobtrusive ways; and principals should integrate the functions of leadership and management and possess skills in both.

Of course, in many South African school lack the conditions that enable distributed leadership. The functional structures of the system separate curriculum and teaching and learning from leadership and management. This is evident in organisational structures from the national department to schools. Often principals are isolated or engaged in daily crisis management from dealing with social trauma, union militancy to demanding districts. South African school leadership, the majority of which work with limited resources and disengaged staff and learners, need courage and grit to get schools working (in addition to resources and support). In these contexts, exercising leadership is a constant process of negotiation between individual, collective and social values and concerns.

⁴ See for example, Caldwell and Spinks, Elmore and Fullan internationally, or Christie, Mestry and Mc Lennan in South Africa.
Leaders, then, cannot underestimate the massive challenges they face in building trusting relationships, establishing forums for dialogue and overcoming situations of mutual disrespect (Fullan, 1997, p. 15).

The Department of Education (DOE) piloted and rolled out an Advanced Certificate in Education (ACE) in Education Management and Leadership in 2006/7. The purpose of the ACE (DoE, 2008) is to:

empower/enable educators to develop the skills, knowledge, and values needed to lead and manage schools effectively and to contribute to improving the delivery of education across the school system taking into account the diversity of school types and contexts.

The outcomes of the ACE are similar to those defined in the Draft Policy Framework and Standard for Principalship:

- Lead and manage people
- Manage organisational systems and physical and financial resources
- Manage policy, planning, school development and governance
- Manage teaching and learning
- Demonstrate effective language skills in school leadership and management

As can be seen, these skills are about managing rather than leading schools. The leadership roles and responsibilities of principals, deputies and heads of department are not clearly defined or understood. School leadership is in the frontline of the struggle to develop new ways of doing things in schools, but several different policy frameworks define what must be done creating a confused, compliance approach.

Christie (2010) warns anyway that generic approaches may well act as impediments to the changes they aim to support by creating expectations that can’t be met in South African school contexts and conditions. She suggests recognising the situated complexities of the work of running schools in the very different circumstances in which school leaders operate.

Many principals struggle to deal with poor resources, an absence of the culture of teaching and learning, and school communities which, even if they are willing to make a contribution, are themselves the victims of a poor education, unemployment or general poverty. Many feel that they operate in vacuums as parents are not involved in the system and “everything is on my shoulders”.

School teams operate in very different and unequal school contexts which have a major impact on leadership work and what it means to lead and manage schools in relevant and appropriate ways. Often school leadership prioritises management compliance and control as it is easier to measure and provide evidence (Mc Lennan, 2013). A notable gap in current school leadership development seems to be an ability to drive change and mobilise stakeholders. The focus groups and other research suggest that school leadership need to drive change and set the example by creating the conditions for learning. This means doing anything from cleaning classrooms to teacher development to make teaching and learning a priority. Relationship styles may vary from the formal to the collegial, but experience suggests that teamwork and getting stakeholders working together is a useful strategy for change.
Focus group insights - leadership

Principals must create environments that are conducive to learning and this must show in the priorities that the principals make. For instance, if the teaching and learning are priority, then improvements must start in the classroom and not in the principals’ office. In addition, making small changes such as maintaining cleanliness, fixing of broken windows, go a long way in creating environments in which learners and the whole school community can thrive on.

The atmosphere in the classroom inspires learning. At the LEAP school, the school management team (SMT) is committed to working together, learning together, making mistakes together, getting up and moving forward again and again. The SMT is committed to learning and reflective practice.

The principal is the heart-beat of the school supporting everyone, feeding people with energy, inspiring and modelling that which needs to be done; and not just telling people what to do. When the principal arrives early at school regularly, this models the commitment which is needed from the teachers. In other words, the principals must get their “hands dirty.”

Setting direction in terms of what the school needs to achieve and defining responsibilities for everyone to ensure that each plays their part. For example, a plan needs to be put in place to ensure that heads of department (HoDs) plan for curriculum delivery, management and support of teachers and effective learning. All processes initiated by the leadership must filter down through every level and aspect of school and cause impact on the learner.

The learners from the schools in Limpopo say principals are supposed to communicate the vision about teaching to teachers and parents and motivate learners to be disciplined about their studies. The principal must use the school money to make improvements in the classrooms like fixing broken boards, chairs and windows.

Principals must set clear policies and implement them without favouritism. Principals must make sure that teachers are teaching properly and at the right time when they are supposed to be in class. Some teachers bunk classes. When learners approach them in the staff room to remind them that they are supposed to be in class, they shout at the learners.

Research undertaken in the Commonwealth and by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) confirms that effective leadership in schools contributes to improved student learning, facilitates education reform and links schools into their broader context and environment (Schleicher, 2012; Moorosi and Bush, 2011; Pont et al., 2008b).

In addition, in work completed for MGSLG, based on engagements with school leadership in Gauteng, Pat Sullivan and Associates (2013) noted that building trust, commitment and relationships with stakeholders in the schools and in the community, are critical aspects of contextual leadership development (see Figure 10)
Some, of many leadership improvement projects that develop collaborative practice, include:

- South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition (SASESC) School Peer Review process
- Partners for Possibility (PfP) facilitate cross-sectoral reciprocal partnerships between business, government and the social sector. It is a co-action, co-learning partnership between school principals and business leaders, enabling social cohesion through partnerships, and empowering principals to become change leaders in their schools and communities.
- BRIDGE is a non-profit organisation that drives collaboration and co-operation among educational stakeholders to increase their collective impact on the education system. In this way, improved system performance as well as improved learner performance can be ensured. BRIDGE runs a number of successful principal CoPs across the country in collaboration with districts and provinces.
- The Foundation of School Leadership and Management (FSLM) helps ailing schools imagine a new way forward by reigniting teachers’ and school managers’ passion for education and change-making and spark a hunger to learn within pupils.
- Norkitt Education Leadership Initiative (NELI) analyses how school governing bodies of under-resourced schools can maximize their effectiveness and pool resources in order to best serve learners.
- PSAfrica (Performance Solutions Africa) develops the capability of principals, HODs, teachers and DBE officials using a training-coaching model.

The aim of principals’ communities of practice is to support school principals to work together to become empowered and central agents in the improvement of teaching and learning in their schools. A community of practice of this type provides an opportunity for principals, as a group, to cooperate and share with other principals, thus enabling them to undertake concerted school improvement action and offer and receive collegial support in doing so.
Principals in well-guided communities of practice return to their schools with an all-important “bigger picture” perspective on their situations in their society and their system, which is essential for effective leadership. The benefits they gain include enhanced self-confidence and assurance in their roles; a sense that they are not alone; new ideas and enthusiasm for ways to conduct their work; and resources of collective strength with neighbouring principals.

**For example – the SAESC’s School Peer Review Process**

Within a community of practice, the development of a sense of relationship and commitment among its members is most important. In this regard, there is a lot to be said for the highly specific, attainable project that is carried out by the members of the community and which deepens the bonds between them. An example of this can be found in the work of one of BRIDGE’s communities of practice for school leaders, the South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition.

When it first formed in 2010, the Coalition defined its own set of educational themes and broad strategic objectives, which have guided its activities over the first years. One of these objectives is to create common purpose through developing peer support and trust amongst Coalition members. Additionally, and through collaborative work, the Coalition aims to explore the collective impact of its schools and to share its learnings. Through understanding what effective practice is, the ultimate objective is to integrate this effective practice into broader educational policy decisions within the national context, influencing and supporting the dialogue around a potential impact school movement in South Africa.

Thus, the principals and school leaders of the Coalition are engaged in defining, sharing and refining best educational practice, actively participating in reviews of each other’s work and school evaluations, attending content-based workshops, and participating in assessment and monitoring and evaluation as and when necessary. Two examples of how good educational practices are shared are, firstly, that one school is embarking in 2013 on an integrated curriculum approach in Grade 8 as a direct result of seeing this at work in another Coalition school, while secondly a school in the Coalition reports that it is funding bursary students differently having seen the structure of funding that another school uses.

It is in relation to the specific task of school peer reviews, though, that the Coalition has seen some of its most exciting work. In order to develop and drive quality across a range of schools, the Coalition members have agreed that there is a requirement for a shared commitment to ongoing improvement. Peer reviews, where school leaders and their staff observe each other’s schools in action, are a good mechanism for schools to establish a process of self-reflection and continuous learning as well as to participate in and support each other’s school improvement initiatives.

Instead of focusing on the approval or punishment of a school inspection, the peer reviews focus on discovering opportunities to serve learners better as well as to transform school leadership and thus achieve school improvement. They create a safe environment for a principal to understand the strengths and weaknesses of his or her own school, thus acting as an effective driver for change. Members of the Coalition went to the United States for a workshop, where they collaborated on the development of tools and templates for the peer review process.

As one principal said: “Having staff members being part of a team has brought a richness to them and their approach within our school, and the preparation and receiving of a review has been a gift to our school and staff. It has already resulted in a more collective leadership approach and caused staff to reflect deeply on their teaching practice, their classrooms and their engagement with students. The privilege of being involved in the development of the instrument and going to the US to create it was an amazing opportunity, not only the development of the instrument but the engagement with other SAESC members and the journey travelled together there and my own
personal growth. I have learnt so much more about myself and been encouraged to be bolder with
difficult conversations and to practice more constructive self-reflection.”

The School Peer Review process began in 2012, with each visit leading to refinements in the
process and instruments in discussion with Coalition CoP members. In August 2015, the
sixteenth Peer Review processes took place at LEAP 6 Science and Maths School in Garankuwa.

The peer review is conducted on a designated school by a team of teachers from other Coalition
schools, with the team leader having experienced a peer review in his or her own school. Schools self-evaluate and are observed against four domains: leadership and management, culture and
climate, school and community, teaching and learning. The process is intensive and is carried
out over three days. It involves the following activities:

- Interviewing the principal, the school management team, teachers and learners, and (if
  possible) parents
- Observing classes in action
- Reviewing selected documentary evidence, including data and assessment reports and
  examples of teacher and learner portfolios
- Conducting a feedback session with the school, in which both challenges and good practices
  observed are discussed
- Compiling a feedback report for the reviewed school.

Each of these activities is supported by a number of instruments and templates so that there is
commonality across the review process in different schools. The school peer review also
promotes a self-reflection process, in particular for the principal, at the reviewed school.

In the 2014 evaluation of BRIDGE’s partnership with the SAESC through the Coalition
Community of Practice, the School Peer Review was found to have a number of benefits, and
those who had participated both as reviewers and through being reviewed reported gains in
insight into their own practices, and motivation to improve in defined areas. The evaluation
report noted:

Almost all schools responded very well to the school peer reviews, and unexpected benefits
were mentioned also by those conducting peer reviews. This Coalition activity, more than
others, has been linked to examples of significant changes in working practice, and can therefore
be regarded as a high impact activity.’ (Feedback Research & Analytics, SAESC Draft Evaluation
Report 2014, p.8)

The evaluation report summarised some of the major differences between the Coalition Peer
Reviews and the other evaluation exercises that schools may have participated in as follows:

- Comprehensive feedback: both the verbal nature of the feedback and the detail provided in
  the report has been noted as unique.
- Unintimidating approach: a great deal of effort is put into a collegial approach rather than a
  critical approach.
- Detailed and holistic reviews: this process is not a tick box compliance approach, and
  demands real engagement and discussion on school issues.
- Innovative approach: an external team of peers brings a fresh perspective on many of the
  school’s practices.

The evaluation report also details benefits as described by peer review team members,
principals and staff at reviewed schools, and benefits to learners. Principals in particular have
noted that the SPR report is frequently useful in preparing School Improvement Plans.
Mentors: the role of mentors in schools for both school leaders and for teachers is receiving renewed attention. There is extensive literature on mentorship in education, with common themes suggesting features and benefits such as the following. Mentorship:

- Supports professional development and improves teaching standards, especially in rapidly changing teaching contexts.
- Helps with the socialisation and enculturation process for new teachers.
- Helps prevent new teachers from making damaging mistakes which could impact on their own careers or on learners.
- Can advance progression and job satisfaction, and could help reduce early departure from the teaching profession.
- Enhances collaboration and team work in the teaching profession.
- Promotes critical self-reflection on practice.

In South Africa, it is not the norm for schools to set up planned and formalised mentoring programmes. The trend is to approach mentoring (if at all) in an informal manner that is usually not maintained. It is generally agreed that mentoring must be a structured, well-planned and deliberate process if it is to be successful, sustainable and change the methods used by mentees in the classroom – and thereby have any long-term impact on teachers and teaching in general. Given this viewpoint, the following issues are pertinent:

- Mentors have a great responsibility and good mentors have certain aptitudes and personality traits. How can they be prepared for their roles? Should there be criteria for the selection of mentors? Should there be common standards for mentors to which any training programmes should be linked?
- Mentorship programmes should be practice-based, and take into account issues such as optimal contact time, building relationships and clearly defined roles and responsibilities. One way of embedding practice into a mentorship model is to track new teachers who have been mentored into a mentoring role.
- How do we recognise leaders or teachers who give up their time to play the role of mentor?
- Potential mentors can also be sourced from retired principals and teachers.
- Research at Stanford University in the US suggests that relying on a pool of mentors who go off to work at different schools is not effective, as there is not enough contact between mentees and mentors. Ideally the mentor should work on site on a regular basis with the mentee. One model is that mentor/mentee ‘teams’ have an external supervisor who checks in on the team relationship.

For example – Partners for Possibility (PfP)

This programme establishes a partnership between a business leader and a principal of an under-resourced school. It is a mentorship programme with a difference, as both leaders are required to complete a leadership development programme over the period of a year. This programme has three courses and 10 Leadership Circle (CoP) meetings a year. These act as ‘solution incubators’. The partners are required to engage their respective communities to achieve their goals.

The process is a leadership development process and support process. The PfP approach enables the principal to build their confidence to lead, as well as create energy in the school via the SMT, teachers and parents.
The Theory of Change is based on recognition that change must be led by principals who need to rediscover their capacity to lead change in their schools and communities. Principals are expected to lead this, but often are not equipped to deal with social change.

Partners for Possibility has business leaders in an actively engaged team to provide support. In addition, with the school seen as the hub of a community, parents have been recruited to become more involved in the schools through a 'social contract' that encourages them to make a contribution. A wide range of groups have also been involved to help principals guide the development of a vision for their schools.

Collaboration is a process through which people, groups and organisations work together to achieve increased impact. Collaboration may be the result of the need to solve a problem, a shared vision, or a regulatory requirement as is the case with SGBs. However, collaboration needs to be developed to catalyse limited resources, achieve defined goals and greater impact. Collaboration usually requires a champion or mobiliser to get the process moving.

In many of the practice cases, school leaders drive the move to collaboration. The support and active engagement of the principal and the school management team affects the motivation of teachers or learners. In addition, the chances that changes are sustained or made routine are lessened: it has been shown in a number of programmes that once ‘project enablers’ (such as facilitators or observers) are gone, beneficiaries revert back to their prior practices, unless the principal remains an engaged champion.

Principals and HoDs can support the development of Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) which are groups of teachers working together to share experiences, knowledge, techniques and insights with the aim of improving teaching practices and learner achievement. Effective PLCs have many benefits. These include improved teacher self-esteem, subject and pedagogic content knowledge, better teaching methods and classroom management, assessment practices and professional attitudes. Teachers can call on each other for ‘just-in-time’ assistance when they need it.
The concept of PLCs for teachers has become a key item on the government’s national policy agenda for in-service teacher development. Ways of making these both effective and sustainable are proposed in the *Integrated Strategic Planning Framework for Teacher Education and Development in South Africa 2011-2025*.

PLCs increase teacher confidence and morale – they feel they can take charge of their own learning and become agents for change, and this can change the culture in a school for the better. (Dr Razia Ghanchi-Badasie, Principal of Brenthurst Primary School)

Some key learnings around conditions for successful PLCs have been identified as follows:

- Attitudes play an important role, and members need to commit to active participation. As one school principal who has successfully run PLCs in her school noted, ‘People need to understand that you put something in, you are not there just to listen to other people’s tips and strategies.’ The PLC needs to have a common purpose, driven by trust and respect. Members agree to ‘rules of engagement’, which involve active participation and follow up.

- The role of a facilitator is vital in making sure that there a methodology in place so that meetings focus on action leading to impact in the classroom. The facilitator also needs to be skilled in reflective practice, and confident in the content area so that discussions are kept on track.
  - The Data-informed Practice Improvement Project (DIPIP) provided external facilitators who guided teachers through the PLC learning activities. A further key intervention was the training of school-based Facilitators (SBFs), with the goal of equipping lead teachers with the skills and confidence to become future convenors of PLCs. This was aimed at contributing to the development of a replicable model of facilitator training for establishing PLCs more widely in the future.
  - While facilitators can be taught certain strategies – and can even form their own communities of practice – it is also important that facilitators are developed within schools, with the support of school leaders: ‘... facilitators are grown on-the-job, through a process of reflective practice within the group; we create ourselves as facilitators.’

- The principal’s role in establishing and supporting PLCs is central. He or she needs to ensure staff buy-in, and monitor the quality of collaboration. There needs to be an initial investment in ‘selling’ the idea to staff, and in building understanding of facilitator and team roles and capacity.

- There have been some initiatives in using online spaces for convening PLCs. One finding is that ‘... sustaining motivation over time is problematic, however, and there is a case to be made for hybrid PLCs that meet face to face as well as online’.

- Some possible barriers have been identified as follows:
  - Teacher attitudes such as passivity, resistance, limiting attitudes or beliefs, lack of accountability, inability or unwillingness to engage on instructional issues or give feedback, and lack of team focus.
  - Teachers involved in the DIPIP project felt that some degree of ongoing external support is needed for sustaining PLCs. External involvement gives credibility and...

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5 Dr Anthea Ceresto of Parktown Girls High School presenting at Teachers Upfront in September 2015.
6 John Gilmour of LEAP school talking at Teachers Upfront in September 2015.
7 Professor Geoffrey Lautenbach of the University of Johannesburg talking at Teachers Upfront in September 2015.
status to PLCs, and allows for external ‘academic’ expertise to be brought in, which gives teachers more confidence in what they are learning.

- PLCs need to be linked to a range of knowledge resources, so that facilitators and members can draw on useful inputs to structure their discussions. While the ultimate aim is for PLCs to become self-sustaining, they should also be linked to district support and subject advisers, and to other communities of practice in the broader educational community in order to expand the pool of knowledge resources to which PLCs can refer.

- Practical issues such as logistics around arrangements, transport costs, and regularity of meetings cannot be ignored if PLCs are to become widespread and sustainable. Convening any meeting requires some administrative support, and there are usually costs involved.

Given these features of PLCs, some questions about large-scale implementation across all schools need to be posed. Are PLCs only effective where there is already a solid base of subject-matter expertise? How can low performing schools and weaker teachers benefit when the enabling conditions may not be there? Can PLCs be teacher-driven, or do they need external resources, funding and administrative support? If facilitators play such a vital role, are district officials and subject advisors equipped to perform the function? Will these become another form of imposed workshop which undermines some of the defining characteristics of professional learning communities?

4.3 Build the professional capacity of school union leaders and teachers

Teacher unions are crucial to improving the education system. Experience in other countries shows that without a good level of professional expertise among union leaders, it is difficult to get unions to move beyond the issue of salary increments to the core professional concern of improving the quality of education. (NDP, Chapter 9, p. 308)

The National Development Plan (NDP) identifies the need to assist unions to develop the professional capacity of their members. Professional accountability assumes self-regulation based on professional agency through peer review and control, independence (given professional knowledge), trust, defined codes of practice and regulatory bodies with powers to admit and discipline members.

Union working together challenges and opportunities

- Some unions have a combative style of engagement within schools, provinces and nationally that disrupts the teaching and learning process.
- There is a tendency to protect members from the consequences for poor professional conduct.
- There is corruption and bullying at school level, especially in weaker or poorly resourced institutions.
- A lack of trust prevents the development of professional relationships and conduct that favour the child.
- Teacher professionalism is undermined by a focus on control.
- Unions can and do influence the quality of learning in schools.
Unions have a track record of collaborating at national level, particularly in institutions such as the ELRC and the NECT.

Union support gets teachers on board and committed to improving learning.

Committed teachers enable children’s performance when trusted by leadership to operate professionally. This is not possible without the support of unions and professional associations.

Building an understanding of the role of unions in supporting and being accountable for learning outcomes at schools.

The Employment of Educators Act (No 76 of 1998) contains the regulations regarding the terms and conditions of service of teachers. It provides law with regards to the appointments, promotions and transfers of educators; stipulates the conditions under which terminations of services can occur; and spells out how the Department will deal with incapacity and misconduct of educators.

The Act establishes the South African Council for Educators (SACE) as the professional council for educators, responsible for the appropriate registration of teachers, management of professional development and inculcation of a Code of Ethics for all educators. All teachers are required to register with SACE, as well as maintain their professional development points for re-registration. SACE also deals with transgressions of the Code of Ethics.

The Education Labour Relations Council (ELRC) is a bargaining council that serves the public education sector nationally and provincially. The primary business of the ELRC is to promote the maintenance of labour peace in the public education sector, through the provisioning of dispute resolution and prevention services.

Education Labour Relations Council Resolution 8 (1998) contains the set of duties and responsibilities that apply to educators at each level. The national Department of Education, provincial departments and the teacher unions agreed to these. In terms of these, principals have limited authority in relation to the employment and regulation of teachers.

The ELRC in South Africa recognises nine teacher unions (see Figure 11 for details):

- South African Democratic Teachers’ Union (SADTU) has a majority membership of 68% of the total number of teachers
- National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NAPTOSA) has the second largest membership of 12%
- National Teachers Union (NATU) (7%)
- Suid-Afrikaanse Onderwysersunie (SAOU) (6%)
- Professional Educators Union (PEU) (4%)
- Public Servants Association of South Africa (PSA) (3%).
The values adopted by the ELRC are:
- Professionalism: promote behaviour that is accepted to be correct and proper;
- Transparency: ensure access to information by citizens;
- Independence: the right to making informed decisions independently that minimise or avoid conflict of interest;
- Accountability: accepting responsibility for actions and decisions taken with allowance for corrective action and penalty for wrong doing;
- Fairness and equity: adjudication of grievances and disputes;
- Social responsibility: respond to the social issues of the day; and
- Efficiency: delivery of quality services economically.

The Synthesis report for the Programme to support Pro-Poor Policy Development (PSPPD) argues that undue union influence (van der Berg et al, 2016, pp. 34-43) is a binding constraint for learning improvement. Three other constraints are weak institutional functionality; weak teacher content knowledge and pedagogical skills; and wasted learning time and insufficient opportunity to learn.

van der Berg et al (2016) make the argument that the influence of the majority union, SADTU, limits the ability of the system to work for the child. The five areas where this is most evident are post-provisioning and salaries, skewed accountability, a weak SACE, biased bureaucratic accountability and limited public trust. These factors are most evident in the prevalence of patronage in the appointment and promotions and teachers and officials.

The Volmink Commission into the Selling of Posts of Educators by Members of Teachers Unions and Departmental Officials in Provincial Education Departments notes:
Weak authorities, aggressive Unions, compliant principals and teachers’ eager to benefit from Union membership and advancement are a combination of factors that defeat the achievement of quality education by attacking the values of professionalism. (Report of the Ministerial Task Team, 18 May 2016, p. 18)

What is pertinent to this deep dive, in terms of building learning relationships, is the ability of the unions to avoid attempts to monitor teachers’ performance. This is partly a response to the social control exercised by inspectors under apartheid. A recent challenge is the halting of the Annual National Assessments (ANAs) which track systems performance. This limits data needed to inform principals, parents and communities on progress.

The focus groups revealed slighted different styles of engagement with unions in Limpopo and Ekurhuleni. The urban schools were more at ease in their relationships with unions in the schools, with few noting any undue influence. This may be due to greater union competition in urban areas. The picture is slightly different in rural areas where SADTU is dominant.

**Focus group insights - unions**

The Limpopo focus groups viewed SADTU as a bully exercising undue influence in the school context. Unions sit in the appointments of teachers and influence who they want. They threaten members if members don’t listen to them as they control job security.

"Unions feel that they are above the law and superior. They take their members as clients. Teachers complain to the unions about principals and then come and bully the principals. If they tell principals to close school for a union meeting, then they have to. If not, they threaten the principals, even teachers threaten us and go to the unions. Unions have a personal agenda and they don’t only close one school, they close the entire circuit."

Teachers stated that unions affect their teaching. “If unions say close the school today at 12 and open tomorrow at 12 then we must do it because they want to have their meetings”.

The protection offered by unions with regards to performance limits the capacity of the system to support and enforce professional practice in schools. This point is poignantly evident in pleas from learners for principals to make teachers work and deal with absenteeism. Teachers are often conflicted between a commitment to learner’s and loyalty to the union. Principals are often reluctant to take disciplinary action against fellow union members.

SACE is an independent professional structure for dealing with appropriate conduct in schools. However, it is dominated by SADTU as the majority union. There is a perception that SACE has struggled exercise its mandate in terms of keep up with complaints and making dismissals. This is an area of focus for the institution:

*SACE maximised its vigilance regarding adherence to the Code of Ethics for Teachers. Of 586 complaints received during the year under review and 283 from the previous year, 647 were processed and 222 carried over to the next financial year. 69 hearings resulted in 56 educators being found guilty of which 28 had suspended “striking offs’, 18 definite period striking offs’ and 10 indefinite striking offs’. Most of the offences related to corporal punishment, harassment and sexual misconduct (in that order). (SACE Annual Report, 2014/2015, p.9)*
Evidence shows that successful education systems rely on self-confident unions that collaborate with the government on educational issues and policies. Bascia and Osmond (2013) conducted research on teacher union and governmental relations in Sweden, England, South Africa and Canada to explore the challenges of raising teacher professionalism to improve learning.

The South African case study demonstrates a complex relationship between government and the education unions which sometimes work together and other time are in confrontation (Bascia & Osmond, 2013). Zengele (2013) focuses on the challenges related to the promotion of teachers which can lead to the loss of teachers to other professions, as they are overlooked in favour of union members. This highlights the challenge for unions of balancing the protection of members’ rights with professionalism and system interests.

Classrooms are where the learning is enabled. The research shows that committed teachers enable children’s performance when trusted by leadership to operate professionally. This is not possible without the support of unions and professional associations for professional conduct and teacher development strategies. Unions’ primary value focus needs to be on learners, classrooms and school performance if the quality of learning is to improve.

*Our teachers lack motivation. They are hardworking but they just go through the paces. We have to get our act together to improve learning. (Ekurhuleni Principals CoP)*

Where there are collaborative relationships, unions can:
- Help level the playing field and manage equity.
- Protect members so that they can focus on teaching.
- Improve teachers’ skills and performance.
- Focus on learner development and professional support.

However, in the absence of effective working relationships in schools, teachers can feel isolated, unsupported and free to operate as they wish. New teachers are often inducted into conflictual modes of working with colleagues, principals and parents, and disrespect or undermine learners. As public pressure about the ‘poor’ conduct of teachers and unions grow, attempts to regulate performance and reinforce compliance are resisted.

Some argue regulation undermines professional agency and responsibility as educators are no longer called on to understand and ground their work, but to comply with a set of predefined standards and outcomes. It does undermine professional accountability. While we must account for public resources, there is a need to reclaim the profession. It is in this space that unions can play a critical role in building the reputation of teaching as a profession of choice and encouraging professional conduct in developing South Africa’s future.

**Focus group insights - teachers**

Teachers that have the “spirit of giving” can achieve a lot. Teachers need to understand that in giving, one gains a lot back. If a teacher believes that “everyone can pass” or “every child has potential” teaching is where one can test that belief. In the very first group of learners since the school was established, 4 learners passed and went on to study medicine. Learners pass here because teachers expect them to pass.
Not everyone is meant to be a teacher. In the majority of cases, teaching is taken as a “fall-back” profession. There is a need to select those teachers that see teaching as a “calling”. The selection process for teaching needs to be refined in order to identify the right calibre of teachers. Teachers must be life-long learners. Teachers who are coming into the profession are no longer passionate.

The desire to learn filters down to the learners. Teachers must love to acquire knowledge and upgrade their knowledge and skills. Their motivation rubs off onto other teachers and the learners. At LEAP schools, teachers show commitment by giving their time, volunteering for extra classes and tutoring. Initially not all teachers used to volunteer. However, after seeing the principal volunteering for extra duties, teachers that started off as reluctant are now coming forward. Teachers must have patience for slow learners and learners that do not understand the subject.

Parents feel that disadvantaged communities still have a large number of teachers that are trained in old methods of teaching or are incompetent. Others are “intelligent” but cannot transmit knowledge; they cannot teach. Teachers are not caring enough. Learners fear them. Even “intelligent” children are fearful of the teachers. Some of the teachers look down upon the backgrounds of poor learners. Some even ridicule learners about their backgrounds.

Teachers use very harsh words when they talk to learners. Teachers beat our children! Teachers in rural schools do not care because their children do not attend public schools. Teachers send their children to private schools where teachers are more qualified and care for children. When teachers are interviewed for jobs, teachers pretend that they are good and they accept that they will do the work. Many of the teachers are not good people and the right kind to teach our children.

Limpopo principals feel that only about 10% of teachers are on time and in class, but the rest don’t care because they are protected by unions. If they do go to class, they are unprepared. Teachers for the grade 8/9 are lackadaisical but perhaps the grade 10/11/12 teachers are on time and busy with work. They also felt that they need to develop with department, parents and teachers support. Parents don’t support because they feel it is the principal’s problem. Teachers need to get together to collaborate and learn from each other. Each quarter they have parent teacher meetings, only 20% come and it is normally the good parents.

Limpopo teachers are of the view that there are many teachers who don’t mark scripts or even give tests or may teach but don’t give written work, they only test the children in the exam time and marks are just given without any evidence. It is because teachers don’t have the knowledge of the learning area to teach in it. For example, an English teacher is sent to teach mathematics. Principals inflate the number of learners in the school and accept students in a grade from another school even if he did not pass the year.

Learners from Limpopo stated what they liked about their school. Compared to the list of things that the learners did not like about their schools; this list is very short and the learners thought hard about what they liked:

- When teachers bring in parents in schools to discuss learner discipline problems that is reassuring.
- The experience of being taught by pleasant and competent teachers is good, that is teachers that explain things until learners understand.
- Some teachers give extra work to weaker learners to make them perform better. They give extra classes before school and provide worksheets.
- Learners appreciated that their English teacher teachers them in English and the principal encourages them to use English. This helps to practice English and to understand other subjects better.

Things that learners disliked about their school:
• Teachers use abusive and insulting language towards the learners if they do not understand something in class. The use of vulgar language is hurtful, and it frustrates the learners and makes them angry. High school learners who mentioned this became visibly upset, agitated and actually stood up when they related this story.
• Teachers practice favouritism and are very harsh towards learners that they do not like.
• Teachers tell us that they do not work for us; they work for their children.
• Teachers hurt us. We bottle up bad feelings and anger.
• Over-aged learners insult and disrespect the teachers.
• When teachers miss classes and nobody tells us where they are and for how long they will be gone. We sit and do nothing or make noise and get into trouble.
• Some teachers work hard and are bullied by overaged learners.
• We are also bullied by overaged learners and we are afraid to report the matter because victimisation will continue.
• Some learners bunk classes and teachers do not really care.
• When we talk to our teachers they are not warm.
• Our parents are disempowered and they do not feel confident to engage with the teachers in our defence.
• We are afraid to tell our parents because we will get victimised by teachers.
• Some teachers do not come to work due to their personal stress and when they come to school they talk to us with anger.
• Teachers are denying our right to be happy.
• Teachers send learners to the shops and visit each other during lessons.
• A primary school learner expressed how she wanted to tell a teacher about her right to be educated but she was afraid that the teacher would slap her if she spoke up.

If issues related to the sometimes negative influence of unions on school relationships are not addressed appropriately, the influence of unions will remain a binding constraint and continuous risk to change. All the unions have teacher development programmes, but the two most influential are the SADTU Curtis Nkondo Professional Development Institute and the NAPTOSA Professional Development Institute.

Leverage could be exercised by supporting unions programmes directed towards building a greater understanding of the role of unions in support and being accountable for learning outcomes at schools. Unless the sometimes negative influence of unions in schools is addressed, the life chances of many poor children will remain unchanged, as unions activity affects collaboration in poor or rural schools, not privileged schools.

Some work has begun in this area. For example, JET has developed an accredited professional development programme in partnership with the University of Witwatersrand’s School of Governance, which aims to build knowledge and practice on good governance and professional ethics for school-based union leaders to create a common understanding of the role of teachers in learning development. The programme has received endorsement from SADTU, NAPTOSA, NATU, SAOU and PEU. However, programme rollout has stalled due to funding challenges.

4.4 Catalyse resources to create and support conditions for learning

My school does not have a playing field. If we coordinate our timetables we could have a joint sport session and a challenge between the north and south parts of the township. Yay... come on, it's a great idea!! (Principal who is part of a Principals’ CoP).
Resources and the ability to deliver are, in many ways, more important for improving learning than policy or institutional environments because they get things done. A functional system that sets goals, monitors progress, provides support and ensures accountability, also mobilises resources and support for implementation. The system needs to have operational capability by being well-resourced and supported, as well as appropriate authority and rules evident in law and established routine.

Figure 12: Average scale score and performance at benchmarks by school type, TIMSS 2011

Resources for schools and school governance are limited and unevenly distributed due to the historical legacy of apartheid. Figure 12 demonstrates the impact historical resources on performance. Resources for learning include:

- Finances (enough and efficiently used);
- Learning conducive home environments (space, light for homework, encouragement or gentle performance pressure);
- Appropriate school infrastructure (classrooms, water, toilets, light, libraries, labs and sports fields);
- Healthy well-fed children (hence the need for school nutrition programmes as hungry children can’t learn);
- Early childhood development (provide the necessary early learning skills as a foundation for further learning);
- Appropriate language policy (transition from mother tongue instruction in Grade 4);
- Learning and teaching support materials (the debate on approaches range from guided scripted lessons to less formal structures with space for professional input);
- Enough skilled, committed and accountable teachers (many teachers are under-qualified, or lack subject knowledge in the key areas such as maths or science);
- Visible leadership and good management (is rare across the system and favour well-resourced schools that can ‘buy’ skills);
Engaged parents and school governing bodies (also tend to favour middle class schools);
Districts and education departments able to resource and support implementation in schools; and
Communities that encourage good teaching and learning.

Inequality and poverty impacts on learning, in terms of family and community resources to support learning, and in terms of school resources for learning. The consequences are mediated in the schooling environment in terms of what resources exist, how they are used; and what teachers and leaders do in classrooms. The combination of resources and ability to use them, is strongly mediated by the physical, social and political context. A key challenge in resource terms is to be able to catalyse resources in any context.

**For example - Principals’ CoP Maths Test**

This case study focuses on a community of practice of primary school principals in Ekurhuleni North district, east of Johannesburg.

This community of practice is made up of eight primary school principals in two neighbouring areas in the district. The areas are similar socioeconomically, but very different racially, in that the majority of people in one area (Area A) are Indian South Africans and those in the other area (Area B) are Black African South Africans. Given South Africa's apartheid history, the schools in Area A have been better maintained and have had more resources than those in Area B. In recent years, parents of children in Area B have sent their children to schools in Area A as these had been seen as well-resourced and enforcing good discipline.

As requests for places in the Area A schools has increased, the principals have begun to pick and choose the children they wanted. This meant that the Schools in Area A have had stronger learners that those in Area B. The other major difference between schools in the two areas has been the language of instruction, which has been English through all grades in Area A schools and mother tongue language instruction for the first three grades in the Area B schools, before changing to English. The majority of parents want their children to learn from Grade 1 in English as they feel this will give their children a better chance to succeed throughout the schooling system.

The changes brought about by this community of practice were almost immediately visible from the outset. Principals began to attend district meetings as an identified group. They started joint fund-raising activities, carried out collective buying, shared resources, exchanged ideas about instructional improvement as well as school management. This was evidence of how a collective of practitioners can maximise resources and share ideas.

The principals organised peer exchanges. For example, two of the principals visited another local primary school to see the school in action, and particularly to learn from the school's management practices. They benefited from the opportunity by learning from the professionalism of the school's staff, who are all aware of their roles and responsibilities and the need to strive for excellence. This they shared with their own staff. This was evidence of the power of peer learning.

The members of the community of practice engaged the provincial department of education about the maths and language strategy in which their schools were participating. As a collective, they communicated to the province their qualms about some of the pace setters and scripted lesson plans that their teachers were expected to use, and their recommendations were integrated into the delivery of the strategy throughout the province. This was evidence of the power of the collective voice.
After some time, the community of practice turned its attention to the more meaty teaching and learning issues, and took collective action regarding the ongoing mathematics problem in their schools. With the support of BRIDGE and the district, the principals administered a maths test to Grade 8 learners in the secondary schools of Ekurhuleni North to identify the maths challenges that were being carried forward from primary to secondary school.

BRIDGE conducted a diagnostic item analysis on the tests to identify the gaps in maths understanding within each of the primary schools in the community of practice and to describe the general trends, which were reported back to the secondary schools and the district. An analysis of the maths test results revealed that common challenges exist across the primary schools in the community.

The principals within the community shared the results with their teachers and it was agreed that the schools would coordinate their efforts whereby each school would run a session on how they teach a particular problem area in maths. These sessions were run twice a week for one month. Since then, the principals have been actively facilitating internal teacher development workshops to close the identified gaps in maths. This was evidence of how principals can be central agents in instructional effectiveness and ensure collaboration and the sharing of working practice.

The test was compiled by a teacher of Grade 8 maths from Parktown Girls School. It was one that had been used by the school for a couple of years, and had successfully identified gaps which had to be filled before beginning the Grade 8 curriculum. The test was one hour long and asked questions on bonds, fractions, BODMAS, decimals, percentages, trigonometry, shapes, data and word problems. Marking was carried out by a BRIDGE team that also included Grade 7 and 8 teachers. Groups of learners were tested over a period of three years.

The results were significant in that the same barriers to learning appeared in all three tests. These were:

- An uneasiness when computing long division
- An inability to solve simple fractions and to understand how to work with a denominator and numerator; this suggests that learners did not play with enough shapes and sections when in the Foundation Phase or concrete phase of development
- Partial understanding of how to apply BODMAS and what this means
- Poor language skills which hampered understanding of what to do in word problems and a consequent inability to correctly spell terms relating to geometric shapes
- Poor understanding of data questions, especially around mean and mode calculations.

The overall results helped teachers reassess how they were teaching and what learners were learning. In the first year of the test, teachers in Wattville and Actonville set up sessions to teach each other and to use test results to establish understanding of what is required across all years to improve methodology and content knowledge.

The focus on improving maths has deepened the CoP's reflection process and support of each other. In particular, the CoP has:

- Collaborated by sharing resources in maths, such as books and teaching strategies
- Built up confidence in principals and teachers who now openly share their problems in maths, within the schools and across schools
- Laid out a clear pathway for change in mathematics teaching in these selected primary schools
- Set a model in place for replication with other CoPs.

The district director for this area has asked to share the learnings and trend analysis of the 2015 test with other schools in her district, a clear indicator that the impact of this collaboration is perceived as useful to schools and teachers.
Resource working together challenges and opportunities

- Slow economic growth and high unemployment are unlikely to shift in the medium to long term, leaving little leverage to shift the uneven distribution of resources that track the fault lines of structured economic and social inequality.
- Parents, local community members, teachers, principals and departmental officials are important resources for learning, but capacity is limited.
- There are not enough teachers in primary schools, the most important years for learning foundations. In addition, many teachers lack the content knowledge, time on task and sometimes the commitment to make a difference.
- Principals and district officials have uneven capacity to use data, communicate with stakeholders, deal with unions, support teachers and hold schools accountable.
- Technology is seen as an enabler to improve teaching and learning, but there are a number of issues in implementation, roll-out and use of ICT tools. Fragmented and uncoordinated practice is the result of a sometimes unclear policy environment and a variable implementing strategy, and provinces are differently capacitated to implement the roll out of technology.
- Resource distribution follows apartheid patterns of distribution. This means that former white (model C) schools are better resourced despite pro-poor funding.
- Financial resources remain a challenge as there is limited funding for development after salaries. How finances are allocated and used is more significant than the amount of funding. The system is high levels of inefficiency.
- The private sector may be able to share experience in the creation of resource efficiencies in the system.
- The majority of schools need material resources and infrastructure to provide basic conditions for learning. Many schools still lack basic sanitation and water, or are over-crowded.
- Technology is under-utilised as a support to learning but the system lacks the capacity to utilise technology effectively.
- Better resourced school communities use cellular and email technology to communicate with learners, parents and different school stakeholders. The use of cellular technology could be extended to schools with limited resources in partnership with the cellular industry.
- Proactive schools use resources as a catalyst for changing teaching and learning in schools. These resources can include learner material, solar lighting, learning labs, councillor or shared sports facilities.
- Catalysing resources leads to collaborative relationships and partnerships.
- Limited resources can be maximised through pooling and sharing.

Finances

Finances for school working together activities, notably SGBs, is provided by government as a small section of provincial budget allocations required to be allocated to supporting SGBs. An average of 85% of state financial resources go to salaries. Other financial resources are sourced from fees, the private sector, NGOs, community leaders and donors. However,
finances seem to comprise less of a challenge than the ability to make things happen in different contexts.

In its 2015/2016 budget the government allocated R276.7 billion to education which is 22% of the national budget. Personnel costs comprise 80 to 95 percent of the educational expenses according to different estimates and significant investments are also made on facilities, school meals, textbooks and other learning materials. The government has also instituted a number of conditional grants such as the Accelerated Schools Infrastructure Delivery Initiative. Public spending on education is 5% to 6% of the country’s GDP, meeting global benchmarks.

Since the South African Schools Act (1996), pro-poor funding policies were introduced to address historical inequalities between white and black schools and promote redress (Woolman & Fleisch, 2006). The National Norms and Standards for School Funding groups schools into 5 quintiles based on a poverty index, that took into account average household income, unemployment rates and levels of education of the community around the school (Motala, Dieltiens & Sayed, 2012).

Schools in different quintiles receive different amounts of public funding, with the lowest quintile schools receiving the greatest amount of non-personnel resources per capita for each learner (Woolman & Fleisch, 2006). As a result, Limpopo and the Eastern Cape receive more public funding than for example, the Western Cape (Motala, Dieltans & Sayed, 2012).

Quintile 1, 2 and 3 schools operate on a no-fees basis, but quintile 4 and 5 public schools, as well as independent schools, charge fees to raise money to hire more and better quality teachers. School fees provide over R3,5 billion a year of income to schools that supplement the funding they receive from government, but benefit only a small percentage of schools and learners.

Corporate social investment is scattered across a range of different players, but education support comprises an estimated 35% and 45% of social investment spend, totalling about R1,3 billion (Besharati, 2016). Trends suggest social investments is higher than aid from traditional donors to South Africa’s education sector. Business leaders in South Africa have an established tradition of pooling resources to support development objectives of the country. One of the first partnerships was the National Business Initiative (NBI) Education Quality Improvement Programme (EQUIP).

The Business Trust, with an executive board comprising senior government officials and business leaders, invested R400 million between 1999 and 2005 to improve hundreds of schools across South Africa, through its Quality of Learning Project and Learning for Living. Business, with unions and government, also support the recently established National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) for the implementation of South Africa’s National Development Plan.

Many companies have their own social investment divisions, trusts, foundations, or fund managing firms (see Figure 13). The majority of funding is channelled through NGOs, NPOs, charities and affiliated schools. Traditionally investment is through parallel provision, bursaries and scholarships, or supplementary enrichment programmes, especially in math, sciences and specialised subjects.
Figure 13: Largest corporate education investors in South Africa (estimations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Estimated R million per year</th>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Estimated R million per year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anglo American</td>
<td>51.36</td>
<td>Nedbank Group</td>
<td>17.12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arcelor Mittal</td>
<td>50.73</td>
<td>Telkom</td>
<td>15.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Truworths</td>
<td>45.60</td>
<td>De Beers</td>
<td>14.72</td>
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<tr>
<td>MTN SA Foundation</td>
<td>35.52</td>
<td>Impala Platinum</td>
<td>13.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anglo Platinum</td>
<td>33.40</td>
<td>Old Mutual</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vodacom</td>
<td>30.55</td>
<td>Transnet</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Standard Bank Group</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>Investec</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sasol</td>
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<td>BAT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Zenex</td>
<td>28.80</td>
<td>HCI Foundation</td>
<td>9.60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Rand</td>
<td>28.12</td>
<td>Bidvest</td>
<td>9.28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberty Holdings</td>
<td>25.50</td>
<td>Sanlam</td>
<td>9.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kumba Iron Ore</td>
<td>25.28</td>
<td>FNB</td>
<td>8.96</td>
</tr>
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<td>Absa</td>
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</tr>
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</tbody>
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Since finances are less an issue than utilisation of resources, the ability to make use of what exists in an optimal way is critical. The gap, however, is that many schools and local communities do not know where to start. The entry point in this regard is a collaborative mechanism that enables sharing of practice and know-how on anything from how to get district support moving to who will donate solar powered lights, time or books. For example, one school stocked its library by asking people on Facebook to buy a book for a child and include a relevant message on learning.

**Human resources**

The range of human resources for schools includes parents, local community members, teachers, principals and departmental officials. School leadership, which includes the principal and the management team, are vital to securing good learning results. However, South African research suggests that many principals lack the knowledge and skill set, related to instruction, values and building cohesion, required to steer schools towards improved learning.

After the home, teachers most strongly influence learning outcomes. Good teachers enable learning improvement and poor teachers constrain. Teacher commitment (through punctuality and presence), lesson planning, curriculum coverage, and regular homework and assessments, have a clear correlation to learner achievements. However, many teachers, protected by unions, lack the knowledge, skills and commitment to instruct. There are weak accountability systems in schools making the consequences for unprofessional behaviour minimal.

While average teacher learner ratios in schools seem appropriate, many primary school teachers work with large classes (between 50 and 70). Correlations between poor learner performance and under-staffing are higher at the primary than the secondary level, suggesting
more personal interaction is important in the lower grades. A range of studies confirm that many teachers lack content knowledge and instructional skills confirming that poor teaching negatively affects learner performance and entrenches poverty and exclusion\textsuperscript{8}.

Parents or guardians and conducive home environments also affect learning outcomes. These often correlate with poverty making inequality a determinant of academic achievement. A combination of parental levels of education, home language and home resources for learning impact on learning results and age of schooling. Districts tend to be under-staffed with uneven capacity to use data, communicate with stakeholders, deal with unions, support teachers and principals and hold schools accountable. Some districts lack the appropriate infrastructure and others the people.

Technology, information and communication

Information and communication technologies (ICTs) are enablers and tools to improve teaching and learning, but there a number of issues regarding the implementation, roll-out and use of ICTs in education in South Africa. Fragmented and uncoordinated practice are the result of a sometimes unclear policy environment and a variable implementing strategy, and provinces are differently capacitated to implement the roll out of technology.

SGBs, teachers, parents and leadership – all key enablers – require access to reliable information for planning and collaboration. Despite intentions, the distribution rate of important documents to schools is less than 50% and to educators and SGBs less than 20%. However, schools are making use of apps to communicate with parents and staff. Many parents like this as it keeps them “in the know” about homework and school issues.

The 2004 White Paper on e-education referred to the role of information and communication technologies (ICTs) in education as revolutionary. While technology can enhance teaching and learning, it is vital that lack of access does not reinforce educational disadvantages. Government’s Action Plan to 2014: Towards the realisation of schooling 2025 noted the following:

\textit{Evidence from around the world does indeed point towards the ability of ICTs to enrich teaching and learning and to take educational outcomes to a new level. ... Ensuring that all learners gain access to ICTs as soon as possible reduces the dangers of an entrenched digital divide in future. (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p.92)}

Whether or not the use of ICTs does in fact improve learning outcomes depends on a range of factors. The key lesson here is that there has to be a degree of ‘school readiness’ for the implementation of ICTs in a school to be effective. School readiness is determined by factors such as teacher proficiency in, and a positive attitude to, the use of ICTs; the ability to integrate ICTs into everyday practice; and the use of relevant and CAPS-aligned content.

In addition, the context has to be conducive in terms of: (i) consistent connectivity (whether by internet or by intranet) and IT support; and (ii) management of the technology in relation to both security and accessibility. Reluctant teachers, poor monitoring of usage, lack of expertise in updating or maintenance, or devices locked away in a cupboard sabotage the whole effort.

The effect of attitudes towards technology in education should not be underestimated. The leadership team in a school needs to be aware of potential dynamics, and plan for managing the introduction and ongoing use of ICTs in the school. This planning should include the allocation of time and human resources for general support, and a good communication strategy.

A number of elements (see Figure 14) that affect relationships and successful implementation are at play. Here are some issues that have been identified:

- Basic computer literacy amongst teachers cannot be assumed. This needs to be assessed in a non-threatening way, and provision made to address gaps.
- Build a bank of skills within the school – use ICT champions to support less comfortable teachers, train teachers to integrate ICTs into their teaching practices (understanding the benefits and limitations), and teach learners to use the devices effectively for learning. Do not impose ICTs on teachers and learners; they need to actively participate in integrating ICTs into schooling.
- Pre-service teacher data shows that the majority of students (i) have not had the use of ICTs modelled by their own teachers; and (ii) they themselves don’t know how to learn with and through technology. New teachers may encounter other obstacles when they leave university and enter a real school context: older teachers defend the status of ‘born before technology’, and young teachers may find themselves in resistant environments. Pre-service teacher training may need to include understanding of change management to deal with these attitudes.
- The introduction of technology can also affect teacher/learner relationships. Teachers can feel undermined by the fact that the ‘locus of knowledge’ has shifted away from themselves to a device. Good teachers will be able to mediate the content; teachers with a low knowledge base or low self-esteem will perceive ICTs as a threat.
- The use of ICTs in a school context should not isolate learners. ICTs must be socially situated, and used in group contexts or for collaborative learning.
- In relation to learners with disabilities or special learning needs, the benefits of ICTs have not been sufficiently explored, and there is too little implementation of ICTs as assistive devices for learners with special needs of different kinds. This was a view expressed by a number of interviewees in a study undertaken by BRIDGE in 2014. One interviewee working at a special school noted that she has had surprising experiences with seeing how cognitively affected children can show their capabilities through technology rather than traditional chalk and talk.
Research also suggests that the relationship between medium, content and pedagogical practice in the use of ICTs in education is complex; there is little agreement on standards for content, and what constitutes effective online learning methodologies, feedback and assessment processes. ICTs should not be adopted uncritically.

ICTs should not ‘replace’ teachers, or view teachers as handmaidens to electronic delivery: pedagogical strategies and interactions between teachers and learners are still central to effective learning. We use ICTs in teaching and learning because technology is emerging as the dominant and powerful medium in many contexts. However, pedagogy and content must drive ICTs, rather than the other way around, in order to enhance and support learning.

Well-managed use of ICTs in schools has however been shown to offer a number of benefits. There is more class time for teaching and learner engagement because e-content is easily accessible. Teachers save time on planning, preparation and assessment, and so have more time for interacting with learners.

Learners are more engaged – they enjoy the challenge of searching for information, learn well from videos and benefit from working collaboratively. Learners enjoy being at school, which translates into lowered absenteeism. If the school context provides for this, learners can use ICTs to do their homework at school, an important benefit if home conditions are not conducive to doing schoolwork.

All these interrelated factors have some implications for how the school leadership-teacher-parent continuum can build up an environment for effective use of ICTs. School leaders have to commit to managing the changes that the introduction of technology might be bring. This process is essentially about dealing with people - a good communication strategy for the parent community, the governing body, the SMT and teachers and learners will help build
cohesion and support around the process. School leaders need to encourage a culture of open debate on issues relating to technology.

**Infrastructure, materials and physical resources**

*In the Eastern Cape and Limpopo between 10–15% of Grade 1–3 learners are in extreme class sizes of more than 60 learners. (Spaull, RESEP Policy Brief, p.2)*

Due to the legacy of apartheid, school infrastructure varies dramatically across urban and rural areas, but also across race and class. The former white model C schools in suburban areas have all the relevant infrastructure to support learning including sporting facilities, computers and telecommunications. The 2011 National Education Infrastructure Management Systems Report notes, however, that nearly 80 per cent of schools are without library or computer facilities and 15 per cent do not have access to electricity or water. In addition, 11 450 schools still use pit latrine toilets.

International and South African evaluations correlate poor infrastructure with poor performance, and the gap between the privileged and poor is large. This is evident in the case studies where historically well-resourced schools, like Parktown Girls, are able to focus on improving learning, while poor schools, like Actonville Primary, have to chase and mobilise for basic learning resources, like classrooms, labs and learning centres.

Other important physical resources in schools affecting learning are School Nutrition Programmes which increase access but also facilitate learning by reducing hunger and malnutrition. Most of the poorest schools in South Africa are beneficiaries school feeding programmes and every day 9 million children are fed by government. Actonville Primary attracts parents to its programmes by offering a meal in exchange for attending psycho-social workshops at the school.

**Focus group insights – infrastructure, materials and physical resources**

- Rural schools have infrastructure problems which schools in urban areas do not experience. The majority of rural schools’ lack basic facilities such as decent desks and toilets. Limpopo parents think that Gauteng has better resources than the local schools which fail to provide learners with modern resources such as tablets, calculators and sufficient books.
- Learners do not like that they do not have sufficient textbooks and resources such as desks. They have to share and in some schools, chairs are broken.
- Learners appreciate meals as they provide them energy to concentrate in class.
- Learners are not safe in rural schools. Gates are often unlocked. There is no security.
- Most classrooms are overcrowded and the learners share broken desks and chairs. Learners insisted that they were capable of maintaining clean classrooms but they were not provided with sufficient brooms and equipment to sweep our classrooms and passageways. They acknowledged that their schools were dirty. "Many windows are broken and in winter our classrooms get cold and it feels like nobody cares".
- There are shortages of furniture.
- Children must learn to concentrate more and not bring their problems from home and also to bring food. The feeding scheme is avoided by those that need it as it appears you are less than those who have food.
The provision of learning materials, technology and other resources to schools can enhance the teaching and learning experience (see Figure 15). In South Africa, textbooks have been used but a recent move towards prescriptive curriculum with scripted and standardised lesson plans has led to the production of workbooks. The utility of these workbooks is undetermined with some suggesting they assist in learning by providing practice.

![Figure 15: Percentage of learners affected by resource shortages according to principals, by type of school, 2011](source: Reddy et al., p. 1)

There have always been divergent and evolving views on what constitutes good learning materials. At one end of the spectrum are the proponents of highly directive materials which provide teachers with detailed guidance and numerous resources; at the other end are those who support more open-ended materials which encourage teachers to adapt and contextualise by using topical and immediately relevant resources. Which is better? The answer is, of course, that it depends – on the school context, on the expertise of the teachers, on their pedagogical and content knowledge, and on cost and availability.

The key lesson here though is that the conventional input/output model for provision of materials is insufficient; we cannot assume, for example, that simply providing quality materials or learning resources will result in quality learning outcomes. As suggested by the research underpinning the Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS), the focus should also be on the instructional process and how it affects learning. And key to the instructional process is how a teacher mediates the materials, whether these are directive or open-ended.

Some argue, however, that teachers need to be encouraged and supported in developing their own professionalism and autonomy; the ability to create lesson plans or adapt materials is a core competence for teachers. Support to teachers should preferably be in the form of...
providing sample lesson plans or materials as illustrative models, or providing training in using and interpreting standard workbooks and text books.

**For example – the GPLMS**

The GPLMS is an example of a structured intervention with a number of supporting elements in which scripted lesson plans are reinforced by sets of quality learning materials (including graded readers) that make use of a systematic and planned approach to instruction. This approach is backed up by trends in international literature which suggest that the lower the performance in schools, the more tightly structured and mediated the intervention should be.

For example, the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER) study *Improving Educational Outcomes in Developing Countries* (2014) extracted lessons from 115 rigorous impact evaluations of educational initiatives in 33 low- and middle-income countries. One conclusion was that ‘... low-skilled teachers need specific guidance to reach minimally acceptable levels of instruction’. (NBER, 2014, p.1).

The NBER suggests that ‘scripted’ lessons are appropriate when matched to low skill teachers, as ‘... scaffolding that provides guidance on both what teachers should teach and how they should do it has proven effective in enhancing the skills of low-performing students.” (NBER, 2014, p. 14). As a discussion of the GPLMS puts it:

- *The underlying purpose of the lesson plans was to introduce and gradually institutionalise a repertoire of practices that would improve teachers’ time on task and establish new daily and weekly routines. In addition, the lesson plan programmes included pre-designed assessment tasks, model answers, mark sheets, and homework activities. The lesson plans also integrated the official Department of Basic Education workbooks that had been provided to all schools. The lesson plans reduced teachers’ planning and administrative workloads and allowed them to concentrate on actual teaching, thus shifting the focus from interpreting the national curriculum to delivery of the curriculum. (Fleisch et al, 2014, p.3)*

While context and the needs of the target group of teachers will obviously determine the appropriate approach, all learning materials should at least meet certain quality criteria. Most vitally, materials need to balance appeal to learners by bringing in relevant everyday content with the correct and consistent use of formalised subject-based terminology. This is especially important in maths and science learning materials.

These ‘good practice’ features of materials also need to be carried over into resources developed for learners with disabilities who are in what is defined in inclusive education policy as ‘ordinary schools’ and ‘full service’ schools. In the BRIDGE study on inclusive education, however, it was noted that there have been delays in getting braille text books to both special schools and full service schools. There are only a few braille production houses in the country, and these are under-resourced.

Language policy advocates mother tongue instruction to the end of grade 3. There are a number of practical constraints to this policy, such as the lack of books and materials, the limited number of trained teachers who teach in mother tongue, and even a certain degree of resistance by local communities. Most of the focus groups advocated that a single language of instruction be introduced as the language switch in the transition from foundation to intermediary phase (grade 4) has a negative effect on learning achievement. This is not the case but it is strongly advocated.
For example – language and learning

Observations on the government’s Dinaledi Schools Programme strongly recommend that teachers should be put on an English language improvement programme, which should address skills such as ‘how to teach reading in English’, and ‘how to teach maths in English’. It has also been suggested that maths and science dictionaries and glossaries be provided to schools.

- An evaluation of schools in the Dinaledi programme also identified confusion caused by code switching and translation in mathematics teaching:
  - It is vitally important that teachers be encouraged to use less translation and automatic code mixing. Learners have to be exposed to the development and practice of subject-specific language in a register which is appropriate for their grade.’ (Watters, 2010, p.72)

The Maths Education Chairs Initiative (co-funded by the FirstRand Foundation, Rand Merchant Bank and the Department of Science and Technology) supports six chairs working in four universities, with four of them focusing on secondary mathematics and two on primary school numeracy interventions. The relationship between maths and language has been a key focus area in all these projects. Issues such as the following have been raised:

- Swapping between languages (code-switching) can be detrimental to the teaching and learning of maths.
- The push to make maths ‘more accessible’ is often misinterpreted by teachers as a push to use 'simplified' language. This can lead to confused thinking in learners who are then not only unable to recognise mathematical vocabulary, but have an incorrect understanding of the concept.
- Learning problems created by incorrect use of discipline-specific and pedagogical language for maths and science have been identified across a number of projects.

On the broader front of educational interventions, reading programmes and the provision of appropriate reading materials (in all languages) are considered to be vitally important in promoting a culture of reading. Any improvement in learners’ reading skills is believed to have a positive impact on learning outcomes, as well as on the general development of the learners of South Africa.

The promotion of reading is in fact one area where the school leadership-teacher-parent relationship can (and has been) effectively mobilised. There is no shortage in South Africa of well-developed resources to support reading; these include African language readers for initial literacy (for both children and adults), as well as easy readers in English.

Over the years many supporting materials for the enhancement of reading skills have been developed by both the government and the NGO sector. School leaders can certainly make planned and sustained efforts to access and share these resources with both the school and parent community. Parents and other community members can be encouraged to play active roles in extra-mural activities and various reading events.

4.5 Activate values for learning and an ethic of care

You can’t enforce something; you have to change their mind-set. As soon as parents see that their kid is loved by the teacher then they are on board. (Teacher at Actonville Primary)
One primary school learner stated “In our school, we work on the five values of respect, care, sharing, tolerance and love. We are asked which value we break when we do wrong.”

A school culture is not something that develops overnight. A school culture flows from values of the school.

Education systems are durable because they incorporate strong vested interests and resist change. These vested interests are driven by values that do not always privilege learning. The tension between the teacher as union member and as educator is an example of how values can either support or undermine practice and learning outcomes.

Most schools have norms and routines which define the way things work. Many of these are rooted in the struggle against apartheid education. A combination of rapid expansion of Bantu education with militant resistance led to disintegration of the culture of teaching and learning in the late eighties. Rote learning and examination driven teaching methodology were emphasised at the expense of student participation and problem solving (Chisholm and Vally, 1996, Mc Lennan, 2000).

Many of the values which characterise collaboration - trust, reciprocity, tolerance and accountability - were eroded in the struggle over apartheid education. These have been replaced in many communities by a sense of anomie, a disintegration of an accepted normative code, evident in a fragmented and dysfunctional engagement, low expectations and unprofessional conduct and a notable lack of caring. Schools that are able to work together to improve learning build community partnerships, parent connections and values (Cohen, 2006).

Archer (2013) suggests that given the tendency to resist change, restructuring is most likely to be achieved through negotiation between different social groupings initiated by professionals, outside contractors or political manipulation. Fullan (1991) argues that the forces reinforcing the status quo are systemic and that transformation requires changing the cultures, not that organising structures, of education institutions.

The political economy of the relationships which connect parents, teachers and leaders in the service of children is an important part of understanding why some interactions enhance learning and others erode it. Knowing where to connect, and how, provides an entry point for an intervention as well as a means to sustain interactions and collaborations.

**Working together values – challenges and opportunities**

- The culture of teaching and learning in schools has eroded with a corresponding effect on results.
- Teachers and learners are often undisciplined, absent or abusive to colleagues and each other.
- There is a poor work ethic and lack of commitment from school stakeholders.
- Many stakeholders feel pressured by the daily challenge of operating in challenging psycho-social contexts.
Activating values in the school community builds trust and cohesion and most importantly reciprocal care.

The values have to be shared by all stakeholders and reinforced in daily interactions in classrooms, staff rooms and the school community.

In many schools, principals and teachers carry the burden of care for disadvantaged or abused children.

School leadership can use values to build professionalism, discipline and collaboration.

An essential value is care and a belief that every child can and will pass.

The research for this deep-dive suggests that there is a breakdown in a culture of teaching and learning evident in in the social and educational problems encountered within schools and local communities (Masita, 2005). Nurturing a culture of learning and care is an important part of addressing social, educational and socio-economic challenges. Govender (2009, p.365) suggests that changing culture requires a change in behaviour and conduct in schools.

Values activation is focused on shifting mind-sets and cultures to implement policy and embed values and practice. The research shows that improving perceptions of the value of teachers and schools, as well as learning, contributes to improved learning as stakeholders rise to the challenge of expectations. Many stakeholders, especially in dysfunctional schools, do not know that they have voice which can be used to apply pressure or recognise good practice.

**Focus group insights – discipline**

Learner discipline matter dominated the discussion. It would appear as if ill-discipline of learners is a big issue in the schools. All the learners spoke of witnessing or experiencing learner discipline problems in their schools:

- Learners not cooperating with teachers;
- Learners engaged in physical fights with other learners or with teachers;
- Learners smoking marijuana;
- Teachers hitting learners with the duster in order to obscure the effects of using the switch;
- Learners mocking teachers;
- Learners not observing the bell or study periods or being disruptive;
- Learners bunking classes and rather hiding in smelly toilets.
- Learners explained that the majority of their classrooms do not have posters on the walls - the learners will destroy the posters.

One high school learner gave an example of how uncaring the teachers are in one of the schools. The grade 12 class has not had a physical science teacher for 2 months and this happens regularly, but no one will provide students with an explanation or update if the school is looking for a replacement. Sometimes a teacher “disappears” and no one tells the learners anything about that. They characterised their schools as uncaring, low performing schools due to poor learner performance and uncaring attitude and the harshness of the majority of teachers and principals.

The Grade 7s are the bullies. They steal lunches, punch and tease others. They say: “don’t tell, or I will beat you up”. These bullies do not concentrate in class and shift attention from their bad performance by bullying. They say “I cannot do this class work”. Teachers can’t do anything. Bullies bring their frustrations from home. Punishment does not necessarily follow bullying. The school calls the police and has class assemblies to discuss bullying. "We are told to lead by example".
Learners from three schools in Wattville experienced drug related abuse in their neighbourhood and abuse at home.

Learners in Limpopo feel that they understand the positive behaviours and practices that are required of them in order to perform well but it is difficult when other learners misbehave or when they are not free to express themselves. The learners must understand the value of education and must not disrespect teachers. Learners must work hard in spite of problems that they experience at school. Learners must respect themselves by the way they dress, relate to others and the way the present themselves.

In many of the schools with a culture of teaching and learning, the benefits of organising schools using values as the glue that keep stakeholders together and on track are evident. For example:

- Parktown girls claim that they use the values of the schools to resolve tensions and fights. “No one would bring drugs to school – we would not allow it.”
- Actonville Primary uses parent’s day as an opportunity to provide additional support to parents by providing counselling as well extra lessons. At this school the values match a finger on a hand, so small children can confidently tell you which value has been ignored when things go wrong. They hold up a finger.
- Messaging for the learners is critical. Learners need to know that someone cares whether they do well or not.

The messaging to the learners must be clear and deliberate in words and actions. The learners need to hear and internalise the following messages:

- The learners need to know that “everyone can pass”.
- The learner needs to know that the school will do everything to support their development.
- The learners need to know that school community has prioritised their development.
- The learners need to know that they have to make a commitment to work hard, be focussed and engaged.
- The learners have to see education as an opportunity.
- The learners must understand that the resources that they are given are a stepping stone to something bigger, empowerment for future and for life.

For example – activating values for learning (LEAP schools)

LEAP Science and Maths Schools provide free education to students from high-need communities, and have mathematics, physical science and English as mandatory subjects. Their school day is extended (9 hours), and they have Saturday classes and formal holiday programmes.

LEAP schools are value driven no-fee schools located in poor areas. Stakeholders commit to making things work, and all students and staff work with a social development organisation in partner communities. There are eight scheduled student visits during the year.

Everyone at LEAP commits to:

- Being kind, honest and healthy
- Being punctual and looking good
- Working hard and never giving up
- Admitting and learning from mistakes
- Confronting issues and being open to change
- Working together and sharing
Every LEAP school is partnered with a more privileged school as well as township schools in the community the school serves. This three-way collaboration creates the opportunity to share excellence in all spheres.

LEAP staff also work with a selection of community organisations by providing mentoring and support in management and operations.

The LEAP Movement promotes sharing of lessons, good practice and advocacy. Aimed at bringing together education stakeholders, the movement to promote equal access to quality education in South Africa.

LEAP schools in the Limpopo have the following to say:

At the LEAP school parents respond positively towards this commitment and participation rates in activities that call for parental involvement is above 70%. Parents also show support by providing their children with extra money to get them to school for additional activities such as Saturday classes. Some parents offer to supervise evening studies and offer transport to learners from the community for free. Others who cannot pay nominal fees work in the school garden.

At the LEAP school learners understand that they have to play their part and invest effort and time because they understand that their parents and teachers are there for them. For grades 8 to 11 school starts at 7h30 and ends at 16h30. For grades 12, school starts at 6h00 till 17h30. Grade 12 learners attend school from 7h00 till 15h00 every Saturday and the rest of the grades invest 3 hours. The learners demonstrate their commitment by showing up and working hard. They understand that effort pays. It is important to check how relationships are working from time to time.

A school culture is not something that develops overnight. A school culture flows from values of the school. In a recent survey done by management, parents affirmed the school for doing positives things which parents appreciate. For example, parents appreciate that learners are kept at school for longer in the day and week and are engaged in enrichment programmes such as extra classes, ICT education and practices, extra mural and life skills training.

The principal at the LEAP school believes that education policies are designed and implemented for what is best for the teachers. Adherence to stipulated working hours for teachers regardless of the context and prevailing conditions of a school are an illustration of this, the abuse of sick leave, early departure from school by some principals are examples of how teachers use policy to serve their needs with little regard on impact on the learners.

School leaders and teachers need to be in touch with reality and be compelled to do the right thing. This reorientation can be done through training, not for certificates but for competence and adoption of value; values that put learners at the centre of the education enterprise. Raphael highlighted another critical factor which has brought about instability in the education sector, i.e. the many changes that the education system has gone through since 1994. There is an urgent need to stabilise the system and provide relevant training. Training should be adapted to local school contexts.

At the LEAP school things that undermine beneficial relationships is the lack of knowledge prevents stakeholders from working together. In many cases people lack understanding of the power of enabling relationships which exist in the LEAP school. Establishing and entrenching relationships that do not benefit the child and prioritising things that do impact positively on teaching and learning – this is a recipe that makes schools dysfunctional. Where parents do not care and there is no one to hold teachers accountable. Teachers that are self-centred undermine positive school community relationships. A principal who does not understand his/her role undermines strong beneficial relations.

LEAP schools are supported by a board, which oversees all LEAP school. The board is good in fundraising and providing a broad vision for all the LEAP schools. The relationship between the
LEAP schools and the Board is radically different to the one between School Governing Bodies of public school. This hands-off approach provides excellent opportunity for innovation and a degree of autonomy. For instance, the school is now embarking on expanding a garden project into a bigger farm initiative which will allow it to support a related and new subject, Agricultural Sciences.

In addition to supporting curriculum development, the project will expand opportunities for parents who cannot afford to contribute money towards the school social development fund, to contribute in kind by working in the farm. Excess produce will go towards feeding the children. An initiative such as this project obviously contributes towards building commitment towards the school.

There seems to be a lack of awareness of the constitutional values which drive education and their achievement of education for all. A mass public campaign run with education, local and traditional authorities, as well as churches, NGOs and the media, could create awareness about the values and practices which improve learning. This will raise expectations, and voice, enabling stakeholders to understand and enact roles and responsibilities.

**Inclusive education is about care**

- The policy intention for inclusion exists but has not been systematically implemented.
- Many schools required to mainstream disabled children lack the physical infrastructure and the teaching and learning skills to managed diverse classrooms.
- School leadership and teachers struggle to communicate effectively with the parents of disabled children.
- A more inclusive, values-based culture in schools will enable learners and parents to feel part of the school community.

*Schools are complicit in [the] exclusion. There isn’t really a culture of accessibility institutionalized in the school because we [people with disabilities] have to make it work.* *(Edward N dips, activist, Johannesburg, November 2014)*

South African education faces major obstacles to its effort to ensure that all learners are educated and supported, regardless of their abilities. The current system is insufficiently resourced and not well-enough managed to achieve quality education for the disabled. Policies, while insistent on each individual child receiving the support they require, are let down by uneven implementation. Worthy national initiatives are often foiled by poor provincial planning and monitoring or by blockages and lack of capacity at the district level.

The White Paper 6: Special Needs Education - Building an Inclusive Education and Training System (2001) outlines the goals of an inclusive education system as one which is able to accommodate the needs of children with disabilities, many of whom fell outside of the system. This is to be achieved by mainstreaming children into ordinary schools, providing for full-service schools or expanding specialised schools. In 2014, 350 000 out of 390 000 children aged 7 to 18 were in schools.
However, implementation is hampered by a lack of skills and knowledge in managing these differential needs in schools. Many schools struggle to create inclusive learning environments due to a lack clarity on the process and resources to support implementation. Many schools and SGBs avoid admitting disabled children and teachers struggle to differentiate the curriculum to address a wide range of learning needs, especially in large classes.

Insufficient access and support for learners with disabilities results in high ‘dropout’ rates and it is all too often the case that children and young people with diverse learning needs are not supported, are socially stigmatised and have nowhere to go. All too often, resources are inadequate, school principals are not able to support the inclusion, teachers have not been trained to support disability, while standardised testing has placed pressures on schools to perform in ways which often leave weaker and vulnerable learners excluded and more at risk.

It is an issue that White Paper 6 has never been promulgated into an act. Similarly, the context of large and intractable systemic blockages and deficiencies, which include the capacity of school principals, teacher absenteeism, shortage and retention, the capacity and staffing of districts, and so on, makes it difficult for inclusion to be achieved.

Views on parental involvement in inclusive education expressed in this study include the following:

- The Draft Policy on Screening, Identification, Assessment and Support (SIAS), which provides a policy framework for the standardisation of the procedures to identify, assess and provide programmes for all learners who require additional support to enhance their participation and inclusion in school, lacks guidance on the role of parents. While an objective of the policy is to acknowledge the central role played by parents and caregivers, the draft policy is ‘... strongly instructive rather than invitational to parents/caregivers, many of whom have limited knowledge about barriers to learning and are often resistant to suggestions that their children need support.’ (BRIDGE Final Report ‘Disabilities in Education and Inclusive Education, 2014, p.8)
- Disability issues for schoolchildren are closely linked to the problems in the health sector. Many parents do not understand what kind of disability their child might have, and cannot get a proper diagnosis or proper care because of dysfunctional health provision in their district. Health departments need to be brought into partnerships in any initiatives dealing with disability.
- A greater drive for parental education on disabilities and options for education is required. In rural areas, for example, children are hidden away, as there is a great stigma around disability.
- Principals of ordinary and full service schools who are expected to admit children with low-level or moderate support requirements do not feel informed or competent either to give advice on admission, or to support their teachers in dealing with classroom issues relating to these needs.

In the area of inclusive education and dealing with disabilities, parental involvement in the child’s education is vital. Dr Hester Costa, Director of Inclusion and Special Schools in the Gauteng Department of Education at the time of the BRIDGE study on Inclusive Education, believes that

... learner support rests on two main pillars – management on the one hand and parental support on the other. ... Parental support is an absolute critical piece in
supporting a learner with disabilities in all aspects, emotionally, materially and including working closely with teachers and the school. (BRIDGE Final Report ‘Disabilities in Education and Inclusive Education, 2014, p.16)

The BRIDGE 2014 study found that there are a range of additional human resources required for different purposes in all three school types (ordinary schools, full service schools and special schools) as defined in the inclusive education policy. At the very least, however, schools should address basic practical needs; many interviewees felt that currently (with some exceptions) learners do not get the physical assistance they require, never mind more sophisticated forms of learning support. The point was made that even untrained and unemployed individuals from around the community could be on hand to help, for example by taking children to the bathroom. Currently in many schools (special or other), it is the teacher who has to leave the other learners to help a disabled child use the facilities. Even if another child is delegated with this task, then that child is taken out of the classroom. A certain amount of mobility and independence in simple matters such as going to the bathroom is a life skill that disabled learners need to learn in any case, and schools are not addressing this. Human resources in general are inadequate in the inclusive education context, and are a key need for learner support to be effective.

For example - leading through collaboration

Mr Derrick Moeketse is an experienced mathematics educator who has worked in education all his life and who rose to the rank of District Official. He was then asked to go back to a school and be the principal of a primary school in Wattville, Gauteng East, to try and improve the school’s education outcomes and at the same time develop it into an inclusive school.

Wattville is located in the East Rand and is an old township that was the birthplace of Oliver Tambo. Isaac Makau Primary school has been transformed in the past three years by Mr Moeketse. He has built a library, a maths centre, laid-out new sports fields, bought sports equipment and has generally improved the conditions of all the classrooms and the admin block (with both government and private company funding).

The necessary support ramps and handrails, with adjusted toilet facilities and pathways have been provided. In addition, staff have improved their performance and now run extra classes in key subject areas before and after school.

A key component in his leadership style has been to collaborate with peers. He is part of a BRIDGE principals’ community of practice (funded by the Anglo American Chairman’s Fund and endorsed and driven by the district in partnership with BRIDGE), in which he meets monthly with principals of similar schools in a geographically proximate area.

The focus in these engagements is on building trust and peer support, while sharing practice and maximising resources. Consequently, the sports facilities at his school are being shared with other schools in the area, for example.

The principals in this community of practice also made a decision to test the maths knowledge and ability of Grade 7 learners across their schools so they could understand what the issues
were in teaching and learning in that subject in their area. An analysis of the tests led to an understanding of which areas required remediation and instructional support, and led to the principals setting up professional learning communities for maths teachers, both within and among their schools.

There has been a marked improvement in maths results at the school from below average to average with the aim of succeeding even further in years to come. Parents see the school as a beacon of hope in the township.

**Key learnings:**

- Effective leadership is essential for school improvement.
- Pooling resources and collaborating with peers leads to a maximising of resources and a minimising of duplication, with increased reach and impact.
- Sharing practice with peers can lead to improvement in instructional leadership.
- District support is key to the success of collaborative engagement and the better distribution of resources to poorer schools through sharing.

### 4.6 Build shared accountability

*Schools should educate your child but also make them independent, confident and able to cope with life out there. (Johannesburg Parents)*

*Construct a results-oriented framework of mutual accountability where districts are accountable for supporting schools, including the nature of the support they provide, the number of times they have visited each school and what they did during the visits. Schools also need to be accountable to education authorities for their overall performance on key indicators. More importantly, schools should be accountable to the school community for the performance of the school in relation to the annual school plan. Finally, parents should be accountable for the behaviour, attitude, attendance and work ethic of their children. (NDP, Chapter 9, p. 311)*

We know that education is an essential component for inclusive development. While mandates from the top are important for the vision, they are only effective if they connect to local institutional contexts. Otherwise they tend to complicate an already fragmented set of meanings and relationships by imposing different priorities.

Schools able to articulate a framework for education development in their context are able to sustain relationships between different social groups through negotiation and communication. They are able to build new collaborative communities by mobilising education stakeholders to support schools. Similarly, district officials who work successfully with schools are those who are able to build commitment to change by connecting institutional contexts to broader educational challenges.

Securing accountability is partly about responding to the challenges of results based management and meeting the reporting requirements of education departments. However, it is also about ensuring that all members of the school take responsibility for their tasks and report accordingly on challenges and successes. Building a positive compliance culture in the sense of everyone doing their bit is an important part of this process.
The formal authority system is centralised and decentralised. Despite policy and structures to decentralise management to schools, authority is hierarchical and rule driven. NEPA reinforces the leading role of the National Department of Basic Education in policy-making and the setting of guidelines. Provincial Departments of Education can develop policy, but only within national parameters.

Schools and districts, and often provinces, have limited policy or management authority (in terms of the space and resources to implement). Often socio-economic and spatial conditions affect the ability of leaders, teachers or parents to exercise their authority and voice. In very impoverished communities, parents hand over to the more knowledgeable (in their minds) principals and teachers.

Accountability is about responsiveness (to mandates and responsibilities) and answerability (for achievement or non-achievement). Democratic governance is based on the idea of reciprocal accountability: citizens elect; politicians decide; and system implements. In education, accountability is multifaceted, despite clear policy on appropriate conduct in this regard.

In many schools, (often fractured) social relationships forged during the education struggle are perpetuated in the new system. These are evident in tensions between educators and principals, learners and educators, schools and departments, parents and governing bodies, and unions and the system. They erupt in the form of protests, abuse, passive resistance or apathy.

Spaull (2015, p. 136) and van der Berg et al (2016) view accountability and capacity as critical system challenges that to be addressed. They are, of course, related as it is difficult to account for one’s actions is one has not been provided with the capacity (skills, will and support) to act.

In searching for a way forward, this article outlines two dead-end possibilities – increasing accountability without increasing support, and increasing support without increasing accountability. Both scenarios fail to improve performance because, in the case of the former, schools cannot mobilise resources they do not have and, in the latter, teachers have no incentive to mobilise themselves or the resources at their disposal. This highlights the importance of aligning the structures of accountability with the processes of capacitation.

Accountability is the expectation of ‘account giving’ in the sense of explaining and taking responsibility for the consequences of actions within the scope of a position (such as that of principal or teacher). In a school the locus of ultimate accountability lies with the school principal. However, the school principal is subject to conflicting accountability pulls. Principals have to manage their staff, and yet are not the employers of that staff; principals have no power over post provisioning, and yet have to manage the consequences of empty posts, doubling up of teacher responsibilities, or having teachers teaching subjects for which they are not qualified.

The principal has to navigate a hierarchical system with officialdom while managing a democratic system with teachers, with the school governing body, with parents and the community. And in many school interventions (whether from the state or from social investors),
the principal is side-lined and viewed as playing a technical management role rather than that of an instructional leader.

**Accountability working together challenges and opportunities**

- The education system has decentralised responsibility but not authority (as in control of resources and decision-making).
- There is lack of systematic professional and shared accountability. Most accountability relationships are bureaucratic and compliance drive and have very little impact on agency.
- Corruption and abuse of resources and children is pervasive.
- There are few consequences for poor performance.
- Parental participation is complex in contexts where gogos or learners are heads of households, or parents are absent.
- Parents in poor school communities or rural areas often lack voice or are marginalised.
- Shared accountability does enable schools to set realistic goals and monitor progress in the security of stakeholder support.
- Parental pressure and high community expectation also encourages schools to rise to the challenge.
- Decisions from schools to national are not based on review and evaluation of data and evidence.

One of the key lessons learned from a range of different types of interventions is the importance of having the support and active engagement of the principal and the school management team in any proposed innovation. Where programmes have been imposed without school leadership buy-in, the motivation of beneficiaries such as teachers or learners is diminished. The chances that changes are sustained or made routine are lessened.

The South African Schools Act (SASA) provides for the establishment of SGBs to plan and oversee the provision of quality education. SGBs comprise of parents, teachers, non-educators and learners in secondary schools. The principal is an ex-officio member and community members can be co-opted onto governing bodies but cannot vote.

Among other responsibilities, SGBs determine admission, disciplinary and language policy in schools, as well as advise on appointments and manage finance. Many of these functions impinge on school management, blurring the lines between school governance and management.

This policy, intended to include parents, teachers and learners in decisions to achieve learning outcomes, tends to favour privileged schools despite intentions. It gives a wide-ranging set of responsibilities to under-resourced schools and communities without the corresponding support or resources.

Localised responsibility, while empowering in principle, can become a financial and time cost burden for poorer communities, and for the school leaders and teachers who fill the gap. These
communities often lack the access, resources, information or finances to support learning. Parents in the Sekhukhune focus groups strongly articulated a need for equity in the form of adequate infrastructure and good up-to-date teachers.

This was a wide-ranging set of responsibilities for under-resourced school communities. Most schools in South Africa had had very limited self-management or governance experience and tended to respond reactively to instructions from above. Many district or circuit level offices which would have to provide much needed support were still in the process of being established and staffed and also lacked experience and capacity.

Established networks (like unions) lead to overlapping systems of accountability. One is related to the formal distribution of voice and authority outlined in policy. The other is related to actual social networks in specific schools and social communities. This informal distribution of voice and authority, in which unions are more powerful than management, or illiterate parents keep silent, disrupts policy implementation creating unintended consequences which skew the distribution of voice and authority and undermine accountability.

With a majority of South African schools holding one or more Section 21 powers, which shift decision-making authority and responsibility to the school, principals, deputies and heads of department in schools need to new skills to implement which include working in teams; collaborative governance; stakeholder engagement; institutional and instructional leadership. However, there has been a tendency to build technical management and administrative competencies like planning, reporting, using data, budgeting, etc.

One example where accountability issues can become blurred is around admissions policies and admissions decisions. The relationship between the principal and the SGB is complex, and can be affected by a number of diverse factors in the environment. Where the parent body and school community context is expertise and resource-rich, there is the risk that the SGB might dominate the principal; on the other hand, in impoverished communities with high levels of unemployment and low literacy levels (or a large number of single parent or child-headed households), principals may have difficulties in the recruitment and election processes for setting up a consultative SGB and filling portfolios appropriately.

There have also been reported instances in which unscrupulous principals have easily bypassed an ineffective SGB. There is evidence to show, however, that effective SGBs are a vital aid to the principal for good school management. The key principles for success appear to be open and ongoing lines of communication between the principal, the school management team, the staff and the SGB, and the establishment of trust.

Corruption is a critical and largely unresolved issue. While policy clearly defines misconduct, which includes failure to follow instructions, improper behaviour, sexual misconduct and substance abuse, principals and SMTs are reluctant to discipline teachers due to informal power dynamics in the school. The South African Council of Educators (SACE) which builds professional accountability by registering educators, promoting professional development and a code of professional ethics also struggle to ‘enforce’ the SACE Code of Conduct and has a large backlog on disciplinary cases.
School safety is related to the efficacy of the relationships between school and community. Children feel unsafe from abusive teachers or learners and are reluctant to go to certain classrooms. Teacher fear entering isolated parts of schools that cannot be seen. Many school communities are extremely stressed and operate in conditions that are hard to imagine from the leafy suburbs of urban areas. This is the impact on schools of a disintegrating social fabric.

For example - The Jika iMfundo School Safety Pilot Project

Jika iMfundo is focused on getting supervisory relationship at school and district level to be professional, supportive and evidence based, but school safety is a daily challenge.

The Jika iMfundo School Safety Pilot project is a participatory project designed to improve safety in schools. Part of the programme is designed to determine what school communities regard as threats to safety (actual and perceived), as well as what school communities advocate or recommend as appropriate measures to contain such threats.

Researchers interviewed learners, educators, members of school governing bodies, cleaning staff and security guards in the four schools in Pinetown using a structured research instrument. Researchers from in the school premises interviewed each cohort and processed and analysed data. An example is provided the ‘safer’ of the four schools.

School A understood the school community as constituted by the community around the school, which takes ownership of the school. This includes the immediate community comprising learners and educators, parents and general workers at the school, as well as by the distant community that takes an interest in the school, for instance the government, private companies, NGOs and service providers.

Understanding of School Safety

Respondents understood school safety to entail a general level of safety when inside the school. This could only happen when there is uninterrupted learning by intruders or when the school has an appropriate security fence with parking inside the school premises and is manned by properly functioning security guards for 24 hours a day and classes have properly cared for doors and windows that do not leak in the rain. School safety also necessitated the presence of a health facility at the school.

The school had safety goals, which emphasise a weapon free zone particularly as some learners had been fatally wounded either through shooting or stabbing and educators have been threatened with weapons. The goals include beefing up security and skill of personnel at the school, a properly lit school especially at night and regular patrols by the SAPS in and around the school. This school would like to have properly controlled and regulated scrapyards especially since there have been incidents where taps, desk frames and other metals have been stolen most probably to support drug and substance pedlars.

Consequently, the school has developed a safety policy and plan and implemented a learner code of conduct. The school has acquired a loudspeaker and siren to alert the school community of impending danger. There is no safety assembly point as yet. There is also security and access control during school hours. However, there are no security guards after school hours, as the school governing body cannot afford to pay for additional security personnel.
Learner Survey

When probed if they had seen any drugs and substances in the school premises learners reported to have seen mostly dagga and whunga, which they could also purchase on the school property. They sometimes report this but not all the time. They had also seen fellow learners coming into school drunk after break. Learners also reported a high incidence of verbal violence among learners and a prevalence of verbal abuse of educators by learners including instances where learners spit at educators. The learner survey interview was conducted with the learner leadership body executive committee and a meeting with the students is on the cards for this term. It should be borne in mind that the programme was punctuated by the winter school break.
**Educator Survey**

Educators reported feeling most unsafe at the entry steps into the school where learners usually smoke their marijuana and whunga within the school. Generally, the safety levels are acceptable although there are isolated areas where safety levels are very low. They also felt unsafe after hours following teacher parent meetings although relationships with school governing bodies were often good. Casual threats, name-calling and a general sense of disrespect often occur when learners do not want to submit work or participate in schoolwork. Most teachers had seen whunga, marijuana and snuff at the school.

They felt that they had good relations with learners, felt that learners were united and tended to protect one another from external threats. Incidents of vandalism on cars were also frequent. There was no problem of romantic relationships between learners and educators and relationships between learners and school governing bodies were normal although they hardly met or talked.

Regarding the school’s state of readiness to respond to danger there were no fire extinguishers, there was a first aid kit and serious injuries could be referred to the clinic. They could also report drugs and other harmful substances to the local SAPS and incidents of bullying are reported to two educators specially assigned for this. There was also a social worker allocated to the school.

**General Comments**

In response to a call for any comments relating to school safety respondents reported the following: the ward is populated by immigrants and most learners from the school come from the Eastern Cape, usually children who are above school going age. It is not unusual for a class to comprise learners varying between 13 and 24 years of age. Five years ago, an educator was attacked at home for disciplining a learner at school. There is a problem of teenage pregnancy. The legal system is not functioning well for instance convicted learners get released under the auspices of being under age. There is a problem of child-headed households with the consequent results of hunger in the school, an absence of discipline and victimisation by fellow learners. Relationships between school management and the school governing body and the representative council of learners is non-existent, they last met when there was a potential strike by SADTU.

Beyond the SGB mechanism and its formal responsibilities, however, there is a strong case to be made for educating the parent community so that parents can support their children’s learning at home, and contribute to the school through volunteering to offer time and skills. In addition, parents need to understand their children’s’ schooling contexts so that they will be sufficiently informed to hold the school and its teachers (including teacher unions) to account if needs be.

What is clear from BRIDGE’s knowledge gathering activities is that the principal plays the central role in ‘bringing in’ parents and the community to the school, and enabling them to understand its operations and its problems, all of which ultimately affect learning outcomes. This suggests that principals need the confidence and commitment to regain the status of community leaders where this has been lost. This implies in turn that principals need effective communication strategies, tools and mobilisation techniques.

**Focus group insights – parent participation**

Parents and communities play a critical role in providing learning opportunities at home, while linking what they learn at school and what happens elsewhere. Through participation and facilitation of diverse learning experiences and activities outside the school, parents and the
community become important factors in the learners overall learning and education. At this nexus, it is imperative to note that school leadership and teacher parent relationships can appear within two extremes, first as either dysfunctional and unfavourable or second as positive catalyst and empowering.

Parents play a pivotal role in motivating the learners. The most crucial stakeholder in the education chain is the parent. The parent has to demonstrate interest in education and show care for the child. This must be expressed daily basis in a variety of forms. The child needs to know that the home context values education and that the parents trust them to perform at their best.

The work of the teachers becomes a lot easier if the child is motivated. A child that knows the importance of education is easier to demonstrate potential and is easy to teach. A child who is motivated begins to see that the way out of poverty is through education. The type of engagement between parent and learner does not have to be determined by the level of education of the parent.

Limpopo learners expect parents to motivate them and encourage them to work and study hard. In most cases parents shout at them when they do not do well at school. Learners feel that the parents still have a responsibility to encourage and advise them, even if they fail test or exams. The learners feel that they can learn from mistakes and lives of their parents, but they do not spend quality time with them because they are not home most of the time. Their biological parents work in cities and towns far away from home.

Limpopo parents acknowledged that they needed to play their part. Some parents do not come to school to engage with the teachers to understand the challenges that teachers face with their children. Even if some parents are illiterate, it is important to show interest in the work of their children. Parents must check homework. Parents can also assist learners of harsh teachers. Learners of harsh teachers can approach parents for assistance with their work. Sometimes learners are not truthful about the status of their work and behaviour at school, therefore, parents must monitor the work of the learners.

Parents of privileged schools are active and self-organising. They participate because they want to be involved and they have the time and the resources. Some of the learners in these schools complained of ‘helicopter’ parents who hover around all the time. They suggested a balance was useful. They liked parents’ participation because it meant they cared.

Communication with parents is often not clear and empowering enough for them to take meaningful decisions. Parents gave an example where Mvula Trust wanted to build “environment friendly loos” in one of the schools. Whilst the SGB approved of the toilets, parents rejected the toilets because they thought that they were as good as pit latrines and they later realised that they had made a wrong decision. By that time, the service provider had discontinued its services.

Most SGBs run parallel to other collaborative structures in the school. Principal’s from Limpopo were of the view that SGBs only come to meetings but don’t give support or help, they worry about their own child only and they don’t really care because they don’t know what to do here. Teachers felt that elected parents are not educated, cannot raise funds and “listen to the principal like puppets”. SGBs don’t know their powers and they feel inferior due to no education. One teacher stated “In my school the SGB abuses their power by controlling the principal because they have been workshopped by the district just once in the year”.

The SGB is as strong as its principal. Some principals do not know their work. Such principals cannot monitor the work of teachers properly. SGBs in schools of principals like that are ineffective. Some SGBs are afraid of victimisation and often do not ask difficult questions. Principals need to be trained on leadership skills and management and SGB also needs to be trained on governance so that they fully understand their roles.
On the other hand, learners from the three primary schools in Watville knew little about the SGB and in fact seemed to think that the principal was the all-important person. It appears that the SGB is not talked about in front of learners. Teachers believe that SGB’s influence the appointment of teachers with the principal and that SGB’s are just puppets for the principal.

Prew (2009) analysed evidence that was collected from a case study of 96 schools in the Soshanguve Township, outside of Pretoria. The case study consisted of a majority of schools that emanated from disadvantaged communities. The partnership involved the local education district office, the schools and an NGO with the aim of developing these schools for positive and effective learning. The approach used eventually led to a highly contextualised response to the local community needs and schools and ultimately to full community participation in most of the schools.

This intervention model seems to have worked as the community defined its relationship with the school and observed that this interaction served its own interests through assisting it with income generation. Most of the schools were situated in lower income communities and a township context where anyone from the community could work on certain days at the school for food or where the learners work with employed gardeners and sold vegetables to the communities or where a group of unemployed parents pay the school a small amount to grow their own vegetables. The formal jobs included being caretakers, security guards, cleaners, ground staff or running the tuckshop.

The annual school feedback reports indicated that half of the participating schools became generators of community income. In return most schools reported increased parental
- attendance at important governance meetings
- interest in their children’s performance
- visits to the school
- volunteering to help the school
- commitment to protect and help prevent crime at the school
- improved admission levels due to learners leaving city schools

This particular research suggests that where deep relationships were forged between the school, the local education department and the local communities, the benefits can be huge. Johnson (1994), argues the merits of such positive outcomes on the basis of a study entailing the transfer and control at the local level in New South Wales. He concluded that the needs of each school are determined best at the local level due to each community having distinctive needs. School governance structures create various opportunities for stakeholders to develop a sense of ownership of the school thereby taking responsibility for the outputs of the school (Bean & Apple, 1999).

For example – building shared accountability

The NECT School Turnaround Programme (STP) in Limpopo is based on a model designed to address whole school change, and embraces a philosophy of ‘deep change’. Two of the strands of this programme are the development of ‘courageous leadership’ and ‘parent and community involvement’. The impact story of interest here is that of a principal who was inspired by the programme to tap into community resources. With support from the programme, she achieved the following:
• Re-energising a community structure called the Quality Learning and Teaching Campaign (QLTC), which the school had previously attended for compliance only. Through the principal the QLTC brought in community members with different areas of expertise (including a social worker, a retired policeman, a pastor, a health practitioner, teacher union members and learners) and engaged parents on issues such as learner absenteeism, taverns in the area and on impact on learner behaviour, and issues relating to learner pregnancy and drug abuse. One of the QLTC’s other success was its intervention on behalf of the school to make sure that the District fast tracked appointment of a permanent Grade 12 English teacher at the beginning of the year.

• The Principal began contacting other schools for resources; for example, she approached a neighbouring school to offer support to her Grade 12 Accounting learners, as her teacher and learners were struggling with aspects of the curriculum.

The strategies used by principal Venessa Moodley of Actonville Primary school illustrate how strong and determined leadership can change the course of a school. A major element of her approach was to bring in partners from the community in key areas such as health and staff development. While the parents of the Actonville children are part of a poor community, she also mobilised the community in a number of ways to contribute to the school’s improvement and development. In addition, she set up a ‘values-driven’ approach to schoolwork and homework in which parents were invited to participate. The activities undertaken by this principal can serve as a model to other principals who are faced with similar challenges.

5 Conclusions and possibilities for investment

For the future, I am putting my energy into building a stronger profession, not into trying to repair a desperately dysfunctional political system. For example, I am trying to build a practice that educators can use to observe instruction, in order to develop and strengthen the professional culture of schools. My work is increasingly focused on direct engagement with practitioners, rather than trying to “fix” schools with policy. (Richard F. Elmore, The Blog of Harvard Education Publishing, 14 June 2011)

The majority of schools in South Africa (estimates shift between 75% and 80%) are weak institutions located in poor communities with poor learning outcomes. Poverty and socio-economic conditions can and do affect learning outcomes, especially in South Africa given apartheid legacies. But this does not have to be the case. Students from equivalently poor household in Vietnam learn more than those from Peru. We also know that many schools in South Africa have learners who perform well, even exceptionally, despite their local context or conditions.

System change depends primarily on the political will and institutional capability of government support institutions. Within schools, a champion (individual or collective) is needed to drive change. Champions are most often principals, working with SMTs, heads of department and stakeholders. Some the strategies used to introduce and sustain change are to:

- Find a way to shift learners, teachers and the school community into a different mindset in which the school is seen as successful and the children are the primary focus;
- Use an event or collective resource (like a mobile lab, or a library, or a reading drive) to introduce new instructional practice and motivate teachers and build a “we care about our school” culture;
Support parents to support their children and call on those parents who are keen to help, often and with gratitude;

- Build trust, values and commitment;
- Care about the children and the local community; and
- Use partnership, collaboration and other strategies to make the most of limited resources.

Sustainable system change is not possible without the support and commitment of unions at a national level, but especially at school level. A key challenge here is a deep-rooted anomie and weariness about the work of the teacher. Building the status of the teacher and the important work they do may shift perceptions about it being a career of last resort.

High performing schools work because the teachers are on board and care about the learners and their success. Some successful strategies include:

- School based initiatives that work with teachers and their heads of department on learning strategy and instructional techniques (supported by the principal, school and district);
- Communities of practice, peer learning and professional learning communities, all of which develop professional autonomy and shared knowledge;
- Recognising and rewarding professional conduct and small victories and dealing decisively with misconduct and poor performance;
- Building professional independence and an ability to work in any socio-economic context.

Context is critical to understanding and managing a collaborative change process. One of the first tasks is to develop an understanding of the schools, stakeholders, organisational capacity, regulatory environment and socio-economic conditions that impact on the achievement of improved teaching and learning. The local context comprises political, economic and social frameworks and requires an understanding of the key stakeholders and other factors that determine needs and challenges.

Given the extent of coverage and research on what works and what does not, levers for change should target the spaces interventions do not address. The systemic gap in existing programmes is a) building core values and relational capability; and b) shared responsibility and accountability for outcomes. These areas, not addressed in current programmes, provide levers for taking school communities that work apart to work together to build new routines and practices to support learning.

Focus group insights – recommendations

- A proper investigation into causes of poor performance of learners in rural schools needs to be launched and addressed. Rural schools never get straight answers from government.
- Equitable allocation of resources must be undertaken. Schools in urban areas get more resources than rural schools. School buildings are good in urban schools; they get computers; better qualified teachers. Rural school must be allocated good teachers.
- The process of funding from national to school is cumbersome. For example, not all schools benefitted from the Anglo American project of building toilets, classrooms and administration blocks.
• There is too much focus on grade 12 learners. The learners are drilled for examinations and made to study for long hours. There are too many demands put on the learners. That is why they end up failing. Learners are not taught properly at lower grades and teachers start putting pressure on children when they realise that they are going to fail matric.
• Teachers must be trained not to be harsh to our children. It is because they don’t know how to teach that they are harsh to our children.
• Circuit Managers must monitor and support principals. Principals must support teachers in delivery of subject content so that the learners achieve quality passes.
• Teachers should change teaching strategies because they feel that the current teaching methods do not work. Learners continue to perform poorly despite being taught. The learners want their teachers to teach them in “proper” English. In the majority of cases, the learners do not believe that teachers provide them with quality tuition.
• Learners would like to have overcrowding addressed so that they can move freely in the class.
• Learners from three of the primary schools in Wattville want parents to be more committed to children’s education. They must care more. Parents can help paint the schools and also get involved in games. They can be called to the office and asked to get more involved.
• Help change the mind-set of learners as they come to school without knowing what schooling is about. Motivate them to make them understand what it is that they are learning.
• Make parents understand the duties to their children and the school as they need to be more accountable.

**What can FRF/FREF do?**

⇒ The deep-dive specification required innovation. We have attempted to find that innovation in practice and translate these into possible interventions.
⇒ Interventions are targeted at addressing the gap of a) building core values and relational capability; and b) shared responsibility and accountability for outcomes.
⇒ All interventions should include building capacity to accommodate inclusion and technology appropriately and in context.
⇒ In addition, it is suggested that the foundations work in the gaps of existing interventions, where there is limited coverage and high potential for impact. These ‘gaps’ will release the levers.
5.1 Change grant making conditions

Venessa Moodley, principal of Actonville Primary School, transformed the school’s reading outcomes in three years. She attributes her successful journey in transforming the school to two things: (i) community partnerships and collaboration; and (ii) values education.

It is recommended that FRF/FREF define an education sector grant making approach that insists on:

- Partnership and collaboration as a condition for support. For example, any applications should be either from a collective, or have built in partnership commitment;
- Intervention plans that demonstrate the development of core values and a focus on building relationships to support and pressure outcomes;
- Capacity building and support of grantee organisations to be able to collaborate and share knowledge through, for example, the development of CoPs or PLCs;
- Outcomes and success measures that include the effects of collaboration, increased accountability and building core values;
- Longer term interventions (at least 5 years) that recognise the complexity of the challenge, followed by post-intervention impact evaluations; and
- Thought leadership by sharing the results of the work, what works and what does not. This will contribute to the development of a national understanding of what enables system change.

Possible partners would be BRIDGE and its donor community of practice. This would ensure greater impact if all donors required collaboration as a requirement for funding.
5.2 CoP and PLC facilitation skills for district officials

PLCs increase teacher confidence and morale – they feel they can take charge of their own learning and become agents for change, and this can change the culture in a school for the better. (Dr Razia Ghanchi-Badasie, Principal of Brenthurst Primary School)

Building the collaborative capacity of districts and leaders will enable them to provide the necessary support for change in dysfunctional schools. Districts can support collaborative learning improvement through the development of CoPs and PLCs that support local schools and their communities.

The NECT also runs district development programmes mostly focused on instruction, but the capacity to initiative multi-stakeholder and professional groups will enable district officials and leaders to problem solve, have professional conversations, work collaboratively and support innovation.

FRF/FREF can work with NGOs and education departments to support the development of a national programme for districts on facilitating CoPs and PLCs. This could be technology based with a local support kit.

This project would require a partnership with provinces and districts (not already a focus of other projects) as well as NGOs with a track record of facilitating CoPs like BRIDGE. Working with established CoPs such as the South African Extraordinary Schools Coalition might also be useful.

5.3 Support union development institutes to develop professional school-level governance and ethics capacity

You can’t enforce something; you have to change their mind-set. As soon as parents see that their kid is loved by the teacher then they are on board. (Teacher at Actonville Primary)

Classrooms are where the learning is enabled. The research shows that teachers are creative and committed to children’s performance when trusted by leadership to operate professionally. This is not possible without the support of unions and professional associations.

Unions’ primary value focus needs to be on learners, classrooms and school performance if the quality of learning is to improve. Commitments at national level in the NECT need to be activated in schools. Supporting union development institutes actively develop school-level governance and ethics capacity will influence learning quality.

Possible partners would be JET (the secretariat of the SADTU institute) working with other union institutions. This would ensure that the unions work together to finalise the programme. An online, updateable programme, with professional learning points, will need to be developed to ensure reach and cost-effectiveness.
5.4 Provide school leaders with the keys to unlock change, collaborative commitment and shared accountability

Leaders are the glue that puts everything together but it’s not easy. You struggle with teacher buy-in, parents and learners. Holding things together requires empathy to understand people are not where I am. (Principal at Principals Upfront Dialogue, May 2016)

Shared accountability enables school stakeholders to develop realistic goals, monitor progress and provide support for learning improvement. The research demonstrates that principals are the primary activators of change in school systems. While there are many programmes and interventions in improving school management capacity, these tend to focus on the more technical aspects of school governance and management.

Supporting practice based, community of practice based leadership programmes, and the development of a schools-based ‘let’s start working together’ kit will support principals and management teams to become activators of collaborative change.

Interventions must to be linked to appointment and promotion guidelines, SACE and OSD competencies and lead to professional development points. Some lobbying may lead to making this a compulsory part of professional development.

Proposed partners here are twofold to ensure sustainability.

• Firstly, providers and NGOs already working on innovative leadership programmes such as Partner for Possibility, BRIDGE or WSG to collaborate on developing an optimal, scalable intervention.
• Secondly, partner with the ELRC, SACE, School Principal and SGB Associations for relevance and links into policy on principal qualifications.

5.5 Enable school communities to find resources and support with ease

Schools need to find a way to talk to parents. We make parents or guardian come in to collect reports. (Principal, Ekurhuleni East)

The research suggests that many change strategies involve using resources (infrastructure, new policy or people) as a means to initiate and create the conditions and motivation for changing teaching and learning.

The development of an app that can be used by all stakeholders as a means to share, mobilise and activate resources will contribute to the better use of existing resources and facilitate sharing in poorly resourced schools and communities.

A possible partner here would be an education tech enterprise, but this should involve working with principals and schools that have cracked the code for resource mobilisation.

5.6 Develop a national understanding of the value and purpose of schools and teachers to address the eroded culture of teaching and learning and build an ethic of care and commitment to children and their futures

We live by our values – habits of the heart. (Parktown Girls learners)
Parents depend on the chiefs in the village so if the chief doesn’t like you then they don’t like you. (Limpopo teacher focus group)

The research on education system change, and on educational challenges in South Africa, suggests that a common social understanding of the purpose and values of education encourages positive school, community and parent ties, as well as changes in practice. Fullan calls this moral purpose, and it is lacking in many of our schools and their communities.

One strategy for achieving this is by initiating a social movement that: 1) builds a common understanding of purpose, rights, roles and responsibility; and 2) develops national support and commitment to children’s futures by changing public perceptions about what happens in schools. A media campaign should be considered.

The Teacher Appreciation and Support Programme (TASP) was launched on 31st August 2015 at the Department of Basic Education. This is a joint stakeholder programme inclusive of stakeholder across the education sector. The TASP forms the process leading up to World Teachers’ Day on 5th October 2015. The programme proposes year-long activities that are aimed at lifting the morale of teachers. This extends beyond the existing departmental activities, such as the National Teaching Awards and the CPTD management system. It seeks to encourage involvement at all levels, including that of social partners, districts and schools.

This project, if undertaken would require a complex set of partnerships. Firstly, the Initial Teacher Education division, Department of Basic Education; The Funza Lushaka Bursary Scheme; the BRIDGE Community of Practice focused on Pre-Service Teacher Development; the Bertha Institute, UCT, which is exploring a social impact bond in this area; the Global Teachers Institute; Teach South Africa and Save the Children.

There are some key national dissemination channels for knowledge and information in this area: The Mail & Guardian’s Education Section; The Teacher; City Press; Teachers Upfront, which is a dialogue for teachers run by the Wits School of Education, the University of Johannesburg’s Education Faculty, SciBono Discovery Centre, the Mail & Guardian and BRIDGE.

Most importantly, the roll-out of the campaign would require partnerships with the traditional leaders, religious leaders, NGOs such as Equal Education and community leaders. These are the member of the broader community that will take the message of care back into schools.

In relation to technology and disability, the following is suggested:

- Implementing inclusive education in schools with limited resources requires a deep commitment to collaboration. In this regard, disability mainstreaming can be a built-in requirement of funding, but also, more proactively can be included in all interventions.
- Technology can be an important means to collaboration through the use of apps, WhatsApp and online support to schools and districts in remote areas. For example, districts could run CoPs or support PLCs via skype, if unable to reach the districts or schools directly.
References


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Department of Education. 1996a. Education White Paper 2 on the Organisation, Governance and Funding of Schools. No. 130, Government Gazette (.


Smit, S. (2016). Background Paper on System Change and Education System Change. Completed as part of this the deep dive research process.


6 Appendices

6.1 A note on methodology

Systems comprise the interactions, pathologies and pathways of various formal and informal institutions operating in a particular context. Institutions shape the patterns of school leader-teacher-parent relationships by establishing boundaries for acceptable practice and action. Innovations in these contexts are socially constructed, disputed and creative solutions to intractable problems, but are difficult to sustain and institutionalise.

The mapping of the institutions and pathways that restrict or enable change, combined with an analysis of existing research, regulatory frameworks and knowledge, enabled the identification of system change drivers which can be used to frame systemic social investment (SSI) in context.

The review study which informed the mapping process is part systematic review and part benchmarking. Systematic review explores research related to a specific field, practice or policy, in this case school leadership and community systems. Benchmarking involves a systematic process for identifying, measuring and implementing effective practices in order to facilitate change. In this study, benchmarking extends only to tracking trends in strategies, what has worked or not, and what possibilities there might be.

The review provides the evidence base for identifying root causes and levers for change in school governance relationships. Initial scoping on system change in education suggests that firstly parents and home environments, then leadership, supported by good teachers have a significant impact of learning outcomes. The key questions are:

- What are the components or actors in the school governance system?
- How do they interact – historically (over the past 15 years) and currently?
- What learning is the system producing?
- What formal and informal authority, practices and ‘rules of the game’ define or influence relationships?
- What financial, leadership or support resources define operational capacity and ability to implement or sustain policy and change?
- What are the relationships of voice and response that define the system?
- Who are the stakeholders and how do they interact?
- How can system change be defined in ways that help research, policy and practice?

In addition, a review of practice involved firstly, an assessment of all the relevant interventions in South Africa using similar questions. Between two different studies, one as part of Neissan Besharati’s PhD research study and the second, on related practice by Bridge and others, over 50 improvement projects were examined to find lessons for successful collaboration for learning. Secondly, a series of focus group interviews were conducted with parents, teachers, parents and learners in rural Limpopo and urban Ekurhuleni. Finally, a series of cases on successful outliers were developed.

The questions for the focus groups were adapted slightly for learners, parents, teachers and principals, but covered the following broad issues:

- What is a school supposed to do – what does it produce?
• What is your understanding of your role in the school in relation to its work? Can you give some examples?
• What is the biggest problem you face? In other words, what is the thing you would most want to do to make the school better?
• Let’s start with learning. What kind of learning improvements would you like to see?
• What role do you think teachers should play to improve learning in the schools? And parents? And “leadership”?
• What do teachers actually do in the school? Give some stories. Also parents? Also leadership?
• Do they work together or each on their own?
• What do you think prevents parents, teachers and leaders from working together? What do you think helps them to work together?
• What does the school governing body actually do? (does it communicate properly, raise money, inform stakeholders, support) What should it do?
• Does the district, and the provincial education department, help?
• Let’s talk a bit about unions: SADTU, Naptosa, any others? Their role? How do you relate? What is helpful, needs improving? Is there any political dimension that affects the school?
• We’ve taken views on several of the matters you raised: any omitted? (learning, teaching, parents, SGB, the district, unions).
• Sitting back: what do you think would be the most effective intervention FNB Foundation could make, at a broad educational-system level, to improve schooling?

The final phase involved a scenario planning exercise over three days. This process enabled the identification of the root causes of system challenges, as well as possibilities, and the formal and informal relationships that enable or constrain system change. See Appendix 4 for details.

An important part of the research process was an internal reference group that acted as ‘devil’s advocate” at each stage of the research. This group comprised Professor Mark Orkin, Frank Meintjies and Pat Sullivan. Over the course of several meetings, this group offered different and useful insights in terms of understanding the findings and interpreting the results.

Also, the technology and disability advisors, and the Tshikululu appointed reference group, provided useful input at key stages.

The research team comprised Anne Mc Lennan (Wits School of Governance), Barbara Dale-Jones (BRIDGE) and their associates.
Evaluated projects include:

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<th>PROJECT</th>
<th>EVALUATION REPORT NAME</th>
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| **RMB’s Maths Leadership Development Programme** | *An evaluation of the learner and teacher development interventions of the RMB Fund’s Maths Leadership Programme. Composite Final Report 2: July 2013*  
| **FirstRand Foundation Maths Education Chairs Initiative** | *FRF education chairs' mathematics education programmes: Comprehensive executive summary of 2014 end-term evaluation activities.* Khulisa Management Services  
  *Maths and numeracy chairs’ programme: Comprehensive executive summary of 2013 evaluation activities.* Khulisa Management Services  
  *End-term evaluation maths and numeracy chairs’ programme 1 (MNCP1). June 2014.* Khulisa Management Services  
  *End-term evaluation maths and numeracy chairs’ programme 1 (MNCP2). June 2014.* Khulisa Management Services  
  *NRF Chair 1: Five Year Postal Evaluations 1a to 9a, plus Chair 1 Self-Evaluation.*  
  *NRF Chair 2: Five Year Postal Evaluations 1a to 8a, plus Chair 2 Self-Evaluation.*  
  National Research Foundation.               |
| **Dinaledi Schools Project**                 | *BARRIERS AND BRIDGES TO LEARNER UNDERSTANDING AND PERFORMANCE IN GRADE 11 ENGLISH, MATHS AND SCIENCE.* January 2010. Report on a study at six Dinaledi schools for the Zenex Foundation.  
  Feedback RSA. 2013.                         |
| **Maths & Science Grants Project**           | *Qualitative research study on three schools which are the focus of the Maths and Science Grants Project. Evaluation Report, December 2013.*  
  Gill Scott & Associates. 2013               |
  Feedback RSA. 2013.                         |
  Feedback RSA. 2013.                         |
  Feedback RSA. 2013.                         |
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<th>Project</th>
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| **Gauteng Primary Literacy and Mathematics Strategy (GPLMS)** | *Large-scale instructional reform in the Global South: insights from the mid-point evaluation of the Gauteng Primary Language and Mathematics Strategy. South African Journal of Education, Volume 34, Number 3, August 2014*  
Brahm Fleisch: Division of Education Leadership and Policy Studies, Wits School of Education, University of the Witwatersrand  
Volker Schöer: AMERU / School of Economic and Business Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand. |
| **Primary Science Project**                  | *Evaluation of the Western Cape Primary Science Programme Stage 2.* Cliff Malcolm, Lavine Kowlas, Michele Stears & Nirmala Gopal. Centre for Educational Research, Evaluation & Policy, University of KwaZulu Natal, Westville Campus, Durban, South Africa. April 2004 |
6.2 #ParktownScenarios

The Scenario Planning Workshop took place on 26 & 27 May 2016 at the Zenex Foundation in the Education Hub, Parktown. The following people attended:

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<th>Name</th>
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<tr>
<td>Al Witten</td>
<td>NMMU/Sasol Inzalo Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andile Dube</td>
<td>Zenex Foundation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anne Mc Lennan</td>
<td>WSG</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barbara Dale-Jones</td>
<td>BRIDGE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bridget Steffan</td>
<td>Wits School of Governance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Claire Lester</td>
<td>Equal Education</td>
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<td>David Makhado</td>
<td>GDE</td>
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<td>Devan Govender</td>
<td>Inanda Seminary</td>
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<td>Faizel Peerbhai</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geci Karuri</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graeme Wilkinson</td>
<td>Tshikululu Social Investments</td>
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<td>James Keevy</td>
<td>Jet Education Services</td>
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<tr>
<td>John Gilmour</td>
<td>LEAP Science and Maths Schools</td>
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<td>Kedibone Seutloadi</td>
<td>Diabalwa Professional Services</td>
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<td>Kerry Petrie</td>
<td>NELI</td>
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<tr>
<td>Koffi Kouakou</td>
<td>Facilitator</td>
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<td>Lettie Miles</td>
<td>Zenex Foundation</td>
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<td>Lynn van der Elst</td>
<td>MIET Africa</td>
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<td>Mama Portia</td>
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<td>Manoshe Phasha</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mark Orkin</td>
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<td>Melissa King</td>
<td>BRIDGE</td>
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<td>Muavia Gallie</td>
<td>Independent</td>
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<td>Nigel Richard</td>
<td>Global Teachers Institute</td>
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<td>Pat Sullivan</td>
<td>Treharne Africa</td>
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<td>Renny Somnath</td>
<td>Sadtu</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sarah Rennie</td>
<td>Grindrod Trust &amp; IPASA Chair</td>
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<td>Simone Smit</td>
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<td>Suraiya Naicker</td>
<td>UJ: Faculty of Education</td>
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<td>Timothy Makofane</td>
<td>Matthew Goniwe</td>
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<td>Tinus du Preez</td>
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<td>Vuyiswa Ncontsa</td>
<td>TeachSA</td>
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The focal scenario question that was defined by the group on Day 1 was “What will children’s education look like in 2030?” The two key drivers for education performance that the group identified were the economy and the capacity of the system to deliver.

Four sub-groups were formed and four scenarios were written about what children’s education will look like in 2030. The first describing of the detail of the scenario quadrants with these drivers is captures in the four figures below.
The quadrants of the scenario exercise can be summarised as follows:

Each of these possible futures were translated into a scenario by the groups, with a story to illustrate its reality. There was general agreement that most South Africa now is bottom left, and that the ideal scenario is top right. However, it was difficult for the groups to imagine how to get to from the current situation to the ideal.

**The ‘working ok’ scenario (top left) - Thabo’s blog “Education against the odds”**

Hey guys. Welcome to my online channel. Those of you, who have been here before, would know that I have been waiting to hear how I did in my matric exams – it has been brutal waiting. So… the big news today…. I got my matric. Cool! Bachelor Pass and a few As. We all did well. It is teaching for me dudes, if I can crack the system. I want to be a teacher but the challenges are great and I am not sure I will be accepted. It is so competitive; can’t believe that over 50% of the class are also looking for places. Tough guys, tough. Old man Sithole has inspired me, and so did Teleporting Philips, to be a science teacher but there are concerns, is it right for me?

My father says teachers are no longer marginalised and he knows, dudes, being the ex-principal of Orlando High. He keeps chanting: “Teachers own their space, are motivated, engaged and professional in their delivery. “Yay, I agree and I see teaching as a pretty noble profession and desirable. They get paid which is more than can be said for others I see around us. It is a profession that encourages collaboration, accountability and bottom-up decision making. Better even than our RCL system. However, there are limited teaching posts available in public schools as the school system has changed and fewer teachers are needed in this cheaper, technology-driven situation. It was great for us but even some of my cousins are struggling to find jobs, all with good matric. In this poor economic situation, the opportunity for work in private schools as increased and as we know dudes there is an elite group that want their children to be well so they can leave the country for employment opportunities
elsewhere. Must say, America looks a pretty cool place right now. Not telling the rentals just yet. Silence my peeps for now.

List up. This is what I downloaded yesterday from Sipho’s Ma. She’s still using Facebook. So uncool but good in getting comments from the system:

“In the schooling system, everyone now accepts that competency based selection for promotion posts is the right way to get good professional individuals in place. This is supported by the district, and community members who are comfortable with this valued based approach and support actively their local schools. The educated parents are fighting to keep their schools alive and give generous and regular donations to the schools to keep them delivering excellent education. On top of this, training programmes are relevant and available for teachers who feel respected and celebrated. Throughout the education system there are technology platforms which use limited resources in an efficient and sharing way. This has created schools as centres of excellence.’

So true! Orlando High now is receiving donations from Alumni – Slim Sizulu has started giving …. he now drives a Porsche and wears real leather. Hey hey … watch this space.

I know that teachers work in a supportive environment that focuses on children’s growth where there is less bureaucracy, trust in teachers and excellent leaders. (Like my language, dude) Overall, the quality of teaching and learning continues to improve for us few. We are the educated and better equipped for the future, shown in our learning outcomes.

Now my comments and concerns: unfortunately, access to employment for all is not there and many of us learners are still floundering which has created an angry and demotivated youth. Just look outside. The townships have become very unsafe and there is a huge concern how to keep the school system going. Teachers walk back to their homes in groups to try and avoid attacks from gangs. Government has built walls around schools and security guards are in place in most of them. My brother, dudes, says unemployment continues to grow (he knows as he works in a bank) and poverty is deeply entrenched. Our teachers are seen as privileged and they themselves have opportunities to move to other careers, in and outside the country.

The government has started to reduce funding for schooling which has angered the masses. What has happened to the cry for ‘free education for all from 2016’ I ask. Keep cool my peeps …… Drop a comment below if you have advice or want to share.

This group described the following:
• Implications: Youth uprising, xenophobic reaction, unemployment and service-delivery protests, privatisation and partnerships worsening inequality
• Recommendations: Professionalizing teaching, leadership development, INSET PRESET

The ‘working apart’ scenario (bottom left) - we’re on the road to nowhere
Sipho, a young man of 25 living in Diepsloot, has been unemployed for five years. Sipho remains hopeful but, like most young people in Diepsloot, his hopes are fading. He has learnt to survive through hustling. His younger sisters, who are 14 year old twins, have been recruited
by the local Chinese Nike sweatshop and are working long hours. His attempts over the past five years to get to tertiary education have failed. He is trying to get an income to support those around him. He survives in the Chinese free trade zone outside Diepsloot, but he can’t get there when the violent protests erupt. He is confused by the good news stories that he sees and hears in the state-controlled media as they bear no relation to his life. 80% of his peers are unemployed. Many of his friends are substance abusers and some have joined the paramilitary.

A child in this world has to be very lucky or rich to access caring education in any context and has to generate income as a basic need. Education is a secondary need. Children have to learn to hustle in order to survive and many of them are addicts. National budgets for education are proportionally high, but outcomes remain low. SA refuses to participate in any international benchmarking exercises. Good teachers are scarce – most have left the country. Schools will require the protection of external security services.

**How did he get to this point?**

Thandiwe, a 15-year-old mother, gave birth to a boy, Sipho, in Diepsloot in 2010. With limited family contributions, Thandiwe supported her child but soon the support declined and reality set in. Thandiwe tried to find work but found that meaningful employment required skills and she could only access low paying and menial jobs.

Her problem compounded when the country was hit by two years of drought in 2016 to 2017 and the economy took a dramatic down turn, and junk status was conferred on South Africa.

Sipho is a bright boy but his performance was perennially poor because of bad health. His school was unaware of his context and did not provide a supportive environment for learning. He had frequent periods of absence from school. The school contributed to his plight because of the poor quality schooling. He tried to go to school whenever he could but often missed schools because he had other commitments like collecting the family ration, which was provided by a UN aid agency. but it’s taken by others.

He lost his mother at a young age when she died in childbirth at home and he found himself alone and he felt trapped and abandoned. He failed matric in 2028. He was surprised by this failure – his results had never predicted this.

This group described the following:

- **Implications**: Marginalisation of children; substance abuse; brain drain; state broadcaster control; service protests and destruction; absentee teachers; poor primary-care facilities; blame-game; prioritising of results instead of learning
- **Recommendations**: integration of ICTs; professionalization of educators; intersectoral dialogues and collaboration; activate parent support for making demands re teachers, participation in schools; increase learner agency in learning; upscaling models; move from teaching subjects to developing learners.
The ‘working together’ scenario (top right) - the Nadine Scenario

Transcript from focus group discussion, university meeting room, 27 May 2030

**Doctoral student**
Good afternoon colleagues. Thank you again for your time. As you know, my name is Lao Su. I am a Chinese doctoral student exploring the system change in basic education that enabled South Africa to move from an education score of 117/140 in the Global Competitiveness Index in 2016 to 35/140 2029. This is a remarkable shift in just 13 years, but more impressive is the shift in the quality of education which has enabled children and young people to lead productive post-school lives. In 2016, South Africa was ranked 127/140 on primary school quality, a score of 2.5 in comparison to 7 (best quality). In addition, 58% of children in grade 3 could not read for meaning in any language. My research to date suggests that in combination with improved socio-economic conditions, teachers, school leaders and parents, are, in different ways, responsible for this significant shift. And, of course, more recently, the innovative use of artificially intelligent teaching aides called Nadine.

Let us start with you. You have been teaching for 30 years. What is different today?

**Experienced teacher**
Now, at the moment, I am very excited. I am a very professional person and I don’t mind what kind of child comes into the classroom because I have everything I need to manage learning in a diverse classroom. I can even get some backup from Nadine when I need it. If I get challenged, I know that the system, my colleagues and the principal will support me and help me to improve. I don’t feel threatened by any grouping because of all of the role players in education, even the unions, are concerned about the child’s well-being. There are no enemies in the system. Obviously, this was not the case in 2016. The situation was totally different.

**Socio-economic expert**
To understand South Africa in 2030, you need to appreciate the impact of the great economic collapse of 2021. Many will point to the triple-year drought of 2015-2018 as the main precursor to the economic difficulties the SA economy was burdened with going into 2020. With mining, manufacturing and agriculture sectors all in recession, SA was just not able to sustain the bloated public service wage bill that it had inherited from the Zuma government. With public debt exceeding 110% of GDP, credit ratings plummeting to sub-junk status, and tax collections were never able to top their highs of 2016, SA defaulted on its debt obligations in 2020 leading to a spectacular collapse of the value of the rand in 2021.

The treasury, still able to wield the necessary power to reign in state expenditure, dictated a 20% reduction in staff across the public service. The department of education had to reach a teacher: pupil ratio of 1:45 across all public schools in the country by 2022. Universities also lost most of their state funding in 2021 and subsequently raised the admission criteria for 2022. Thousands of learners who had expected to gain entry to university were ill equipped to pass the new university entrance examinations. As the economy re-balanced, with a greater inclusion-rate (especially with a large increase in registered small businesses, including community bakers that replaced the old oligarchy of industrial bakeries), slowly both households, then communities and schools were able to begin investing in the resources
learners really needed to learn and gain full competency. The Department was even able to buy a Nadine teaching aide for every school to ensure consistent access to content.

Principal
I remember the day parents came to my school. They were very unhappy because their children could not get into university. They came to the school and blamed the teachers. They said the teachers were lazy and incompetent and we had to get rid of them! I set up a small committee to attend to these issues. Luckily, the department announced the need for cutbacks and put in place a process to deal with under-qualified teachers. These teachers were put on a three year programme to support and help them to improve. Only those who ‘passed’ were retained. In the end, 20% of teachers left the system. Out classroom ratios increased but abler teachers could manage and the saving were put into development. And of course, having a Nadine is a great help. As a principal, I also have more real authority to support teachers and children. It is also good to be deployed to where my skills are needed. New challenges bring new learning.

New teacher
I was lucky to be in high school after the big crash. The education department had already changed the way they did pre-service development so that teachers in training spent 50% of the year in classrooms. I was motivated to get into teaching by a young teacher doing his training at our school. When I finished school, I spent 50% of my time at Wits, and the rest in school. When I started teaching as a registered professional I was ready, and also, the school that I had trained in employed me. The transition was easy. I get lots of ‘how to teach’ support from my colleagues and the principal, and Nadine the teaching-aide provides any content back-up I can think of, and sometimes good advice. One Nadine per school was issued by the Department in 2028.

Doctoral student
Thank you for your time. Just to summarise, the major shifts related to dealing with incompetency on parents’ demands were to: increase teacher-pupil ratios to 1:45; change teacher-development to ensure that teachers enable relevant and fun learning; and deployment of good principals and teachers to struggling schools to ensure a just distribution of resources in the system. And of course, Nadine, that brings the entire world to the classroom.

- **Implications**: efficiencies free money for improvements (reduce 20% teachers), school based selection, teacher mobility, parental involvement
- **Indicators**: Treasury in control, unions agree to reduced 80% and deployment, reduced gap in learning outcomes between “good” and bad” schools, growing no. of schools meeting minimum norms
- **Recommendations**: changed teacher: pupil ratio, change funding to drive INSET, deployment of robots, deployment policy for teacher/principals

**The ‘working aside’ scenario (bottom right) - people’s education re-imagined**

What does our world look like? There are more opportunities for people to participate in the mainstream & in the informal economy, with the result that there is less poverty and improved living conditions.
Due to lack of capacity government’s influence has waned. Political patronage and corruption in the school system had led to non-delivery at all levels of schooling, so the public school system has been further weakened. But civil society has strengthened. Empowered by an inclusive economy, civil society has taken over various functions – this has led to a community school movement, greater uptake of home schooling, and a strengthened private/independent school sector. Technology has played a big role in all these developments, with local start-ups working at a community level with schooling interventions. While varied, educational opportunities exist at a community level, there are however capacity issues in some specialist areas: this manifests in a lack of directed and effective support for the most vulnerable people within the education community.

A story for 2030
Thabisile looked at her child as he played on his device. Who would have thought that such an inexpensive but creative technology would be available for her children, when she didn’t even have cellphone growing up? Maybe, she mused, her own experiences of poverty were what led her to take on a position for which she was not equipped. Accepting patronage did not have a happy outcome for her. But now things had changed – her work at the community school was a learning experience for her as well as for her children. Sipho looked up: “Mum,” he said, “Don’t forget it’s family maths night tomorrow. Make sure Gogo comes as well.” Thabisile smiled. The best thing about the community school was the way it brought in those who had been excluded not only from the economy but from basic education as well.

There was a knock on the door. Maria put her head in: “Please sissie, I need some help from you. We have just found out that two of Tumi’s teachers have left the school to go to Zimbabwe – they say they don’t get enough support to develop their teaching skills. Tumi’s principal says that it is not right to keep Tumi at that school. It’s not like your school where all of you are so involved. Now there is no teacher there who understands her abilities and her learning needs, and who can use her visual aids properly. She needs to be taught in a way that matches her potential – and the technology without the teacher is not enough. What advice can you give me?”

The group described the following:

- **Implications**: Incr. pre- and in-service; institutionalization of patronage (and resistance); high levels of unemployment, early resignations; more mobilisation of citizenry.
- **Recommendations**: Diverse schooling-types, enabling legislation; tech intensive, therefore upskilling pupils/teachers; greater parental involvement - 24/7 learning schools; teacher-development reconceptualised.

We recognized that a lot of the current state of the education system would fit into the bottom left quadrant. But we also recognized that there is a corridor of opportunity (denoted by the arrow in the diagram below), that will allow for movement out of the bottom left quadrant (where we are) to the top right quadrant (where we wish to be).
6.3 A tool for school community resource sharing

The tool would be community-led, and not centrally driven by the owner/manager of the tool. It would provide incentives to users to share and engage. The key purpose of this tool would be for education stakeholders to share information about their work in order that:

- innovative teaching and learning approaches in education can be shared,
- partnerships and collaboration can be encouraged,
- duplication can be reduced,
- funders and implementers can collaborate, and
- resources can be maximised.

The proposed tool would be an easy tool for any innovator or funder to use to showcase their work in education. It would capture the core of the innovator’s practice though requesting details for the populating of a profile. It would allow innovators to share and describe both their existing innovations as well as any partnerships they are engaged in. During the completion of profiles, it would request that innovators describe the geographical areas they work in, their beneficiaries, their funders, their evaluation findings, and so on.

The tool would have two layers of visibility:

- Public information would include:
  - My Focus areas
  - My Geographic areas of operation
  - My Beneficiaries

- Partner view would include details about:
  - My Partners
  - My Collaborations
  - Detailed descriptions of my initiative(s)/project(s)
  - My M&E reports

The tool would encourage stakeholder engagement and collaboration by providing nudges to members to work together for collaboration points and increased profile credibility, which would boost their “Stakeholder Engagement” and “Collaboration” scores. Funders could help drive member engagement by communicating the importance to grantees of sharing practice, engaging with others and collaborating, and by recognising applicants’ ratings in this regard.

The system would provide collaboration touch-points and would encourage users to:

- Create new initiatives, or realign existing initiatives in common focus areas or regions/beneficiaries.
- Meet each other when they are at the same "event," (workshop, training, presentation, etc.)
- Share “findings/lessons learned” relating to success/failure of initiatives (and initiative related materials, methods, regions, etc.)

These would lead to increased points and ratings. The tool would also have “handshakes” to support collaboration. e.g. If I say my initiative is at a school, the school is sent a handshake to confirm this.

The outcomes of this work would be:
1. Practice is shared.  
2. Resources are maximised.  
3. Duplication is reduced.  
4. Funders and implementers collaborate.  
5. Education system is positively impacted.

Data collected from this app would allow for a data “map” of not only resources but also who is doing/funding what and where. This data, together with learnings shared in the forum, would be disseminated in appropriately segmented ways a variety of knowledge management platforms.